



For daily latest books please visit <https://novelsguru.com/>

And also visit my Facebook page, and like and share it

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3345453369055623>

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends.

Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.

C E L L O P H A N E by Lia Butler

Chapter 01

Cellophane a thin transparent wrapping material made from viscose.

“Krotoa!” I hear a shout coming from the outside followed by an aggressive knuckles against my door “Oh this child wants me dead, she wants me dead” the feminine and sweet dramatic tone says “Krotoa do you want me to miss the worship team delivering us to heaven and the sermon!” Again she shouts the more words roll out of her mouth her tone becomes sonorous and melodramatic when she doesn't receive a response from me I hear her footsteps fading through the hallway and I take a deep breath catching another glimpse of my sublime sculptured body painted artistically with what the woman who has been shouting outside my door call satanic—that was my grandmother by the way who could hardly sleep last night and

filled with too much elation about celebrating the death of the only son that was sacrificed for our sins.

I am clad in a sheer silk embroidered vintage long slip dress and I am sure the moment I walk through the door, revulsion will be painted on those elderly women's faces who'll be wearing three piece and matching hats that almost covers their scowled faces and some with eyebrows drawn into thin dark lines, with their lips dappled with red lip stick. I am sure they'll turn into exorcist too asking me to go on my knees with my hands in the air as they cast the demons out. "Krotoa come out!" Now my grandmother's tone sounds threatening "And if you don't come. . ." Hmm she's one of those church members who bake and cooks for their pastors, surely famous too because they have money and always showing off by changing their tailor made dresses and she is known for her impeccable sense of style that some envy her, she can easily take Kefilwe Mabote and Bonang's crown with her elegance.

"I am still wearing my shoes!" I immediately interject before she can throw one of her threats once again.

"I don't care a damn!" she seethes and before I can utter words responding back to her she wrenches the door open after kicking it with her white kitten shoes then she gasps dramatically and clutching her chest while flapping her eyelashes and taking off her hat "What are you wearing? What

happened to the back of this dress? Why are you showing those satanic drawings? Oh Jesus, hosanna!” And now she’s hugging herself while swigging her body side by side and shaking her head. A frown appears on my face. “Krotoa wear something to cover those satanic things. What happened to this dress?” she asks yet again examining me from head to toe with her breathing accelerating upon seeing the black dragon spread on my back. And then the tattoo written “I am a god” on my forearm causes the salty beads to shimmer in her forehead and I am sure it’s because the people from her church including her they only know one God the one who decided to sacrifice his only son for our sins instead of going to war with the devil so we won’t be sinners.

Aww you must be wondering why am I against religion? Hmmm well I lost my mother who was really devoted and was a worshipper at church and when the famous, powerful pastor ripped her dignity away from her and she voiced out about it bold fonts written in capital letters were pasted on her forehead as they called her a “wanton” but I still go to church, sit at the front and listen as they preach, jumping up and down until they’re damped in sweat. I still go down on my knees some days with liquidity lanced with rage and bitterness falling through the valley of my cheeks because one day I am expecting God to answer me maybe I’ll hear his sonorous tone coming from the sky as he responds to me—where was he

when my mother was screaming for help? Where was he as that man deeply thrust in between her thighs with her tears touching the corners of her eyes and her mouth opened without a sound coming out? Where was he when she took her life because of shame? Where was he? Was he still a God then? A man of miracles? When his son that preaches his word took advantage of my mother, was he still the same most high? I am still waiting for those answers personally from him.

I can see the trepidation that was dancing in my grandmother's eyes starting to fade the moment she sees me draping a matching sheer scarf that covers all my apparent satanic drawings then a smile etch on her face "Aww now we can go!" I internally roll my eyes as she walks out and I am following right behind her. We get in the car and in novice the ear splitting gospel music that fills every corner of this car would've turned me instantly deaf but it doesn't instead I intake a sharp breath from the depth of my belly button looking outside the window as she manoeuvre the car outside the gate, drumming her fingers on a steering wheel and also raising her hand while singing along.

We're parking next to the rest of the cars and already we can hear the singing from here she glances at me grinning and filled with exuberance. "It's going to be a beautiful easter Krotoa" she unfastens her seatbelts "I wonder why your mother gave

you this name. It's beautiful isn't it? Just like you" Hm she's really in a good mood you can hear it from the tone of her sweet voice. Then she gets off the car and pulling down her olive green dress that was designed by her granddaughter before I follow right behind her after taking off my scarf, she's sashaying her hips left and right and when she turns around to see that I've taken off the scarf I expect her to be melodramatic and start praying in tongues but she doesn't, I guess it's the elation swirling in her chest and blooming in her face. "Hurry up! Hurry up! They've started" she snaps her fingers. When we walk through the door to the enormous building with red brick walls and a cross at the top, all heads turn to my direction. The gasps, glares, gazes and gapes that I receive the moment I walk through the door from women and roguish smirks from men with lust sauntering in their eyes is exactly what I wanted as my tone leg shows on my side slit at every step that I take with the clicking of my shoes matching the instrumentals and blending harmonies coming from stage.

I make myself comfortable at the second row alongside my grandmother whom squeezes my hand with a smile on her face before she stands on her feet to start singing. My buttocks are glued on this wooden bench and wandering my eyes around seeing everyone in their element, some already have the crystalline salty beads falling at the valley of their cheeks when a prayer erupts. They're clapping their hands and some are on

their knees with their heads bowed—I am nonchalant and not feeling the holy spirit they've said has come down or maybe I do because I am feeling something forceful that wants me to pray but I suppress that feeling and keep my eyes fluttered opened until they move to the front row when my eyes meet with him standing still with only his lips making movements and his eyebrows furrowed. I cannot study him but the side features of his neatly trimmed beard already have me wanting to crawl to the front. I am sure he's one of those men I have seen on the internet whom moisturize and brush their beards, the emollient of his skin makes me wish I could trail my tongue there up and down but I push that thought and shove it at the back of my mind and this time fluttering my eyes closed but I cannot. How can I? When I just seen the holy spirit in a human form?

A moment after praying, singing and dancing a pastor stands on stage. I am so sure that the creator of all things also took his time sculpturing him with those gray strands on his beard and short hair. He stands there oozing power and dignity with his broad shoulders “Bazalwane I don't know if you've noticed that today we have a guest and that's my son. . .” a smile appears on his face with dark gums and the beautiful worshipper at the front has a smirk on her face flicking her hair. I guess she's sleeping with the son huh? Or she has desires or maybe they've promised her that one day she'll marry him, shame. We listen

to the pastor becoming a braggart about his educated son who's part of the people who'll be preaching the seven words of Jesus on the cross. "Nqaba come to the front" Everyone stands on their feet while clapping their hands together and then a song lanced with jubilation wheezes in the air. My eyes are out of their own volition as he makes his way to the stage and then stand behind the pulpit showing the perfection yet imperfection crispy white teeth after the singing has faded, women can hardly compose themselves and I am so ashamed that I quickly have to glue back my vagina to my body and rapidly blinking.

I can feel my stomach flip flop. My eyes feast on him with my knees vibrating like empty vessels at the sight of him. Heat well up and wash through me. He has the most compelling eyes I have ever seen. His lashes thick and dark, astonishing considering they belong to a man so masculine. "Hallelujah!" that sound roll out of his mouth so sultry and smooth, exotic as he clasps his hand at the pulpit.

"Amen!" Involuntarily that sound comes out of my own mouth that even my grandmother glances at me, it sounded resonant "Amen" I repeat once again mumbling underneath my breath and oppressing all these ungodly ghastly thoughts of him worshipping my body from the crown of my head to my white painted toes before we move in a artistically dance with our

bodies. When his tongue peeks out of his mouth to moisturize his brown colored lips

Advertisement

I imagine it digging the pearl in between my legs, tasting the juices of glory and my hand on top of that head shaved in a bald fade with waves as though I am giving him blessings for exotically taking me to the heaven, while an erotic sound comes out of my mouth. My breathing becomes short and shallow not even listening to what he's saying on that stage and watching the perfection of his sculptured body. He looks absolutely gorgeous, all dark and sleek and the very ultimate raw in sexual power.

“Father, forgive them; for they not know what they do” his voice is not too deep and not too husky but it sounds like diamonds in a glass of water glistening in sun rays and giving that rainbow artistic image, it resonates me.

When he looks towards me our eyes interlock for a moment I hold onto to my breath and clutching my chest. I swallow the cement slowly drying up on my tongue—I think he's looking ahead and not me. Yes, I am surely reading too much into things. I hang my head low needing as much oxygen into my lungs and when I finally look up his rapid fire gaze is still on me or maybe ahead of me then he looks towards the other direction. What is this? God showing himself that he exists in a

human form and trying to attract me? Oh he should think about that one again because whatever it is, it's not working.

I watch all his movements that almost look like a sensual dance move in my eyes as he preaches and women are standing shouting "Glory!" as they clap their hands together and then he grabs the bottle of water and opening the cap, his nails are clean with veins gracing his hands and my lungs wheeze like an old accordion seeing the sight of them.

I am giving God all reasons to send me to straight to hell. Even the air feels thicker, making breathing a laboured thing.

What is all of this? My body reaction towards him I mean, what is this?

Everyone is bewildered when he calls his father on stage and he whispers to him, before we are asked to stand up and my traitorous feet propel me to do so. My grandmother yet again glances at me with amazement, another powerful prayer erupts from him and his father who's standing right next to him but they don't drag it too long before his father takes a microphone and we return to our seats. "As my son is preaching here he just saw a vision. . ." I also saw the vision of his tongue and mine synchronizing before he looks down at me with those eyes "Ever since he got back he has been praying and asking God to show him his wife, his soul mate" Arg it's surely that worshipper who's already covered in a rosy hue "And has he

was here on stage he was shown his wife” I’m sure they planned this during their pillow talks with that worshipper and how they’ll make their proposal dramatic. Ululation starts to erupt. “Nqaba go fetch your wife” they give him a rose that was used as part of the decoration at the front and yet again a smile curl his lips—oh what a charmer and devilishly attractive. A gorgeous walking bible with the most beautiful riveting eyes and heart shaped lips.

I can see the high hopes blooming on every woman’s faces and smiles dancing on their lips. Even the women who’re old enough to be his mother are pushing up their wrinkled cleavage and my grandmother’s aspirations of having a pastor’s son as his son in law are shattered right on her feet like a vase.

Marriage? Of course he’s captivating, mesmerizingly beautiful and charming. But I could never imagine marrying him. I don’t mind day dreaming about him glorifying my body as though we are like birds, mating with wings but marrying him, no. I am sure he’ll want to change me, drown me in patriarchy and turn me into a preacher.

Now he’s holding onto the rose and he moves from stage walking around searching for his wife and whenever he walks passes a woman without getting a rose their faces fall with anti-climax and tears prickling at the corners of their eyes. I can hear the wedding song being sang. I can see the mirth in that woman

at the front with long curly weave touching her waist clad in a blue corset dress that holds her gracefully showing her hips and gigantic watermelons on her chest.

My eyes are sharpened watching him walking around and my grandmother is dancing and pushing her buttocks with jubilation. I wait and wait to see him returning to the front with that rose in his hand with butterfly effect. I am hanging my head low when I feel someone's presence in front of me, the singing has paused and deafening silence has been painted on these walls. I am met with a tall frame standing in front of me as I whip my head up, that smile he had has been replaced with solemn looking down at me like I'm a refined diamond, I am static like a statuette who's only blinking rapidly gazing back at him.

Does he want me to help him search for his wife? Why is he here? Looking at me like the most beautiful human ever been created.

I wander my eyes around me and my grandmother has the same expression on her face mirroring mine. I hear gasps and everyone's eyes have jumped out of their sockets bouncing on the floor. I see his father's face painted with a disapproval look and a scowl, and his mother has a smirk dancing on her magnificent face and then the worshipper is diabolically looking at me with tears crowding her eyeballs.

Oh I cannot ignore the loathing in some people's faces. I look at him once again and swallow the denim knitted on my throat. He takes my hand pulling me up and I stand on my feet with his breath now tickling my face and he hands me the rose, "Nqaba" he introduces himself to me and my jelly bean hums a sexual mantra.

"Krotoa"

I say breathlessly, I hold on tightly to the rose that has been given to me.

If only I knew that day dreaming about a man one day could mean he'd walk up to me showing his crispy white teeth and asking for my hand in marriage, do you know how many men I could day dreamed about? Doing what is seen as ungodly?

What if I marry him? Just so I can punish God for everything that he has done to me? Imagine marrying someone who's surely devoted to him and who'll lay his life on his feet then change their mind-sets about what they believe in? Or maybe. . . I don't know but anything to make that man who wasn't there for my mother take a sit on an inferno seat? I'd love to see everyone's faces in this church every day as I walk to the front as someone's wife. Not just someone but a pastor. I know people will be expecting me to change. Imagine change for a man—what a joke my darling.

I think right now we should be at the front on our knees with our hands waving high as they bless this union but instead his father just aggressively walked out of the church like a cannibal needing to seep someone's blood from the neck to feel alive again. You see what am I talking about? Hmm bringing discomfort to people who believes in that man somewhere in the sky eating daily bread. The man standing in front of me who has quite different facial expression dancing on his face takes a sharp intake of breath "Krotoa please come with me" he takes my hand and following where his father had disappeared to. Oh my—his fingers are intertwined with mine and all those exotics sensations I felt the moment I set my eyes on him as he was mumbling a prayer underneath his breath comes alive. I wouldn't call this love at first sight. I mean me? And love? Absolutely not. I don't date; I don't do relationships but surely sleep with people and continue breathing my flavoured air as though it never happened the following day.

"Baba you cannot leave just like that" Now I'm standing just distance away but I can hear them. I can see how attractive is the father who surely once slept with worshippers at some point in his life flaring his nostrils and gulping greedily for air while he blinks "You asked me to pray and I did. You asked me to ask God to show me my wife and I did. Now he has shown me my wife what more do you want from me?" Did he really show him me? That man up there is actually funny. Arg is he

thinking he can tame me? For some bizarre reasons he's always assuming he has everything under control. But in all honesty. . .he does have everything under control, sadly.

"Nqaba are you listening to yourself?" From his tone I can tell that he's not happy about God's choices. Not at all. I'm sure today his pray will be laced with nothing but incense and tears. . .Again what if I marry his son? What will happen then? Who can stop me? God wants him to marry me—and I want to have sex with him. "That. . ." he pauses and gazes at me with a simmering glare "Nqaba that girl will drag you back into your unholy ways. Just look at. . ." Look at me? Ha ha ha I'm the temptation your son will wet dream about and you think him looking at me will change everything man of God? "Look at her Nqaba are you sure that this is what God chosen for you as a wife?"

"Yes" he sternly responds. "I've been seeing her in my dreams since the fasting and praying. You of all people know you have no right to judge anyone!"

"You should've prayed harder Nqaba!" Now he's seething and gritting through his teeth "Are you sure it wasn't an unholy dream and you thought. . .what about Nomkhosi? That woman knows and love God"

"How about you ask God that"

“That’s enough both of you!” I hear a feminine voice saying from behind. I have been standing here and watching how all of this unfolds in front of me. “Nqaba you’ll not speak to your father like that” she takes a step forward and walking pass me towards her husband and son. Then she glances towards me. “We will talk about this at home but not here. You asked your son to do something and he did and now you’ll go back inside and you will pray for him and the woman that was chosen for him”

“Ngeke ukubone lokho maMkhize!”

” Aww he’s that type that calls his woman with clan names.

“My daughter please go back inside”

02.

goddess

/'gɒdɪs/

noun•

a female deity, a woman who is greatly admired, especially for her beauty.

At this moment I don't know whether I'm going to become pastor's wife or am I becoming pastor's wife. Ha ha ha you surely might've thought there's another second option here. We are driving home my grandmother hasn't said a word instead she's murmuring something underneath her breath and I am now the one manoeuvring through the afternoon traffic until we get home eventually. What am I supposed to say to her? Maybe apologize but what for? I am not the one who asked that man to come and stand in front of me telling the congregation that he saw me in his dreams or vision that I am going to be his wife or whatever that he saw. I am so sure that this man was just trying to find reasons to do "ungodly ghastly" things with me and instead he found a way. Does he know what is getting himself to wanting to marry me?

I walk into my room and my grandmother is in the kitchen I can hear the sound of plates, cups and spoons clicking against each other aggressively. Well. . .she should be celebrating that I

could be marrying a pastor and I might change. That's what everyone is expecting by the way that I am going to change and become a better version of myself. And on every church service I'll be at the front shouting "hallelujah" as my husband preaches and maybe create some sort of society or whatever it is for women in church. Aww what a joke my darling.

"Krotoa!" My grandmother shouts. Here it goes. I'm about to face her wrath for something that I didn't do. I was surprised as everyone. I just fantasized about that man and that was it.

"Krotoa get here man!" Again she's banging something. I ignore her for few minutes so by the time I get there she has lost all her marbles. I walk into the kitchen and she's holding a cup in her hand there's another burning cup on a kitchen counter. I guess that should be mine? Yes it is, a cranberry flavored tea. "You don't have to marry him. I don't want you marrying him. I don't want anyone taking advantage of you. We've been through this with your mother and this cannot happen again" she says and then take sips from her tea.

I'm thunderbolt that she's not angry at me actually. I can see the vexation exuding from her though. Maybe this opened wounds that never healed. No ointment that smells like freshly brewed herbs can manage to stop them from the bleeding. Unexpectedly she places the cup on the counter and erupts with silence cry with her shoulders moving up and down as

though the past event visual images just showcased in her mind. "I am not angry at God. I am not angry at religion but my anger is directed towards the person who did this to my daughter. A man we trusted into our home" The same person who took my mother away from me then everyone painted him as the victim. My mother was the antagonist and was turned into a great nemesis. "And I am asking you now please don't marry that boy if you don't want to"

I remain in my very same position and clasping the sides of my dress. My emotions spring up unexpectedly like weight gain refusing to be lost. And the anger swirls through my chest and dancing in my lungs. "I was chosen for him" I remind her and she looks at me through the wet curtains of her lashes, her chest heaving up and down. "And if this is what God wants then I'll marry him"

"You're my granddaughter. I know you" she attentively looks at me as though she can see beyond my bones and thoughts. Invading my thoughts and privacy but I remain incoherence all that she wants to see is not there. "What are you up to?" What am I up to? He he he he I don't know but I am definitely up to something. "Krotoa talk to me what are you up to?"

"Nothing" I respond quickly.

“I hope it’s really nothing because I’m not going to lose you like how I lost my daughter. And that family had nothing to do with what happened so you cannot punish him for another’s man fault” Another man? Well. . .he is a man and he believes in God and highly devoted to him. Isn’t what he’s doing taking advantage of a woman? A woman that’s me. And using God as cellophane to wrap around his true intentions? “Your hatred towards men is getting out of hand”

“A man raped and killed my mother”

“And that man had his name and surname and identity Krotoa Makhetha now please don’t punish someone for something he did not do” she clasps her hands together as though she’s about to chant a prayer and pleading for forgiveness. That the anger in my heart could evaporate and pain. That my night becomes different and I don’t have to dance anymore to rhythm of the music to suppress what I am feeling inside. You see the same men we are talking about? I sleep with different of them every day then walk out of the room as though we are strangers who were not moaning and groaning each other’s names. Having them calling and wondering what went wrong. Having them questioning their strokes and size of their male organ. Having them promising me the best night of my life but I just sleep there outstretched and hoping for a powerful orgasm to come crashing like a tidal wave but nothing happened.

Having them promising me the galaxy and the universe. Having them selling me dreams in a bag made of diamonds but I never buy them.

Isn't that what they do to women? Then get applaud for being a casanova? While women are slut shamed because they cannot "close their legs". It's hard being a women. We are oppressed by misogyny, sexism, beauty standards, featurism and patriarchy and we should bow to that? Not me. I fuck a man until he loses all his senses then format that encounter at the back of my brain as though it has never happened. I am basically the perfect description of what the society accepts as a standard of beauty. A woman with curves and sharp nose with high cheek bones and a body that could make her sway her long legs on a run away. And skin as though I was sculptured with clay made of caramel, vanilla and honey just to make it smooth and flawless.

I am a gorgeous woman,

I am divine feminine energy.

I smirk hellishly and greedily gulping for air while wiping tears at the corners of my eyes. "You know what the bible says?" I ask her and she gazes at me with eyes that are shimmering with tears "The bible says that God helps those who help themselves"

“And how are you helping yourself here?”

“By feeding my own empty soul and void. I am me, revenge is my thing”

“You’re taking revenge at the wrong person and I am warning you rather not marry Nqaba if you don’t have genuine intentions. I am not standing by him and I am not standing by you but I am standing with what is right. God chose you for him for a reason”

“Like how my mother was raped—

“Krotoa!” she seethes and directly pointing at me with her index finger that’s shivering “Your mother wouldn’t have agreed with this and everything that you’ve been doing. You know that. Your mother was pure and kind. . .now don’t do anything and use my daughter for it”

“Your daughter was my mother!”

“Then start acting like she was your mother. If you want to get married then do it for the right reasons not vengeance. Because there’s no revenge that needs to be taken. Now please stop this nonsense”

03.

Krotoa pronounced as “Krotwa”

My grandmother is not talking to me because she feels whatever is that I am doing is for the wrong reasons she believes what happened should be let go and everyone should move on without any vengeance or whatsoever. Apparently I have underlying issues that I have to deal with and also anger towards the death of my mother— everyone is making me feel as though my emotions are invalid, and that? That’s a joke my darling. No one can tell me what to do and how to grieve.

Women from church have been coming here almost every day to offer their prayers and some to see whether or not I am “perfect” for their pastor’s son and a woman who could possibly stand at the pulpit one day and preach. Now I’ve given them every reason to see me as a demonic creature that wants to destroy their church and make them dance with the devil to trap music. I did that by shaving my hair short and bleaching it including my eyebrows. I am not egoistical once again but I am a true definition of the word gorgeous and that’s why I use my feminine divinity to make men weaker than they already are.

My grandmother held her hands in her head and screaming our clan names the moment I walked through the door with my makeover and she’s assured that I want her death from heart attack and high blood pressure. But truthfully speaking I’ve

always been different amongst everyone at home even my cousins and other relatives. At young age I'd want to be braided in different color braids and in my teenage years I'd cut my clothes and make them either short or too revealing. I've always been a black young woman who's comfortable in her own skin and ignoring what the society thinks and has to say. Trust me you'll never be enough for anyone. I only had one cousin that I grew up whom I related and resonated with because she designed most of my clothes but our relationship slowly became wilted, she is trying now to make it work.

I just changed into something comfortable to wear when the door to my room opens and my grandmother appears with a gigantic smile on her face. "You might want to change to something not too revealing" I am sure the women from church are here again. Now I have to wear my plastic smile and sing glory hallelujah. "Your husband is here" My what? My eyes almost land on my feet but I immediately wear them back. He hasn't spoke to me or even come here ever since that day he chose me as his wife whom he saw in his dreams. I am sure that was the most intense wet dream of his life that he decided he wanted to marry me. I might've fucked his brains out until all his senses were paralyzed that he thought marriage was actually a way to go. "And he wants to talk to you. I'll be in my room to give you two space" This woman, suddenly she's not

against this. Right after that she winks before I can say anything and she's already humming a song.

Let me change to something that would bring discomfort into his chest!

I've changed and absolutely looking like a woman who was rather created with

glitter than clay as I make my way into the living room and I find him comfortable on a couch but uneasiness dances on his face and sheen of lust dances at the corners of his lips and eyes when mines interlock with his before he swallows what's inside his mouth.

I'm looking at him sitting on the couch brimming with poise and I make myself comfortable opposite him swathe in a silk pink plunging short dress. "You've changed your hair" those are the first words that roll out of his mouth. Man of God? That's really insolent. What about greeting? Oh he has never heard of it before? After that he clears his throat again. "Ahem short hair looks beautiful on you" That's a compliment and I find myself touching my new pixie cut and then clasp my hands on my thighs.

"You're not here to compliment me especially since I haven't heard from you" I crease my eyebrow at him. And he rubs his chin with his finger. I manage to keep my marble face

regardless of the fact that his darkened intense gaze awakens all sensual sensations within me and I drown in them willingly. “God showed me as your wife?” I have been meaning to ask him this question. Why would that feared man choose me? Out of all people me?

“No”

Man of God—Did he just lie at church? Oh shame this one will be crucified on a cross and he’ll regret the day he fabricated. Doesn’t he read the bible? When he sees the facial expression written on my face again he runs his hand on his beard. “Well the reason I came to you is because it will be much easier for you to do something for me”

“You want me to do something for you?” What could that be? Does he want sex? He shouldn’t have done that drama then because I would’ve gave him that willingly with my legs outstretched on the bed and waiting for him to worship me.

“That’s what I said Krotoa”

“The last thing you want to do is giving me attitude Nqaba when you need my help” I say sternly and that seemed like he has just received a kick on his solar plexus. “What do you want?”

“I need you to keep an open mind”

“Do you want to fuck?” I can see his eyes out of their own volition and there’s moist on his neck. I wish I could run my tongue there. . .ha ha ha I’m joking I could never do that. Remember the mission is to somehow hurt this man. What was the mission? Oh punishing God through this man because he’s highly devoted to him. I want him to crawl to the man he believes in with tears in his eyes and beg for mercy. Or maybe crawl to me. But whatever is that he needs help with he may not get it.

“What? No Krotoa” He quickly says “We are going to pretend that we are going to get married. All the preparations will be done. Everything the way everyone want it to be. But on the day of the wedding when you have to say “I do” I want you to run away. You can go wherever you want and I can give you whatever amount you want if you do this for me”

“You think I need money? And so desperate for it that I could help you with this? You saw me different from any other woman at your church and automatically you assumed you can easily lure me with money?” I crease my eyebrow. “A girl with tattoos and different surely has no morals those are your thoughts?”

I see agitation being painted on his face then he runs his hand on his beard yet again and sweating in between his eyebrows, as he should. “That’s not what I meant but I’m just saying

you're not like them because they'll expect genuine marriage from me and I know you don't" Who said I don't? "And beside this is good money"

I laugh sardonically "I don't need your money Nqaba. I am a qualified dermatologist

Advertisement

I have my own practice and I make my own money. I can take myself wherever I want whenever I want. I don't have to make any deals with anyone to do just that. You see me staying here with my grandmother and you're thinking I don't have a life or whatsoever?"

He seems as though he just saw a ghost singing jazz at this moment as he has turned pale and glacier. Is it my qualification? How many times you've been told don't judge a book by its cover.

"That's not what I meant"

"What do you mean then? What makes you think I'll run away leaving my life behind for you? What's so special about you? What is your shit made of?"

"I just want you to help me that all"

"Why?"

"Because I can't get married now"

“Are you homosexual and trying to hide that from your family?”

“What? No” He protests quickly “I have nothing against homosexuality but I’m not

part of that community. I just don’t want to marry right now”

“You have a problem with your sex life?”

“You’re always thinking something out of the picture honestly”

I see his teeth and

the sound that rolls out of his mouth is absolutely beautiful, almost like an orchestra. I wonder whether he sounds like this when covered in sweat with legs wrapped around his waist. “I will tell but if you agree into helping me” There’s no chemistry here, there’s no love at first sight or whatsoever.

“I am not running away Nqaba now keep that in mind”

“I understand that was selfish” he pauses and rubs his hands together “We can get married for three months and divorce”

“You fear marriage why?”

“I don’t fear marriage but it’s not the right time right now and my parents want this to happen in a blink of an eye for me to get something. But we can talk about this maybe tomorrow? Our first date maybe?”

“Fine”

He gets up “And wear that dress so I can prove that there’s nothing wrong with my sex life”

“Man of God” I smirk roguishly.

I’ve been trying to figure out and put together the puzzle to understand what could be a reason for him wanting to turn me into a “run away bride” and not only just that but also “umabuya emendweni” which means by the way a divorcee. In a black community you are made to feel like a failure whenever your marriage doesn’t workout, only women and not men. We incubate patriarchy here.

Also is three months enough? For what I’m planning on doing of course. Or maybe be under the impression that I will runaway only for him to be stuck with me not only for three months but what they say during their wedding vows? Till death do us apart, life is comical I am telling you.

The moment he has left my grandmother walks into the living room with a smile sewed on her face already wanting to know what he said. “He’s a gentleman isn’t he?” I tug my head in looking at her. Is this you? Is this you who was against all of this? “What did he say?”

“Well he was apologizing for not coming to see me” I lie through my teeth.

“And you forgave him? When he came here empty handed without any flowers? If that man really wants to marry you then he should make an effort Krotoa” They’re always saying I have underlying issues but it seems that the man who was here, offering money on a silver platter has serious issues than I have. Or there’s something hidden about him in a dark.

“I will make sure that I tell him” I smile and she blooms leaning back on a sofa with her hands against her stomach.

“You love him don’t you? Look at that smile on your face. Maybe I might’ve judged you and thought you had wrong intentions and I’m sorry my love. I’m sorry I didn’t see right through you that you had genuine intentions”

I have genuine what? Ha ha ha.

“It’s okay gogo I understand”

“What did he say when he saw you?”

“He said I’m beautiful”

“With orange eyebrows and hair?” “They’re bleached”

“Whatever!”

04.

desire

/dɪ'zʌɪə:

noun

- a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen.

The restaurant is filled with rich odour of scrumptious food and when the summer wind stirs amidst the trees outside, it waltz through the glass door and the heavy scent of the lilac and more delicate perfume of roses dancing outside whirls around the atmosphere when I see him walking through the door looking impeccable in a matching three piece and loafers when our eyes meet a smile enlivens on his face making his way towards me. "I'm sorry I am late" He apologizes before making himself comfortable on a chair and leaning backwards, "You're looking beautiful" A compliment that tickles my ego rolls out of his tongue and I elevate my eyebrow at him. "You're not going to talk?"

"You're late Nqaba!" These words dance against my tongue eloquently and sensual before tapping my fingers with sage green manicure against the table. "But since you apologized then I'll take that" I grab the glass of white wine and taking a sip.

“Thank you for taking your time to come here and talk to me” He says with impeccable mannerism. You see one thing about him is that he’s indeed a good looking man and I cannot fault that. “Have you ordered something to eat? Did I tell you how beautiful you look?” He says then waves his hand to the waiter who immediately approaches towards our table. “What you would like to eat?”

“I’ve ordered something already but you can get something for yourself” Upon hearing that I’ve ordered he orders something to drink rather than something to eat then the waiter disappears with an affable smile leaving us making an intense eye contact when he takes a deep breath. “You promised to tell me about your problems with your sex drive” I tease him with a smirk and he grins playfully with his shoulders moving up and down, running his hand on his beard then he pauses composing himself. “I’ve travelled all over the city looking for a right sangoma and none of them have managed to help me” He goes with a flow and deeply looking into my eyes as though he’s trying to study me.

“I know someone who can help you”

He tugs his head in and humour is dancing on his face and mirth in his eyes. “Oh really who is that? I’m glad God has showed me you as my wife” I see what he’s doing. The conversation flows

like water in a river, so crystalline and reflecting the scorching sun in the sky, almost creating a diamond like picture.

I laugh “Well you should thank him and maybe fast for a month. I don’t know” I shrug my shoulders and he smiles taking a sip from the glass of beer that has been placed on the table. “You were already late and I have to go back to work. Now tell me why am I here and the reasons you want to get married in a haste?”

“I grew up with two men in my life. One is my father and the other is more of a father with me and that’s my uncle” He states explaining, I guess I’ll find out about his ancestral lineage as well. “My uncle is a wealthy businessman

Advertisement

I grew up in his environment that my father portrays as dark but I idolize him anyways because always has been a huge part of my life and my role model. He raised me” He explains and I sharpened my ears “Anyways one of his businesses is emerged with my father and now my father wants to step down because of how the business could be too unholy for him and he wants to give me his shares but in order for me to get them and be part of the business I need to prove to him that I can be responsible. I also have to proof to my uncle who’s more of a father to me that I could be a great businessman as how he

taught me. My father is the light in my life and my uncle is the dark. Life always needs balance all the time”

“Basically you’re living your life to impress other men? You want someone to marry to prove how responsible you can be?”

“You wouldn’t understand Krotoa”

“Not like I want to understand anyways. Now tell me, if I run away from the wedding how does that prove anything?”

I attentively gaze at him as he slowly opens his mouth and vowels forms. “Well imagine your son head over heels and being left at the alter, wouldn’t you feel sorry for him and give him these shares?”

“If he was marrying someone that I told him wasn’t good for him then no because he’d proof me right when I said he was irresponsible. And you know what I’ll do after that? I’ll sell my shares because I’d be so disappointed in him and that’s the end” When I finish I take a sip from the wine looking at him as he thinks deeply. His moves were not so smart; he should’ve sat down and deeply thought about this. “But if my son get married for three months and I see his relationship unfolding right in front of me, seeing how happy he is with his “wife” then that we’ll show me that he’s quite responsible and give him the shares. And after that I won’t be able to do anything really with what happens to those shares even if he divorces”

I see an impressed and delicate smile forming on his face when he sees my point and where I am going with this. “I undermined you but you’re very smart” I wouldn’t have studied for twelve years to become a dermatologist now if I wasn’t huh? I wouldn’t be where I am if I wasn’t. “I know I am dragging you into this but I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t need your help”

“Great but I have my terms and conditions”

“Whatever you want, I’ll do it”

“We can discuss and talk about that but not now at some point into this. And

tomorrow is our engagement, my favorite color is sage green but everything green also make me happy. Next time when you come to see me at my house you should bring flowers. I guess since you’re becoming a businessman soon than a brand new car won’t really hurt your pocket. . .” I get up from a chair “Let me know when we can attend church together” I lean closer to him and kiss his cheek “We need to start acting like there’s powerful chemistry between us” After I’ve whispered that in his ear he smirks impishly and getting up from the chair lacing his hand on my waist and walking me out.

He glances at me “Does this mean you’re agreeing to helping me?” But you have a price to pay, nothing is free even freedom.

“Yes” I smile at him.

We stand right next to my sage green car facing towards each other when he pulls me closer by my waist and his warm breath against my face. You must be thinking I'm feeling hedonic and salacious sensations flowing all over my body huh? Awww men don't me make feel nothing. Regardless of the sexual tension between us there's nothing beyond that honestly. "Thank you" He smiles charmingly.

"I have to go and we won't be having sex until our honeymoon night because we are holy" I say sarcastically and he laughs opening my car door throwing his head back.

After I've fastened my seatbelt he closes the door and then waves goodbye as I manoeuvre the car on the road.

05.

sovereign

/'sɒvrɪn/

•adj

possessing supreme or ultimate power.

I wanted to celebrate but I just don't know how to go on about it between having a man or men under my sheets, one coming from behind maliciously thrusting and plaguing and the other one silencing my moans with his phallic inside my mouth, my face turning red as I feel the pressure of the hands wrapped around my neck and my eyes covered with tears to nirvana. Or maybe go out looking rather wanton yet sophisticating to an expensive restaurant surrounded by businessmen whom are tired of their wives and boring sex lives, whom eat organic food and do yoga because they feel they can "save the world" not forgetting about the part where their nannies are the mothers to their children. I've met a couple of men like that before who complains about their wives all night as they keep guzzling a glass of cognac while they make you believe that one day they'll leave them for you and if you're naive it would sound like a woman leading an orchestra to your ears with a sweet soprano—believable—only for them to leave you behind, planting a seed of self-loathing and worthlessness, questioning

your morals and “worth”. Let me tell you something you didn’t ask, he will never leave her for you. The divorce he told you about fight he was in between your legs kissing your inner thighs and your felt the venus in your palms, it’s not going to happen but rather walk away with your wallet full and mental health knitted tightly.

My game plan has changed but it seems much luminous than what I had in mind but it seems we are going to walk away wealthy and exuding superiority. Isn’t it funny that he was questioning my intelligence? And had portrayed another image of me in his mind. Well I am going to give him one portrait that he’ll capture for as long as he lives even in his afterlife.

Upon returning back home the smell of stew is almost suffocating and I can hear my grandmother’s humming from the moment I walk through the door then she appears from the passage wearing her pink apron that she once said makes her feel young like the first time she met her husband, I guess she’s the only one from her generation moving to mine that had a perfect love story. Where she met a man on a way to the river and she then gave him his some sort of necklace and that was it they got married. Whereas I’ve met Sanele, Sandile, Siyabonga, Siyakhanda, Siyaxhuma

Siyaphula and Siyanyisa, and none of them have been my so called prince charming. One thing about men is that they’d turn

you into a “stuphethi” and when they do they seriously make sure.

“Your mother in law called me today and I decided to invite them for dinner seeing that this relationship is really happening I’d love to have them here so we can find a way forward and when we can discuss negotiations” One thing we have in common with my grandmother is the love of money. We can smell it even under the mattress and inside the smelly shoes. We communicate differently with money. . .there’s that powerful connection that no one can actually deny. I’d sell my soul to the devil because he seems generous with money.

Have you seen people who are allegedly part of illuminate? Ha ha ha none of them are poor actually they all swimming in my money do you know what we call that? Generosity.

“You should’ve called me so I can come back home early and I could’ve helped” I tell her and she looks at me with those accusing eyes of hers before she smirks. Every time when I see that brightness on her face I often wonder how she was like in her youth days. I’ve seen her in pictures, she was one of those women who deserved to be on television shows as “umfazi wephepha” most of those actress where problematic second wives from the city who had their own houses on top of a mountain with furniture while the rest doesn’t have furniture. And that’s the life I want too. I wouldn’t mind being a second

wife to a man who can provide and buy me my own private jet. Not a man who'd ask for a second wife while we are staying in one room house worse than we are renting, men are ambitious.

What was I talking about again? My grandmother, a beauty she is with that long hair and diamond earrings, this is my Lynn Whitfield.

"And you could've helped?" she elevates her eyebrows at me and pressing her hands against her waist, trying to read my face. "You don't ever help with anything because you hate visitors. If I never stopped you from buying your own house you would've left long ago"

"That's not true" I smile at her. Only this woman can paint me with tropical colors. "You know you're my world and I wouldn't trade you for anything" As those words unexpectedly come out from me her eyes become glossy. I'm not expressive. I rather show you physically how I care about you and showering you with gifts. I think my love language is physical touch.

"I know" she smiles sweetly and opening her arms for me, I briskly walk to her as she welcomes me with warmth. This is home and this feels like home. "But for now go take a shower and look good to impress your in-laws so they can make this wedding easier to happen. Prove them wrong even if you're pretending for a moment and then you can be your true self once you're married to the love of your life" Love of my what?

Aww shame. “Now go quickly they’ll be here in a few. Wear that beautiful green dress I bought you” she winks at me. I wonder if it’s still here. It’s a beautiful knitted long dress that’s asymmetrical and very sensual. It’s not showing too much skin as I would love it too or even show any tattoos. It’s a garment that you can wear when - I don’t know - indoors on a lazy day? Perfect.

The moment I walk into my room my phone starts to ring and it’s coming from an unknown number. At first I ignore but it continuously call and I answer. “Krotoa hey you’re speaking to your husband to be” He says with humour in his tone. Oh suddenly he thinks we are friends? Okay.

“Nqaba” I don’t match his energy.

He clears his throat. “I hope I’m not interrupting you”

“I don’t know where you got my number but I must say I’m impressed”

“Well I had to go lengths to impress my wife to be”

“I don’t have a ring on my finger as yet so I don’t appreciate these claims. What do you want from me?”

He chuckles slightly, the sound is mellow “I was thinking. . .” He pauses as though

he's moving away from something before all I can hear is silence at his background. "You easily agreed to this and I cannot help but wonder why? What's that you want? Why would you easily agree?"

"You will know soon Nqaba. Good things come to those who wait"

"I'm not selling my soul to the devil"

"Thank you"

"For what?"

"For calling me a devil, it's an honour that you see me that powerful. I wouldn't take

that compliment slightly" I smile as though he can see me and I'm sure he's wondering what he has got himself into.

"You're something else" I hear a grin in his tone. "You're overly confident and men are scared of women like you. Me included"

"I'm glad this wedding is fake because I wouldn't have been able being with a man who's intimidated by me Nqaba"

"I am not intimidated by you"

"I am not planning on arguing with you either on whether or not you are but I want to know the reason behind this call"

“What happened? Why you’re so indifferent about everything? Why you’re so cold?” He asks me. It’s been what? Three seconds of knowing him and suddenly he thinks he knows me.

“Why you’re calling me?” I plague again.

“I wanted to let you know that your grandmother had invited us for dinner tonight and I hope you don’t mind. I had no idea”

“I don’t mind. I guess you wanted to also tell me to look presentable for your parents to accept me?”

“I have no problem with the way you look so you can wear anything really but whoever wants to fight you will have to go through me first” “You would’ve made a great one”

“A great what?” He sounds bewildered.

“A so called great husband” “I tend to be one for three months”

“I guess I should say congratulations then for having me as a wife. It’s a privilege” I

blow my own horn and he starts to laugh with so much love and I can picture those teeth flashing while he throws his head back.

“What are your favorite flowers?”

“Just buy anything cute that would impress my grandmother and also get her a gift as well so you can be her favorite”

“Well to be my father’s favorite you should at least know one verse from the bible and quote it in a conversation”

“I don’t intend on becoming your father’s favorite so I won’t really bother. I guess I’ll see you tonight” I heard him gasping at my words then he laughs. I’m comical, he has been laughing since this call started. “And what about your mom what does she like?”

“You want to impress my mother?”

“Nqaba women are very influential they either give you sunshine and rainbows or hell on earth there’s no in between. If she doesn’t like me trust me it would be impossible to have this wedding”

“My mother is not hard to impress really. Just buy her nice things and say the right words but when you’re on her bad side, it’s get tough”

“I know the power women holds. I’ll see you tonight then”

“Tonight sthandwa sami”

I chuckle, “that was not cute, don’t say it ever again. Thank you and bye”

I guess tonight should determine whether or not I should’ve been an actress or just

stick into being a dermatologist.

06.

spiritual retreat.

- place where one can engage in a period of spiritual reflection. sanctuary, refuge, haven, ashram.

Isn't strange how women always have to be the ones who impress their in-laws and make sure they're in their right corner? I'm not about to change who I am to make someone else comfortable in my space. Now that? I don't see it happening.

Not today, tonight and tomorrow.

The table is impeccably set with my grandmother's expensive ceramic and minimalistic bowls. My mother had me at young and tender age, and so is my grandmother, she had my mother at young age. Yes back then stationary rape was tossed aside and it was "normal" for young women to date men whom are much older than them.

I'm not here to preach or even bring discomfort to anyone's chest for that matter. It looks lovely here and we are smothered by different aromas.

And so far my grandmother hasn't complained about my choice of style or my make up or whatever, I guess I look quite decent. There's knock, she grins like an adolescent getting up on a couch making her way to get the door and in that moment I

hear joviality in everyone's tones, I can hear "amen" and "hallelujah" too from a masculine tone before they all appear at once following each other including my husband -shame- who looks great in swathed in a shirt and jeans looking rather comfortable. Awww he bought me white roses. He steps closer into my space wrapping his hands around my waist and sweeping me off my feet with a hug and enormous smile.

"I got these for you" He says. It's just flowers and it's not decorated with money or whatsoever for aesthetics. And also who said that flowers smells nice? I've seen you taking a sniff for a scent to voyage into your nostrils than you bloom as though you just smelt something beautiful. "You're looking beautiful" He never forgets to compliment. I mouth my thank you in a sensual way to show that we have powerful chemistry here and undeniable love for each other as I show all my teeth.

I greet the mother who seems rather raptured to be at my presence and the father couldn't even handshake me. Not that I care about him anyways. He can suck his own penis for all I care.

"Thank you gogo Ziqubu for having us tonight" He says after he just looked at my hand without hand shaking it then he pulls out a chair for his wife and she makes herself comfortable with a sweet simper. I can say that this tetchy man actually has a great pallet in women.

We gather around the table making ourselves comfortable and the conversation starts with a bible study and what was being taught last week. I see them engaging with smiles on their faces, sharing the body of God, one piece to another and it seems everyone enjoyed the book that was taught. We have no wine on the table at least non- alcoholic champagne or anything that could be the closest thing to tasting to alcohol. We haven't eaten as yet too other wise I'll be eating from my plate and everyone's plate by now since they're so drowned in this conversation and "my husband" you can tell that he's really trying so hard to impress his father and it's ridiculous.

"And you Krotoa what's your favorite verse in the bible?" The father asks me unexpectedly and leaning backwards on his chair attentively looking at me. He's quite good looking shame. It's always the good looking men with this attitude, who feels they're better than everyone. "And also why?" What's this? An exam?

"Oh" A subtle smile appears from me. "Genesis one verse one. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" A frown appears from his face and I can tell that he's not sold at all. "If he didn't take his time to create heaven and earth we wouldn't be sitting here on this table as celestial beings"

He opens his mouth to say something but his wife immediately placed her hand on top of his

bringing some sort of tranquillity to him and I can see the serenity washing over him and the hard honed muscles around his face becoming relaxed. Ha ha ha. What he wanted from me? To talk about the book of Moses? Jericho? Psalms?

“We are not here to talk about the bible baba but to enjoy delicious food and have great conversation not about church either but we are going to know each other since these two have made a decision of forming a union” A three sum with her and her husband sounds absolutely lovely and music into my ears. Listen to the sound of her voice. I am not saying I want to have sex with her and her husband before you give me looks.

My grandmother announces that we can eat and now there's a sound of plates, spoons and laughter because of her humor.

“Nqaba when are you planning to get married with my granddaughter?” My grandmother asks him with a simper. The idea of having me getting married seriously sends her to her utopia.

“Before he answers that question we wanted to know whether or not she's a virgin? My son is not marrying someone who's not pure” Here we go! This man shouldn't say anything. He should just be silent and be a pretty picture because what comes out of his mouth is nothing but bullshit.

“Is your son a virgin?” I ask him directly looking into his eyes.
“Because I wouldn’t want to marry someone who’s not pure too. What makes you think I’d want that?”

“Krotoa!” My grandmother warns.

“It’s a genuine question and I just want to know whether or not he’s a virgin. Nqaba are you a virgin?” I gaze towards him and immediately he starts choking and coughing rapidly while hitting his chest and guzzling the glass of juice and everyone eyeballing.

“It’s different” His father answers rather. “A woman should respect herself”

“And what about a man? A man should go around sleeping around with different women then slut shame the ones he has slept with because it’s different? Then he must marry someone who’s pure? What makes him so deserving of that? I am not a gate keeper or an incubator of patriarchy and misogyny where I’ll make you feel superior because of male privileges”

“We should treat our bodies as the temple of God”

“And I’m glad you used plural there. When you say “we” that means men and women, including homosexuals as well should treat their bodies as the temple. And as people we are free to do whatever we want with our temples because it’s belong to us. It’s mine and not yours. If I wake up one morning and

decide I'll change the color to my temple then that's fine because it's mine. If I want to draw it, absolutely perfect it's mine. Let's not only use that when it's suit you. If I have to treat my body as a temple and so do you mfundisi" I emphasize on that last word. "My relationship with God might not be the greatest. I grew up under religion and I hold what I was taught dearly to me regardless of being in a very perplex space at the moment. But what I won't stand is people pushing their own agendas and hiding behind the word of God and painting Christianity in a sense where people loses respect towards this religion. You won't make me feel inferior as a woman and as a person because you think you're much better than me since you're believer. In the bible we are taught about the love of humanity. We taught about respect for one another. We are taught about not being judge-mental to another person so start practicing what you preach" After my words he seems like a man who was punched in a solar and sacral plexus before he gets up from the chair he has turned into a ghastly.

"We are leaving" He announces flaring his nostrils and I can tell he's about to explode. I know different pastors and I know that not all of them are like this. Of course I may carry the hatred in my heart and want someone to be punished for what happened but I don't judge characters or maybe subconsciously I do or unintended but you won't use the bible to push whatever agenda you're trying to push with me. I understand

that book because my mother would forcefully make me read it. I understand what's written in it, my relationship with the higher power might've shifted but let's not hide behind religion when we want to disrespect people.

"We are still having. . ." The wife cannot finish what she wants to say because of the look she has received. He is an alpha male and I like that about him, it's attractive. And well his son stubbornly remains on his chair and enjoying his meal ignoring all the drama erupting in the room. "Nqaba" His mother called him already her tone is begging. I guess he's a rebellion and that's the reason his father had this terms of conditions for him to get our shares to the business.

"I'm not going anywhere just because my father is uncomfortable with the truth. We came here to have dinner didn't we? Now I'm peacefully going to eat and enjoy" Aww he's not that much of a mama's boy and always expecting to be breastfed.

His father just walks out without saying any other word leaving his wife to apologize on his behalf and walking out after sharing a hug with my grandmother. And their son? Well pretty much enjoying the lamb and mash on his plate.

"I'll go finish my food in my room and you two can remain behind and have a talk" I can tell she's not okay about what has happened but I know how to pacify her and we'll talk later on.

But she's the one who taught me how to stand up for myself and not backdown for nothing and that's exactly what I did.

What was I supposed to do? Allow that man to talk to me in whatever manner? His son deserves a woman that's pure? You guys never disappoint ever, in anything.

"My dad has never had anyone especially a woman standing up to him like that and that's why he was being like that I hope you didn't take offense" Nqaba says placing a cutlery aside and looking towards me. "I guess that's why I was raised by my uncle. He actually understands me"

"You idolize your uncle very much. If I knew better I'd say he's your father and strangely you called him the dark"

"That's because he has a dark aura. I didn't understand before but now I do. In this business world you need to do anything to make sure you get what you want and protected" I'm not going to ask now what kind of business is this but at some point I will and the uncle sounds like an interesting character and strangely I want to know more about him. "You're brave Krotoa"

"Where is that coming from?"

"I'm just saying that you're very brave. You should take that as a compliment I know you like that"

"Oh suddenly you think you know me?" I tug my head in and he picks up his cutlery, cutting a piece of meat that immediately

disappears in his mouth. "What is that you did? For your father to have these terms and conditions? I'm sure you might've pushed him into making this decision"

"We all have flaws"

"And I am not here to judge you"

"I've made wrong decisions in life. You can safely call me a player who used women"

He didn't have to tell me because I can it on his face it's written.

"Like how you're using me now to get what you want from your father?" I elevate

my eyebrow "No need to be uncomfortable we are both using each other here"

"How are using me?" That statement really caught him by his balls because his eyes are now focusing on me.

"I'm going to have a warm sex toy for the next three months that breathes and

sweat" I didn't expect that sound coming from him as he laughs and throws his head back even clapping his hands together.

"You're not at your house wena this is at your in- laws"

"You want to use me sexually?"

“In every way”

“I cannot wait for our honeymoon night then since we are holy beings” He has

humor. We have a platonic relationship. “And I want you to know that I don’t want you to feel bondage. We are not exclusive but you cannot bring a man to our house”

“When are you buying me a house and a car then?”

“You don’t have patience? Relax. Tomorrow I have something planned so what time are you finishing up at work?”

“What’s that you have planned?”

“It’s a surprise baby don’t rush me”

“If I don’t like what you planned trust me I’ll walk away. I don’t like nonsense”

“Trust me I am well aware of that” He pauses then looks at the watch on his wrist “I should go. This was great”

“Okay bye”

“Krotoa!”

His eyes are dancing on the table “Are you not going to walk me out?”

“You don’t have you own feet to walk yourself out?”

“No, kindly hold me tight all the way to my car”

“You’re flirting with me and that’s not good” I say and he smirks.

I get up from my chair and announce to my grandmother that his son in law is already leaving, she comes back so hug him before I walk him out and he places his hand around my waist until we stand next to his car, facing each other and he leans closer.

“Your grandmother is looking at us by the window. Is it okay if I kiss your forehead?” It how he asked me that makes me want to laugh. “And don’t look towards the direction where the window is. How about you smile at me as though I said something you like” Right after that I place my hands on his chest, as we make eye contact and I smile at him as a woman who’s wrapped like a gift with love and adoration. He kisses my forehead making me close my eyes and for a moment that felt right that my heart started harmonizing a melody it’s not supposed to be singing. “You’re beautiful”

Arg now I am covered in a rosy hue.

“Thank you. I’ll see you tomorrow”

“What time?”

“I won’t be going to work because I want to take out my grand—

When I attempt to

look towards the direction of the window he tilt my head to him and engulfs my face with both his hands.

“You don’t want her suspecting anything” He has leaned in once again that I can see the thick shape of his eyebrows and although it’s dark but the light illuminate his eyes that they almost look as though they’re shining. He has a triangular shaped face, “You said tomorrow what’s happening baby?”

“I’m taking my grandmother out on a spa date”

“Okay it’s on me. I’ll book an appointment and send you details in the morning. Have a great night”

“Thank you” I smile.

“Goodnight. And don’t dream about our honeymoon night”

“Oh please, goodnight”

07.

bewilderment

/bi'wɪldəd/

- perplexed and confused; very puzzled

N Q A B A

I walk into the room and today she's sitting by the window watching the garden as the flowers that somehow resembles flicking fire dances in one same tune the moment she hears my movements she turns around and the same fear she always has painted on her face enlivens as she holds onto the blue hospital gown tightly.

"You're here!" I cannot really understand her tone whether she sounds elated or maybe not pleased at all. After that a smile appears on her face as she pushes her natural curled afro with the color chestnut then she clasps her hands on her thighs and clears her throat. "I thought you weren't coming today" she states, surprisingly she remembers me today. I thought it would be like any other days where I have to introduce myself again while she pesters me with questions and then asks me to leave.

I don't know where is the sudden nervousness coming from as I stand by the entryway gazing at the smoothness of her ivory skin and her beautiful bottom heavy lip as she gazes at me with unreadable eyes.

“I thought you’d be sleeping” I say. These days I’d find her peacefully sleeping and watch her as she inhales and exhale gently with her lips slightly parted. From the time I met her when she was alone by the garden in a wheelchair just staring at the blooming flowers when I was here to see my brother who works at this hospital.

Then later I discovered she was in a fatal car accident and she lost her memory, she doesn’t remember her name, where she comes from and who she is. I have no idea about her family and why they haven’t looked for her but I’m working on finding out that information about her.

“I was waiting for you” That caught me off guard that I remain in the very same position and immobile as a statue. “You’re not planning on standing there now are you?” A sweet smile escapes her lips causing my own to bloom and I immediately walk into the room striding towards the corner of the room where she’s sitting and giving her flowers that she takes in her hands and voyages the scent into her nostrils before she holds them closely to her stomach then gazes at me. “Thank you for the flowers” I can tell she genuinely means this but it’s the facial expression that I cannot understand because it remains impassive. “Why you always come here? Are we somehow related?” I don’t know why I’m always here. I don’t understand either.

“We are not related by any chance”

“Were we together?” Instead of respond I just shake my head slowly and feeling my palms become clammy and sweaty. “We are not related and not even together so why you’re always here Nqaba” The sound of my name sounds sultry against her lips.

I don’t have answers to her questions and therefore I decide to get up, I shouldn’t be here for that matter. I just stand looking down at her and the bewildered facial expression painted on her face and I can tell she wants to continue plaguing me with questions and she also wants to know about herself she’s in a battle with her subconsciousness “I have to go” I announce and her face falls with disappointment.

“I wasn’t sending you away” she says shifting on her wheel chair darting her eyes between mines. “But if you really have to go then fine I hope I’ll see you tomorrow” she tells me about her high hopes. “I’ll see you tomorrow, I promise”

Those seven words are powerful and I can see mirth dancing in her eyes.

Right after that I walk out feeling crowded in my own skin and my bones becoming too small. I don’t know where my state of my mind is standing right now as I make my way through the corridor and the vacuum scent traverse through my nose until I

walk through the door finding Bandlaletu swathe in his hospital gown and he leans back on his chair upon seeing me walking in with a frown dancing on his face. "You came to see her again?" Elevating his eyebrow at me with an unimpressed tone and I don't have to say any another word instead I intake sharp breath and taking a sit on a chair. "Why you're here Nqaba?"

"I don't know" I shrug with the heaviness on my shoulders moving up and down. "I needed to see her"

"For what reason? Why are you even doing this to yourself?" Obviously he's against my decisions and this marriage set up. He's always been against our father and how he chooses to do things that's why he's living his own life and doing what his heart desire without no rules or even terms and condition normally this is expected from a last born but my brother here who's an heir doesn't care about business or anything related to it.

"You literally have two choices. Either walk away from this business thing and your father's terms and start your own thing. You can do it and we both know you can"

"That's your father too"

"That's not the point here. Why you don't just marry this woman and get what you want? You'll win in both love and

your so called dream rather than doing this. What if this backfires? Have you asked yourself why the other woman even agreed to this?"

"You know I cannot just marry her because she doesn't even know who she is. What if she's married and her husband just shows up from nowhere?"

"By now her husband would've found her if he wanted to or if she was married. I'm still trying to find information about her and name but it looks like this woman has never even existed" He picks up the pen from the table and start playing with it.

"And what about the other woman?"

"Last night she stood up for herself when ubaba was doing what he's famous for and I was impressed, there's something about her"

"Nqaba tell me. What are you going to do? Because now you are showing sudden interest in this woman you're supposed to just have business deal with?"

"Both these women are totally different from each other. The other one is fierce, brave and fearless, she's leaving her life in her own drums and doesn't allow anyone to walk all over her. And the other one. . .I don't know her as yet but she's gentle and soft yet strong and as powerful as the other one"

"Are you in love with these women?"

“What no!” I quickly say in brilliance “There’s sexual chemistry with Krotoa. It’s undeniable honestly but we are both doing this to gain something and not love. And with the woman who’s mystery I can say that I actually love her or may feel something”

“What’s going to happen when you get married to someone you don’t love and only have sexual chemistry with? What will happen to the one you love?”

“I was thinking of getting her an apartment when she’s discharged while she’s still trying to regain her memory. It’s not like Krotoa and I are together or there’s genuine emotions involved but I’m still going to respect her and she won’t find out about the other woman and the other woman won’t know about my “wife” until eventually my divorce”

“This is polygamy and you’ll be living two lives and lie. Let me tell you something what you’re doing is dangerous especially with a woman as dangerous as Krotoa. You said she’s fierce didn’t you? Trust me you’re playing with fire here. If she can stand up to our father then what are you? This deal and the business will be the death of you and don’t say I didn’t warn you”

“Tonight I’ll be proposing and I’m thinking we can have a small gathering as a family. You haven’t been home for a year, please come”

“You’re proposing and then tomorrow you’ll be here again to this the other woman? What are you doing Nqaba?”

“I’m trying to get what is rightfully mine Bandlalethu. You didn’t want to be part of the business and that’s okay but I’m going to hold our legacy with both hands and I just need my brother to support me”

“I’m not going to support you when you’re playing with people’s emotions to get what you want. But I’ll be there tonight and I’ll be around just to see how all of this unfolds and I’ll be waiting for you with open my arms to comfort you when things don’t go your way”

“Aww that was very sweet of you” I say cynical and he smirks diabolically shaking his head. “Regardless of you being against this but knowing your arms are always opened is all I needed”

“Let me ask this one more time. Is this all worth it? Why you don’t marry the one you feel you somehow have feelings for and win both love and these shares thing you want so bad? What if ubaba finds out about your plan and you end up not getting these shares then what?”

“Then I have to make sure that the whole act is believable so he doesn’t find out”

08.

chemistry

/'kɛmɪstri/

noun

- the complex emotional or psychological interaction between people

N Q A B A

There she is walking into the room in a silk emerald dress and to cover her bleached eyebrows she might've used a black pencil on them, her make up makes her appear as a goddess and she's fully aware of that as she looks around the room surely unimpressed about the fact that we have family here and immediately her grandmother appears from nowhere briskly walking towards her with open arms enveloping her warmly while she whispers in her ear first Krotoa frowns and then suppurate with laughter. The muscles around her face seems rather serene whenever she's around her grandmother, this woman is brutal and it seems the only because who can calm her turbulence nature is that woman engulfing her face with both hands before kissing her right on her lips.

I take a sip from the non-alcoholic champagne needing moist on my throat before approaching towards their direction and when her eyes meet with mine she elevates her eyebrow first

with a trailing blaze from head to toe before she pretends to be elated upon seeing me.

“Nqaba!” That sound comes out of her mouth with a combination of sarcasm and something else yet she conceals it with a charming simper as I step closer to her pulling her in for her a hug and her scent blooms my nostrils, there’s something exotic about her fragrance and the sweetness of it. When she looks at me I cannot tell whether that adoration is fake or not. This woman is not only confusing everyone but me as well.

“What a lovely surprise” she glances at her grandmother who’s eyeballing me with mirth. I called her about wanting to “surprise” her granddaughter in this manner and also asked for the so called blessing to this union and proposal I’m doing tonight.

“Let me go” Her grandmother says already waving her hand at someone. If you didn’t know you’d think she’s rather her mother because she looks young and fresh even her sense of style. “If you need me I’ll be there” she says to her granddaughter before walking away and disappearing around. My sharpened eyes follow her until she’s hugging and laughing with my mother. My father is not here as yet including my brother. I don’t know whether or not they’re coming because they’re against my choice for different reasons.

“Is this the best you can do?”

I wasn't expecting that from her as she looks around the room in all shades of green and flowers that makes it look almost like an indoor garden before her eyes meet with mine when a waiter walks pass she grabs a glass and takes a sip "Non-alcoholic" she's clearly disappointed.

"What you don't like the set up?"

"It's beautiful" As she compliments her face remains nonchalant before she takes

another sip from her glass and I watch how her lips cover the corners of the glass and the movement of her throat. I take a step closer to her and leaving no distance between us, she looks up at me with her hazel brown eyes remaining impassive but sheen of lust at the corners of lips. "What are you doing?" Her tone becomes rather sultry and smooth than it always usually sound before she looks around us to see whether or not people are watching. "You want to impress everyone?" Upon seeing that everyone's attention is on us she asks now her hand resting on my face.

"Are they watching?"

"Obviously" she wants to dramatically roll her eyes but instead she moves her hand from my face to lace it against my chest.

"You're looking beautiful" I compliment her with a smirk and our eyes moving in a same tempo that we've created between

each other. I can feel her breath that smells like cherry and cream dancing around my face alerting my entire body to react. “You won’t say thank you?” I crease my eyebrow at her and she vigorously nods her head before she looks around then me again, “Why?”

“You’re telling me something I already know” After that she winks and kisses my cheek. Her lips almost have the cold sensation and feel soft. We are interrupted when someone clears their throat behind us and I swiftly turn around placing my hand around her waist to meet with my brother swathe in a suit with a glass in his hand.

“I didn’t think you’d come!” I cannot hide my joviality and a grin on my face, as we hug and I remain in his arms. “Thank you for coming” I whisper in his ear. The discomfort that was on my chest disappears instantly when he pulls away casting his eyes towards the woman standing right next to me and he attentively gazes at her as though he’s seeing god in a human form, I don’t blame him the sensuality that exudes from this woman is the reason the apple was eaten in the garden.

“You won’t introduce me?” Bandlalethu asks his eyes remaining on the goddess who doesn’t really care whether or not this introduction is done.

I smile looking at her and she smiles back. “This is Krotoa the woman I told you about and Krotoa this is my brother

Bandlalethu” I introduce both of them to each other and she stretches his hand for a handshake.

“Nice to meet you. I’ve heard a lot about you. It’s great putting a face to a picture that I already had” Bandlalethu says.

“Oh” Why she’s so nonchalant? “Nice too meet you too. Excuse me please” she announces then turns to me. The facial expression once again that perplex me. “I’ll be back just now don’t miss me” she shows the crispy white stones then wink before she disappears through the crowd. I watch her until she’s nowhere in sight.

When I turn to my brother his eyes are fixated on me before he shakes his head and taking a sip from his glass. “Krotoa” He murmurs softly as if he’s getting used to the pronunciation and memorizing the name. “That’s a beautiful name and she’s gorgeous. Not what expected” He says then look around and we see our father walking through the door and my mother casts her eyes towards our direction smiling then meets her husband half way. “I actually saw him outside and he pretended as though he’s on a phone” I can tell that he’s pretending to be nonchalant but that’s not true. They don’t have a relationship or whatsoever but acknowledge each other. Regardless of trying to make mends between them but with my father’s stubbornness and not wanting to take accountability in anything it always ends up catastrophic. “And umalume is he

not coming?" This is the only person we've had healthy relationship with, who's been a father to us.

I shake my head in disagreement "Well he's currently in hiding and won't even make it to the wedding but he said he'll see us when he comes back"

"When is the wedding anyways?"

"In two weeks' time" I tell him "Everything should be done quick as possible so I can take over the business. I cannot waste any more time" That facial expression tells me he's unimpressed when he takes yet another sip from the drink and then nods his head. "And how is she?"

"Well I was called before coming here and I was told she remembers her name and where she comes from but nothing beyond that"

"I have to go!"

"Go where?"

"I have to go and see her Bandlalethu"

"You're not going anywhere Nqaba. You wanted to propose tonight didn't you?"

That's exactly what you're going to do and you're not going to go anywhere near Zeno. I'm not going to watch you taking advantage of a vulnerable woman" He seethes with eyes

shooting venom at me before he clicks his tongue and then walk away from me. Is that her name? I cannot be here another minute knowing she's recovering. I grab yet another glass and guzzling all of it wishing this was rather potent.

"That won't help you"

A voice says from behind turning she's back and has applied lip-gloss on her luscious lips. And if we were not around people trust me no words would've be exchanged by now, "I don't know what's happening but you need to put yourself together and stop acting like a boy. No one is going to nurse your feelings Nqaba"

"I'm glad you said you don't know what's happening because if you did you wouldn't have said that"

"I wouldn't have said anything because it wouldn't have affected me in anyway. Since it affecting you that means it has nothing to do with me or what's happening here" Her fierce attitude is really attractive that my mind is suddenly clouded by her at every corner making me forget completely about what I was feeling. Then she does what I was praying and hoping she wouldn't do -smile- before she turns around attempting to walk away and I grab her my her arm causing a gasp to escape her mouth. "Nqaba!" that was a whimper after there was a collision on my chest and hers heaving.

“Hmmm” I murmur

“You don’t know what you’re doing”

“I do”

“Let me go”

“And if I don’t?”

“You decided to invite your family here but if you didn’t then I would’ve shown you”

My heart pace changes and the speed increases almost immediately with my tongue drying up. I can feel my phallus hardening in all attempts to escape the garment covering it.

“Now let me go” Upon seeing everyone with their eyes on us I slowly go down on my knee with my hand disappearing in my pocket and in a nanosecond everyone is surrounding us. My father has a frown on his face and my mother has unshed tears with a smile. As everyone witness something beautiful.

Krotoa is an amazing actress clutching her hand against her chest and fanning her face at the same time pretending to be stupefaction. “From time God showed me who’s my wife in my dreams I knew he wasn’t making the wrong decision until I set my eyes on you. You’re truly what I’ve been looking for and I’m hoping we can learn how to love as we start this journey Krotoa Makhetha will you marry me” Where are those tears coming from? At this moment this is comical but I cannot really laugh at

how this is such a great act. Instead of saying a word she vigorously nods her head as though she's unable to speak because she's crying.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" she screams all at once giving me her hand and an emerald diamond looks amazing on her manicured fingers. I get up sweeping her off her feet literally.

I frame her face with my hands and capture her lips as she wasn't expecting that. I dip deeper into the honeyed sweetness of her mouth and holds back then moan softly and lean into me. There's chemistry and harmony of the tongue that makes this kiss amazing and reawakening sensations that should be asleep. The feel of her body against mine almost drives me into my knees -tongue foo- and I can tell that she's feeling what I'm feeling and for a moment we completely forget that we are around people as I gather her close and my one hand in the silken spill of her hair and the other at the base of her spine but the ululating interrupts and we pull away from each other. We share a shamanism eye contact but she quickly looks away and clearing her throat when my mother comes towards her and attacking her with a hug.

My father comes and handshake me with a broad and proud smile on her face

Advertisement

surprisingly since I thought he was against this. “God really showed you this girl maybe to challenge you but there’s chemistry between you two and I’m seeing it. I’m proud you Nqaba and please see me at my office along with her when this ends” What? I’m bewildered for a moment but I smile back as he pulls me in for a gigantic hug, “We should send a letter as soon as possible so you can marry your chosen one” I thought he didn’t like Krotoa right after that he moves from me to her, giving her a genuine hug and my brother looks at me shaking his head then he leaves.

I follow right behind him, almost running. “Bandla!lethu!” I call after him and he ignore me “Bandla!” I call once again and he pauses turning to point at me with his index finger while chuckling sardonically “What’s wrong? I thought you’ll stay”

“I have to go to work. And congratulations on your engagement is was believable” “Work?”

“Double shift. I’ll see you tomorrow; you’ll come around won’t you?” Regardless of

wanting to see her upon finding out about that recovering but. . . I don’t know now. I’m in such a very confusing place especially with my father now buying this act.

“Yes. Let me know how she’s doing” I find myself saying. We handshake and then he get on his car and I return back to the venue.

My eyes meets with Krotoa who’s on the table with my mother since food is being served and their faces are blooming with tropical hues, my mother is the one talking and I’m sure it’s about wedding arrangements. I stride to their table and making myself comfortable in between them. “I was talking about wedding arrangements and preparations with my daughter she has taste in everything even men” she looks at me with humour in her eyes grinning and this conversation is rather uncomfortable.

“When is the wedding anyway?”

I place my hand on top of Krotoa and she gazes up at me then my mother. “In two weeks I’m sure you’ll be able to help her with wedding preparations and also get the best wedding planner”

“As long as she tells me what she wants then I’ll make sure she gets the best wedding” And someone interrupts by waving their hand at her needing to say a word and she excuses herself getting up and leaving.

“In a month? You’re really rushing this honey moon night now huh?”

“After that kiss you cannot blame me”

“What was distracting you earlier?” A piece of meat disappears in her mouth and she chews slowly and swallow. “You seemed all over the place. What’s going on?”

“It was nothing. Just business”

“I see”

“Are you happy with your ring?”

“It’s not bad”

“You’re so ungrateful”

I tease her and she laughs pausing eating. “I know you like it” she looks at her hand and then frown.

“It’s a beautiful ring yes, just a piece of jewelry honestly. I’ve never imagined myself wearing this or even getting married for that matter”

“Why?”

“There’s nothing that ever intrigued me about marriage honestly but this experience might change my perspective”

“You said we are not exclusive right?”

“When did I say that?”

“You’re not that smart, you know very well when you said that”

I laugh, "I didn't mean it"

"Now you want us to be exclusive?"

"What if someone sees you with another man? This would ruin everything. I

understand we don't love each other but can we at least have mutual respect"

This is such a hypothetical response honestly. "I hope you understand. We can have a contract and some rules with what will happen when one of us breaks the rules"

"Exclusive?" she's not pleased "I can do that. But I'll have my own terms and conditions just not now" I'm seriously throwing myself in an ocean full of sharks. With everything that I do I need to be vigilant because I cannot stay away from the other woman and I cannot bear knowing that another man touches my "wife" the same way that I do.

"Intimacy?" "Of course" I smirk "And my father wanted to see us after this" "We should go then"

The night proved to be absolutely beautiful and almost realistic with congratulations every now and then, and exuberance flying in the room.

Right now we've just arrived at my father's home office and he has already made his way there while we follow him behind. I

don't know what exactly he wants to talk about but maybe it's one of those couple counselling he does when people want to get married just to make sure they're making a right decision. Krotoa hasn't said her terms and conditions regarding us being exclusive and that alone are shooting apprehension through my system, I'm selfish and I am fully aware of that. I know you can't have you bread buttered on both sides but we do that when we are making toast now don't we? So yes I can.

We find my father on a chair and a smile appears on his face when he sees us walking in then he leans forward and points the chairs opposite him. "I'm glad you here. I'm sure you two are tired it was a long night so I'm going to get straight to the point" He then pauses "Nqaba you know that I've said when you show me that you can be responsible I'll give you my shares to the business and you did. The other night you showed me that you really love this girl when you stayed behind after I stormed out and for that reason I've decided I'm going to give you the shares right now" My eyes almost fall of their own volition. I don't have to get married after this. "But on my fifty percent shares I've decided you are going to get twenty five percent and the other twenty five percent goes to your wife because this is a family business and she's becoming part of the family" Are you kidding me right now, is he out of his mind? "Here you go please sign" He takes out the papers placing them on the table.

09.

feeling

/ˈfi:liŋ/

plural noun: feelings

- an emotional state or reaction: “a feeling of joy”

When Jesus says yes nobody can say no.

For some reasons I cannot help but feel and think this is how that man I've been questioning is giving me a consolation prize and nurturing my wounds because this is coming from someone who's highly devoted to him—a pastor, giving me something he worked hard for on a silver platter when we once shared different views. I doubt he has changed his mind about me or even have a different opinion but instead there's something hidden here. This man is smarter than his son who seems to be undermining me because he's used to women going down on their knees for him.

“Baba. . .”

That's Nqaba clearly recovering from the stupor and he seems like a pivot that the earth has turned. “Are you sure you're making the right decision?” I see him shifting uncomfortably on his chair and clearing his throat several times.

“The woman you’ve chosen is a beauty with brains and that’s good for you because she’ll have a great impact on your decisions regarding business” After that he shrugs then leans back on his chair and placing the pen on the table. “Now please sign” He says his tone rather stern and authoritative. His son is hesitant running his hand on his beard and deeply thinking about what he’s about to do then he gazes at me.

“Baba can we do this tomorrow? I mean we are tired and had a long night and this is not something we can talk about now”

“Whether we talk about it tomorrow or a day following that my decision still stand so please Nqaba don’t waste my time” I see him slowly taking the pen with his hand shaking and he glances at his father. What more can this man do to get these shares if he can easily sell his soul to the devil?

I attentively gaze at him as his hand moves and the black ink moves against the white paper sealing the deal. After that he hands me the pen and I sign with my heart and stomach dancing to amapiano and celebrating. My plan wasn’t already in motion and already what means so much to this man is being given to me. Him knowing that I have these shares will give him sleepless nights that even when he dreams he’ll wake up screaming my name. I can feel his diabolical gaze burning my skin as I move my hand with a pen on a paper and then I push

the paper away from me. My tongue is no longer producing enough saliva in my tongue and my hands are clammy.

“Great. And since you didn’t read the contract here it says if ever you decide to divorce that means Nqaba will give you fifty percent of his shares and you’ll end up with forty. That’s it, goodnight” In that moment his son loses all his marbles becoming deranged as his father gets up from his chair. That means I have nothing to lose here. Basically he’s teaching him a lesson here that he warned him about me and yet he still wanted to marry me. If this marriage is truly genuine that means there’s no divorce right? And guess what? It’s not genuine and the plan of wanting this man on his knees and under my mercy is not something farfetched by right on my doormat.

Immediately he gets up following his father and he’s exuding rage and treacherous. I remain on my chair the moment I hear the voices on the hallway, the son is shouting and screaming but the father sounds rather calm as a cucumber even his response he keeps his tone so low while the other one is screaming for these walls to come crumbling down. He he he. This catastrophe happened sooner than I thought it would.

I look around the room and the white, minimalist desk takes its inspiration from a drafting table while the unique overhead light fixture brings a bit of artistry into the room. It’s

anomalously clean that you cannot see any dust or whatsoever maybe I should also get this house too? Yes? No? Ha ha ha fine I'm going to get my own house but this looks luxurious doesn't it?

After some time I see the door opening and Nqaba walks back seemingly like a cannibal who won't even bother about cooking me and turning me into a scrumptious meal but rather eat me raw with the smell of blood in his hand. He closes the door behind and pours himself a glass of water.

"This wasn't part of the plan" Trust me it was. I was just planning on how to go on about it but it seems the universe listened and responded. This man walked up to me thinking I'm narrow minded and undermined my intelligence that's not forgive-able. "And the fact that you haven't told me why you agreed to this and all the terms and conditions you've been talking about are unclear just make the matter worse. What if you're planning my downfall?"

"What if I am?" I subtle smile appears on my face and this time he turns around with his face pale and glacier. Again he takes another gulp from his glass and then places it aside before he glares at me.

"This is not a game Krotoa!"

“And I never said it was but I’m simply asking what if I’m really planning your downfall then what then? War? You’ll kill me? What are you going to do?” Instead of saying anything he flares his nostrils and I get up from the chair and making my way towards him with a devilry smirk. “Aww stop it I’m joking. Loosen up a bit you’ll die from heart attack” I can see from those eyes that have darkened that he wants to wrap his hands around my neck and strangle me until I take my last breath. “You said you wanted us to be exclusive right? And I agreed if I catch you cheating on me or doing some shady shit behind my back you’re not getting these shares I’ll keep them and take the fifty percent as well but if you act right then after this deal I want at least fifteen percent from these shares”

“You’re out of your mind!”

I gasp dramatically and clutching my chest. “I am out of my mind? Remember I said I had my own terms and conditions before agreeing to this and I just told you what I want”

“I can give you money if that’s what you want Krotoa but not this”

“It seems your mind is crowded by a lot of things so I’m going to leave so you can think about this and I hope you make the right decision I’m going to call a cab. . .” I grab my bag from the table and turning on my heels to walk away when he grabs me by my arm.

He starts nibbling my earlobe, causing shivers to trail down my spine and ending at my core. He trails hot, wet kisses on my jaw slowly going south. Once he reaches my collarbone he sucks on my skin. "You don't know what you're starting Nqaba"

"We are not so holy after all now ain't we?" Awww he thinks I'm naive and after this I'm surely going to give him the shares. I've come across men like who thinks there's power in their phallus when there's absolutely nothing but zero strokes.

He pushes up my dress to waist with eager and pulling down my straps to meet my denuded breasts and perky nipples inviting him. His tongue start gliding across my skin and once he reaches my breast, the pleasure heightens causing an unexpected attractive moan to roll out of my mouth. He harshly takes one of my nipples into his mouth, sucking, licking and nibbling on the left one massaging the other. I cannot help but release a few moans when he did so. Then he does the same to the other breast. He bends down on his knees and start kissing me extremely slow down my stomach causing vibrations throughout my body moving in waves and my skin becomes scorching hot and suddenly everything becomes foggy. I have no control has to what I'm feeling and the foreign sensations traveling throughout my body. My mind and body is given to him and become his. "Nqaba stop!" If we dare get intimate then I'm going to lose myself. I cannot deny that there's been

undeniable sexual chemistry and that could lead to me losing my head in the game and that's why he's doing this, sex in a midst of an argument? He knows exactly what he's doing is but he's not as smart as he thing he is. He can learn a thing or two from his father. "Let me go. I think my cab is here"

"I'll take you home Krotoa"

"We are not having sex here and now so please stop" I push him aside pulling down my dress and grabbing my purse that has fallen on the floor. He gets up since he was standing on his knees and running his hands through his head, clearing his head. The translucent desire shimmering in his almond eyes and trying to catch enough breath into his lungs. "Remember what we spoke about and I hope you'll take time to deeply think about it. Next time do not try to have sex with me to get what you want" I smile at him walking out of the room and in a haste before I can change my mind and return back to that office because I'm in no control on my mind and the sexual hymn my body is already singing.

-

This morning I woke up to a morning phone call from "my to be husband" and also bouquet of flowers that ended up inside a trash can. He has been sending more of these flowers since the day started and maybe if this was money the conversation

might've been different but what am I going to with flowers?
Flowers that would surely wilt anytime from now.

My mind is also crowded by the feel of his touch and the softness of his lips against my very own skin. I have to keep shaking my head vigorously in all means to format what happened in that office and remind myself who am I and why am I doing this. "Krotoa!" A knock comes from the door at my office and I'm interrupted when I slowly lift my head and seeing someone I wasn't expecting standing by the door. What I can say is he's natural charmer with an undeniable presence and he's par with his impeccable style. I can say that his parents have such enchanting and beautiful genes. I'm wondering what exactly is he doing here? "Is it okay if I come in?"

"No you can stand there and tell me what you want" Because why would I allow him to come in? "I'm joking you can come in" I say and a smile appears on his face as he walks through the door.

Again what is he doing here?

After he has taken a sit and leaning back on his chair with his eyes fixated on me, I elevate my eyebrow with a subtle smile wondering what will come out of his mouth. "I thought about the deal you've given me"

"And I hope you made a right decision"

“Yes. I am the one who approached you about being exclusive and that’s because I actually want to get to know you and I like you. I don’t know if there are any feelings involved or whatsoever but. . .” I don’t want to hear all of this. I’ve heard different men telling me this. In different languages about how different I am. How they feel something for me but what must I do with those feelings?

“What was your decision?”

He takes a deep breath “I cannot give you fifty percent after this deal but I can give you five”

“I don’t have time for games Nqaba so please leave my office and come back after you’ve made up your mind”

“Krotoa I asked you to help me because I didn’t know things can turn out this way. You have nothing to lose here but I do”

“After you’ve made up your mind we can have this conversation again”

I emphasize.

“You’re using me for your own agendas”

“Agenda?” I smile.

“A way to make money”

“I make my own money”

“Well if you do then giving me back these shares wouldn’t have been a problem. You’re going to marry me as it was planned and when that happens you we will divorce and you’ll walk away with the five percent I’ve agreed on”

“And if I don’t?”

“I will be very sad seeing you losing your sanity after you’ve lost your grandmother. You want to be part of the business world now don’t you? We play dirty here and if you want to declare war then so be it”

“And war is exactly what I’m going to give you Nqaba now please excuse me. And tonight we going out for dinner it’s on me” I wave my hand with an engagement ring on his face with a smile.

10.

power

/'paʊə/

noun

- the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way

N Q A B A

I walk to my brother's office and find him swathe in scrubs sanitizing his hands meaning he's just coming back from surgery. I walk through the door with aggressiveness and sweat beaded on my forehead when I start pacing up and down, unable to sit down because of what's growing inside me.

I cannot explain this vexation but the more these thoughts keep invading my mind it's like they're watering it to bloom. "This is my work place Nqaba you cannot just walk in anytime whenever you feel like and if you want to see Zeno then you know where her ward is"

I pause and looking at him while holding my mouth in total stupefaction and trying to calm all my senses. "Baba. . ." I pause and he immediately looks at me leaning against his desk with attentive attention "Last night he called us to his office"

“I guess he has accepted this “marriage” then? And you can get what you want” He shoves his hands inside his pockets and his eyes fixated on me. I intake a sharp breath hoping that relaxation can drape itself around me, I already know that his eyes will shimmer with anti-climax and that’s the emotions that I’m not ready to in his eyes. “What happened?”

“I think he was teaching me lesson or maybe he wanted to see whether this is genuine or not I don’t know Bandla” I run my hands on my beard and taking off my blazer “But he gave me twenty five percent of his shares and gave Krotoa as well and if ever we decide to divorce then I’ll give her another fifteen percent and that would make her a majority shareholder, she’ll have control over me”

“You didn’t sign that right but you asked for more time to decide so you can have a conversation with this woman and negotiate about a way forward. I think you should just cancel this marriage and be honest with ubaba. Are you aware of what malume would do when he finds out about this coming back from wherever he is to learn one of his businesses is being treated like this. Udlala ngomlilo Nqabayezulu” I become immediately pale remembering the scene as she hand the pen in between her sage green manicure at the tips and the rest of the nails were crystalline clear, she has such beautiful hands that for a moment I focused on them than what they were

doing. “Nqaba did you give away the business just like that?” My heart beat becomes incredibly slow with my tongue not producing enough saliva into my mouth. I rapidly blink in hopes that I could turn back the time and change how things have unfolded. “Uyahlanya wena!” He reminds how much of a maniac I am before he throws his hands in the air and grabbing out the chair taking a seat. “The greed has finally got you and you’re becoming the version of your father when he was part of this business. Are you out of your mind? Do you know what you’ve done? Have you spoke to her?”

The taste of my saliva becomes distasteful and I grab the bottle of water on the table and opening the cap needing something to give my throat moist. “We had a conversation and it didn’t go well. Well she said she wants fifty percent at the end of this and I refused and offered her five or ten percent, she made it clear that she’s not settling for less than that. Last night I approached her with us being exclusive and her terms are if ever she catches me cheating while we are “married” I’m not getting nothing back and obviously she’ll take more from me. Anyways when we had this conversation I threw threats”

“You did what? Are you out of your fucking mind? And even approaching her about being exclusive when you know you cannot do that shows uyahlanya” Now he flares his nostrils “What was the threat?”

The thought of this makes me feel like my hands would start growing in my stomach and my phallus somewhere from one ear to another. “I said I’ll murder her grandmother and she said if war is what I want then she’ll give it to me”

“I warned you and the fire that’s about to burn you even satan will envy being part of it because you don’t think. Nqaba how can you threaten someone who practically has power over you? Let me tell you this woman is smart and she’ll play this game much better than you because your head is empty. Go apologize and make things right”

“Apologize? I’m not apologizing”

“Great then because you’re going to be working for her soon and she’ll make sure that you’re miserable. I’m sure she has her own agenda and it seems to destroy you. Have you thought that maybe this is one of the women you’ve slept with and revenging herself or anything but there’s more to this woman than you think. A woman full of hatred is untouchable and she has no emotions or whatsoever because she has nothing to lose that’s what I see with Krotoa. Now apologize to her, make her feel special. I know this will be hard but make her fall in love with you if you want these shares to come back to you regardless of whatever the situation may be but everyone wants to be loved” I listen to him as he speaks and guzzle the water and the cold spreads all over my burning body. For a

moment there's an ear splitting silence between us. "I am discharging her today and for now I'll be taking care of her while you try getting these shares back" And so suddenly he announces, avoiding making any sort of eye contact but looking at the papers on the table and I place the bottle on the table.

"Did you find any information about her?"

This time he pushes the papers aside and leaning backwards on the table. "Zeno Mazibuko and she's from Ngwelezane, eMpangeni. I don't have anything beyond that for now but she seems rather recovering but she needs time" I inhale sharply and running my hands through my face. "You can go see her" I want to see her but I have so much going on right now. I wouldn't want to surround her with such heavy negative energy more especially in her condition so I rather see her tomorrow.

I shake my head, "I'll see her tomorrow maybe. I have so much going through my head and Krotoa said we are going out for dinner tonight basically she was telling me and not asking me" I tell him and I cannot believe the sound of laughter erupting from my own lips when I think about this. "I have to go and take care of Zeno and yourself" I get on my feet and not even wanting to hear another word from him. Of course I'm the one who attracted this to myself but that's because I was trying to

prove my “manhood” to my father since he has always doubted me and even questioned whether or not I was his son.

I get in a car and making myself comfortable leaning my head on a steering wheel inhaling sharply when I’m interrupted by a knock on a window. I ignore it for a moment before slowly lifting up my head and there’s a nurse. I pull down my window and she shows me her teeth, she’s attractive and surely wouldn’t hurt releasing all these emotions moving like thunder through my veins in between her legs.

I have been in committed relationships before but when it comes to being faithful I don’t know what happens. It’s the adrenaline that shoots through my bloodstream when I have to leave the house in the middle of the night for spontaneous sex and just dominance.

“I’m sorry but my patient saw you and she asked me to come and ask if you could come to her” For a moment I thought it was one of those women throwing themselves at me or she might be seeing the sheen of lust on her face and I clear my throat getting off the car without saying any other word and following her as she makes her way to the garden and there she is on a wheel chair and sweet simper appears on her face. How am I supposed to stay away from this woman? I was trying to run away from because of these foreign sensations and emotions that comes out of nowhere

Advertisement

spreading throughout my body at just a mere sight of her.

Her hair is falling on her face at the front yet curled and she tugs some strands behind her ear as she sees me taking one step than another approaching towards her direction until I'm sitting on a chair opposite her in total silence with birds being musical and the smell of flowers voyaging my nostrils. "What happened? You look distracted" These are the first words that comes out of her mouth, the texture of her tone is husky but eloquent.

A smile I haven't thought could appear from my face dances at the corners of my lips. "It's nothing that cannot be sorted out" I just need to make another woman feel what I'm supposed to make you feel, wear a mask that may not fit me and continuously pretend. "And you how are you feeling today?"

"You were leaving without seeing me. You said you'd come but you were already leaving Nqaba" The agony cannot be confused with something else in her tone. "But I'm feeling much better today. I managed to walk a distance and I'll be using crutches from now on and maybe I can use one of them to hit you on your head whenever you don't come to see me" Her sense of humour elicit laughter from my belly button and causing my shoulders to move in one rhythm as hers and she

laughs, “Great seeing you laughing” she says unexpectedly and catching her breath.

“Oh so you said just to see me laughing?” I ask after I’ve managed to calm down “I heard you were being discharged. I hope you don’t mind if we can go out”

“I’m not ready for that at the moment. I hope you understand. I just don’t want to meet with people that I don’t know and they end up asking questions that I cannot answer. I just want to adjust to this new environment” I quite understand where she’s coming from me “But maybe we can do something indoors? I don’t know”

“But if only your crunches doesn’t land on my head then I absolutely don’t mind”

“I cannot make that promise it will depend”

I elevate my eyebrow and for a moment our eyes interlock causing my breath to

become ragged, I look at all the features on her face and the hair floating around on her cheeks then she hangs her head low before she casts her eyes towards me once again. “It will depend on what?” My tone has changed becoming lower and sultry. My heart beat accelerate causing me to clasp my hand on a concrete table here. “Zeno. . .” I call her name and the glossy eyes meeting with mines “It will depend on what?” I ask

again but we are interrupted by a nurse who then announces that she should be taken back to ward, the vibrations in this atmosphere have changed and become more risqué and salacious. I watch her being pushed on her wheelchair until she disappears at the hospital leaving me behind with my thoughts shattered with bewilderment between these two women. The alpha female who is always in total control, I don't know whether or not they're genuine emotions there or not. Of course there's nothing there we are just doing business and then this woman, who make feel unnamed emotions with just exchanging few words and a sight of a smile. I need to be honest with her and tell her the truth before she can find out from someone else, maybe she'll understand that this is nothing but business.

I'm at the restaurant and I've been here for two hours but she hasn't walked through the door. I keep tapping my fingers against the table with white table cloth and repeatedly checking my watch when I finally see her walking through the door and swathe in a black dress. I can see men with their sharpened eyes fixated on her with each step that she takes she's brimming phlegm. I stand on my feet to meet her half way and placing my hand on her waist after kissing her cheek softly yet these predators are still gazing at her as though she's a price to be won. I pull out the chair for her and she looks up at me smirking roguishly then I return back to my seat right

opposite her. "I thought you were no longer coming" I am the first one to speak. I cannot yet understand the ambience between us after our last encounter but she's her normal unapologetic self and she places her hand under her chin.

"Why? Because you threatened me and you think maybe I'm scared of you"

"I'm sorry Krotoa" I apologize "I shouldn't have threatened you or your grandmother for that matter. I was just overwhelmed"

"When you overwhelmed you threaten people? Look I understand where you're coming from surprisingly but I'm not going to change my mind either about the decision I've made"

"I'll give you whatever is that you want"

"I'm not convinced because just hours ago you wanted to kill my grandmother. That's my only family and you wanted to take that away from me. Am I the one who approached you? Am I the one who asked your father to give me these shares?"

Absolutely not so for you to have what you want then please let's have mutual respect" There's some sort of shift here.

There's no aggressiveness in our tones and simmer in our faces but rather we are calm, that was unexpected. "Three months is not a long time and after that we'll be done with each other"

"We can still be friends right?"

She grabs the menu from the table and her eyes move around it before she looks up at me. "Only you can determine that and not me. We can be friends or we can destroy each other. I'm not one to be played with you must know that" Right after those words she looks down at the menu and then places it on the table. "The ball is in your court"

"What happened?"

"To who?" she frowns.

"To you. What happened? It seems you're carrying so much hatred in you. It's too

much venom and no one can expect when you're going to release it"

"I don't want some therapy session Nqaba"

"This is not therapy but we are having a conversation. We are getting married and

becoming business partners and the best we can do is getting to know each other"

"You don't have to pretend like we have some sort of platonic relationship to have these shares back. I'm going to give them back to you as long as we both stick to our word"

"Krotoa"

“Nqaba”

“I’m not pretending here or playing anything but I genuinely want to know about you. Fine threatening you was a wrong move and I accept that, I’m apologizing for it. Now I’m making up for it. I cannot mess this up because you have nothing to lose here but I do” she attentively gazes at me then lean backwards on her chair to get a clear picture and maybe read me beyond my soul and bones.

“I forgive you” Then she smiles.

It’s working!

11.

- alpha female is a powerful and successful woman, often in a leadership role.

Alpha females are often described as intimidating by men and women alike.

N Q A B A

I cannot get my eyes off her. It feels as though all her movements are a sensual and sexual dance. I sit here imagining her swathed in a see-through dress made of diamonds with that impeccable skin, and her collar bones. I keep my gaze fixated on her as she slowly brings the glass of white wine closely to her lips, her manicure with swirls makes her hands appear gorgeous. I think of them running through my back then she gently places the glass down and a fork disappears in her mouth before she chews and swallows her food, those upturned eyes interlocks with mine as though she's looking beyond my soul and bone, reading and turning each page in my mind.

There's something powerful about her that cannot be missed and it's exuding in her aura. "I was thinking that I can send a letter to your family maybe tomorrow and we can start all preparations. I don't know what you think" I have my fingers crossed that she can agree to this because I want to start counting months already so I can get what belongs me. I am praying that no one would be emotionally damaged at the end of this. "But if you're uncomfortable with that then I totally understand"

I attentively gaze at her as she wants to finish chewing and swallowing first then her eyes meets with mine "I don't want you sending any cows to my family. You can send the money to my grandmother's account and then invite few people and we can get married" I didn't think that's what she would want. I thought maybe she'd want an extravagant wedding but it seems I continuously keep misjudging her. "I don't want your ancestors to think and believe that I now belong to them when I have no intentions of being a genuine wife to your family" After that she grabs her glass of white wine again and take a sip before she puts it down on the table. "And also this company tell me more about it and what's it about. What makes you think you can handle owning it and being part of it?"

"If we want everyone to believe this is real then we have to do things the right way. We need to make everything believable" I

tell her and she shakes her head a true indication that she doesn't agree with what I'm saying. "I'm going to give you time to think about this and I'll give you until tomorrow"

I grab my own glass and take a sip. This woman has an sophisticating element into her but also a "bad bitch" attitude if I may call it that way, it's a strange combination that I've never witnessed before with anyone I've come across. Right now she's smirking at me after the words I've uttered. It's an indulgence smug then she flaps her eyelashes at me. "And what makes you think that tomorrow I'll change my mind or maybe the following day? My word stands. Are you not Christian? I don't think you should be bothered about negotiations really but if you want to waste everyone's time then do it" After that she shrugs her shoulders. "I asked you about this business Nqaba" The sound of my name against her lips sounds risqué, I am now aware that what I have and feel for this woman is nothing but lust. I want to explore what is between her legs and listen to the sounds of her moans that are all. There's nothing deeper than that really.

I lean forward on the table and rubbing my hand against my chin, that caught her attention because she pauses eating and drinking from her glass but rather her facial expression appears grave. And she has androgynous features that I find extremely attractive.

“Many years ago my uncle had this business idea. I can say that he’s one of those men who worked hard to be where they’re today whether he had to kill to get to the way to the top but. . .”

“I don’t want to know about your family history and how much of an alpha male your uncle is, you seem to idolize him almost as though he’s a god to you” I couldn’t finish what I wanted to say when she disrespectfully and rudely interrupt me. Did she say my family history? Maybe I might’ve praised her attitude too much because that was absolutely ill mannered. I’ve never had anyone interrupting me as I speak before and she’s making it sound like I would go on my knees to have my uncle’s phallic inside my mouth—how dare she!

“It’s a company that interests in petrochemicals, oil and gas, telecom and retail. Well it has branches in different provinces one of them being in KwaZulu-Natal and this one is owned both by my uncle and my father whom decided to retire because he doesn’t want to be part of the family business anymore and the blood being shed, it’s not a woman’s world too” I say with a sonorous tone in high hopes that could scare her and she might even hand me those shares without her asking for crumbs.

“You never disappoint in undermining women I give you that. Every chance you get you prove to me right about you, you make sure to use it” After she has said that she grabs her glass

and the remaining liquid disappears in her mouth. I can feel vexation traveling through my bloodstream and my veins are immediately swollen and appearing in my arms. “Is this what you’ve always wanted growing up? Being a businessman and “shedding blood” since that seems to be a brag to you that your uncle is a murder” When she emphasized those words they were laced with cynicism then she chuckled sardonically and her eyes directly looking at me.

I elevate my eyebrow at her and also grabbing the glass of wine from the table. “I wasn’t bragging about my uncle being a murder but I was simply just saying that in the business world you need to be callous Krotoa. It’s a war zone where people fight for business deals and misunderstandings. I’m not trying to scare you”

A smile appears behind those glossy lips as she taps her nails against her glass “You’re not trying to scare me?” Then she pauses “Why would you think you scared me? Nothing scares me Nqaba. Not even God scares me and you think I’m scared?” I remember my brother’s words about how this woman sitting across me could be dangerous and I witness that in front me. I thought I’d be able to peel off layers into her but she has covered herself with leather that you cannot easily just peel off. “I asked you a question have you always wanted to be a businessman?” I don’t know.

I've never got to witness anything else in my space and environment. Everything at home was about this business we were groomed to be as ruthless and powerful as my uncle and my father—before he was born again. I got to see guns and blood stains in their shoes and clothes that they were wearing.

Outside our home guns shots would be our lullaby as I sit in the corner of the room praying underneath my breath for all of it to be over before my uncle would walk into the room holding a glass of amber wood liquid opening my door and promising me it will never happen again. I've always wanted to be him and be like him.

“Yes” I want to break this glass on the table and stab myself through my neck because my response sounded foggy almost as though I was unsure. “Yes this is what I always wanted” This time it sounded the way I wanted it to and this time she repeatedly nods her head with a scowl on her face as if my words were unbelievable. “I wanted to carry the legacy of this family” Why am I trying to prove myself to this woman?

“Okay” Is that all she's going to say? Not that I expected more from that one word.

“To me it seem as if you're trying to prove yourself to your father and uncle that you can be on their level. You wouldn't mind sitting on this table and talking about them for hours”

“You know nothing about me Krotoa”

A smile appears on her face then she grabs the bottle of wine on the table to refill her glass before she takes a sip. “You’re right. I’m sorry” I didn’t expect that apology from her; I can feel wind blows down my spine and traveling slowly to penetrate my mind.

That changes the atmosphere even her sweet and delicate scent voyaging through nostrils makes me idyllic, I relax completely on my chair. “And how does your boyfriend feels about this arrangement?”

“I don’t have a boyfriend”

I am like a deflated balloon at her response. I almost smiled but I manage to conceal it with this glass in my hand. “You’ve never been in love before?”

“The idea of love and being in love is very overrated and boring for me. I don’t want love and I don’t want to be loved or love someone for that matter

Advertisement

I’m talking romantically. My only true love is my grandmother and it ends there” she speaks and I notice that she hasn’t taken off the ring on her finger, it wraps her perfectly and looks as though it was meant to stay there on that finger and on those hands. “And what about you? Love?” My mind drift for a

moment thinking about the innocence of her face and that curly chestnut hair that makes her look like a tree, a beautiful one that I could sit under on a sunny day and drinking lemonade in a glass that has different kinds of fruits.

“Me? Love, no” I chuckle and swallowing my saliva to feel the taste in my buds and moist in my throats. Then I look at the time on my watch and it almost half past nine. I wander my eyes around the restaurant and seeing that we are the only one left and the waiters seems to be already cleaning when she sees that too she casts her eyes towards me and grinning. “I guess we should leave” I announce and she nods, getting up from her table this was on her but when she attempted to pay for the bill I said otherwise. I am not going to allow her and her feminism to demoralize me like that.

After she has stand I place my hand around her waist and she looks up at me, the color of her eyes is potent. Our feet are moving in a same rhythm as if they tell each other when to make movement until we walk out of the door. “It’s so cold” she complains the moment we step out and I take off my blazer placing it over shoulders then she thank me, the moment we stand in front of her car.

I am looking down at her with our eyes connecting and the ambience becoming sultry and exotic between us. “I hope I’m not stepping on your toes but we can go to my place and

maybe have another bottle of wine. The conversation was just starting to flow” I suggest and she shakes her head.

“And what if your parents show up? Then they’ll assume we are already sleeping together. You don’t want to give them reasons to doubt the “chemistry” between us Nqaba”

“What’s wrong if we are sleep together?”

“Trust me you’d wish all of this was real because you’d run mad” I flare my nostrils at her words. That was damn attractive. Even that facial expression and superior smile painted on her face, not making me doubt that she’s a goddess that truly gets under my skin sometimes.

“I want to”

“You want to what?”

“Run mad”

“I thought we spoke about this, honeymoon night because we are ethereal”

I am laughing as I open her car door and she looks at me one more time before getting in then I close her door behind when she hoots as she starts the engine then drive off—((takes a deep breath))—I am in such a perplexing space, world, dimension or whatever you want to label this as.

I get into my car and remain in a same position and the time continues moving. I cannot understand my thoughts as they spread through my brain like something liquidity when I grab my phone and calling my brother whom I am sure will throw cusses at me for calling at this time of the night. “Nqabayezulu how did it go?” I haven’t heard this elation in his tone in a while. Did he get promoted at work? And why is he calling me by full name?

“I don’t know” I tell him honestly “That woman is confusing me. I don’t know. I know that she might’ve forgiven me but falling for me? I don’t really know” I shrug as though he can see my body language.

“You’re not expecting her to just fall in love with you after two hours of dinner. These things take time. Tomorrow surprise her with flowers. Make sure they’re delivered at her work place, send her expensive gifts and make her feel special”

“Krotoa thinks love is overrated and you think flowers will make her fall in love with me?”

“You said you have this under control then have it your way because you don’t even listen to me Nqabayezulu, uyangiphazamisa”

“I plan to have sex with her. A great love making ad worshipping her body maybe that might change her mind, I’m just not sure since she doesn’t believe in love”

“HmMMM”

“Bandlalethu?”

“Listen I have to go. I’m working on a surgery that I’ll be doing tomorrow morning. Just take my advice, bye”

Right after that he abruptly hangs up the call.

12.

forgive

/fə'gɪv/

- stop feeling angry or resentful towards (someone) for an offence, flaw, or mistake.

Literally most of my patients today are suffering from acne and basically some recently saw a commercial on television about hyaluronic acid and they wanted to know about it, and whether or not it's true that the sun screen is good for skin.

Every woman and young girl has dreams. And one of them is being and becoming something in life—successful—and being independent. My dream was being a dermatologist (dentist ye-skin) and the reason was because I've never been one of those people who only had to drink eight glasses of water to have impeccable skin but my mother would use different products on my face that she was introduced to because of how terrible my skin was.

But I don't want to fabricate and say I wouldn't want to live the life that my cousin whom I am meeting in just few seconds who married a rich man who turned her into a housewife that has a

successful business of a clothing brand and get invited to events to be a guest speaker where she basically just brags about the beauty of her marriage and husband. I am convinced that she bathes in pink water and drank her own urine every morning because felicity seems to know her name.

I walk through the glass door, looking around and I see her wearing a hat at the corner of the restaurant. It's those hats that those wealthy women in movies wear, there's something cosmopolitan about them but what can I say? Lerato is a true definition of what was meant for elegant and refined.

I inhale sharply, looking through my drawers for a smile that could rather seem genuine so I don't appear too lucid that I envy her life—lucky bitch—I am so sure that she breathes flavoured air as well. I said she brags? Excuse I am sure that was me being unnecessary jealous but she's such a sweet soul, too generous for me that even people in our family basically take advantage of her.

“Look at you. Awusemhle mntase. You're looking so beautiful”
Yes that's her in her sweet tone that you can listen to at night so you can fall asleep and she just said the same compliment in two different languages. I manage to wear a smile on my face and bloom in a kaleidoscope hue as I trail my gaze from the black shoes that shows her painted nails with the elegant minimalistic long dress that's a cut out around her stomach and

her soft glam make up that makes her appear absolutely ethereal as she show those crispy white gems she calls teeth at me. "Let me see your hand. . ." Oh she has found out about the engagement, this has my grandmother written all over. Because just days ago she was advising me about having relationship with all my relatives because anything can happen to her and I'll be left alone as if that would plant fear in me, being alone. "Omg it looks so beautiful and expensive. Take a seat. I've missed you so much" I haven't got a chance to say a word but rather I am overwhelmed by her presence, not intimidated before you assume things.

"Lerato. . ." And finally I get to speak and we chuckle in between as she pushes aside the car keys of an expensive car and sunglasses then leans back on a chair. "You're looking amazing too" I compliment and she keeps her eyes on me, with a gigantic simper. "And how are you?"

"I've been great. I brought you something" she says then her hand disappears under the table when she gives me an enormous paper bag and handing it to me. I am wondering what could be inside.

"A gift?" This is absolutely awkward for me. Was I supposed to also purchase a gift for her or something? What should I say? That I am going to buy one. "Thank you so much. I cannot wait to see this"

“It’s only a pleasure. This is some stuff from my new collection so I thought I should bring you something. You want to order?” Then she grabs the menu and going through it. I am seriously feeling out of place for the first time in my life. Usually I enter a room knowing what to say and what to do. But encounter with family are always just so eccentric for me.

Are we going to talk about my uncle who has drinking problems? My aunt who recently divorced and has distant herself from everyone? My cousin who’s a “skrr skrr” and continuously disappoint the family and there’s always family meetings being held because of him? Maybe about the other cousin who’s having her sixth baby from a different father or the one who’ll be graduating soon?

I look through the menu and make my order as the waiter stands right before us with a notepad and pen. I watch my cousin being amiable to him before he disappears and leaving behind a pink elephant in a tulle dress dancing ballet on the table. “Our grandmother told me about your engagement and I couldn’t believe it so who is he and how long you’ve been together?” Now I am supposed to come up with a perfect love story that would land coated with gold into her ears. I’ve never been interested in those romantic movies so I easily forget the plot otherwise I would’ve used one of them. If I say we met at the coffee shop that would sound scripted or maybe through a

friend? Ha ha ha why am I even allowing my brain to bleed because I am sure my forward grandmother already told her we met at church and I am the chosen wife?

“It’s nothing serious just a business deal and that’s all” I tell her truthfully and she gasps looking up at me with bewilderment. I am sure she was expecting a sweet love story with a lot of “ncaaw and aww” moments so that tears can glisten in her eyes because she’s a sucker for love, always been.

“That’s not what gogo told me” Hmmm she doesn’t want to believe what I’ve said to her, she thinks I’m holding onto something and even hiding something. “I heard that he has been praying for his wife and finally God showed him you. I am just surprised you agreed to his proposal you’re not one to believe in love and marriage. What’s special about him?”

“Nothing” Literally. What I go for in a man is someone who doesn’t doubt himself in a room full of people, a man who walks in but everyone throws respect at him without him having to ask for it and even attention. With a dominating and supreme aura. Not a man who wants to live his life proving that he’s powerful and ruthless not forgetting undermining women. It’s comical watching him thinking he has this “game” at the palm of his hand.

“What you mean there’s nothing? Are you marrying someone you have no feelings for or whatsoever?” Feelings—Let me push aside whatever this thought attempting to enter my mind.

“I am helping him with something and I am going to gain from it. No one has feelings for anyone here. Maybe different agendas”

“What’s your agenda?” I see her looking at me with innocent curiosity. As the waiter places our food on the table and she immediately guzzle on the champagne then her eyes returns to being fixated on me. “What’s you’re agenda Krotoa?” Again she asks the moment the alcohol travels through her system and she seems ready to hear what I have to say.

“My grandmother cannot find out about this conversation Lerato. . .” This is more like a warning and a threat than anything and she vigorously nods her head wanting me to get straight to the point. “I want to destroy him” Those words sounds so treacherous and I see her blinking rapidly like I blew a spell on her then she guzzles the gold color liquid again that tastes like stars against buds.

“What did he do you?”

I shrug my shoulders and this time holding the glass in my hand. “I don’t know. He didn’t do nothing. His fault is being a man” I scowl my lips and then guzzle the glass once before refilling.

The nonplussed appearing on her face makes me almost suppurate with laughter throwing my head back and appear as an antagonist. “Is this about what happened to mamncane?” When she plagues me with that conversation I pause what I am doing. Everything in me becomes paralyzed and the color of my eyes appear red as blood as though I am robotic creature—not literally—A frown dances on her face as she awaits for an answer from me.

“This is not about what happened to my mother. It has nothing to do with her”

“We both know that you’re lying to me and if that’s what you’re telling yourself every day before going to bed then you’re also lying to yourself Krotoa Makhetha. The anger that resides you is the reason why you’ll miss out on a great chance of love because when you see men you see an enemy. You see someone who took something away from you. You scared of them, you won’t admit that but you fear that what happened to your mother could happen to you. You fear it could happen to another woman therefore you want to destroy these gender to protect someone else from becoming a victim of this cruel act. But what you’re not understanding is that the anger that you planted inside yourself is going to grow and grow then it will turn you into something that you are not. While you’re

trying to destroy people, you're so unaware that you're destroying yourself as well"

"You know nothing Lerato Kgamanyane!"

"I know that I care about you and I love you. Regardless of you pushing away people because you're so afraid of the idea of love but I do"

I look at her with a sardonic facial expression. How many minutes we've spent sitting across each other on this table? Two? Five? Ten? And suddenly she thinks she has Me figured out. What the hell does she know? Nothing.

"This was great" I haven't even touched the appetizing plate blinking at me on the table. "But I have to go. I have to return back to work"

"You haven't even touched your food Krotoa don't do this. If I might've offended you in any way then I'm sorry"

"You haven't offended but I'm leaving and thank you for the gift" I grab the paper bag she has given me and attempting to walk away when she holds me by my hand. I turn back to her and she's looking at me with eyes that are luminous with adoration and care that I don't want to witness. "Lerato"

"Forgive him Krotoa" I pretend as though I haven't heard those words that her mouth shaped perfectly. I am about to exit the restaurant when I bump into someone. "I am so sorry. . ." I hear

an apology from a melodic and baritone voice, it's not deep—I lift my head up and I remember him that night when his brother engaged me. I just forgotten his name. He's with a woman that looks extremely gorgeous with chestnut colored hair that has been braided in cornrows and earrings hanging on her ears. There's just something about the dimples dancing on her cheeks as she innocently smiles at me. "Krotoa!" He says my name. Oh he remembers. I must say that their parents were having godly sex because their sons are attractive and most definitely good looking. "Bandlalethu. I am sure you might've forgotten"

"Oh yes. Great seeing you again" I don't know but I can sense that he's uncomfortable seeing me. "I am sure we would catch up soon. Again it was great seeing you Bandla" I immediately say then walk out.

Returning back to work. It's a walking distance. I just hate the fact that at each step that I am taking I am haunted by the words of my cousin. Who said I actually care about missing out on love? What has love done for anyone? Mxm, I don't care about being outside of the party.

When I return back I see everyone looking at me with tropical hues and unusual smiles. And then? What happened? I ignore their stares and making my way to my office. The moment I

walk in there's bouquets of flowers everywhere and he's also here afloat with trepidation.

I close the door immediately and if there's one person who can get under my skin and make themselves comfortable there then everyone this is him—Nqaba.

I want to throw each and every flower surrounding this office on his face but rather I compose myself as he stands up then clears his throat. "I thought I should surprise you" With flowers? And not money in my account? Or maybe a house somewhere in CAMPS BAY but you thought that flowers were just perfect? "I don't know if you love flowers but if you don't then I can make it up to you" The sound of his tone sounds different than it usually does. It sounds more lewd and smooth as the saxophone in a song. "I'm surprised"

"You look beautiful" Another compliment for today. I smile seeing him taking a step forward towards my direction until he's standing right in front of me. And he's so, so close. Too close that I can smell and touch his scent if that's even possible.

"Thank you" I say quietly, whispering now in the close proximity. He leans forward and I cannot inhale without taking him all in. Our lips are so close, almost touching and my eyes dart between his eyes and his are focused on my lips. After a moment of hesitation, he leans forward again and he presses his full lips against mine, holding my waist. Then his other hand

slowly slid up the side of my neck, resting it along the crook behind ear.

The kiss that he gives me, I can feel it down to my bones, shaking my core. As our lips continue to mould together and dancing the sensual samba and my free hand simply rests on his chest.

Then I pull away from him catching oxygen that has been deprived from my lungs. I can see him catching a breather as well in this salacious ambience then he smirks complacently without removing his hand around my waist. "I just came here to check on up on you and drop these" Oh, is that what people who're going to get married do, check up on each other?

"Flowers" I look around. They're so pink. "Thank you. I'm not a fan but they're pink"

"I thought you were going to say they're beautiful" He grins, looking down at me as though he's study all my face features.

"They are"

"At least you think so. I should go. I'll call you later okay"

Do I casually tell him that I saw his brother with his girlfriend? Was that his woman?

The question is do I tell him? Ah no.

13.

mary magdalene

ZENOKUHLE

It still feel peculiar being back into the real world and hearing the sounds of the screeching cars on the road, seeing the movements of people walking up and down: some paying attention to what they have in their hands, some holding onto their partners, some looking rather irascible and some covered in sheen of sweat with a bottle of water as they run. I come across different people wearing masks of a woman, man, young man, young woman and queer.

I can feel a sensation that's indescribable as the breeze dances on my arms while the music of a feminine eloquent woman plays in the car that's manoeuvring on an affluent environment.

I inhale yet again feeling flowers growing into my lung each time the warm and sweet air voyages through my nose. For a moment I steal a glance at him—this man—that has been so generous to me. And he has his focused on nothing but the road, his eyes are narrowed and he seems deeply in is

thoughts. Making me wonder what's that he's thinking about I am fascinated by that face that he's making and I get to study all his face feature. He has such a delicate beard and high cheek bones and dark lips as though they were burnt by smoke. I've never smelt nicotine on him though, ever.

He catches me with my eyes fixated on him at first he frowns trying to read my facial expression and where my inquisitiveness is coming from then I see a smile blooming that invites my own. "Thank you again for what you're doing for me. It means a lot" I am so sure he must be exhausted and bored of hearing these words rolling out of my mouth from the moment he walked into my ward while I sat by the window after I've braided my hair into cornrows.

I could see other patients wearing their gowns and sombre that brought a humongous emotions into my chest that kept expanding. He stood there and announced that I was being discharged with a smile dancing on his face, he has always been so optimistic and transferring that energy to me every day—hope—that's what it gave me as he would rub my knuckles with his hands that were too soft and he also has long fingers eliciting alienated sensations that I have no words I could use to explain as yet but maybe I can say they are ungodly.

I could see that he thought this news would somehow draw euphoria on my face but rather I remained on that window not

knowing what to do with my hands as they started shaking and their temperature was frigid. I held onto my hospital gown then ran my hands on the lines of cornrows. As though I was the pivot the earth had left unturned almost static in a same position. "I am going home?" I remember asking him thinking that he might've made a mistake and delivering the news to a wrong patient. But he stood there swathe in a hospital gown and black suit that made him appear attractive and charming—and he's fully aware of it. I could tell by his body language and the way he speaks with authority. "I am going home?" I asked again until a frown appeared on his face.

There was nothing to be raptured about as I don't really remember who I am regardless of knowing where I come from and my name but If I made a choice of going home now I don't even know where I would start since I don't remember anyone in my family. The sound of their voices. Their names. Their faces. I don't know my identity.

While I am stuck in my haze I hear him saying. "You have nothing to thank me for. I'll take care of you until you remember and get back your memory eventually just don't be hard yourself" But his words are so soft it sounds just like passing wind on an airless summer's night.

"I wish I can remember anything. Was I married? Did I have children? Where are my parents? My siblings? And why they've

never looked for me. I want to remember something. Anything” I say the words flowing bitterly off of my tongue, my face unable to filter the expression that lingers on it. I look right back to his face and I see pity. “What happened to me?” I swallow the bitterness on my tastebuds and I want a glass of water to get rid of the taste and the swollen feeling of my tongue.

“Zenokuhle” I don’t think I’ve ever heard anyone pronouncing my name in such mannerism. As though I am an expensive piece of gem. I know he wants to hold an eye contact but he can’t since he has to focus on the road. “I just told you don’t be hard on yourself. When the time is right you’ll remember” He has a calm grace about him, so intense I am convinced he never panics about anything but people like him are the most dangerous ones. You never know when they are going to attack. “Look at me. I got you don’t worry” That smile invites my very own then I look outside the window yet again but this moment is short lived when he finds a parking spot then he turns to face towards me. “Remember you have nothing to worry about. Just pretend as if you’re in a foreign country for the first time and live in a moment. If you’re uncomfortable then fine we’ll leave. We are here to have something to eat and that’s all” I find myself being lost in those eyes and the movement of his lips then I subconsciously slap myself in a

reminder that this man is being a good samaritan and I shouldn't dare take advantage of that.

Although there was someone whom I thought we shared something with. I think it was the way we both could be comfortable in total silence and smiles between but-((takes a deep breath))-I have been searching for chemistry and trying to understand if I might've had romantically feelings for him or it was just platonic and I am still perplexed. Mostly because I haven't seen him for some time and he has been acting totally strange. Very different from the man I have been interacting with for a month.

When he opens the door for me I am stupefied by his gentleman mannerism, they're total impeccable then he smiles after I've murmured "Thank you" And for someone who's just coming back from the hospital I would love to believe that I look decent in this pastel color dress that makes me feel rather comfortable and not too overwhelming nor underwhelming.

As we are walking through the door to the restaurant Bandlalethu causes a collision with a woman and her shopping bag immediately lands on the floor causing me to gasp as he quickly picks it up, I can tell that she's irascible but the moment she lifts her head up the facial expression dissolve. I've never met anyone so beautiful before

she is one of those women you'd see on that high-end magazine or maybe a fashion show in a country with a three color flag which is green, white and red. Her hair and eyebrows have been bleached; she's exuding supremacy and even her aura. One of those women who intimidate you without daring to say a word and by the time they do say something they've already planted self-doubt inside you.

"Krotoa!" The man next to me says with his body language rather screaming uncomfortable seeing her. They know each other? They used to date? I cannot really read her face but it seems as though she's trying to remember who he is.

"Bandlaethu I'm sure you might've forgotten" There's a hint of disenchant in his tone that leaves me with another pile of questions. Who is she? Or maybe she's one of those famous people. I wouldn't doubt that for a second. From her style to her posture, she's an absolute goddess.

"Oh yes. Great seeing you again" I really doubt. Then she casts her eyes towards me. I didn't know I was smiling until now when she attentively gazes at me as though some cartoons in my head are dancing to a wrong tune. I thought maybe she'd smile back, that's a human thing to do I am guessing but rather she remains straight faced. Oh that was rude wasn't it? "I am sure we would catch up soon. Again it was great seeing you Bandlaethu" It felt as though my existence was not felt. Like

she couldn't see me or whatsoever. Am I invisible? I am literally just standing right next to the person you're talking to and you won't even acknowledge me? Wonderful, I guess.

Right after that she cat walk pass us with her long and smooth looking legs propelling her out of the restaurant. Even when she's just walking it's like she has the world at the palm of her hands. Mxm. I am so sure she's one of those rich kids who suck on their parent's breast and then act as though the world revolves around them or maybe she was just lucky to marry a rich old man who takes care of her so she doesn't lift even a finger.

"Who was that?" I ask him as we are walking through the tables. Looking for the right spot where we can sit at this restaurant that has neutral color palette and everything about it is expensive. Even the people whom are drinking champagnes and cocktails.

"Oh that was Krotoa" He sounds nonchalant making himself comfortable on the chair right opposite me. But at the same time it seems he wants to avoid having the conversation about her.

"You guys seem to know each other" I hope that my chuckle in between will conceal that I want to know deeper about their relationship and how they know each other.

“No. Not really but she’s a family friend” Oh. Oh. Oh. I see after that he grabs the menu on the table and his eyes are wandering through it.

I grab my own menu. “I think she’s beautiful” My eyes are fixated on him, impatiently waiting for his response.

“I know, she’s extremely gorgeous” Now that felt like a powerful punch at my solar plexus that I greedily gulp for air into my lungs. “Have you decided on what are you going to eat?” After a moment of going through his menu he asks me pushing it aside and he has such an innocent expression on his face, unaware that he has left me feeling like a deflated balloon.

“Zenokuhle!” I hear someone calling. It’s a waiter who should be taking our orders. I just look at her completely perplexed while she stands here with her hands against her hips and trembling lower lip. I can see she’s about to explode with emotions seeing me, sitting here with a vessel memory. “Is this you Zenokuhle?” Again she asks. It looks like she wants to touch and embrace me but at the same time murder me with this knife on the table. “Oh now you’re back? After you’ve disappeared for how many years? How many years? Your family died when your house was set afire and where were you? Where were you Zenokuhle? Are you not ashamed of yourself? After everything you’ve done? Are you not ashamed

of yourself, you bloody devil” There’s a crescendo in her tone. I wish I could at least remember what is she talking about but I remain here like a defrosting meat, static and not knowing what to do.

“Let’s go” Bandlaletu seethes and his face has changed. I cannot really read it. But I blame him. I blame him for taking me into a public environment when I made him aware that I wasn’t ready yet. My tears trickle at the corners of my eyes, gulping for enough oxygen that has been deprived into my lungs. “And you don’t dare raise your voice when you’re talking to her!” Now his tone is perilous. I just want to ask about what she told me and my family. I want to know what happened. Why did I disappear? What happened? But I cannot because I’ve become completely paralyzed that a simple two vowel to form a word and sentence cannot roll out of my mouth.

“Hamba sfebe ndini that’s all you ever know” When she seethes that cuss Bandla turns and grabs her by her arm. I can tell that grip is painful because she whimpers. Everyone is now casting their eyes towards our direction and the manager approaches us.

I touch Bandla’s arm and he turns to seemingly trying to send tranquillity throughout his body but he appears treacherous. Then he clicks his tongue letting her go before we walk out of

the restaurant and completely ignoring the manager whom wants to find out what happened.

The way he opens the door for me to get in the car I thought it was going to fly in the air and travel straight into that restaurant and hit that woman in the head. I get in the car and remain in the same position that I was sitting on in that wooden chair, still nonplussed. I disappeared for years? And my family died on fire? What happened? How did that happen? Maybe she was mistaking me to someone else. But she called me by my name.

The moment he starts the car I wipe the tears and focus outside as we move. I inhale sharply trying to find words in this ear splitting silence. I am sure he must be wondering what kind of a person I am. I am wondering too. "I am sorry about that" he apologizes first his tone sounding deep and husky at the same time. "I'm going to deal with her"

I glance at him "she called me a bitch"

"Hmmm"

"I am not a bitch"

"Hmmm"

I look at him then look around this damn car to find something I can use to I hit him on the head then maybe he can regain his senses because there's no way. There's no way this man is in

his senses. But also that means I'll end up homeless. Mxm. I choose to just look outside the window and not dare say a word. "It seems like I am a vile person" I cannot really hold back those words as they leave my mouth.

"And that's okay. That was who you are then and not who you are now. Don't let that define you. I told you don't be harsh on yourself eventually you'll remember somethings. You cannot expect that you were perfect back then, we all have flaws"

"Do you have flaws?" I ask him.

"Yes many of them"

He then shrugs his shoulders and looks at me with a smirk. I have completely forgotten that I was crying and my nose is blocked with mucus when we erupt with laughter and my shoulders moving up and down. "But on a serious note you have nothing to worry about. I'll go back there and find out what she was talking about and who she is to you. That will help us navigate in finding more about you. I am here for you once again. You have a friend in me"

14.

Life is too short, be a slut.

I groan and covering my face with a pillow upon hearing my grandmother ululating then she starts singing ebullient. “Krotoa! Krotoa!” Yes that’s her outside my door screaming my name in a sing song. I decide not to respond and remain here in a same position while impatiently waiting for my sleep to return. But this woman walks through the door. “I know you’re not sleeping. Wake up Krotoa man!” I hope I am not being awakened because some pink flowers that are going to wilt in just three days are surrounding the kitchen this time because I’d have my breasts hanging from my behind. What makes men think and assume that all women loves flowers? Did he expect me to fall in love with him after those flowers? “Wake up!” This time she peels off my duvet and I am left feeling the morning breeze but I continue with my act pretending to be sleeping and turning to face towards the other direction so that my grandmother won’t see me rolling my eyes. “You’ll find me in the living room when you’re done being dramatic. You’re just like your Amzoli she was just like you” she compares me to my mother. A smile appears on my face, she had such a beautiful name. What a woman that she was. You see my cousin whom

was preaching to me yesterday? Yes she reminds me of my mother in every way. Even her sense of style and sweet personality.

When she walks out of the room I decide to sit on the bed and pulling up my duvet, traveling through my thoughts. And this world is not so colourful and it makes me often wonder whether or not my mother has a proud and charming simper when she's looking at me? What I've done? And what I am planning on doing—not that her not approving this will make me change my mind about anything. If I wasn't so afraid the blood of that man who took her away from me would've been painted in my hands right now. Just having my eyes fixated on him while is laying on the pool of blood with words too heavy to roll out of his mouth while he beseech for another chance making a promise that what happened will never happen again. Ha ha ha isn't funny? How that somehow supposed to make everything okay and all shall be forgiven because "I'll never do it again and I promise to change" would pat me on the shoulder. As if that would bring back my mother. I'll never walk into this house to find her swathe in an sophisticating garment and watching one of those romantic movies in a language that she doesn't understand but rather she'd watch subtitles then she'll bring my head into her lap gently massaging my scalp and teaching me about love, different kinds of love and love language.

The sound of her voice if you could get a visual picture of it would've looked like crystalline water at a peaceful lake, with birds beautifully humming. It was velveteen that you could listen to her talking on and on even if she was talking about how chickens give birth.

“Krotoa!” This sounded like a warning from my grandmother and that means this time she'll walk here and drag me by my ankles. I have no choice but getting off the bed and briskly walking into the living room and as I predicted there's an enormous bouquet of boxed flowers. Yes that ululating and the wedding song was because of this. I am being awakened at eight am because of these damn flowers. “Those are not yours but mine”

My grandmother says with a bragging smile when sees me looking at the flowers on the coffee table. Oh she has a man? I hope it's not that deacon, that man is not her type and whenever he speaks his mouth is always full of saliva. No, no. “My son in law bought them for me. And I woke up to this. Your husband has sent the letter. He wants the negotiations to happen as fast as possible. I've already called your uncles and they agreed that this weekend would be perfect” I did say that this man knows how to get under my skin didn't I? Didn't I say he should just send the money to my grandmother's account and stop being melodramatic?

Now my uncles will be here. That one who steals cars mostly surely would be looking around our neighbourhood for his next target and then ask gives me ten rand to buy myself nice things. Yes with that green paper that has an old man smiling on it. And then his girlfriend who works at the salon—Jesus I am going to die before my family actually arrives here with their drama. Then we have uMkhonto who used to be a boxer, he's a father to me and umalume Malibongwe always disappears. Anyways my uncle's girlfriend, sigh

that woman doesn't know how to speak in a lower tone and she always has a bottle of cider in her hand then the night ends with them fighting and cussing at each other.

My facial expression remains unfiltered and she witnesses the irked on my face then she narrows her eyes at me taking a sip from her cup of tea. "What's wrong? You don't want to marry umfana ka Zungu anymore?" No but rather I want to kill him. What would he do if I cancel all of this nonsense and walk away with these shares because clearly he's undermining me. I've been allowing him to do this to me for far too long and I am saying this now, there's no wedding happening here. "Krotoa talk me don't just stand there looking like a chicken about to hatch" My head is not even here anymore. I hate people who don't listen to me. When I say A please don't tell me about B because I don't care about it.

“No. I just thought that he’d send it tomorrow” I sew a smile on my face that manages to appear like a perfect garment and this woman here is smart. Too smart. I know that quizzical expression on her face means she wants to plague me with questions until the truth comes out. “You said we are going back home??” I am hoping that we don’t have to go back home and be awakened in the morning to go fetch water and listen to the chicken crow. You see if that happens Nqaba has another thing coming his way.

“No, no, no they’re coming here” Oh I guess that man who’s bed is made of clouds is somehow good isn’t he? “And they’re coming in the next two days. Lerato said she’ll come help around but she has to speak to her husband first” I want to dramatically roll my eyes but rather I make my way to take a sit on the couch and leaning back. I could be sleeping right now and dreaming about this man I am marrying having sex but here I am talking about a wedding that is not going to happen. The only thing that I regret here is seeing anti-climax on my grandmother’s face but she’ll be fine. “Aww I cannot believe that my second granddaughter is leaving me. You’re really getting married Krotoa”

Now I have to pretend to be dismay with tears shimmering my eyes. Oh so early in the morning? What is that I’ve done?

“Getting married doesn’t mean I am going to leave you. I’ll be here all the time. I’ll visit every day to see you” If only she knows that I am going to be around and she’ll still knock on my door with annoyance in my bedroom so that we could go to church. But will she still want to attend church? I haven’t thought about her and considered her in this. Maybe getting married and having to divorce sounds rather swallow able than not having a wedding at all. The whole idea of walking down the aisle and saying vows that I don’t mean makes me nauseous so suddenly and that’s why going to court is a perfect idea.

“You can’t visit me every day. No, no. You are going to be a married woman now. You’re marring into church too Krotoa some things have to change” I guess I have to dye my hair black now? And my eyes brows. I have to change the way I dress? I know exactly that’s what she’s talking about. If she could she would do something with that tattoo on my back maybe remove my skin with a knife or something. “I know you express yourself in so many ways. Trust me when your mother was young she was just like you. I remember when she did her braids blonde, I asked her to take them off the moment she walked through the door and shaved her head off. But even when she was bald she was beautiful. I’ve never judged you for who you are but not everyone will understand you especially when you’re married woman” Now I need a makeover? Yawns.

“I know” I smile. I don’t know nothing. “I was thinking the same as well” You should see how her face has just brightened. Like she was praying that I say those words. “Today I’m not going to work so I’ll go change my hair and I’ll look acceptable” I-she-me say those words and they tasted like rotten liver against my buds. I am wondering why am I doing this to myself? Is this still about destroying this man? Or maybe knowing what I am going to gain after all of this? Or maybe to prove to him not to ever undermine the power of woman? Am I really missing out on a chance of genuine love because. . .I cannot be thinking about love, my thoughts cannot be foggy not now.

“And how was your meet up with Lerato?” It was a nightmare. “Isn’t she lovely?” No.

“It was great well she bought me a gift. I need to call her maybe she can help me with my makeover” Look at that woman. Now she has stopped taking sips from the cup made of glass and you can see what’s inside. Now she’s a blooming mirth portrait.

“I’m going to like this Zungu boy because he’s changing you for the better. Listen to you. I was scared that you’d die alone Krotoa” I will actually. But at least I will be a businesswoman and dermatologist with houses in different provinces and cars that my heart desires. I hate kids, I don’t want them, they should remain in my womb and don’t even dare think about becoming human. I hate pets, I don’t want anything that would

associate myself with them. “You love him don’t you? Look at your face”

“You have no idea” I smile and then look at the ring on my finger before looking at her. Now she seems pretty much convinced that her granddaughter is going to have her happily ever after and she’ll meet her great grandchildren. You know what I deserve? An award of being a best new comer actress in these streets.

I excuse myself returning to my bedroom and closing the door behind before grabbing my phone and getting inside my wardrobe to make a call. My grandmother could be standing outside my door leaning her ear and listening to everything. “Didn’t we talk about this Nqabayezulu?” I guess this is some sort of greeting when you’re talking with an ignorant man.

“Nkosazana sawubona. Did you sleep well sthandwa wami?” Why the fuck is he not matching my energy? And who is nkosazana? And worse sthandwa sami?

“I slept well until I woke up to a letter this morning and I thought we spoke about this” Oh why do I sound calm now?

“I thought you gave me permission to go on and do this unless you don’t remember”

“I gave you permission? I gave you permission Nqaba? When was that?”

“You said if I wanted to waste everyone’s time then I can do this and that’s why I chose to go on about it”

“Nqaba I am going to kill you. That’s what I’m going to do to you. I’m going to kill you”

I hear him gasping dramatically. Then I hear a voice at the background. Oh no wonder he’s calling me “sthandwa sami” he must be around his father or maybe his uncles since there was a letter sent. I don’t know. “You’re murder Krotoa?” There’s humour in his tone and I can tell that he’s smiling too. Nxarga that charming smile that doesn’t move any of my toe nails.

“You’re getting on my last nerves and I made it clear to you that I don’t want to do this. Now I have to do a stupid make over because I need to look like a decent wife because of you. If you continue doing this then they’ll be no wedding and you’ll wait for me and these shares in that bloody alter!” I seethe and then hang up the call.

15.

narcissistic

/nar-sis-ist-ik/

- abnormal interest in or admiration for yourself

N Q A B A

((Inhales sharply))

My eyes are fixated on my phone screen the moment she hangs up the call seething and I am left with my veins swelling from the treacherous and perilous malice. I cannot really run to my brother every time this woman manages to make my head sibilate. I seriously need to do something with myself. Maybe get something intoxicating that would travel through my system into complete oblivion or sexual intimacy? No, no I cannot think about being with another woman that's too risky for me right now especially when this sorceress would go demented when she discovers about my shenanigans.

Also I cannot really see my innocent angel with her soft and ethereal face because she has to recover and think about herself. My angel is that what I said?

I know for a fact my brother is taking care of her for me until I have everything figured out and hopefully then she'll still be waiting for me.

I run my hands through my face trying to think of something. Anything that could pacify that woman. What does she desire anyway? I could see how apathetic she was walking through her office that was surrounded by flowers but rather she said "they're pink" then wandered her around the room before she cast her eyes on me. I was hoping to see her blooming with a rosy hue but rather she remained the same, with her well sculptured honed facial features.

"Nqabayezulu" I am interrupted by a masculine and thick tone calling me as I am still staring at my phone and hoping for some sort of shamanism that maybe she might call me back after she has calmed from the turbulent storm. I am suddenly feeling transfigured with my feet that are unable to move from this position and my body that's listening to them and not my brain. "Nqabayezulu!" Again the stern tone calls me and I slowly cast my eyes towards their direction and my father is standing there swathe in a white shirt and jeans exuding authority. "I've been

calling you what are you thinking about? It's that girl isn't?"
Then he smiles. I haven't seen those teeth in years.

I look at him perplexed then ask "A girl?"

"Your wife to be" The he reminds me that I am going to get married with a demented woman who's not afraid or scared of anything. That woman makes me wonder what that happened to her, she's not afraid of death? The thought of dying makes my lower stomach flutter with bullet and blades. "Is she the woman that you really saw? I hope you're not doing this for me. I'd hate to see you in an unhappy marriage" If I could at this moment I'd suppurate with sonorous laughter until I turn into an antagonist because I'm doing this for him, he pushed me into it.

"Isn't this what you wanted me to do?"

"I want you to be responsible that's all. I want you to be a man and have a wife and children. I want you to love"

"You want me to be you because you're so afraid that I am going to turn out like your brother. It gives you sleepless night knowing we have a relationship with him and not with you. You've always wanted to be just like your brother. You're jealous of him ain't you baba?" I elevate my eyebrow at him and seeing his iris dilate, his eyes are becoming darker and lines starts appearing on his forehead, all the animalistic

characteristic in him enlivens as he remains standing on that entryway. I expect him to say something, but rather he smiles then turns on his heels and walk away. I am wondering what is his next move. What's he going to do? Is he going to come back and chase me out of his house? Are we going to pray about this and listen to him asking God to forgive me because I have no idea about what I'm doing? Or maybe he'd change his mind about this business—I didn't think about that one. I should actually swallow my pride and go apologize to him, I know that will make him feel superior than he already his.

I wrench the door to the fridge open and grabbing the bottle of water guzzling it down once and calming myself from whatever is that I am feeling before my feet obey me and propel me around the house looking for him and he's not in the living room or even his home office. Did he drive to church? I don't know anything is possible with that man who has underlying issues with his brother whenever you touch that conversation his teeth sharpened like a shark and he'd eat you alive, without any remorse drawn on his face.

“Zungu” I call him the moment I see him outside the terrace and deep in his thoughts with his hand resting on his chin.

“Baba can we talk?” My respectful mannerism seems to impress him because he just nods his head and point the chair opposite him. The ambience is tranquil here and the sun is

slowly outstretching in the sky. As the trees surrounding us whistles softly. “I wasn’t supposed to talk to you like that and I am sorry” This is me apologizing. I’ve never done that before and that caught his attention because he’s now looking at me as if he’s searching for something on my face.

“It’s true. I’ve always wanted to have a relationship with you. And maybe I might be trying too hard and pushing you away”

“What about Bandlaethu? Why you can’t try having a relationship with him? You cannot pretend as if he’s not your son and he hasn’t been trying to amends”

“What about him?” Then he narrows his eyes and flaring his nostrils. His hand remains resting on his beard. “Your brother made it clear that I am nothing to him and I cannot do anything about that” Having a narcissistic parent is hard. They make you assume that they’re not wrong and make you feel something is absolutely wrong with you. They make you assume you are internally flawed. You carry shame in your skin and develop punishing inner critics. “I am not the problem here” I guess we are the problem then? Us wanting our father to love and care for us make us a problem. That’s great.

“You’re not the problem?”

“That’s exactly what I said. And I forgive you for what you said just minutes ago and I am hoping that would be the last time

you ever speak to me like that. I'm your father and not your friend" Now everything changes, the monster is displayed. "And tonight we have a service at church bring your fiancé and the church must have a good image of you. Don't disappoint me Nqaba. While your uncle is away the business needs you right now so take over already, I had that conversation with him and he support what I just said now make me proud" Business? That sounds lovely. I have completely forgotten about what this conversation was about when a smile spreads through my cheeks and matching his then he extends my hand for a handshake. "It's not too late now. Then get up and do what you're supposed to do. Go carry the legacy of this family. The staff will be briefed about you taking over" I guess my father is really not the problem. But rather we keep looking for things that will make him appear flawed.

We get up and share a warming hug. I remain in his arms for some time as he embraces me with caress and endearments then I pull away from his arms. I cannot find my mother around the house as she might've left already—she's a businesswoman after all and that's how they met with my father.

I need to see this woman who wants to see me at the mental institution. How am I going to tell her about going to church tonight? I didn't think this through. I focus on the driving

Advertisement

changing gears until eventually I am at the two thick set-horizontal levels that are met by concrete panelled entrance, maximizing movement across each level. Large glass panels let the outside in building with our surname written in black and white fonts.

And stepping out of the car I inhale the air deeply into my lungs with a smirk dancing on my face. This is happening—one step and all of this will belong to me. I grab my laptop bag, I had to start at my house first and change into something that would make me appear emitting sovereignty.

As I walk through the building I see eyes towards my direction it seems everyone was aware that I'd be gracing them with my presence. "Mr Zungu" A woman swathe a black and white dress that shows off her shoulders walks towards me with her lips painted in neutral tone that matches her make up with natural curls, her chocolate brown skin tone emollient. "I am Miss Khawula and I have been taking care of things at the moment. Nice meeting you" she extends her hand. Oh she's a fine piece of meat isn't she now? I get to feel the softness of her palms and the whiff of her sweet scent as she shows her crooked yet delicate teeth. "Oh please follow me so I can show you around. Then I can introduce you to everyone"

“And nice meeting you too Miss. . .” Not that I have forgotten but I want to see her walking around egg shells and lava around me.

“Khawula” Then she simpers and turns on her heels indicating that I should follow right behind her. I watch her sashaying her hips left and right. Her legs following the rhythm that she has created with her feet. I fix my blazer as we enter the elevator and she presses the button, summoning it. We scramble in and she leans on then takes a deep breath looking at her watch then look around the elevator yet making sure that our eyes don’t interlock even by mistake.

“You said you’ve been taking care of things?” I ask her breaking through the silence looming between us and she nods her head then she fixes her dress with her left hand so I can see the ring glistening on her finger. Ha ha ha. Is that supposed to make me step back and not try anything? Or is she assuming that maybe I want her?

“That’s true. I believe that I’ve done a great job” she says and then smile. I nod my head and shove my hand inside my pocket. This conversation won’t go further than this actually. I asked for exclusivity so I need to keep that in mind. I am getting married and I need to portray the picture of being a perfect husband that every woman would envy. Regardless of having an alpha woman as a wife. I swear that woman would point a gun on my

forehead one day and shatter my brain because I bought her flowers, she's deranged.

Why am I even thinking about her?

Oh that's because I have to call her about attending church today. Is my father even aware of what he's asking from me? That woman threatened to leave me at the alter and disappear with the shares.

Finally the sound of the feminine tone announces that we have arrived. This was agony slow and I let her get off first before following right behind her, her dainty plump posterior is such a sight actually even the way she moves it. "Okay so I was told that this would be your office. I'll give you a moment to look around then you can call me when you're done so we can introduce you to the staff" she says. I look around the contemporary masculine interior design. It's sleek and sophisticated. And it's very matured. "I'll be standing right outside" she announces seeing me mind blown and taken aback.

I look around and seeing the bottle of alcohol that I needed since this morning. Yes! Yes! Yes! Isn't God good? I place the laptop bag on top of the table and striding towards where the alcohol is. I pour the amber liquid onto the short glass and at one sip immediately it burns my throat. This feels so good. This

is what my body needed. I make myself comfortable on a brown leather gigantic chair leaning on it.

It feels like I am being crowned and the powerfulness wraps me like a gift. I feel untouchable.

I take out my phone from my pocket and counting from one to three, shutting my eyes before dialling the number that has a heart right next to it. I did this just in case I am home and I am around my parents whenever Krotoa calls to bark at me.

“Nqabayezulu Zungu” That’s how she answers my phone call

“Are you still mad at me?” I take a sip from the glass in my hand and taking yet another sharp breath. I’m going to become an alcoholic throughout this marriage for my mentality to be in place, I need something intoxicating every day.

“Hawu sthandwa sami. . .” Wait what? “I thought we’ve already spoke about this” No woman we didn’t talk about anything but rather you threatened me. “I’m going to call you later right now I’m with my cousin and my grandmother. You miss me?” Even the sound of her tone is velveteen. Now wonder she’s sweet.

“My father wants us at church tonight” This is a perfect time to tell her about this, she cannot really tell me to go drown in an ocean full of sharks or maybe promise me that she’d send hit men to scatter my body.

There's silence. That means she's cussing me underneath her breath and her ears have smoke coming out of them. I wish I can see her face right now. "No problem. I guess I'll see you tonight then Zungu wami" That wasn't supposed to have an effect on me but rather here I am smiling and even pushing back the glass in my hand. I wonder whether or not she did drama at school. "Are you going to fetch me?" Khona uzophula umoya wami? That's not happening.

"I'm still busy at work and I'll finish up surely late. Is okay if we meet there?"

"Okay no problem. I'll see you then"

"Where are you?"

"I'm out we are having a spa date then we'll go out for lunch. Do you want me to bring you something to eat at work?" Is this how she'll always speak to me around her grandmother? Because I might have her moving in with us, she sounds genuinely nice. And also she mentioned a makeover, I cannot wait to see her. I hope she won't be irascible but she could at least smile for few seconds so my father won't see any loopholes.

"No, no I don't want to bother you. . ." In that moment Miss Khawula walks back and when she sees me on the phone she murmurs her apology yet walking in and standing in the middle

of the office with her hands against her chest. “Just have fun with your grandmother and I’ll send some money as well muntu wami” Why this one standing in front of me looking at me like that?

“Thank you” she says sweetly “Nqaba”

“Yebo I’m listening nkosazana”

“Ngiyakuthanda” I am feeling a combination of emotions. It’s like a perplexed weather. I don’t know whether I’m a frigid or parching. I just blink rapidly and taking a gulp from my drink.

“I love you too mama. I’ll see you tonight” Right after that she hangs up the call. I remain in the very same position and completely paralyzed. This almost feels like narcotic.

I need to talk to my brother!

16.

fear

/fiə/

- unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm

N Q A B A

Why am I doing this to myself?

I have been constantly plaguing myself with this question that keeps spreading through every corner of my brain. I'd sit in the middle of the conversation at work with my hand brushing my beard deep in my thoughts. What if I listened to my brother? Because I know for a fact he would never leave me in a dark to dance with my demons until I slowly start growing horns on my forehead becoming one of them. I know that there's a woman who had captured my heart in a most alienated way. I could be doing this with her. I could be winning my chances in both love and business with a woman I know will truly be in this with me.

But I am afraid. I'm afraid if I open myself, I will not stop pouring. Why do I fear becoming a river? What mountain gave me shame?

Right now I could be driving home because I've been drowned with work and actually throw myself on the couch then fall asleep there. Until I am awoken by my irksome alarm buzzing and my phone vibrating on the table but here I am at church repeatedly checking my watch because this woman should've been here hours ago and my father is about to preach. I hope she didn't change her mind to maybe teach me some sort of a lesson—she's capable trust me. Now I am running out of excuses as my father keeps gazing at me with a questioning look and wondering what's going on.

I decide to rather focus on stage to the woman with long soft textured hair at the front wearing a green hue dress with gigantic sleeves and singing with her hands waving in the air. Everyone is standing on their feet singing along. I am interrupted by my vibrating phone in my pocket and I quickly grab it out when her name appears on my screen. I am holding onto my breath excusing myself and making my way outside to answer it, I am feeling queasy. The moment I place the device against my ear I can feel the salty water beads forming on my forehead. "Zungu wami. Am I late?" Okay she's most definitely

with her grandmother because there's no way she would speak to me with this velveteen voice on a normal day. Krotoa? Never. "We had a problem but right now I am just two minutes away. I hope you understand" No I don't understand why your voice sounds like a glass of pearls. Make it make sense.

I wanted to have a conversation with my brother that this woman is also bemusing me at this moment. I don't know whether my mission of having her falling in love with me is working or she's ahead of me.

"Oh no, not all mama we started just minutes ago" I mean an hour ago. But because I need her here then fabricating outside the church is what I am going to do. "I am standing outside as we speak. Are you okay? Do you want me to do anything for you?" Also she hasn't really said anything to me about the money that I sent to her but rather sent a picture of those women doing something on her feet.

I can see a car driving through. I could barely breathe until now. The doors open and I take a step towards them but I am immobilized upon seeing her. Is this her? I had to ask myself as she stands right in front of me with her head that has been shaved into a short hair and she's swathe in a top which seamlessly blends into a black midi skirt with a giant white ribbon draped across the skirt giving the ensemble an extra luxurious touch with pearly drop earrings hanging from her

ears. And this time she didn't paint her face with gold and vibrant colors on her eyelids but rather looking natural. This woman is beautiful and it's unrealistic.

I don't know whether it's the shape of her nose or eyes that makes her appear godly and almost not human but. . . she's something that never existed before. I come across women whom are beautiful but this isn't the kind of beauty that you used to (basic) or you can never find someone else looking like this in terms of facial features but this one is godly.

"You're so beautiful" These words came out of my own mouth. I haven't blinked since she stood in front of me with her lush scent voyaging my nostrils. "You're sublime. You're really beautiful" I cannot stop talking and throwing these compliments at this point when she wraps her hands around my waist.

A woman's touch, sacred geometry. Her hands nurturing breath that strokes divine confidence. "Thank you but I am already late we should go inside" After that her lips touched mine. Whatever is that emanated on them tastes so fruity that I now want my tongue exploring the inside of her mouth. Oh man she smells good.

Her grandmother greets me and thanking me for the flowers when I am introduced to her cousin. I cannot really pay attention to anything else but her. It's crazy how she can

transform in a nanosecond and right now she looks like a sophisticating and elegant woman that my father would approve of but the personality and attitude hasn't changed. That makes her attractive.

I keep my gaze fixated on her with my hand now on her waist. I've noticed that whenever we walk together our feet communicate that they should take steps at the same time almost creating a rhythm of their own. By the time we enter the church I see heads turning towards our direction. And the men drooling and surely thinking about my woman on their beds. I tighten my hand around her waist with my hands digging into her soft skin marking my territory when she glances at me and smile. Krotoa is always seductive and sensual but today she has gone up her way to tease and hike up my desire.

This woman is brimming with fortitude that elicit my own as we make my way to the front and when we get there my mother is elated seeing her as they share an embrace rather than a handshake. Even my father has a simper and showing those white stones and thanking her for being here tonight. Right after that we make ourselves comfortable on the chair; I take her hand and rubbing her fingertips against my lips. God even her hands smells like a bowl of delicious fruits and if we were

not in a holy room I would've sunk them into the warmth of my mouth.

I try focusing to what is happening. But I cannot can. At this point I don't know if it's how heavenly she smells or how prepossessing she looks with this short hair. I've never noticed that she has thick eyebrows maybe because they were blonde or was that orange? I don't know. All I know is what's before my eyes right now is ethereal.

I need to remember that all of this is an act and we are pretending. When I attempt letting go of her hand, she holds mine tighter then glimpse at me once before looking forward as though she didn't just do that. What on earth is she playing? What is this woman doing?

I gulp my saliva and I cannot really grab the bottle of water on the table because I can only use one hand. My focus is now at the front as my father stands behind the pulpit brimming authority, he looks raptured and proud. "Amen bazalwane!" These are his first words as he lean closely to the microphone and then takes off his blazer. My mother gets up making her way there to get it. Apparently an usher should be the one doing that but she prefers doing it for her husband. I wonder whether Krotoa would do that for me. I am sure she would look at me as though I've lost my marbles and ask me to carry my own blazer throughout the whole service.

“Amen!” The brethren at church responds back some raising their hands and bibles. You should see how elderly women smile at him with motherly adoration. They are fond of my father as their own. And they respect him because to them he’s the closest thing to God. “Hallelujah!” The others say at the same time, there’s exuberance on their tones and in the atmosphere as well. Being here help others forget about their different battles and what they’re going through.

“It’s nice to be here!” My father shouts. Honestly few minutes ago I wouldn’t have related to that line. I still want to go to my house though and take a shower then have a bottle of beer but having these soft palms rubbing against mine sounds much better than that.

“Kumnandi ukuba lapha!” Again the voices scream back. Both feminine and masculine. Basically just translating what my father has said in vernacular, some stand on their feet whistling and ululating. And well some are loudly clapping their hands together in total delight.

“Amen!” My father clasps his one hand on a glass pulpit then smiles. He just stands there and smiles. Guess what? Everyone else is smiling. They have no idea what brought that simper into his face. “Just few weeks back we had my son standing here Nqabayezulu who chose his wife after he has seen her in his

dreams and vision” I wonder when I get to heaven I’ll be punished for that. Jesus

Advertisement

I hope you forgive me. I don’t even want to look around to see the women’s faces because they’re some whom I promised sweet nothings. “And today they’ve decided to grace us with their presence. Nqaba come here!” But we didn’t decide. This man forced me to come here. Now I have to go to the front when this was unplanned? I’m seriously being punished for all these lies and deceit.

I hear one of the worshipper start singing. I am glad it’s not the one who has been under my sheets before. Well I haven’t seen her around otherwise I would’ve sat on the chair feeling nails underneath my plump posterior.

I force a plastic smile and propelling towards the front after I fixed my blazer. And my “wife to be” remains sitting behind me and she has mastered the classes of appearing as though we are a perfect young couple that’s anointed by grace. Even the way she’s smiling and clasping her hands on her thighs. Looking at me with false adoration and passion as I stand behind the pulpit then the singing immediately fades.

I clear my throat and looking for the right words. All eyes are cast on me. My father is giving me a stern look that I shouldn’t

dare say something that would make him murder me in front of all these people. “Amen!” I say and they respond. “I don’t have much to say but God has shown me how wonderful he is. He taught me love and kindness. And mostly he gave me perfection in a human form and that’s ingodusu yami uMakhethe, sukuma mama bakubone (stand up my love so they can see you)” I see a rosy hue on her face. Then she stands up waving that hand that has an emerald diamond. I can hear ululation erupting. If only they knew that there’s a price to pay for all of this. I swear this time around Krotoa will have my eyeballs for breakfast. “That’s the one I’ve been shown after months and months of praying. I hope that God will show us kindness, patience and what true love really means in this journey we are about to take. I plead that you do put us in your prayers as well. Mama do you have something to say?” I ask with her with a grin and now she’s on the limelight. This time I’ll have a bullet going straight to my forehead, hallelujah. “Hhayi she’s shy. Maybe next time. Amen” I quickly get off the stage after she has shaken her head in disagreement.

The service continues. We are still holding hands surprisingly. I thought the sermon would be long until I start yawning and falling asleep on this chair but rather it was short and sweet—as they would say. Now we are leaving. We get up as they sing a song. Everyone wants to embrace and handshake Krotoa. And some are touching her face as if they cannot believe something

so unreal is standing in front of them and they have gigantic smiles on their faces, asking innumerable questions and when are they going to see her again. Ain't they just hypocrites? This is the same people who thought she wasn't good enough for me.

I have to walk her out because her grandmother already wants to leave. This time I don't have my hand around her waist but she has hers around my arm, leaning her head too on my shoulder. "I hope I'm going to see you soon mkhwenyana. It was a great service" Her grandmother says kissing my cheeks while I am still holding the door for her as she goes in. I make an oath that I'll see her soon before closing the door behind and also bidding farewell to the woman who was introduced as Lerato.

Oh God save me!

I run the back of my hand down her cheek, and then lovingly trace the line of her jaw with a knuckle. "I wanted to thank you for tonight. I know I am asking for too much from you but you're still doing this for me. I really appreciate it"

"Mkami" she says.

I'm confused. What is that supposed to me? Is she calling me her wife? Anyways I pause and I focus on her with a strange expression that remains impassive. "You should've said sukuma

mkami bakubone (stand up my wife, let them see you)” Oh that. You never know what to expect from this woman seriously. “I’ve been doing so much for you yet you haven’t bought me that car you should’ve bought long time ago for me”

I laugh. For the first time today. I genuinely laugh with my shoulders moving up and down. “Oh you wanted me to call you my wife? We are not married as yet. But after then I am most definitely going to use that line the way you wanted me to. Anyways what car do you want?”

“I don’t know anything that would look good on me”

“I’ll sleep thinking about what would look good on you then”

“A good night sleep you’ll have there”

I chuckle “You should go. Your grandmother said she was tired”

“Tomorrow” then she pauses “What are you doing?”

“I have work and I’ll finish late”

“Give me your house keys and send me your address” I swear my eyes almost fall off their own volition. My house what? “I don’t want to steal anything. Am I not your fiancé?” then she elevates her eyebrow.

“A fake one yes. What do you want to do in my house? I’m not cheating Krotoa. I asked for exclusivity right?”

“Whether you’re cheating or not I don’t really care. All I want is your house keys and your address that’s all Nqabayezulu”

“What if you want to bleach all my clothes after tonight? And break all my furniture?”

“You think I’d do that?” I give her a face and she laughs. “I’m not planning on doing anything like that. Oh My God calm down Nqaba let’s have fun”

“Fun?”

“Fun. Now give me the keys Zungu wami” she says sarcastically and I shake my head. I cannot believe I am doing this. I hand her my spare key and she winks at me before she turns on her heels then pause. “Make sure no one comes to your house tomorrow. And good night” No ways I am going to tell my brother. This woman could literally just murder me. We are talking about business shares that are worth millions here.

Immediately I grab out my phone and making my way to my car, making a phone call. It rings and rings then takes me straight to voicemail. But I am lucky at my second attempt when I hear his voice. “I am seriously fucked and confused” I say before he can open his mouth and say something else.

“Unjani Nqabayezulu?”

“I don’t have time for this. I am spending too much time with this woman and I am starting to think with my penis and not my brain. I just gave her my house keys”

“You gave her what?”

“I know but she asked for them then she said no one should come to my house tomorrow. If the night ends tomorrow without a phone call from me you know what to do. And today she randomly said she loves me” “What if she was truthful?”

“No, not Krotoa”

“Then get your head back in the game. Listen remember she’s the one who should fall in love with you and not you so you can get these shares back. Be serious Nqaba”

“Is Zeno okay? I need to see her”

A long pause, “Yeah. Yeah. Yeah she’s okay and already discharged. And she’s staying at my place until she remembers everything” “Is it okay if I come around right now? Please Bandlalethu I need to see her” “Right now?”

“Ngiyakucela”

He inhales sharply “Fine, woza but you’re not sleeping over”

“Thank you. Thank you. I love you mtaka ma”

“Mxm!” He laughs.

17.

desire

/dɪˈzʌɪə/

- a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen

Z E N O K U H L E

I wake up these days emanated with translucent salty beads dampening the satin fabric of my night wear garment and I gasp for air but not remembering the visual image of what was happening in the dream. Actually all I hear is screams and guttural hysterical crying but I cannot see faces, I can hear footsteps too and the rich smell of something burning traveling through the sharpness of my nose.

“Oh Zeno!” I wake up from one of the dreams again and repeatedly pushing my hair back to wipe the sweat beaded on my forehead. I greedily gulp for air into my lungs and take a few second to look around my surrounding so I can remind myself where I am. “You need to remember something. Anything” I

reprimand myself again and blinking after my brain has normalized this bedroom.

Ever since that encounter I had with that woman at the restaurant my brain is no longer decorated with flowers that smelt like orange, grapefruit and bergamot but rather they've wilted. The bright and decorated world has become an exhibition of mournfulness, whispering gentle words of sorrow. Ever so slowly crumbling the walls of my soul. Smirking and sneering as they tumble. It extends its ragged talons.

A bitch? What is that I might've done to have that word sewed with infamy being thrown at my face as though it's powder that's meant to enchant my beauty. Oh that word is not enthralling actually.

My feet touch the floor and once again I look around the room. And this bedroom is ethereal and romantic from the molded headboard accent to its unique bedside lamps. The muted gray, white, and natural wood palette is especially soothing in the bedroom context. And then the sparkling lights that hover over the bed, in addition to the bedside lamps, are quite lovely.

A knock interrupts the cheap vacation that my eyes have taken around the room. Immediately push my hair back and finding the perfect posture that I could sit on with my hands clasped on the sides. I fell asleep after I was watching the sun slowly disappearing behind the mountains and the moon was starting

to sashay her hips in the sky. "You're awake!" He walks through the door and the first thing that I notice is his clean and delicate bare feet that looks rather feminine and soft to touch as they appear at the hem of his black jeans and also the black vest that looks like his second skin. And then he smile leaning against the door. I often wonder whether this man ever panics about anything. Does he ever show other emotions? Maybe rage? Maybe melancholy? Because ever since I've known him he always had that pearly smile on his face. "You have a visitor" Now his face returns to being impassive. Not showing those teeth. Not showing anything but rather it remained honed.

"A visitor?" I ask him perplexed and he shoves his hands on his pockets. Then he hangs his head low almost like he is calculating his words in his head or maybe he is looking for the right vowel that he could murmur to me yet he cannot find them. For a moment we have silence between once. My mind screaming that I should say something or show some sort of rapture about the so called visitor. It could be that woman who insulted me. It could be anyone from my past since he said he was going to do a research. "I am coming" I announce to him and swallowing the tasteless liquid that befriend my tongue.

I thought that maybe he was going to move from that position. Instead he remains there with his hands in pocket, his short natural hair uncombed and the thickness of his eyebrows

doesn't make any sort of movements either. Our eyes dance together then he nods his head turning on his heels and walk away. Oh that was very—I am smothered by his powerful presence and scent. I need to regain my senses before getting up from this bed and looking at myself in the mirror.

I could be a princess in one of those movies that made us young girls and women believe that one day we'll have a prince charming knocking at your door. I romanticize that ideology. A moment of staring at myself and dapping what tastes like cherry and cream to moisturize my lips.

As I am walking through the hallway I can hear laughter. Two masculine voices sounding euphoric and now I'm just wondering who's the second person. When I appear he immediately stands on his feet when he sees me. Our eyes connected. My mind sufferers from severe amnesia this time with all thoughts crowded upon seeing him after such a long time. Everything in this room bows to him as he's absolutely gorgeous, all dark and sleek. A true fantasy. Who am I talking about between the two of them? Oh God help me.

I look at him swathe in a suit and he has taken off his blazer

Advertisement

his shirt rolled up to his sleeves and showing the beauty of his veins on his arms. The very ultimate raw in sexual power is standing before me.

“Sawubona” I almost close my eyes at the sound of his voice but I force them open. Then cast them towards the man in black vest holding onto his glass that has ice and amber liquid ignoring making any sort of eye contact with me. I wanted to see his facial expression once. Just once. I guess that has made everything crystal clear for me.

Bandlalethu sees me as his sister and nothing beyond that, I guess he’s my what, brother?

“Nqaba”

That sounded as though I was still getting used to the pronunciation of his name.

I can see his tall frame making movements and getting up from the couch placing his glass on the table and grabbing his car keys. Is he leaving? What’s going on?

“I’m going to give you two some privacy. And I’ll be out for some time. If you need anything you can call me I guess. Nqaba take care of Zeno” This was just a signature to a piece of paper. I hold onto my breath as they share brotherly embrace then he walks out of the door without saying a word exclusively to me. I am pretty sure that he’s going to see that woman because she

seems to be on his “standard”. I mean this house exudes luxury and everything about it including the cars that makes his garage look like a car dealership.

I take a moment to choose who to listen to my mind or my heart but they’re both screaming the same thing. My body feeling those alienated vibrations and sensations whenever this man would walk into my ward. The perplexity between romance and platonic relationship becomes a picture that I could beautiful hang on my walls and stare at every morning with a cup of chai tea in my hand. What am I longing for? A man’s love that I am looking for it in everyone? In their eyes? In their smiles? In their facial expressions? Upon receiving my answers I become nonplussed and wanting to desperately drown myself in a bathtub full of water. “Nqaba” Again I call out his name that sounds like honey on my lips.

“I’m sorry ka Mazibuko. . .” An apology swiftly rolls out of his tongue. Like a melody he has been rehearsing with an orchestra. I hold onto my knitted dress as my palms starts to sweat. “I know that these past days I have been distant. Ngicela ungixolela” Again he apologize.

“You don’t have to explain yourself to me Nqabayezulu”

“I am explaining myself because I want to” I look at him and then look away but his eyes remains on me forcing me to start playing with my feet as we are standing just distance apart. “I

just need you to be very patient with me Zenokuhle” What is he talking about? This time I have to look at him. To study his face. I think I’ve become a master in reading people’s face to find what exactly I am looking for.

The heart is an organ that has a body of its own. And the mind of its own. You could desire for something while it loves something also regardless of the fact that these two can co-exist but sometimes you could want them from different people.

I breathe and my feet propel their way forward until I sink onto the couch and he’s hesitant at first before he also take a sit distance away from me balancing his elbows on his knees. Again I look into his eyes—they’re an ocean of different combination of emotions but the beauty of them is admirable. “Zenokuhle I want to know if you feel something or anything for me before I can make any decisions moving forward I want to know that even if it’s a drop but at least you feel something for me” This time he seems afraid to hold eye contact with me but rather he looks at the gleaming shoes on his feet. “Because I wouldn’t want to hold onto something that doesn’t belong to me”

“You disappear all the time Nqaba”

“I know. And I am here apologizing and asking that you give me time. I promise KaMazibuko I’ll do right by you”

“And while I am giving you time to do whatever is that you’re doing what should Yezulu? I should wait for you?” I ask him and instead of responding he crack the bones on his knuckles then lean backwards on the sofa to just stare at me like I am a gem he has just discovered. “And how much time do you need?” I crease my eyebrow at him.

“Three months”

I gasp, “three months?”

“I know it’s a long time”

“It’s not” I quickly say then stare at my thighs that look as though they’re bathe in a bathtub of butter and cream. “Three months is not a long time. I can wait, I am still trying to find out who I am anyways” If he could right now he’d stand on his feet and dance while whistling and calling out his clan names but rather he remains on a same position and smirking at me. He smiles, and the tension around his eyes vanishes. I hadn’t noticed before, he has been tense this whole time?

“You’re far!”

“I am far?”

“Yes, come here and sit next to me”

I look at him and frown. That smirk just remains on his face and I have no choice but standing and making my way to him. It feel

like I was moving from here to another country since I was teasing him and walking slowly as he chuckles and shaking his head at me. I'm about to sit down when he grabs my hand and make me sit on his lap rather. He runs a hand up my thigh to my behind. He grasps the nape of my neck with his other hand and kisses me, holding me firmly in place. This is the first time we are kissing and he tastes of something sweet yet mint. I run my fingers through his head, holding him to me while our tongues explore and curl and twist around each other, my blood heating in my vein. "I'll never hurt you intentionally Zeno" These are the words he says as he pulls away from me and we are breathless. I still don't know what's going on. This man said he needed time and I said I'll give him that and wait.

Then we kissed. Now he's talking about not hurting me. We haven't seen each other in a week or two. I was called a bitch two days ago. God what's going on?

What's going on?

"Is there someone? Is that why you need time?" By the bitterness on his face I already know what's the response. Jesus Christ. What was I thinking? Maybe this man is married with children and having problems with his wife and he has turned me into his happy place. No wonder he hasn't been coming to visit me. Oh thixo what's wrong with me? Beside the amnesia but what's wrong with me.

I try removing myself from his lap but he pulls me back and tightening his grip around me. “Ka Mazibuko. . .” I don’t know where these bloody acidic tears are coming from me. But here they’re shimmering in my eyes as I continuously swallow my saliva gazing at him. “There’s no one” He says and I become a deflated balloon. “Its just business nothing much and nothing you should be worried about”

“What’s going on Yezulu?”

“Where?”

“Between us? What’s going on here? You just kissed me”

“I asked whether you feel something for me”

“I do but I cannot describe it”

“And that’s all I needed to hear. We are going to explore what we have here. Just you and I. You shouldn’t be worried about anything else”

“You’re not married are you?”

“Hawu” Then he smiles “I’m not married”

Thank God!

Well I am not sure where this is going.

18.

superpower

/'su:pəpaʊə/

- an exceptional or extraordinary power or ability

Isn't comical how men have this mind-set that once you sleep with a woman then she abruptly falls in love with you? Ha ha. You find them gathered in a table drinking expensive alcohol having an intense debate about this until they all come into conclusion that all women are the same. I think the death of my mother made me become a version of myself that I truly admired growing up. A teenage Krotoa dreamt of being like this one, she wanted to be able to walk into a room full of men and not be afraid of it. With her head up high and with a charming smile, she could be wearing anything but because she's the one who has it adorned it will look like what definition of perfection was, my sacral chakra is opened and that's why I have an ethereal sex appeal.

From his eyes I could see the swimming pool of sexual desire for me. I know that he dreams of me with my legs outstretched and his head deep into my shaven fruit that tastes like pineapples and his tongue dancing, moving through the satin

slits while his hands hold onto my thighs and fingertips digging deeper into my skin until eventually I change pigmentation. And you know what should happen after that? Well I am expected to believe that he's the man for me and fall in love with him.

Isn't strange how a woman is portrayed as "abnormal" and some people assume that she has been hurt when she doesn't desire a man, marriage and having children? I've seen how people look at me when I say I don't see myself ever getting married. It has nothing to do with the problem that I have about the other gender. But I do not see myself spending my everyday life forever with a man. I'd rather drink the cheapest bottle of champagne at the restaurant. I am not afraid to say it with my chest that I am selfish and I love my space. I love to be alone, and children and husband never have been part of that equation. If I had to get pregnant now the next morning I'll be at the waiting room for my abortion. I am not even willing to compromise for anything.

Now here is this man who thinks I am going to fall head over heels for him. It seems as though he believes that his phallus is made of gold and diamonds. I've tasted all kind of penises in my life and I know for a fact there's nothing special about his. My eyes are focused on the ball in the game and then him? Well I expected so much more from him than this but I've learnt that this man is not the type of man I'd go for anytime of day. The

looks are there but he's not an alpha male. We all have our preferences and he's not my cup of coffee.

While he thinks that he'll make me lose my head until I eventually forget about the business deal that we have then he has another thing coming. I am perplexed whether or not I am doing this in the name of destroying him or because of how much power this comes with.

What is your superpower? Because mine is supremacy.

Now while we are busy making people believe that we are "in love", I am also going to make him believe that "I am falling in love with him" and that way I know he'll let his guard down. Are we having sex? Not yet. But we are teasing him into having more wet dreams and lose his mind? Well of course.

The moment I unlock and wrench the door open I expected something totally different from this but rather I am taken aback by this slick home with raw concrete, exposed brick and natural wood crash together to make rugged rooms with soul and vintage charm. This house has the original brickwork that has been left exposed as a feature wall in the living room. It drops a textured lining behind a set of backless industrial style bookshelves and decorative items on the shelves are sparse to allow the red brick to have its moment. The eye-catching modern chandelier competes for attention in the feature packed room. An aerial yoga swing hangs out by the sofa,

colour coordinated in grey fabric. What this man does yoga? It seems that his sex game might be on “par” and that’s why he’s assuming that I might fall in love with him huh? Awww Nqabayezulu shame.

The rectangular coffee table draws a line down the centre of the room toward the modern fireplace. I must say that this house is absolutely more perfect than what I had in mind although this is not really my style but its impeccable really.

I stride to the kitchen to leave everything that I have in my hand. I’m planning on cooking for a man, of course!

Over in the kitchen I am welcomed by the clean white units cut crisply across grey concrete walls. The set of unique kitchen bar stools add a warming accent and the concrete floor tiles contrast against a grey cast concrete island.

I’ve just finished cooking—tada!—I actually made pasta and that takes about an hour or something regardless of the fact the sun is setting and creating a beautiful artistic image outside but the summer weather leaves you sweating from your forehead to in between your toes as I stride into the kitchen and hearing noises and movements, what on earth is that?

I look at the time on the watch and it’s around half past seven. Is he home already? I thought he’d be here an hour or two from

now. As I'm about to enter the kitchen a yelp escapes my mouth and my subconscious screaming that I should cover my breasts and instantly my hands fly into my chest with my eyes out their own volition.

"I didn't see anything" he turns around and facing towards the other direction with his voice baritone tone, that's very sensual in a way.

I haven't seen his face because he just turned around facing the other direction and instantly he takes off what he's wearing, a black shirt and handing it to me. That's a bad decision because I get to admire his back and see all the small muscles clearly defined. I quickly grab the shirt from him and he's only left with a white tank top that holds his body and advertising his broad shoulders.

"Turn around!" I seethe.

Swiftly he turns around with timid look wandering on his face and literally his body is like a sculpture that was made for women to admire, masturbate too and fantasize about. It doesn't help those thighs behind his jeans are just as glorious. What kind of position were their parents doing when having sex? I swear this man is gorgeous from that bald fade haircut with waves and on the side of his forehead he has veins resembling lightening and clean, delicate beard on his perfect emollient skin. The gold chain hanging on his neck makes

everything appear godly—this is god’s image. “You’ve never seen a half-naked woman before?” I ask him buttoning the last button and his shirt is emanated with strong masculine cologne that will take me surely few weeks to get rid off in my body.

I thought he’d find humor in what I just said but his face remains impassive examining me from head to toe making me so conscious about how look. My face? I hope I don’t have crusts at the corners of my eyes that would be “embarazzing”.

“What are you doing here?” I remember the last time I saw him was when he was with a woman at a restaurant and I am sure for a fact that’s his girlfriend that he wants to marry soon, she’s one of those women that ticks all the write boxes in being a “perfect wife” just like that cousin of mine who won’t leave me alone and thinks that I should give love a chance.

“I was sent to come and check up on you” I swear these walls vibrated alongside the sound of his voice as he said; standing there and exuding sovereignty now pressing his hands against his chest showing that he’s a messiah.

“Who sent you?” I ask him and he gives me that “duh” look about questioning him when I already know an answer to that. “Why did he send you or maybe he thinks I’m going to steal his furniture and house?” I sardonically chuckle and walking pass him when he follows me with his sharpened eyes remaining on

a same position “I wasn’t planning on stealing anything by the way Bاندلالابو”

“And no one was accusing of that maKrotoathazana” What the fuck is that now? What kind of a name is that anyways? I look at him and this time an unexpected smile appears on his face.

“And that’s not my name!”

“It was okay for you to give me a name that’s not mine yet you have a problem when I do the same?” He creases his eyebrow directing his eyes on me, I am sure he wants to invade my mind and read me, opening me from one chapter to another but I don’t allow him too. “The reason my brother asked me to come and check up on you is because something came up at work and he had to leave town”

“Why he didn’t call me?”

Then he shrugs nonchalantly “I am guessing because he hasn’t got time? But I’m sure he will call you. Now that I’ve seen that you’re okay then I should go”

“You called me maKrotoathazana because it rhymes with Makhosazana?” Now that it makes sense in my mind I chuckle clasping my hands on a kitchen counter “You have humour I give you that”

“I cannot say the same about you and yes I’ve seen women naked before”

I dramatically roll my eyes at him

is that a brag? What braggart then. I've seen women naked too and men so what? "You don't have to leave but you can stay. I came here for your brother not to be alone in his house. I cooked so you can help yourself" I make an announcement and attempting to return back to the bedroom so that I can change and leave. I cannot say I'm not disappointed especially after putting in some effort into this. I don't care about cooking but my time—the time I wasted coming here because I had a plan.

"Why you don't stay and we can eat together? I don't think I can finish all the food you've cooked alone. After that I'll take you home" I hear him suggesting behind me and I abruptly turn to meet his filtered facial expression before a smile dances on his same shaped lips, his face becoming soft "Unless if you're uncomfortable with having dinner with me for your own reasons then I'll totally understand" What that reason could be? Nothing.

"You think I'm afraid of you?"

It's strange so, strange that this man's facial expression can change in a nanosecond after you've assumed you've read him. As we speak he's unguarded.

"You should be" Then he says with an infectious tone and move away from where he was sitting making himself comfortable on

the bar stool. "And so, dinner?" A complacent smirk is what I see after he has accomplished planting questions in my head. Why should I be scared of him? Ha ha ha if he's like his brother who underestimates me then he has another train coming for him.

I don't answer but rather disappear to the bedroom and wearing pair of sweatpants that I quickly found before returning back to the kitchen to find him pouring two glasses of wine, he has neatly placed my bowl on the table with the cutlery and when he sees me walking in he opens a chair for me to sit in gentleman mannerism then make himself comfortable on his seat next to me. His proximity would make one's knee turn into gelatine and at this point I don't know if his scent odyssey through my nostrils is the reason I'm smothered or the warmth of his arm against my very own. "Why are you doing this for him?" At the random time he asks but his eyes fixated ahead as he holds a glass of wine in his hand. I examine them and how they look, they're so clean as if he doesn't touch anything in his life.

"I am just helping that's all" I answer dishonestly and a sardonic chuckle rolls out of his mouth before he takes his fork and poking what's on his bowl, lifting his hand up and it disappears in his mouth then he swallows. "You don't believe me?"

"You want me to believe you?"

“Yes because I’m telling the truth”

“We both know that’s not true, you can lie to everyone else but not me Krotoa” The sound of his potent tone makes goosebumps appear on my skin. I have to remain composed and sew myself into a perfect garment of supremacy. “But I’m not here to question you with what’s happening between you and him. You’re both adults who knows what they’re doing”

“I’m glad you won’t question our choices”

“I asked you a question is there something you’d want to ask me?”

“Is this a game?” I elevate my eyebrow.

“Well if you want it to be then fine”

“It should be fun then. . .I bought a bottle of tequila after each question we take a shot” I suggest and at first he frowns obviously not sure about this idea. “. . .I was actually planning on doing this with Nqaba. It’s an easy way to get to know someone without the atmosphere being too tense” I quickly say and already his bowl is almost empty. I’m sure if he could he would’ve ran his tongue on that ceramic bowl and asked for more.

“And how am I going to drive you home?”

“There’s a guest room here, don’t be a bore Bandlalabo now take this as if you’re getting to know your sister in law and you’ll see whether or not I’m a match for your brother”

“A match for my brother?” Then he grins and pushing his bowl forward. “You’re already trying to get me drunk and I totally don’t think you’re match for my brother” I punch his shoulder playfully and this time he laughs, genuinely showing all his teeth and the eloquent and sultry sound comes out of his mouth. “Fine! Fine! I am only agreeing to this because. . .” Then there’s a pause “I want to see what’s my brother is getting himself too” Oh whatever (chuckles) I get off the chair and grabbing out the tequila and glasses, he’s washing the dishes that we were using after that we make our way to the living room and making ourselves comfortable on the floor next to the coffee table with a bottle of something intoxicating and snacks.

“What’s your body count?” I plague him with a question first and he tugs his head in then starts laughing with his shoulders moving up and down. “What? I am asking what men usually ask a woman so they can judge her by the number of people she has slept with”

“If ever a man asks you that just leave him” Then he says with a solemn expression. “It’s a clear indication that he doesn’t deserve you. . .” our eyes interlock as he’s sitting on another

side of the table “And I’ve lost count of my body count. Maybe forty and yours?”

I gasp “Forty. . .” I pause thinking that mine is double that amount “Well you can double the amount to get mine” I tell him as I’m already pouring alcohol in our glass instead of a judgmental facial expression he remains the same. I’m joking I’ve never slept with that much people but maybe it’s ten or twelve.

After one gulp we both groan as it burns our throat and starting to travel through my system and I blink twice then look at him.

“Who hurt you?” That’s a question from him and his blazing eyes with wild fire remains on me, nothing but me. “And I want you to answer honestly”

“Is it possible that we cancel this game and then you just take me home?”

“Haibo after I’ve answered your question? You must answer first then I can see if we are cancelling playing this game”

“It’s not romantically or anything like that but the death of my mother left a wound that never heals”

“What happened?”

“It was suicide. . .well she was slut shamed for being a victim of rape” I just realized that I’ve opened all doors to myself. I don’t

open up to people so naturally I clench myself up so nobody can enter. It's a norm for me to practice tightening my loose ends. . .but I have just become slippery and let out the portions of me that are not meant to be seen.

"I'm sorry" The sincerity cannot be missed.

I chuckle to conceal all the emotions that have embarrassed me by showing themselves after I've managed to hide them for years. "It's okay. . .A shot?"

"No. I want to give you a hug"

"I don't want consolation" I say already pouring our glasses and pushing his glass towards his way and he holds my hand.

"Bandla. . ." I pause and breathe "This was a bad idea I should go" I get up from the floor. All the laughter and colorful vibrations have become intense. And this is new and different. As though traveling to a totally different atmosphere when I stand on my feet he pretty much does the same but his tall frame hovers against mine. "I don't want a hug" I tell him again. The he reaches out to place his palm on the side of my face, trying to soothe me, as though he could see the visual picture of my thoughts, emotions and hidden secret behind my eyes. I cannot do this. I shouldn't have suggested this game either— fuck me side ways!

My chest is pressing against his and I'm afraid to swallow the saliva in my mouth because I might choke and that will threaten the tears in my eyes. "The person who did this to your mother do you know him?" Then he asks with visible vexation and murderous tone.

"Let me go Bandla!" Really Krotoa? You're not screaming? You're not shouting "I'm going to get my revenge and that what matters now get the fuck away from me!" That's better. What's next? Leaving this damn house. I push him away and turning but he grabs me by my arm and causing a collision on his chest. He grasps my chin to hold me in place, and then his mouth is on mine. Desire sweeps through him, and unbidden my body responds—it's so tied and attuned to him. "This is wrong. . ." I try saying in between the kiss but he groans and kisses me once more, passionately, with a fervour and desperation I've not felt from anyone before. As though he needs me even from the way his hands are handling my body and holding me closely to me. If he could he'd get under my skin and make that his new home. I can taste the tequila on the softness of his lips as he elicits something alienated from me.

I pull away and pushing him back looking for my damn car keys around this house. I find him on the very same spot I left him in and we share a magnetic eye contact with his hands deep on his pockets then I walk out slamming the door.

I wrench the door open to my car, starting the engine before manoeuvring the car on the road as though I'm being chased by my own guilt until I get home. I make my way to my grandmother's room and she's with my cousin laughing at something.

"Gogo please pray for me!" I say standing by the door and she looks at me as though two cartoons in my head are not dancing.

"What's wrong? Have you lost your mind? What happened to you?"

"Gogo please pray for me now!"

19.

godlike

/'gäd, līk|

- resembling God or god in qualities such as power, beauty or benevolence

BANDLALETHU

Upon getting here I'm invited by unfamiliar cologne voyaging the atmosphere, I know how to identify everyone I am closed to by their scents and footsteps. You see growing up and surrounded by men who're powerful, dangerous and supreme you learn from the young age to be like them because one day you're going to take over the so called "throne". I had to be a father figure and set an example to my brother because our sperm donor was not around. Now so suddenly he's a changed man and what about me? The young boy that they've changed to become another version of them.

I learnt the ropes at early life and by the time I reached my teenage years the smell of blood and a dead body didn't leave me transfigured and with nightmares. I've managed to mask

things and appear “human” when I know for a fact I’m almost subhuman and Nqabayezulu thinks he could see everything happening unfolding in front of his eyes but that was nothing. I always managed to protect him by being on my uncle’s side and observing, learning and executing but he had to promise me that he’ll stay far away from my brother and won’t be introduced into this life.

I grab out a gun in its hidden place searching from one room to another because they might be an intruder in my house as I’m about to turn around to leave the room that I was searching a frame stand behind me I point a gun directly on his forehead and he grins. “Malume!” I say upon seeing him standing in front me. You see this man here could disappear for months and years without anyone knowing his location that we even assume he could be dead, sometimes he comes back with fresh gunshot wounds or in one piece but he has been a father to me, although I was groomed to be a “man” at tender age but he showed what being a father is like. “What are you doing here? When did you come back? You changed your cologne” I plague all at once shoving the gun behind my back as we are both chuckling at what transpired.

“I thought you might disappoint me but it seems all my teachings didn’t go down in vain. . .” Then he says and a leer remaining on his face, examining me. I know that this man can

read me with just one glimpse but not this time. I've become a master of concealing emotions. "Now pour me a drink we need to talk!" Then he says with a grave expression. I nod my head as he makes himself comfortable at the home office and clasping his hand on an arm chair tapping his fingers and watching my movements. "I've decided that I'm going to retire. I've had a long run and I'm moving to another province and probably going to get married too" What? I attentively look at him to read his face about what he just said. Mkhululi Zungu is talking about marriage and throwing ropes? I hand him the drink and making myself comfortable on a swivel chair.

"You met someone?" I ask him bringing the glass closely to my lips but I decide otherwise. I can still taste her against my lips and my tongue has a tingly sensation that evokes risqué through my bloodstream. The softness of her skin makes my hands feel as though they're anointed after touching something close to god, even the sound of her voice is like a new melody and sultry harmonies in my ears but I quickly push back the thought of her at the back of my brain. "Who is she?" Then I ask my uncle and gulping the drink I thought I wouldn't drink. I need to get rid of her taste and fragrance emanated on my hands, every thought of her needs to be formatted from my brain.

“No one in particular yet. . .” Then he takes yet another guzzle from his drink and groaning before he stands up and his feet propelling towards the corner of the room to pour himself another round. “I am leaving everything under your name. You need to take over all the businesses”

“I’m a doctor” I remind him.

“Fuck that!” Then he stands there and looking outside the window then he brings his glass towards his mouth. “We both know that’s not what you passionate about and love but you went to that field so the limelight could be on your brother”

“And that’s because he deserves it. Nqabayezulu has proven himself enough”

“I don’t want him to prove himself and how much of a man he can be, because that could bring the business down now tell me for how long are you willing to be his shadow? I’m not starting a rival here but I’m saying you don’t have to dim your light to make him shine, don’t be stupid Bandla”

I lean back on the chair and listening to him as he speaks while trailing my fingers on the glass and thinking deeply about what he said. “You remember me and your father?” Then he smiles as though the past image is playing right in front him—cinematography—then he takes another slug of cognac and playing with the muscles around his jawline. “We were a power

house together. The business is where it is today because we worked hand in hand, of course greed got in a way and Mzobanzi wanted more power but. . .” Again he pauses to look towards my direction this time “You and Nqabayezulu can do much better than what we did. Your relationship cannot be broken by anything and you’ve always protected him do you think you still can while you’re a doctor and he’s busy with business? Bandlalethu he won’t last because he needs you just as much as you need him”

“Nqabayezulu would do anything for this business, for this family and you know that”

“No, no, no you just defined yourself here. You’d do anything for this family and him even it means sacrificing your own happiness just so he could be happy. I’m not saying he’s not capable of this

he’s more than capable but you know the business from its deep roots. Just think about it and then get back to me” I finish up the drink that was in my glass and not responding. “I will come around tomorrow I have to go somewhere and don’t tell your brother or anyone that I’m back”

“Let’s say I really quit my job and decide to take over the business would—

Immediately he interjects with a dazzling beam and mirth dancing on his face. What brought that much rapture from this man?

“Whatever you want Bandlaethu I’ll give it to you” He says and my violence expands on my chest, demons whom are blood thirsty starts to chant in my head and my nostrils flared with anger menacing; medusa enraged.

“I want a body. . .” I can see perplexity growing on his face “I want a dead body and that’s all. I’m going to take over then make sure that Nqabayezulu gets half of everything. Even tomorrow I’ll be at the office behind the chair” That might’ve caught his attention because he just returned to where he was sitting making himself comfortable while I remain lithe as a dangerous predator on a chair and holding my glass with an amber wood liquid on it blazing at him then he sees what he has given birth too and groomed.

“Whose body is that?”

“I will give you all the details soon”

“Why? What happened?”

I shrug my shoulders nonchalantly and turning my lips into a scowl “A soul decided to take her own life because of him. . . I am guessing uMveliqangi and Umkhuluwomkhulu has sent me to take vengeance for someone” I then answer him and remain

impassive while he vigorously nods his head. I'm glad that he doesn't plague me with questions. "Are you going to do it for me? I just don't want blood in my hands this time" I lean forward.

"I said I was going to do anything when you have enough information then let me know. I'll reveal that I'm back when your brother is getting married. I should leave" After that he stands on his feet. I don't want to hug him, it will remove the feel of her body on my hands even this handshake twists and turns my stomach because her fragrance has been removed from my palms. I watch him disappearing behind the door then stand to pour myself another refill before opening the shelves to find my cigarette and placing it between my lips inhaling the nicotine so it can burn all my thoughts and her face lingering my mind.

I cannot possibly call her now because I don't have her number or even know where she stays—fuck—I'm just going to drink from this bottle until eventually tranquillity calms the turbulence. I make my way to the living room and sitting there, standing and pacing to revert my thoughts from this perplexity.

Well my brother called me to go create a fabricated lie to that woman about him being away with business when he's in another woman's arms but the moment I-I-I. . .I cannot possibly

be thinking about her barely swollen flesh against her chest with perky nipples and the oval shape of her belly button.

I greedily take uneven gulps of air in this ear splitting silence suffocating me in this room and my sanity crawling out of my body then I hear footsteps and without saying that's my brother. I remain on this sofa without moving since the potent alcohol is traveling to every part of my muscles. "Bandlalethu!" Then his voice echoes and I don't respond until he appears standing distance away with an amphetamine smile but slowly fades the moment he sees an empty bottle of whisky on the table and two packets of cigarettes.

"What happened? Are you okay?" Now he's panicking surely thinking I'm drowning in some sort of darkness and fighting demons but I'm fighting forbidden feelings here and visual past images. "Bandla what happened?"

"Nothing happened, what are you doing here?"

"I came to see you. . .I'm about to meet Zeno at the hotel now, I'm sure she's sleeping. I got caught up at work" he explains and look at what is on the table once again then me. "Is everything okay?"

"I'm fine Nqabayezulu"

“Well you cannot blame for worrying about you bafo. . .you don’t ever drink this much and you smoke like this when you have so much on your mind”

“I do. I do have so much on my mind” Then I chuckle slightly and meeting with his blurry frame since my vision is impaired.

“We will talk just not right now I want to be alone”

“I understand, did you go to my place?”

“Yes”

“And?”

“Nothing”

“What you mean nothing? Wasn’t she there? Maybe planning something”

“No but she was cooking you dinner for you to come home too and that’s it” I shrug my shoulders and grabbing the packet of cigarettes. And there’s only one left, she made me smoke both packs? Oh no she’s dangerous. “You shouldn’t have given her the keys from the first place”

“I know. . .” Then he runs his fingers through his head “I’m confused” I don’t think I want hear this but inhaling the smoke to swirl into my chest and lungs it what would make this bearable, I lean forward to hear what he has to say. “They’re different from each other”

“Oh”

“They both bring out different sides to me. I know that this whole Krotoa thing was supposed to be a game to get the shares but it has become more than that. . .” I’m going to need more than just cigarette but something that would send my sense of hearing to complete oblivion “And then Zeno on the other hand as well”

“You love both of them?”

“You asked me to make Krotoa fall in love with me but I was already in the mud so the answer is yes, I love both of them”

“Oh”

I hear him inhaling sharply and then disappears around the house coming back with a bottle of alcohol, much better. After he has poured his glass he pushes mine towards my direction. “I should be with Zeno right now but I keep thinking about the bewildering space that I’ve found myself in. Is it wrong that I want both of them?”

“I don’t know”

He drinks from his glass “please say something, be honest with me, what should I do? I still want to continue this whole thing with Krotoa and navigate my feelings. I was honest with Zeno but not entirely, three months is enough for me to see whether or not I want polygamy”

I clear my throat, “I really want us to have this conversation but can we talk tomorrow? I can barely hear anything you’re saying” I chuckle slightly.

“Fine with me, let me get going then. Take care of yourself and don’t drink much. I’ll bring Zeno tomorrow afternoon”

“About that can she stay with you for the next two days? At the hotel of course. I need to clear my head”

“I can get her a new place. I’m sure you’re going to need more than two days then tomorrow you’ll tell me who’s this woman messing with your head”

“Makhosazana” I tell him

“Is that her name?”

“No I just came up with that, there’s no woman and there’s no need for you to get Zeno a new place just give me two days”

“Alright don’t go to work tomorrow. I’ll come see you”

“No problem” He gets up and leave.

Fuck!

20.

unholy

/ʌn'həʊli/

- having committed unrighteous acts

I grunt and pray underneath my breath the moment someone roughly opens the curtains to my room and the sun rays filtering through the window turning me visually impaired. “Krotoa! Wake up!” My grandmother’s voice pierce through. I just managed to fall asleep after tossing and turning, for a moment it was as though I am floating into a whole new dimension but I had to quickly drag “her” —myself back to reality and ignore the imaginary marks he left on my cheek. “Wake up did you see the time? It’s half past. . .” Then she looks at the time on her watch. I cannot see her but I know my grandmother. Eventually after seeing what’s on her wrist she gasps dramatically. “It’s half past one vuka!” What the fuck I quickly get off the bed and my attempts to run around the house to prepare myself for work so I can run away from my grandmother and manifold questions she grabs me by my hand. “You cannot go to work at this time. Now go take a bath and

Lerato has prepared lunch then you can tell me what happened last night”

I feign innocence and say, “What happened last night?” I narrow my eyes at her and she elevates her eyebrow a clear indication that I shouldn’t dare see a clown in her. “I was just drunk gogo” I mean there’s no any other explanation that would sound much perfect than this one. “It was my last day drinking alcohol I promise. . .” I quickly say before she opens the bible then I lick my fingers making a promise and she smiles, shaking her head. “I promise”

After she has left the room I intake a sharp breath and clutching my chest, my eyes are dragging themselves at the bottom of my eyes because I didn’t get enough sleep. The strong cologne emanated on a shirt that I am wearing takes me on a trip, I have to blink twice and touch my forehead as though that’s going to format the freshly stored memory. “I’m a bad bitch, I’m a bad bitch, I’m Jada Pinkett” I remind myself staring at my reflection in the mirror that doesn’t totally agree with me. Well that’s not my problem then.

After I’ve finished taking a bath and scrubbing myself well guess what? I still pretty much smell like him and that continuously evokes every thought that I am suppressing. I’m sure my wanton personality is nursing her hangover from the tequila

that she had last night and when she's fully awake then I won't be thinking about a man. Me? Man, no.

My feet propel me to the dining around and my cousin has made everything appear aesthetically. I'm sure it's for her social media because she's also adorned in a beautiful coffee dress as though she's on a photo shoot to be on a magazine. "Now you look so much better, come, come take a sit and have something to eat. I'm leaving I have somewhere to go and you guys can stay here and catch up" my grandmother says and eating the grape from the table then she kisses my cheek before she kisses Lerato—it seems there's something going on here.

"When did you realize that you were in love with your husband?" The moment I hear my grandmother's car starting outside I ask the woman across me, hiding behind the glass of orange juice in my hand. "I'm just asking please don't think there's someone who I'm in love with" I quickly remind her before she starts getting her hopes up and that I might've taken her advice about giving love a chance.

"I never loved him" The rawness of her tone makes me choke on the liquid inside my mouth and I start coughing while aggressively hitting my chest. "It was what he had and nothing to do with love" You know what makes me elated? That I've never had to mask my truth. Those pictures and videos on instagram with everyone commenting "couple goals" it was all

unreal. “I’m sure you’re wondering why I’m here don’t you? And the real reason is not because I want to help with the negotiations but we are divorcing with Ziphathe” I can see the unshed tears luminous in her eyes wanting to shatter and fall down the valley of her cheeks. I’m not that good at consoling people. What should I do? Anyways I get up and making my way to sit right next to her and for a moment struggling with my thoughts on what to do next but eventually I embrace her in my arms with a smooth touch then her body vibrates, a guttural unattractive sound that almost sounded like a dying dog barking escapes her mouth.

Am I supposed to say something? Anyways the quietness in this house is making this matter awkward because the only question that I have in mind is what is she walking away with from this marriage, I mean that man is in some politician business.

“Let me take you to the bedroom” Eventually I find vowels in my head and form them into words. That was enough right? “You need to rest” I say again taking her hand and leading her to the bedroom, she gets on the bed she smiles at me, her make up doesn’t make her appear as wet canvas—that’s waterproof honey—her dazzling beam invites my own to a showcase and she holds my hand. “I know that you’re doing this for your own agenda and some reasons but I’m not going

to judge you but rather I'm going to support you in whatever that you do just know you have someone in your corner okay" I want to remove her hand as she places it on my cheek making me reminisce about something I told myself I won't be knocking on it's door anytime soon. I nuzzle on her anyways because she smells really fruity and nice; her aura is so warm too.

"When you feel much better we are going to watch movies and then drown in your sorrows because I don't have one"

"Krotoa!" then she dramatically blinks rapidly and those individual lashes should be my favorite. "You're making fun of me already? Well at least I haven't asked ugogo to pray for me" We suppurate with laughter and she pats the empty space on the bed inviting me. I have no choice but getting on the bed clasping my hands on my stomach while facing the ceiling.

"What happened?" This is the matter of telling the cellophane truth or just continuously come up with something fabricated.

I chuckle and there's a vibration in my stomach. "I was just drunk, I'm not drinking tequila ever again" And that's a serious oath with my hand on top of a bible that I'm not touching it again.

"You were drunk?"

"I was drunk"

“I’ve seen you drunk and you were nothing close to it. Whose clothes you were wearing?” Well the pants belonged to the other brother and then the shirt belonged to the eldest one. Why you’re asking? That should’ve been my response but rather I just look at her with a smirk and she’s surely thinking it belongs to my soon to be husband who’s sending cows in the next two days. “Awww get out! You did it? Is that why you asked me that question? Are you falling for him?” What no? Not even in my during the day nap will that ever happen. “Krotoa!” Then she claps her hands completely assuming that I’m falling in love and going to have my happily ever after. “Omg I cannot believe this!” Then she holds her mouth and gazing at me.

“Enough! Enough! Now get up we are going out for self care day. We are going to buy some skin care stuff and then shopping it’s on me!” I announce and well I might need this more than she does actually to calm my own calamity when Zahara said “I refuse to be calm because what I have become is not becalming” I know exactly what she meant, I always feel that line on a much more spiritual level.

Now here we go!

I’m moving from one corridor to another looking for something. . .I don’t know what for really. I keep ignoring the voice singing in my bag because of an incoming call but this time it’s a

number I cannot recognize. I have no any other choice but pressing the green button and answering—I thought Nqaba’s name was going to flash on my screen once again since it has been doing that from the early hours of the morning. “Mama!” That’s what he says, the moment I answer the call. I check my phone screen and this is not his number. “Are you mad at me? I’ve been trying to call since the morning”

“Sawubona Nqaba unjani?” I greet and ask him how is he doing, keeping my tone neutral and he inhales sharply. I don’t want his theatrical act right now. Just not today, I don’t care if he’s around people but I’m not in a mood to play part. “And what do you want?”

“I’m sorry” Immediately he apologizes sounding much sincere than I would’ve sounded. Then he pauses surely to gather words in his tongue. “I’m sorry sthandwa sami but I can make it up to you”

“I don’t want you to make it up to me. There’s no need for you to apologize either so is there anything else you want from me because I’m busy?”

“Krotoa” Then he says my name as though I don’t know or how to even spell it for that matter. “Look. . .I know I should’ve called and let you know—

“I’m going to end this call Nqaba” I threaten him moving from this corridor to another when my eyes sees a white long dress. I’m not one to adorn anything that covers my body parts but this is absolutely gorgeous and sensual in a sense, it resembles me. I grab it and place it on my arm. “And whose number is this?”

“Bandlalethu. . .” I am now defying gravity with uneven breaths. Then his face

Advertisement

transcendent and sensuous, swims before my eyes. I close them and feel the air of the store beating about me, filling with light and wings and celestial magics. “. . .he told me that you prepared dinner and he has been complimenting you and since you were not taking my calls I asked him to borrow me his phone. When can I see you so we can talk?”

I need to regain all my senses that have suddenly become paralyzed in a moment, I clear my throat taking a sit on a couch at the store because my knees and feet can no longer move to their own accord. “I’m leaving tomorrow for the stupid negotiations remember?” I remind him and then he laughs on the other side of the phone. “I guess I’ll see you over the weekend”

“Are we done?”

“If I buy you that car you wanted will that be enough for you to forgive me? I think it would also play part if I give you as a gift after you’ve traditionally become my wife”

“Your wife?” I jeer “It sounds perfect. And how is ahem Bandlalethu. . .” I felt the words squeezing themselves because they’re bold fonts out of my throat. “Is he okay?”

I can hear a smile in his voice, that he truly adores his brother, “he has been complimenting how much of a good cook you are. Anyways look I have to go now and I’ll call you later tonight, take care of yourself and be safe” And right after that he hangs up the call and the unknown guilt smothers me in that moment the divorcing cousin of mine walks towards my direction seemingly ecstatic and not so somber as she was.

“Are you done?” I smile at her and she rapidly nods her head, we make our way to pay for the four full baskets of shoes and clothes, not forgetting jewelry. I know for a fact that all these clothes will be stolen from me by my cousins over the weekend then my aunt will ask for everything I’ll be wearing because it’ll look much better on her than me.

We are standing in a queue when my phone starts ringing again. What does this man want now? I inhale sharply and answering the phone call to hear him singing the “apology” canary.

“Nqaba I thought—

“Makhosazana” The sound of his tone is gravitates, deep yet it feels like a brown colored silk garment against fingertips if you could touch it and feel the texture.

“Bandlaletu how are you? You’re good that’s great. I’m glad you’re okay” I say all at once and rambling on without any sort of full stop to my words. “Your brother told me that you cannot stop—

“Nqabayezulu just left so stop being melodramatic” Excuse me what? In that moment there’s total silence between us. It pretty much seems needed. I can hear his inhalation and exhalation, releasing prana energy and I have to give this woman who has her eyes fixated on me with quizzical expression on her face. Is it because of my facial expression? I don’t know but anyways I give her my card and pin making my way out of the store to the car parking where there’s deafening silence and I can hear my thump-thumping heart beat against my ribs. “Are you okay?” After what felt like an eternity he asks dragging his words as though he need to think and be vigilant about his words.

“I’m fine. I’m perfect. I’m great. I’m marvellous Bandla”

“You’re not being honest and we both know that” I look around the car parking and swallow my saliva before leaning against my car. “I’m asking again, are you okay Krotoa?”

“I told you I’m fine” I boldly tell him.

“You got home safely last night?”

“I’m marrying your brother Bandlalabo”

“You got home safely izolo ebusuku MaKrotoathazana?”

“Yes”

Again silence!

“I need to see you again please”

“Why are you doing this? You want me to leave your brother alone and forget about the whole plan is that what you’re doing?”

“I asked if I can see you, I don’t know where all these accusations are coming from”

I stare down at the sneakers on my feet, this man just changes a whole syllabus and turn it into a haiku. “I don’t think us meeting up is a good idea”

“Why?”

“I’m not going to answer that question”

“Ngiyakuzwa. . .” I can hear him inhaling something. I think he’s smoking. My imagination starts showcasing an image of him on a couch with a cigarette on between his lips and smoke weaving in the air. Why am I finding that—I find nothing.

“Krotoa I’ve never been anyone’s choice maybe an option yes. . . a second option but I haven’t been that much of a better choice for anyone so I know it’s not about to start now”

“Where is that coming from?”

“I’m just telling you because I think you deserve to know that” I’ve collected enough saliva into my tongue now, it’s not distasteful but rather tasting like the strawberry bubblegum I was chewing few minutes ago.

“I guess I should hang up the call”

“Where are you?”

“I’m at the mall doing shopping”

“I’m going to send a location right now to my house and if you don’t show up then trust me I’m not going to bother you again”

“That would be impossible!”

“No one knows about this house if that’s what you’re afraid of Makhosazana so I’m sending the location and I’m leaving the rest in your hand”

“I said that would be impossible”

“Ngizobona ngawe” Then he hangs up.

I keep staring at my now dark screen and in a war with my thoughts when I see Lerato making her way towards my direction and carrying the brown shopping bags in her hands. I open the car boot as she shoves the stuff there then we both get into a car while I slide behind the wheel with music making my eardrums bleed maybe I deserve that. I allow her to have her moment singing along and taking videos on her phone whenever she directs the camera to me I awkwardly smile then focus ahead drumming my fingers on the steering wheel.

“Enough now what’s wrong?” she asks after lowering the volume to her music as she keeps her eyes fixated on me. “You walked out at the store looking pale Krotoa”

“It’s nothing. . .just work but I’ll sort it”

“Is this about the negotiations and the wedding? You still have time to stop all of this nonsense anyways. You’re doing great in your career; you’re surrounded by people who love you. Why you don’t focus on things that make you happy? Rather than things that reminds you of what happened? We both know that umamncane wouldn’t have let you revenge her death like this—not this way Krotoa. You need introspection”

“I know what I’m doing”

“And I don’t doubt that”

“I’m glad now let me do things my way” I seethe and she raises her hands in the air.

.

I stand in front of the wooden door looking down on my brand new satin dress with an open back exposing the art spread out on my back then I look down to my toes playing with my fingers, my knuckles should be knocking but agitation has risen and smothered me, suddenly the earrings hanging on my ears are heavy.

A moment later my hand rises up on its own and the gentleness of knuckles touches the door, knocking twice. I remain planted on a same position with my chest heaving up and down, my collarbones are visible and showing the sensuality of them. I can hear footsteps from the inside approaching towards the door then the doorknob turns. Right in that moment my heart creates an upbeat, electronic sound.

When the door opens the scent that has become familiar odyssey through my nostrils, he’s swathe in black top that shows his perfect arms and pants that does nothing to hide those long legs. We stand with our eyes interlocked as though

we communicating through them before words can manage to roll out of tongues.

I shouldn't have come here, no!

My thrumming pulse is already a testament to my ungodly ways.

I turn to walk away but he holds my arm, the finger digits gripping onto my skin. I swirl around voluntarily to meet him with that unreadable facial expression.

“Bandlalethu”

I purr his name to feel the sensation of it pronunciation and taste.

“Makhosazana”

21.

holistic

/hō'listik/

- characterized by comprehension of the parts of something as intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole.

I'm still standing here on a very same position—immobilized and studying all his face features and brown eyes that I'm sure illuminate the room in the dark yet they're concealing something. The colour of his same shaped lips is also mahogany and not too dark. I normalize myself with the meaning of inhaling and exhalation while his hand remains in my arm as though to leave marks and visual image that should hunt me from here onwards even in my dreams.

"I'm not coming in Bandla" I announce the sound of my voice is sultry as the vibrations in the air and our frequency. I can feel the crisp sweet summer breeze brushing against my skin and he hasn't said a word but rather deeply looking into my orbs and invading my thoughts. "What did you want to talk about?"

“You want us to stand outside? I’d love that but can you please come inside, the weather has changed. I cooked a meal for you” I can now see his face becoming subtle then a smile that’s showing all his white gemstones. I don’t dare break the eye contact between us then he removes his hand from my arm to step aside and allowing me to walk in. I glimpse at him once and that charming beam hasn’t been wiped off his face, I have no choice but walking in to be welcomed an alluring home with a bohemian decor style that creates cosy layers for comfortable living.

This is breath-taking—it’s more like a utopia you can escape reality and run to. The house is on top of the mountain in a forest surrounded by whistling trees. In the living room I am met with the welcoming glow of a modern concrete fireplace. A small side table and a round coffee table make a weighty set in the centre of the cosy living space.

The dress I’ve adorned makes perfect sense in this environment and space even the tone of the atmosphere. I have made myself comfortable and clasping my hands on the couch exuding the feminine divinity as I watch his movements in this open plan apartment. “What are you drinking?” Then his tone pierce through the sharp intense ambience and I have no choice but to look towards his direction and he pauses what he was doing when our eyes once again make that connection and

he walks towards me, barefooted. I am sure that his feet are much more clean and delicate than mine. As his feet propel him towards me we are both now dazzling with smiles and him showing those sharp canines. He squats before me almost kneeling as though I'm the god he worships taking my hands to his and caressing my knuckles. "You know what my first impression of you was?" Yes that's it this man is random.

"You thought I looked like a bad bitch? Aww thank you so much Bandlalabo"

"No but I thought you were something close to a god, you were ethereal. I kept my eyes on you and every movement that you made"

"I was in your brother's arms"

I can see his face becoming marble in a nanosecond but he hasn't stop doing necromancy with his fingers on my knuckles. "That wasn't the first time I met you maybe it was your first but not me and I had to pretend that we've never met before"

"Wait what do you mean? Have we met before and maybe fucked?"

"You would've remembered if we fucked. . ." Why my vagina walls just spasmed at the texture of his tone and that poised smirked? I need to get myself together. After that he gets up and moves away from me with so much grace returning to the

kitchen. “What are you drinking? You want wine or cocktails? I can make one” You see what I meant? He turns a haiku into a poem in a nanosecond. “And you’re looking beautiful tonight makhosazana”

“You haven’t told me where you first met me?”

“Red or white?”

You see? You see! You see?!

“White”

I’m not used to that soft expression on his face but it’s admirable and fascinating. I swear he seems too calm as though even at war he’d be the one asking people to be serene, “do you like it sweet or dry?” I see him bending and coming out with a bottle after my response was sweet. I’m watching every movement here from how his hands are holding those glasses and placing them on the counter to how he opens the bottle of wine.

I decide to take off my shoes and placing them aside making my way to the rectangle dining table which is an industrial concrete creation, offset with warm wood dining chairs and rustic stools. The wicker dining pendant shades lighten the look and add a spray of boho style, the ceiling beams pull the warm wooden accent through the concrete open concept and the

modern fruit bowls creates a centerpiece down the industrial dining table.

After he has placed my glass on the table he sits opposite me and leaning backwards bringing it closely to his lips and I pretty much do the same, the brown lipstick I had dapple on leaving crescent shape marks on my own glass. “Was that your girlfriend you were with the other day?” I plague him with a question and he shakes his head quickly while swallowing the liquid inside his mouth, drinking dry red wine and gazing back at me. “Is it someone you’re casually sleeping with?”

“I don’t casually sleep with people, I’m very protective of my energy now and secondly ngimdala kabi—I’m old” Then he gazes at me. I think if I was shy and easily intimated I would’ve looked away from him but rather we tend to keep our eyes interlock without exchanging words. I still don’t know what am I doing here and I’m not about to ask either. “But to answer your question she’s nothing to me”

“Well I think she’s beautiful unless if you’re afraid of women then that’s the only reason you haven’t made a move” A frown appears on his face, narrowing his eyebrows then he takes another slug of wine from his glass before shaking his head then he starts slightly laughing. “What? Why you’re laughing?” I ask him and creasing my eyebrow.

“I’m thinking of how much you were forward when you were young”

“You’re sitting there and thinking about me when I was young? You’re so creepy” I chuckle slightly and placing the glass on the table. “I was one of those popular girls at school and everyone wanted to be my friend”

“Why because you were beautiful?” Then he asks taking slow sips in between and I am vigorously nodding my head. “I’m sure you wore a short skirt and white clean socks with a blazer”

“That was me and the teachers loved me because I was so smart regardless of being forward. And I’d wear a school blazer everyday even in a hot weather” I tell him painting a picture in his head and it seems he can see it because he’s grinning and listening to me talking.

Then he gets up from his chair and walking behind the counter, before I hear the sound of bowls, plates and spoons. I think he might break them, I get up from where I’m sitting making my way there and stand next to him and he pauses to turn and faces towards then his hand is lace around my waist but firstly he leans against the counter and brings me closely to him.

I lift my head up to meet his face and softness of his breath tangos around my face, as we speak a different language, a native tongue.

I lace my hands on his chest and. . .and for once this alienated feeling that has been cat walking to cripple me is crowned because I don't suppress it from winning.

"This

us, like this doesn't it make sense to you Krotoa?" That question leaves me completely disabled that I have to sew myself to appear not transfigured by these brand new sensations won't allow me to reveal myself under the veil in that manner. "That's all I want to know from you. If it makes sense"

"In a different time, space and circumstance it would've made perfect sense but—

"But what? You want the power and to be prove that women can be supreme? The world is fully aware that women are almost godlike, celestial. There's no need to prove that to anyone"

"It's not about that Bandlaethu please"

"Then look at me and tell me what this is about?" Then his eyes moves on same synchronization as mine. As though we are birds making love to each other. "I can bear any pain as long as it has meaning mina Makhosazana"

"What is that supposed to mean?"

I see the apple on his throat moving up and down on his neck before his tongue comes out to lather his lips with moist. Then he runs one hand on his forehead while the other remains on my waist. After that he moves from me, walking out of the room and leaving me standing here.

And within a minute I can smell nicotine coming from the outside and I decide to rather plate out for us, he made spicy rice and chicken, it looks good that I'm doubting that he might've cooked it maybe he bought it or something. I don't want to think about everything happening at this minute in time even though my thoughts are like a nagging adolescent but I ignore them, I make my way outside to find him deep and drowning in his head with a cigarette in his mouth.

"Bandlalabo!" I call him and he casts his head towards me. Oh at least after walking out on me he can still smile—that charming one that makes me geek up and think about all the ungodly ghastly things that would make The Lord close the heaven gates on me. "The food is ready" I announce and he nods his head throwing away the cigarette partitioned in between his fingers.

I can feel his footsteps right behind me as I'm about to turn around the corner, I feel manly arms holding me back by my arm before I can say anything his hands is wrapped around my neck, a sensual choke as he pushes me against the wall. At his

lips' touch I blossom like a flower and the incarnation is complete. It was velveteen at first and then with a swift graduation of intensity that makes me cling to him as the only solid thing in a dizzy swaying world. His insistent mouth is parting my shaking lips, sending wild tremors along my nerves, evoking from my sensations I didn't know I was capable of feeling at just a mere kiss. When his tongue strokes into my mouth the grip moves in a same rhythm around my neck causing a moan I've never heard rolling out of me before. I can taste the nicotine and dry wine from him and this make an exotic combination.

I pull away from him, "We shouldn't. . ." He doesn't want to stop kissing me. At each word that I utter his mouth just captures mine. Then he pauses. When my lips separate again so I could spit words, his tongue invades me again with risqué. He holds me tightly against his body with his fingertips digging into my skin, making love to me with passion and adoration, but my brain cannot take the onslaught sensations.

I thought he'd do more but instead he pulls away from me to stand just distance apart then takes my hand leading me to where we were. I haven't recovered from the holistic prayer of our hands, tongue and skin chanted.

"I'm not going to do anything to you unless you've made up your mind" What did I say? That he's random, he just

murmured that. "It's either you put an end to this game you busy playing with Nqabayezulu or I will Makhosazana and trust me on that. It will end in tears sisi"

"What do you want from me Bandlalethu?"

"You"

"And if you cannot have me?"

"Then fine but this fake wedding is not happening Ntombi ka Makhethe ngimile mina lapho"

22.

alpha

['alfə]

- denoting a person who had a dominant role or position within a particular sphere.

BANDLALETHU

I look at the watch on my wrist to see the time once again as I am getting impatient at the corner of the restaurant when the waiter stands before me asking whether or not I would like to order anything, “Just wine thank you” I have been sending her back and I could see by those narrowed eyes that she was becoming irascible but this time an amiable smile dances on her face after she asked me for options. I pause for a moment gazing at her hairy face and thick cornrows with earrings hanging on her ears—I cannot help but be reminded of someone as she blinks at me then look behind her to see what am I looking at. “I’ll have sweet white wine please” I don’t usually go for this one but right in that moment I reminisce as she sat on that chair with a white dress made of satin fabric and

it showed the tattoo spread behind her back. That short hair somehow manages to give her look a subtle tone with clam earrings in ceramic on her ears but that's quickly replaced by how she walked out of the house like an aggressive swirling tornado destroying everything after what I've said.

I know she thought I was going to follow her behind as she grabbed her shoes, the arch of her waist moving side by side, sashaying as a woman dancing tango then she seethed making eye contact with me and the way she closed the door it was enough for it to break. I've said what I needed to say and I'm not taking any of my words back. I'm not sure how I'm going to navigate this and manoeuvre through it but I know for a fact that she's—mine.

"I'm so sorry I'm late" A man swathe in a navy suite apologizes pulling out a chair and placing his suitcase on the side while making himself comfortable. "I'm really sorry but. . ." I hear him saying again after reading my face and seeing my facial expression then he extends his hand I am guessing to greet? It been already three seconds of our meet up and by this encounter I am questioning how my father hired him to be his lawyer. "Mr Sithole but you can call me Zamokwakhe"

I shake his hand and then grab at the glass on the table that was placed here few minutes ago and taking a sip. I'm not drinking this because of the sweet taste on my buds, I just

wanted something that would linger the fresh visual image of her at the back of my brain. “Next time I’m hoping you won’t waste my time” I say to him and he nods his head, but transform in total different picture of what I had in my mind. “Anyways I called you here about a recent contract that my father made about the business between my brother Nqabayezulu Zungu and his soon to be. . .” I pause and the veins in my hand showing their visibility at that thought. My breath suddenly becoming uneven. “And Krotoa Makhetha” That sounds perfect.

“You understand that I cannot share this information with you because—

“I guess you want to tell me about privacy and losing your job blah blah blah. I don’t want to hear it but I want to know what the contract said, whatever amount you want put it on this table”

I see him shifting on his chair leaning back and running his hand through his hairless face before he breathes. “Fine. . .” After a long thought he says surely he has made up his mind. “That contract was fake” What? I attentively look at him so he can explain furthermore about what he has just told me. “Well it was the only way for him to see whether or not this was a genuine companion that’s the reason he made them sign the contract to see if they’ll still continue doing this. Also he

wanted to teach his son a lesson” A lesson? What’s wrong with Mzobanzi?

“And then what happens after?”

“Well they will get married and his son will take what’s rightfully his then the woman walks away with nothing” I should’ve known that my father is much smarter than what the brother of mine thinks. “And if they divorce of course then they both get absolutely nothing” I wasn’t planning on drinking what is in this glass but I just guzzled the liquid to smoothen my chest and my throat right away. I need something much stronger than this. “And that’s all really” That’s how he zipped close this conversation and leaning backwards on his chair. I can feel something pull my medulla oblongata with my brain starting to bleed from this information I just received.

I get up from the chair fixing my blazer “You have my number so give me all your details and how much you want, please get me a copy of that contract” I see a smirk appearing on his face as he extends his hand for yet another handshake but I don’t but rather look at his hand and walk away. The moment I get into a car I grab out a cigarette and shoving it in-between my lips, inhaling the smoke that’s going to burn the diabolical emotions starting to expand all over my bloodstream. In this total silence and only listening to the sound of moving wheels my phone starts ringing. I look at the screen and they’re calling

me again at work, I haven't been there for three days. And for the first time I feel more like myself than trying to be a superhero swathe in scrubs and a white coat—that's not me—I'd wake up every morning dragging my feet because that doesn't shoot adrenaline rush throughout my body or awakens anything euphoric from me.

I am on my third cigarette since I got into this car turning the wheel, changing gears and gazing at the rear view mirror when I drive through the gate to my uncle's house. I throw the cancer stick that was already burning my fingertips and getting off the car striding towards the door before I can even knock the door opens, his security might've informed him that I'm here or maybe cameras? You'll never know with him anyways he stands here gazing at me.

“What are you doing here Bandlaethu because you know I don't anyone to know I'm back?”

“If you wanted people not to know that you're back then you would've hide somewhere else Mkhululi and not your house” I attempt walking in but he pushes me back surely because I called him by his name. A grin appears from my face and he clicks his tongue walking back inside the house and I follow right behind him as we walk through the hallway.

“What if someone was following you?”

“I would’ve known” I answer him.

The moment we get into a living room I pour myself a glass of cognac and taking one long sip groaning before refilling my glass and making my way to sit on a couch as he watches and examine me. I give him a glass of the drink that I made for him just that way he likes it, on the rocks and firstly he inhales the scent before just holds it in his hand penetrating me with his gaze. “You want me to ask you what’s wrong Bandlaethu?” Then he creases his eyebrow and I shake my head

Advertisement

gulping from the glass yet again that becomes instantly empty and roughly placing it on the coffee table. “When was the last time you had sex?” I hellishly look at him and he laughs throwing his head back then hands me the drink that belonged to him. “You need it more, it seems your brain is drowning in sperms. What’s wrong?”

“It’s your brother”

“Mzobanzi? Is he inviting you to another church service or opening a third branch?” You cannot miss the humour in his voice as he clasps his hands on the sides.

“If he wasn’t my father then I would’ve made sure that his brain shatters on a wall with just one bullet. . .” I flare my nostrils and

my uncle seems taken aback as I sip again from the drink in my hand. “. . .you or anyone wouldn't have stopped”

“This is my brother we are talking about here Bandlalethu and he's your father”

“My father?” I sneer and take the slug of brown liquid floating with cubes while leaning back on the chair. “You know that the contract he gave Nqabayezulu was unreal? He planned the whole thing to make sure that he gets married before he can give him the shares”

“And Nqaba didn't see the contract was fake and he just signed?” he questions me, I know exactly where is this conversation going. “Well did your brother tell you what my brother's contract was saying?” Now plagues with a mockery tone. I penetrate my gaze towards his direction and he smirks then shrugs his shoulders. “It seems you're defending your brother and I'm doing the same here”

“What's there to protect Mzobanzi?”

“Your father Bandlalethu. You expected him to just hand over his shares to your brother? He had to earn it and if he couldn't see that the contract was fake nor did he go through it then I was right about the fact that this business is going to crumble down like the walls of Jericho” Then he gets up making his way where the alcohol is, standing there and looking at me “You

want more?" I shake my head in disagreement running my hands through my beard deep in my thoughts. "And this is why I was saying that your brother is going to need you. Of course he's good for the business just not that smart" Now I'm just listening to him talking and absent minded. "What are you thinking?"

I glimpse once, "You don't know the sacrifices that Nqabayezulu has made. Ubaba asked him to get married to be part of the family business and he did just that"

"No, no, no your brother knew that I was going to make him part of this business when I get back but as always he was trying to prove something and you want to know the truth Bandlalethu? Your brother is always trying to prove that he's much better than you because you chose to walk away from everything whereas you walked away for him. And today I want to know. . .you're always breathing for people but who breathes for you?"

"Myself"

"Amasimba lawo and you know that" Then he says that what I'm saying is crap. I elevate my eyebrow at him and he pours himself a drink. "What were you doing anyways finding out about this?"

"Nothing" I quickly tell him.

“You cannot lie to me, so speak up”

“The wedding is fake. . .” That caught his attention because he just paused then starts laughing sonorously walking to lean behind the couch interrupting what I have to say. “And the woman he’s marrying is. . .” I exhale sharply and he stops.

“No Bandlalethu!”

I get up and grabbing the packet of cigarette that I’ve placed on the table walking out to have a smoke, his footsteps and scent tells me that he’ll be here in a nanosecond and as a I predicted he’s leaning against the sliding door. “What are you going to do now?” I wasn’t expecting that question from him. I deeply inhale the nicotine in between my fingers and looking ahead at the view with greenery scene. “And Nqabayezulu does he love her?”

“That’s what he said” I shrug my shoulders “And another woman too”

“Wait, wait, wait I’m not following”

“Well before he approached this woman to be his “wife” there was someone already in the picture who was my patient”

“You allowed him to do this nonsense? What are you smoking wena?”

“Ugwayi”

“That one in between your legs? You’re smoking amasende Bandla?” I want to laugh at him and but that facial expression is enough for me to hang my head low. “I’ve never taught any of you to treat women like this. I am anything but you’ll never see me disrespecting women”

“Well he said he wants polygamy”

“Who in this family has he seen with two wives? Uyahlanya uNqabayezulu” Then he seethes and I throw the cigarette once more “You cannot be with this woman” Instantly our eyes interlock, with me stupefied with what he just said. “I’m not going to let that happen. If your brother wants to marry her then fine but you Bandla lethu you’ll stay away from her”

“I can stay away from her but Makhosazana is not marrying Nqabayezulu”

“And who’ll stop them?”

“Bandla lethu Zungu. You are looking at him as we speak”

He chuckles sardonically “how are you planning on doing that?”

“What if he’s just confused? With everything that’s happening and pressure? This could be lust. I’m going to talk to him and if he really loves her then fine”

“Fine what?”

“Just fine nje nothing else”

“Fine you’ll let them get married?”

“I don’t remember saying that. All I said was fine. I have to go”

“Where are you going?”

“To speak to my brother”

“Bandlalethu what you’re doing is dangerous”

“The person I told you about is umfundisi Mdlalose, from eMlazi and I want him gone by tonight”

“I’ll get into it but about—

“I’m leaving”

23.

introspection

/intro-spek-tion/

- the examination or observation of one's mental and emotional processes

N Q A B A

I cannot hide the rapture traveling through my bloodstream and inflating my veins the moment I drive through my apartment greeting the security and coming back from a car dealership. I had asked my personal assistant to cancel all my meetings so I can find a perfect car for her—I don't know what she likes really and I should've asked, the last time I surprised her with an engagement party she didn't seem that much elated. In fact there was no sign and indication of euphoria dancing on her face even when I surrounded her office with flowers she just said they're "pink" with a corner smile as her eyes wandered around then she moved to another topic as though I didn't go all out to impress her. And with Zeno I pretty much did the same thing when we spent two nights at the

hotel. I could see it, that one emotion I expected from Krotoa luminous in her eyes then she turned to me as she was swathe in a brown dress that showed her voluptuous body, her curves and swollen flesh against her chest as she dazzled a beam towards my direction bringing them closely to her nostrils for the scent to voyage through her nostrils and felt the texture of their soft petals.

That night we danced together with my hand against the arch of her waist while hers were against my chest, the moonlight illuminating her beautiful face painted in neutral tones. In the middle of the night she woke up fighting, crying and screaming. I embraced her in my arms as I witnessed her vulnerability and touched it with the digit on my fingertips while she held into me and dampening my chest with salty beads that are laced in unnamed emotions—the moment, us in each other's arms was as though a perfect fairytale story written by one of the praised novelist in the world. The ones that are usually turned into movies and series from a book to convey what “love” looks like. I felt my heart constrict at the mere thought of that four letter word and how we've never been told that one can find himself drown into women who're totally different from each other. I am bewildered whether or not I am indeed in love with both these women or my head is lost in their beauty, sound of their

voices that haunts me in my dreams awakening me to take a shower after my sperms coated my hands as I stroked my phallus up and down.

I get off my car and taking a deep breath as this thought revisits me again, changing my mood and all I need right now is a beer or maybe throw myself on a couch the moment I walk through the door. I am exhausted from being constantly at war with my thoughts and feelings and trying to get to know each one of them.

“Bandlaethu!” I am in total shock the moment I walk through the door to find him comfortable on my sofa, lithe with a glass of untouched whiskey on the table and an ash tray that’s filled with burnt cigarettes, this room smells like nicotine. I watch how his dark gaze is sharpened and watching all my movements from the time I close the door to unbuttoning the last two buttons of my shirt and taking off my blazer but he remains there as though he’s a sculpture that’s still drying up. There’s something about him. . .that has totally changed. It’s like looking at the younger version of my uncle but a much more dangerous one because it has gotten better and better over the years. It’s the way his hand is resting on the arm of the sofa and his jawline tightened that makes him appear more supreme than I have seen him before, his honed facial expression is poisonous as though of a murder.

I frown looking at him as though I'm learning my brother all over again. Like he's not the same one who'd rather lose whenever we'd play video games just to see a grin appearing on my face whereas he knows all the cheat codes. He seems different from the one who'd make me win fights between us but rather just stand there as I punch him on the face until his face starts to bleed without fighting back.

"When did you get here?" I ask him and swallowing my saliva, I don't not understand what makes me scared of this picture here in my living room just watching me without any word rolling out of his mouth. "Is everything okay?" I plague again. Maybe something happened and elicited some emotions from him. Usually my father manages to provoke him but he always remains calm and collected nothing than what I am seeing on display in front of me.

"You want a drink?" Then he asks me as though I am a guest in my own home. I shake my head in disagreement "You're going to need it Nqabayezulu" I attentively look at him and shake my head grinning the moment he smirks at me. Arg that was all just an act? Ha ha ha. I get up from the couch making my way to the kitchen but I can see him from here as I grab a green bottle of beer and opening it before taking a sip. "Life is complex. . ." Then he takes a sip from his glass I saw on the table the moment I walked into this house. ". . .but it requires a certain

level of maturity in order to sustain relationships that matters. You have to weed out the process do you know that?" I know him. I know how much sometimes he speaks in riddles and you have to catch in between the lines to understand what is he saying. That's one thing about him, he's intelligent. It makes total sense why he spent so much time at school traveling in different provinces, moving from one country to another to represent our school in mathematics and science. He knew everything like the back of his hand; he'd look at the book once and that was it. Everything would be transported to his brain but ubaba never praised him much about it. It was strange that I was given an applaud from getting a mere B when my brother got his A's in every single subject but he wouldn't get the same praises. "People are too quick to give full access to strangers who give them a "good" moment

Advertisement

not knowing every moment returns to collect. Life is a boomerang, everything returns. You have to be selective with spaces you should have the knowledge to protect. Time is sacred that way with ever you may be grow there and create magic with the wind"

I feel the coldness of this liquid and it's acidity traveling through my throat and listening to him speaking. "What is this about? About what we spoke about the other night?"

“You’ll figure it out yourself” Again his gaze penetrates me and I watch him taking a sip from his drink. “Nqabayezulu uyahlanya?” Unexpectedly he asks me, creasing his eyebrow at me. “It’s a genuine question and I want to know uyahlanya?”

I laugh but seeing his face means that he’s actually solemn.

“What? No. Is this because I said I’m in love with two women? We are naturally polygamous creatures”

“Uyahlanya” That’s not a question anymore but he’s telling me that I’ve lost my marbles. “We are born naturally what?” Then he shakes his head making me feel as though I’m a total imbecile and wishing I could swallow back my words. “Now leave that part because we will get there soon but how can you sign a contract that you didn’t read? You didn’t call your lawyer to look into it? You just heard from uMzobanzi what was it about and you ran with that. You’re so hungry for power”

“I’m not hungry for power!” I raise my voice.

“I’m sitting here in front of you. What is the need for you to raise your voice?”

“What’s wrong with you?”

“What’s wrong with me?”

“Yes. You’re acting strange”

“Maybe that’s because my brother signed some stupid contract without reading what was it about and I had to find out that it wasn’t real but fake. And your father. . .that one whom you want to praise you, played you and the woman you’re claiming you love is a pawn”

I feel like a deer caught in a limelight and the hand holding the bottle of beer becomes rubbery that I quickly have to place it on the table. I start to tense feeling the acrid bitterness of this revelation rising up my mouth. “I don’t understand what you mean”

“I mean you are stupid, simple!”

“This is not the time Bandla please” I stand up walking to stand towards the window, looking outside but my iris cannot really focus. The headache threatens to consume me then I glance towards my brother once again. “What. . .what that contract said?”

“You will marry. . .” Then there’s a bit of hesitancy there. I can see that he’s looking for perfect vowels to form a sentence; his chest is burning with something I cannot yet put a name into it. I’ve never seen him like that. Ever. “You get married then you’ll get everything and—yet another pause but this time to take guzzle his drink. “Krotoa walks away with nothing and if you divorce then you’ll get absolutely nothing from this so this plan

of three months marriage and taking separate ways is not going to work”

“Well I have nothing to lose then” I shrug nonchalantly and turning to him. “I get married and I get what is mine”

He looks at me as though there’s a vagina somewhere on my face. “Are you listening to yourself? Are you even listening to what you’re saying? What if Krotoa wants a divorce?”

“You said I must make her fall in love with me right? That’s what I’m going to do”

A chuckle escapes his lips “You’re so determined to be powerful and be almost as Mzobanzi and Mkhululi but what you don’t know is that they’ll never use people as pawns to get what they want. That power they have is earned. That power you glorify there was blood shed. I also lost my childhood and had to dance with the devil. . .and you want to use umuntu wesimame to get what you want? You need some serious introspection Nqabayezulu and I swear if I didn’t love you so much by now I’ll be digging a grave and throwing your body in there” I almost crawl out of my own skin at each word that rolling out of his mouth. My heart starts to thud too loudly against my chest watching him still on that sofa and turning it his throne. “I’m going to ask you two questions and the answer is yes or no. Are we clear?”

“What makes you think I’m afraid of you Bandlalethu? You’re my brother yes and I respect you but. . .”

“You don’t know me Nqabayezulu. You. . .You don’t know me. You know the version of me that I wanted you to see because I was protecting you. When I said I love you two seconds ago I wasn’t being a poet here. Now answer these two questions” I swallow my saliva “Zeno, do you love her?” Then he asks, furrowing his eyebrows and I gaze back at him.

“Yes” I answer with bold confident.

“And Krotoa? What about her?” I pause for a moment and deeply think. I have been doing that for sometime—thinking. From that night I found him drunk after smoking two packets of twenty cigarettes, sitting in a dark before I confessed I’m stuck in a web of two women. “It been literally twenty seconds and you wasn’t so hesitant about Zenokuhle. I’m asking again do you love Krotoa?”

“I’m not sure. . .” The unfiltered truth comes out of my mouth.

“About both of them. I’m unsure”

He grabs out his key and places them on the table. “These are the keys to my house. A house you don’t know about. You’ll go there to take time and reflect. I want you to think deeply and do a lot of soul searching while at it. Then I’ll ask you again these two questions”

“Tomorrow is my negotiations”

“What negotiations?”

“I’m getting married remember?”

“Who said you were getting married Nqabayezulu? No one is getting married. You can sign all these fake contracts but what you’re not going to do is play with Ka Makhethhe she’s not a play ground. . .” his tone changes “And Ka Mazibuko” Then he quickly adds with an undertone. “Now take these you have some thinking to do”

“I need to have a conversation with ubaba”

“That’s all up to you then” he shrugs.

I return to my seat and balancing my elbows on my knees.

“You’d never do anything to hurt me right? I only have you Bandlalethu without you I surely would’ve went on with this marriage and destroyed myself”

“Hurt you?” he asks and I nod. “No, no, I’ll never do that. I have to go”

“Night shift?”

“Yeah, yeah it’s busy these days. And also I met someone yesterday at the restaurant and she looked like Zenokuhle”

“Which restaurant”

“At Musgrave I’ll send details. It’s the same restaurant where we met a woman who attacked and called her names”

“When was this?”

“Not so long ago; she needed some air so I took her out but you talk to her. Has there been any changes?”

“A lot of nightmares yes” Then I wince “she wakes up crying and drenched in sweat sometimes”

“That’s a good sign she’ll remember soon. I have to go now”

“Bandla!” I call him and he stops at his tracks and turning to me. “You said you had to dance with the devil and I don’t know the real you. What was that supposed to mean?”

He smiles, “I just wanted to scare you so I can get through that thick skull. You got scared?”

“Mxm!” I chuckle “Nothing scared me”

“Hmmm” Then he murmurs “Look take care of yourself okay”

“Okay”

I look at him walking out of the door and finishing up what is in this bottle. I don’t know whether or not I want to have this conversation with my father now. And then tomorrow? My uncles called me this morning about the plans of the negotiations. My head is swirling around with different

thoughts and I grab yet another bottle from the fridge and this time grabbing my phone to make a call.

After few seconds of ringing I hear her sweet tone saying. “Yezulu. . .” Immediately all the storm I’m wandering into turns into high trees and I see a lake too—the serenity that I needed opens its arms to embrace me. “. . .are you okay?” Then she asks me. The guilt penetrates me and I double gulp the bottle in my hand.

“I miss you” I tell her honestly “I miss you Zeno” I repeat again.

“I miss you too so much but you sound stress is it work?”

I grunt underneath my breath “Yes, yes things are turning upside down. Are you okay?”

“I just woke up from another dream. I remember—

“I’m coming over” I immediately interject.

“No, no you don’t have to come. Just. . .” Then she breathes out “I’m not who you think I am Yezulu”

24.

mask

/ma:sk/

- a covering for all or part of the face, worn as disguise, or to amuse or frighten others

Z E N O K U H L E

I wake up once again from the dream with all past visual images playing as a black and white film—I remember. I instantly get off the bed and making my way to the bathroom to stare at myself in the mirror with my eyes thick with emotions and the fragile glasses there are about to shatter in a nanosecond as I gulp for my much needed breath into my lungs.

-

It was in the middle of the night and I could hear the muffled kwaito music coming from the outside dancing in the atmosphere inside the three room house. I knew he was there

at the tavern across the street, surely on his third bottle of beer with women on his lap and shoving his tongue down their throats then he'd come back home and beat me up to the pulp. I slept with my one eye opened impatiently waiting for him and preparing myself for the punches that would be laced on my stomach followed by unbearable kicks, right in that moment the door wrenched opened. "Zeno! Zeno!" I heard his husky tone echoing as he struggled to stand "Zeno baby please open the gate!" I got up from the bed while BOOM SHAKA kept singing from the outside and putting on my shoes dragging my feet towards the opened door to unlock the gate when he walked in and groped my buttocks. "Zeno!" Again he called me turning me around to him and the smell of beer and cheap weed that they call "i-green" voyaged through my nostrils as I attempted to look away from him. "I'm hungry did you cook?" He looked around to see if there was any pots on a paraffin stove on top of the brown old cabinets since the four plate stove had died.

I attempted to get away from him but rather he held me tightly against his body then roughly kissed me on a cheek before he moved away and took a sit on the edge of the bed while taking off his dirty white sneakers and pushing them aside. I glanced at him once turning away from him with my heart thudding way too loudly as I take the plate of chicken livers, pap and onions and giving it to him. "What is this Zeno?" Then he seethed

looking at the meal I took time to prepare for him, with his gaze burning me as I stand in the middle of the house that was suddenly too small. I knew what was going to happen next. He was going to throw that plate away and it will shatter on the floor then what happen next is my silent sobs because I cannot scream anymore but rather look at him on top of me and his knuckles meeting with my face. “I bought meat two days ago then what is this?” I heard him asking again as I pulled down my night dress and swallowing my saliva.

“You asked me to cook it the following day when—

I don’t get to finish what I wanted to say when the sound of the scattering plate starts to sing in the intense atmosphere.

“Mosolina!” I said his name as though it was the first time I was learning how to say it when we met at the tuck shop around the corner when my mother sent me to go buy cold drink for our visitors and he was there leaning against “igusheshe” with a group of his friends who’d do anything to be around his space and even suck his penis if needed.

He was adorned in a navy vest and jeans, with a gold chain hanging over his neck and a match stick in between his mouth, then he followed me all the way inside the shop only for him to pay for what I bought then smirked at me.

It was the small scar on his cheek that made me find him absolutely attractive and his honey skin tone. After that encounter I would see him parking his car just across the street at my house in high hopes to catch a glimpse of me. “Zenokuhle stay away from that boy!” my mother would warn after she caught me standing outside leaning against the brick walls of our home and smiling at the stranger who waved at me. “Go inside the house now!” Then she’d shout. I’ll instantly walk inside the house before she can beat me black and blue—we would call her dragon lady with my sister because of her no-nonsense manner but the truth is she was protecting me.

“Mosalina please!” I begged seeing the anger sipping out on every pore of his skin as he took one step closer towards me, in a nanosecond his hand was wrapped around my neck. I try clawing at his hand with the translucent beads of my tears sewed with sheer fear touched his hand that one that had a tattoo of number “26” on his thumb. I could feel my air circulation being cut off permanently but this time I wasn’t pleading as I’d usually would whenever he chokes me but I had succumbed to the idea of being one of those women who died from the hands of their lover because she couldn’t walk away, she was afraid, she was stupid, she was this and that but the truth is—I loved him. Yes I loved him enough for him to fight his demons through me. I took those punches every night and nursed them the following morning while holding the small

mirror that was once hanging on the wall but my back broke it one night after he pushed me against it. He apologized, he told me that would do better and he would change, I believed him.

Tears drenched when he finally let me go, I greedily gulped for air into my lungs with my throat burning before I slumped on the bed watching him disappear to the bathroom that's when I grabbed the knife following him behind and before he can even turn, I grabbed him from behind then slit his neck like how my uncle would when slaughtering a goat before he can fight

beg, cry. I wanted him to die fast without feeling any pain in that moment our blue and white bathroom walls were painted with his blood before his soulless body landed on my feet and I continuously stabbed him on his chest, tasting my soulmate's blood as it splattered on my face when a guttural cry of freedom escaped my mouth sitting at the corner of the bathroom while holding the knife in my hand, covered in blood and watching him there lifeless.

I woke up the following morning and took a warm bath in a bath tub that we usually used together before lathering my skin with a moisturizer that smelt like shea butter and ate the chicken livers and onions that he didn't even touch while he was still there—dead. When I was done I changed into a dress and took the money that was hidden under the mattress after his heist last weekend and shoved it in a bag alongside my

clothes then left him there after chastely kissing his lips and his body was wasn't as warm as those nights when he'd make love to me, holding onto my wrists as he deep thrust while apologizing for beating me up the day before but he was cold.

I got into a taxi and sat at the backseat feeling the warm breeze dancing into my skin as Thembi Seeteo sang "I am free" and I sang along while tapping my fingers against my thighs with a smile on my face, tasting freedom. I felt my insides twisting and turning the moment the taxi parked outside my mother's house and I opened the short small rust gate.

I saw her stepping outside with her hands against her hips, her anger replaced with motherly adoration before her lips spread into a smile. And regardless of running away from home with a man who I thought was my soulmate she still enveloped me in her arms and comforted me with warmth.

"I killed him mama" I told her.

.

I can hear noises coming from another room dragging me back from floating into my dark past and my feet propel me to where they're coming from only to find him pouring him a glass of whiskey then he turns towards my direction when he hears

my footsteps, “Zeno” There is something that has totally changed about him even the way he says my name or even look at me for that matter. It’s totally different from that day when was my anchor when I was being attacked at the restaurant. The sultry palette that danced on his face has dissolved and misplaced by impassiveness. “I hope I didn’t wake you up” he dryly chuckles and gulping his drink. There is sovereignty in how he holds a glass and how his lips touch it, it’s suavely.

“I just woke up few minutes ago” I tell him and then he nods his head closing the bottle of expensive whiskey then glances at me once with a quizzical expression but he chooses so not to say anything. “Are you okay?” I ask him remaining on a same position and watching him once again, “You seem. . .”

An unexpected charming smile appears on his face and showing those sharp canines then he takes a sip from his drink and say, “What makes you think I am not okay?”

“You’ve been drinking a lot these days. I don’t remember the last time you went to work”

“I heard you’ve been having nightmares, do you remember anything?” When that question is thrown on my face, I can feel the distaste and that image of him on the floor in a pool of blood revisits immediately that I grip on the sides of my dress with my palms becoming sweaty. I cannot exhibit my past because no one would understand the perfect artsy picture

hanging on the wall in an art gallery but rather they'll judge and question it.

"Yes" I choke "I remember my mother and my siblings" I don't tell him the entire truth. When those insults were thrown at my face about my house being set afire I know exactly what happened that night and I know that my sister managed to escaped. "And my accident" I tell him and he elevates his eyebrow gazing at me, that's another story that I cannot narrate. I'm afraid the man I've met and fallen in love with will walk away—Nqabayezulu loves me without cages.

I have to hang my head low because of how he's studying my face as though he's reading me and seeing beyond my soul. "I'll call Nqabayezulu. . ." then he announces and taking one last gulp from his drink. ". . .I have somewhere to go to and I cannot really talk right now"

"He said he was on his way"

"Kuhle lokho"

"Bandla lethu did I do something?" I regret the words as soon as they leave my mouth because he just narrowed his eyebrow "I just wanted to know if maybe I might've done something because you've been cold lately towards me"

"No, you haven't done anything. I just have a lot going on at the moment and I don't understand what you mean I have been

cold, do you want me to smile at you and laugh even though there's no reason?"

"That's not what I'm saying"

"Then what are you saying ntokazi?"

"Nothing"

He grabs his car keys and phone from the coffee table without another word rolling out of his mouth then he turns around.

"What are you hiding Zenokuhle?" he stands exuding supremacy with his hands shoved in his pockets.

"I'm not hiding anything"

"Your body language and your speech work on that if you want to lie to me so I'm asking one more time what is that you're hiding?"

"I'm not hiding anything" I repeat.

That smile again, it's dangerous "Okay" then he walks out of the door and shuts it.

25.

confession

/ken'feSHen/

- the act of confessing something

What the fuck?!

I scream with my phone in my hand as I am trying to call his damn number again and the feminine voice tells me about trying again later.

This is later!

I have been attempting after every second as she repeatedly instruct me about one and the same thing. I can see the sun now becoming a “shy makoti” that I was supposed to pretend to be as she disappears behind the mountain creating an artsy picture. I am still draped with a blanket around my shoulders and my grandmother is trying to call her pastor once again flaring her nostrils while she’s seething.

“Awwww Krotoaaaaa!” My aunt walks into my room stumbling and unable to even stand, wearing a dress that she took from

my suitcase and holding a jug of sorghum beer, shame—she didn't sleep a wink as she was busy chopping vegetables, singing and ululating preparing for the early hours of the morning to hear my in laws praising our clan names outside the gate. "Krotoooooaaa!" Again she calls me and I turn looking at once, I'm afraid if I entertain her I'm going to end up murdering her, I'm not in a mood. "You know same thing happened to me. . ." she places her index finger with long pink manicure that she did under the tent at the side of the road just yesterday and they're already falling off against her lips, she keeps gasping when she sees one nail landing on the floor and complaining about how much she paid. ". . .I am telling you. I waited and waited for Senzangakhona and he didn't show up then he told me the cows were stolen. You see these people my baby? They're not coming and your uncle is already eating drumsticks in the kitchen" The she burps and shakes her head. Jesus Christ I have another person that I'm going to murder now because he knows very well that I said they should stay away from the food because it belongs to the guests.

I walk pass my aunt and fixing the blanket on my shoulders striding to the kitchen to find my uncle holding a drumstick in his hand and a bottle of beer, I take a deep breath and clasping my hands on the table, "malume I said. . ." before I can finish what I wanted to say he raises his hand while pointing at me with a bone.

“Your people are not coming, have you heard of negotiations starting at 5pm Krotoa? Just tell that boy that I’m going to catch him and I will kill him with my bare hands” Then he clicks his tongue and eats cucumber from the green salad. I’m really going to grate Nqabayezulu Zungu.

My grandmother walks into the kitchen anti-climaxed as though she’s the one that has been stood up. At this point I don’t know what to do or say because I cannot even show any emotions either. “What are you going to do now Krotoa? Are you okay my baby?” Oh she might think I’m planning on committing suicide and running away from the city. Well I don’t really care but rather this man needs to know that I’m going to walk away with all these shares and upper hand. When he came up with all this nonsense of sending his uncles here he wanted to what? To make me a cynosure and crown me with embarrassment? “You know you can talk to me right sthandwa sami?” she says in a sweet tone as though I’m a fragile feather that might break.

“We should go and burn down their church” my uncle says from behind me and that doesn’t sound like a bad idea, even though my grandmother just devilry glared at him. We are interrupted by my aunt who’s singing wedding songs and ululating at the living room. I cannot take this anymore instead I just walk out of the house with my phone in my hand and anger

sipping through every pores of my skin, burning rage hiss through my body like a deathly poison, screeching a demand release in the form of unwanted violence. It is like a volcano erupting; fury sweeping off me like ferocious waves. The wrath consumes me, engulfing my moralities and destroying the boundaries of decency.

The shrill cry of my phone makes me pause walking from outside the gate and I quickly press the green button answering the call. “You did this Bandlalethu didn’t you?” I seethe the moment my phone is against my ear with vexation coating my voice; he’s one of the people whose body would be at a mortuary today.

“I told you I was going to do it Makhosazana. What did I say to you?” Excuse me? He won’t even deny it.

“Fuck you yezwa!”

“I can see you there with a blue and white attire, do you want to come here and say that on my face Krotoa?”

For a moment I pause to think about the next word wondering how dare he?—how dare he makes me lose my sense of speech and use that tone on me? On me? I don’t ever bow and submit to a man and I’m not about to start now because of his baritone voice voyaging through my eardrums actually I am going to walk up to him and tell him to go have an orgy with his brother

Advertisement

father and the rest of his uncles who surely has missing teeth.

“Where are you?” I ask looking around only to see a car just down the hill and I know for a fact that’s him. Ha ha ha he’s driving a “vrrrr phaaa” and I know a reason behind that so that I couldn’t notice that could be him or maybe someone from his family to represent that spineless man he calls a brother. I stand here after immediately dropping the phone call before looking behind to my uncles under the tree then outside the gate and I see him flashing lights. What the hell? This one thinks his sperm is made of champagne.

I return back inside the house and looking for that cousin of mine who bought me the outfit that I am wearing today, then painted my face and draped a head wrap artfully on my head. I can say that I look like those women on twitter and instagram who post pictures after their negotiations, bragging about becoming someone’s wife. There’s this other one who’s a doctor and posted a picture of her ring that teared apart her glove, mxm.

“Lerato!” I walk through the hallway inside the house and my aunt is still pretty much singing with her husband now. The rest of my uncles are under the tree in a circle chanting a song, dancing and drinking traditional beer. They have completely forgotten about these negations that they were so exuberant

about. “Lerato! Lerato!” Again I call out when a ping comes through my phone to see a notification at the top of my screen and he just sent a message threatening me.

<Makhosazana do you want me to come there myself so you can say what you just said to me since you ran away?>

I read the message.

<You won't even make it through the gate because my uncles will kill you Bandlalabo and I'll help them braai your body!>

I see the typing these message and my fingers are burning before I click my tongue.

<At your age you want to be widow? Awukahle wena come out or I will come there to fetch you myself>

Who is going to be a widow? I'm sure on his way here he might've knock his head somewhere because there's no way any sane human being whose cartoons are all dancing in his head can say this.

<I'm giving you three minutes and your time starts now>

Another message immediately comes in.

Why my knees are cold?

Finally this cousin of mine appears from the bedroom flicking her bronze curly weave with a doleful expression looking at me.

Arg I've forgotten I have been stood up and now I have a demented man threatening me. "I'm going out please cover for me" I say and she creases her eyebrow wanting me to tell her more. There's nothing more to say. "I need to see someone it's important. . ." her eyebrow elevated further and I look down my phone ". . .I cannot explain I already have two minutes remaining Lerato!" I think she's another reason I am going to lose my marbles at this moment.

"Is he the reason why your in-laws didn't show up? Krotooooooaaaaaa you're in love with another man?" What? No, no, no I am not—sigh—I am not in love with anyone what's wrong with her. "Who is he? Is he here?"

"We will talk when I come back please"

Then she examines me and smile. Oh no I don't have time for this. "You love him" That sounds more like she's telling me than asking me actually.

"I'm not in love with anyone stop!"

"You should see your face right now" Then she smirks "Who is he? Is he handsome?" I look down at my phone. Oh God why time moves so fast? I just leave her standing there, calling after my name and using the kitchen door because there's no one here. I instantly become immobile as unlocking the gate and seeing him approaching towards my house.

Uyahlanya uBandlalethu!

I quickly walk out and closing it behind, almost running as I am approaching towards his direction. “What’s wrong with you have you lost your mind?” I am glad there’s no electricity where we are standing but I can see him because he’s illuminated by the early moon, wearing a sweatshirt hoodie then he pulls down his two strings, smelling like whiskey, nicotine and that familiar scent. “Bandlalethu uyahlanya? Have you lost your mind?” I ask again now standing facing each other.

“You look beautiful makhosazana” then his deep tone resonate, causing my throat to experience drought and my body buzz with something foreign. I am burning under his gaze with red rimmed eyes “. . .well too bad you’re wearing this attire for a wrong person” I’m going to slap him. “You see what you’ve done to me Krotoa?”

“What did I do? What did I do? I should be asking you that damn question Bandla”

“Ngiyacela” Now his tone is stern but soft at the same time. I don’t know how to explain this, even his face is hard with his eyes molten brown. “When you talk to me please don’t raise your voice that’s all I’m asking”

“I should be killing you!” I step on my feet and my right hand is shaking. “I should be killing you Bandlaletu Zungu! My hands should be around your neck and strangling the fuck out of you!”

“You’re using the word “fuck” to me again Ka Makhetha I don’t like that”

“Leave!”

It’s the way he’s looking at me. I’ve never had a man gazing at me this way before it’s usually lust painted on their faces but this is different and new. . .and alienated. I hate it! I hate it so much! I hate that even through this darkness I can see that very same facial expression that he had the first time that we kissed.

When he takes a step closer to me I don’t move. I don’t say a word but I wait. I wait for him to stand right in front of me and paralyze me with proximity. His hand goes to my waist firmly as he pulls me closer to him and my instinct takes over. “Bandla. . .” I whisper unable to find the sound of my voice and meeting with his gaze.

“I’ve been trying. I’ve been trying to silence the sound of your voice in my head and the visual image of your face in my mind. Your laughter and the softness of your hands. . .I tried. I thought alcohol could possibly erase it but—what should I do Krotoa? And don’t tell me to leave you alone because that

would be impossible and I'll be found killing people to keep myself alive. What should I do mphefumulo wami?"

I look at him, again the sound of my voice is not found. "I promised myself to never fall in love Bandla. I cannot break that promise"

"I made a promise that I will never hurt my brother but I'm just a knock away from doing so. If you love him tell me now!"

"I don't"

"You don't what?"

"I don't love him. It wasn't about love from the start. It was about something else. . ."

"Revening the death of your mother?" What the fuck? And how does he know that? "You we're looking for a victim who'll take a fall for what that rapist did to your mother and by hurting them you think you'll heal?"

"You don't know what you're talking about Bandla! You don't know shit in fact!"

"Your voice makhosazana"

"Let me go!"

"That's not happening since you're in my arms now you're not leaving them anymore Krotoa Makhetha"

“Your brother and I had a business deal”

“What makes you think that business deal is still on when he didn’t come here for the negotiations?”

“Oh so you came all the way to do what? To laugh at me? Is that what you’re doing”

“I came here to tell you that from the moment that I saw you right there and then I knew at some point we were going to stand like this in each other’s arms then I’ll tell you that I love you Krotoa Makhetha”

26.

whelve

- (n) to bury something deep, to hide.

I AM HERE.

My feet are deeply rooted into the ground suddenly feeling heavy and I am in his arms, a man who has just confessed that he loves me and I have never had a man saying those words to me before in my age while staring into my eyes with an ocean of emotions although some of them I do understand but they're some that are just unnamed. I gaze back seeing his iris luminous with unshed tears and the heaviness that was laced on his shoulders gone and he seems as though he has just tasted freedom after his confession.

I did say I've never had a man saying these words right? At a young age I hoped that one day I would find him in our living room swathe in a brown suit and looking impeccable with his afro nearly combed waiting for me to walk into the room then open his arms to wrap me around with fatherly warmth and apologize. I wanted to hear his husky voice as my mother would say trembling with emotions while he explains why he left the

hospital promising to come back after he held me in his arms then named me Krotoa.

What made him give me this name?

I don't know how it feels being loved by a man because he chose to walk out of that ward and never returned. I don't know how it taste because for years of growing up I loathed my own father then the hatred bloomed and was directed to his own gender and then worse a man again chose to take that one thing that was important away from me which was my mother; now how can I love a man?

What does that even mean "love", because as I am standing here in the dark with the moon illuminating his face and witnessing, tasting and touching his emotions I cannot think of anything else beside destroying him and having him crawl on his knees and begging for forgiveness and maybe. . .just maybe hearing a deep tone apologizing will bring a sense of serenity to my turbulence mind and soul, maybe it will feel as though my father is saying it and my heart won't be stoned but soft, maybe it will feel as though my mother's rapist is saying it and I can finally heal from seeing her hanging from the garage completely naked because depression made her lose her sanity, maybe the image of my mother sitting by the window with her hair braided in bantu knots with tears falling down the valley of her cheeks as she wails about what happened will be replaced

to pictures of her baking in our small kitchen with a gigantic smile.

I can see it. I can see that he's impatiently waiting for me to say something but instead I avert making any sort of eye contact with him. "You cannot love Bandlaethu" I try pulling away from his arms and instead he pulls me closer, too tight that I can feel the bubble of emotions on my throat that have been suffocating me for years.

"I already do but I want to know what's the reason? What's your reason?"

I dart my eyes between his, the smell of whiskey dancing through my nostrils.

It's strange how intoxicating it is, totally different from his usual scent, so good. I swear this man smells like a fragrance store, "the only thing that I am thinking about right now is how I can destroy you, take advantage of the love you have for me, use it to crash you because that's what I have been doing. If not ruining people's marriage then I am just hurting men. One after another" I spit and he doesn't seem surprised about the confession I have never made to anyone.

-

I remember once when I had a gun on my forehead in his room after he found out that what we have was nothing but fake. I have cleaned his bank account and that money helped me build my practice today. I remember the sweat on his frowned face while he paced up and down the room, I sat on the bed motionless, surprisingly, but that day made me realize that I'm not afraid of death, I have nothing to lose anyways. Even though I'm aware my grandmother would be crippled by too many emotions but that woman is strong, I wish one day I can be like her honestly and deal with my hurt and pain instead of allowing it to turn me into what I am now. "I am going to fucking kill you Krotwa!" When his tone roared in a room, I just smirked—for a woman who had a gun in between her forehead after stealing someone's money from their bank account with a help of a friend who's good with technology and hacking then trust me I was too calm, too calm. "I am going to fucking kill you!" he said again with saliva coating his mouth and the wedding band on his finger reflecting the chandelier at the hotel. "Why would you do this to me after everything I've done for you?" Ha ha they all tend to ask this. I was used to this song anyways.

I shrug my shoulders nonchalantly "To destroy you. To see you looking like that" It was the first time I've ever been unfiltered to a man before and he chuckled dryly and ran his hand through his head. "I'm sorry you had to be a victim" It was

strange how I care about him, he was totally different from any other men that I've been with maybe because whenever we fucked he'd be gentle sometimes and never treated me like a whore that I truly believed I was because women are always slut shamed for opening their legs and not men.

"You could've told me you needed money!"

"Then I wouldn't have seen that facial expression on your face. What would be the point? I wanted to destroy you now if you want to kill me do it now, I have nothing to lose" I said and I think that made him see that I wasn't afraid of death and he removed the gun on my forehead, breathing out and sinking in a chair.

"What am I going to say to my wife and children? About losing so much money? What am I going to say, did you think about this?"

I smiled getting up from the bed and wearing my lace underwear, "did you think about her when you fucked me?" I creased my eyebrow but at the same time the face made me want to comfort him in my arms and apologize over

over and over again with tender and gentleness. I was in such a state of bewilderment as I stared while he ran his fingers on his lower lip. Like an antagonist feeling euphoria running through my body that I managed to cripple him unexpectedly and I

walked out of that door leaving him calculating his next move. I don't know what happened to him, I have never heard from him ever again but I know that out all men that I have slept with I cared about him but too different from this one standing in front of me now so he better just stay fucking away from me.

-

“I'm not good enough for you Bandlalethu” I say once more and swallowing the bitterness in my tongue of these words I have just said.

“Then destroy me Krotoa. Is that what you want to do? Fine then do it in every possible way you can do it but. . .but don't tell me you're not not good enough for me because you have no idea what's good for me!” He breathes long and hard, attempting to regain his strength. “I'm going to give you time to think about this then I will see you tomorrow but I want you to know that I'm willing to lose everything for you Ka Makhetha”

When he removes his hands from my body I want to crawl under his skin and stay there, but rather I watch him as he takes a step back and hanging his head low, clenching his jawline. “I hope you remember what I said to you before” then

he says in complete silence between us and the sound of crickets sounds like a sombre background song.

“You never been a better choice” I say remembering and he lift his head up to look at me. It’s strange how in this darkness we are still able to look at each other’s faces and eyes. “I have to go before my grandmother starts looking for me”

“I’ll be here waiting for you to make up your mind” What is that supposed to mean? Oh he doesn’t really mean that he’ll be standing here but just “here” I get it now. I manage to remove my feet from this position and walking away from him, although it feels like the ground is made of wet cement but my feet propel me until I open the gate to find my uncle gathered his friend singing loudly and their voices sounds so perfect with my aunts, there’s ululation that just erupted. It’s surprising that they’ve completely forgotten about what happened today as they sing “Isaga: Zulu chant” clapping their hands along, whistling and that one who wanted to burn down the church has a stick in his hand.

It’s a beautiful sight as they embrace the black culture that for a moment I stood here and watched what is happening but quickly remembered that I have so much going through my mind that needs my special attention for instant that satan’s toe nail who haven’t called to explain the stunt he pulled today and then this man who just said he loves me.

I walk back inside the house and my grandmother is eating the food that was meant for guests with my dearly cousin in the living room, there's radio also throbbing in the sound system. "Where were you?" my grandmother asks with a concern tone and I give her a soft expression taking a sit on the sofa, "His father called me, he said they don't know where he is but they'll get back to me as soon as they find him. I'm sorry, I should've protected you. I should've protected your mother. . ." No, no, no. I didn't want her to feel this way. I get up from where I am sitting to her and holding her hands. ". . . I just saw from the news that he was found death, they brutally killed him. I know that I shouldn't feel this way but I never felt this sense of satisfaction in my life"

"Who? Who did they kill gogo?"

I can see it. The answer on her face even her words starts to echo in my head and I don't know where are these tears coming from, I didn't cry when my mother died and even at her funeral but I sat there and watched everything happening until the end. I stared at her face in a coffin so beautiful as though she might wake up without a droplet of tear falling down the valley of my cheeks but today I explode. For very bizarre reasons. A hysterical and guttural sound comes out of my body with my body feeling freedom as it trembles, shake and show vulnerability.

The way my scream was so loud even my uncles and aunt run into the room to find out what is happening while I am in my grandmother's arms. "What happened? What's going on? Krothano my baby what's wrong? What happened ma" my uncle, his name is Jongimpi. I cannot see his face because my head is on my grandmother's chest but I know that he has a frown and this made him sober instantly, they treat me like a fragile egg in this house because I am the only child that my mother ever had, their only princess as they would say. "What happens ma?" Again he pesters my grandmother.

We are interrupted by the noises in the background and malume Jubezizweni screaming at someone that he's going to beat them up but it seems that is falling into deaf ears, it must be their drunk friends. "Makhosazana!" I hear a scream outside the living room door dragging me back from my emotional state to reality. What the fuck? What is he doing here? I ignore him and continue "crying" in my grandmother's arms who's also assuming that it's just a mere fight. "Makhosazana!" Again he screams that forces Jonga to walk out outside and knowing him he'll beat Bandlaethu black and blue because he was a boxer back then, all his pictures still hang on the wall with a red satin shorts and gloves.

We can hear a ruckus happening from outside now and my grandmother immediately get ups and tells me to remain here

she's coming back assuming I am still paralyzed by these emotions I don't know where they're coming from, of which I am still disabled by them by the way. Even my chest feels like I swallowed a bag of nails and under tools.

"Bandlalethu what are you doing here?" Oh snap! I get up from the sofa hearing my grandmother, to see him already have received few punches from Muhammad Ali and his nose is bleeding.

"I heard Krotoa screaming" Wait when he said he'll be waiting for me there he meant he'll stand outside my gate until when? In this moment I come into conclusion that something is wrong with him upstairs. "I heard her screaming and. . ." Our eyes meet as I appear behind my grandmother and when he sees my tears I can tell that brought indescribable rage. When he attempts to approach towards my direction the boxer of this family pulls him back. Now Lerato has put two and two together and hit twenty two because she has a smirk that I want to wipe out with a slap honestly.

Bandlalethu wants to fight off my uncle but instead he remains calm. ". . .Krotoa are you okay? What happened? Did someone hurt you" My grandmother's sharp gaze forces me to hang my head low.

"Who are you wena mfana?" malume Jubezizweni asks, by the way I am the only one who uses the Makhetha surname

apparently it was my father's and when my mother was pregnant he paid all the damages for me to use his surname. I should be using—Ziqubu.

"I'm Krotoa's boyfriend" I am going to fucking kill Bandlalethu. I swear on my mother's grave that I am going to murder him when he sees the look on my face he secret smiles then turns to my uncle who just glared at me. "I heard her crying and I had to see her. I'm sorry for just coming into your yards like this and ngizohlawula" he says that I he is going to be fine, what the fuck is this guy?

But he's not my boyfriend.

My grandmother wants to throw me on that three leg pot already. "What are you talking about? Krotoa is marrying your brother"

"Gogo she doesn't love him it was just—You see that bloody divorcee! No wonder they're leaving her, that shouldn't have came out like that but why is she even talking? For what reason?"

"I can explain" Bandlalethu says.

"There's nothing to explain here. Leave my house now and never look back and you will stay away from my granddaughter do you hear me? You think you and your brother will through pass her like a ball. What is this? They sent you?"

“Gogo. . .”

Why do I want to explain?

“Shut up wena!” My grandmother points at me “And go back inside the house. Bandlalethu leave and tell your brother what he had with my child is done. And tell your father to bring back the car that I bought for the church. I am done with your family now please leave!”

27.

game

/geɪm/

- an activity that one engages in for amusement or fun

I just came across some stupid tweet saying bleaching my hair is my coping mechanism instead of dealing with my problems and guess what? I saw it after driving to the nearest store here—UMTHWALUME and I've bleached my hair platinum blonde including my eyebrows again because what else am I supposed to do since my grandmother is not talking to me and this is the first time we have went on more than six hours without talking then that stupid Bandlalabo has been blowing up my phone and I am just wishing that my uncle could've punched him until his front teeth fell off because why would he call himself my man? My man?

And then at work they have been calling me day in and out. I don't understand why did I hire these people when they will give me such a headache but it was an emergency from what they said some aesthetician came looking for a job and they said she overly qualify. . .now that can cost me an arm and leg. I told them that I was going to call her when I'm back in the city

and asked that they send her documents, I haven't checked my emails.

“Krotoa! Krotoa!” Now that's my uncle calling me outside the bedroom and I am wondering what he wants from me. I decided to quarantine here until all of them decide to talk to me, I know they love me so much to go through the day without saying a word to me. “Krotoa come out and meet me at the living room!” Now that sounds like trouble and he's sober. If maybe we had this conversation after he drank three bottles of beer it would've been just fine but now I am going to feel his wrath with sharp words. “I don't want to repeat myself” After those words I can hear his footsteps starting to fade. I sharply breathe and getting off the bed—I don't know where are these damn tears coming from now but I have been feeling an argue to just scream my lungs, cry me a river until I feel there's nothing left anymore, my pillows are dampened and eyes pretty much looks swollen from the acidic liquid spilling off my eyes.

I drag myself out of the room hoping that I could meet my grandmother through the hallway but she's not around even that cousin of mine who cannot shut her mouth. I'm going to tell ugogo that Lerato said she never loved her husband just to make sure that the scores are settling.

When I walk into the room I find my uncle waiting for me with his back arched on the couch and I think I am angry at him for punching Bandlalethu. If he misses boxing match then he should go back to being a boxer not going around and professionally punching people. “Eminem?” he frowns at me the moment I take a sit on a couch.

What the fuck Jongimpi? And by the way he’s using that name because of my bleached hair and eyebrows. I’m not going to laugh. “It suits you and you’re looking beautiful Krothana” I guess people just freestyle my name in whatever way that crosses their minds.

He leans backwards on the couch and deeply gazes at me, “When is that boyfriend of yours planning to come here and pay the fine?” Well this is about money, he should’ve just told me that he wants money and I was going to give it to him or buy him a case of beer.

I shrug my shoulders nonchalantly, “malume he is not my boyfriend” I tell him the honest truth because that man might’ve lost his mind after few punches. I’m wondering where did he get the guts to actually stand here surrounded by quarter of my family and said that with his chest.

A furrow furthers on his face, “But that’s not what he said to me. To everyone. Your grandmother is very mad at you princess. What happened and who was that boy?”

“I just know him and he happened to be Nqabayezulu’s brother”

“That boy who was supposed to come here and asking for your hand in marriage?” When I nod my head he rubs his hand through the beard on his chin.

I don’t like how he is squinting his eyes and it seems as though he is judging me. “And between the both of them which one do you love? Be honest me” No, I wouldn’t dare be that raw with you because you’ll throw me against these walls. Never, I refuse. “You know when your mother was your age she already had you” Then a smile escapes his dark mouth as he reminisce about his sister. I cannot help but chuckle because at my age I have never been in a committed relationship and the thought of being in one sounds—I am indifferent actually. “Get up let’s go take a walk and get some ice cream. MamGxabhashe sells it here” Oh God he wants me to eat that cheap ice cream with a chocolate flavour that rather tastes like cocoa and cone that falls apart in your hands but I have no choice but getting up from the couch along with him as he throws his hand over my shoulders looking down at me while I look up at him and we both smile. Yes, he has been always been a father to me, and chased away all boys who wanted to me, embarrassing me. He is such a charmer that women fight for him here. I watch him walking towards me grinning and holding two ice cream cones

in his hand and I cannot believe a grown man like him actually has his tongue out licking and looking elated then he gives one to me

Advertisement

I am thankful for the sunscreen because of this scorching weather that would've left me burnt. "You didn't answer my question which one of these boys do you love?" Again he plagues and taking one long lick as our feet move at the same rhythm.

"I don't love anyone malume"

"What does love mean to you? What is love to you?"

I am afraid to look at him because I always have answers for everything but it seems this time, I don't know what love is.

I don't know what love means to me for that matter. This thought alone is somehow uncomfortable it makes me feel almost subhuman in a sense and way.

"Love. . ." I cannot think of anything right now and he has paused walking and now chewing on the cone with his eyes transfixed on nothing but me ". . . I think love is coming home to my grandmother singing in the kitchen and cooking dumpling and tripe. That sounds like love to me"

“You don’t even know what love means to you or what it means in general because you haven’t given yourself a chance to feel, to be human. You’re keeping this anger inside of you, watering it and patting it eventually it will grow and transform to something that could scare you when you’re looking in the mirror. Also your emotions are valid and how you feel too but while you’re carrying this hatred inside you the person you should be directing it to is gone surely continues to live his life. What about you princess? What about you Eminem? I’ve been seeing you and how you changed since your mother died”

“He is dead” I can feel the amphetamine swirls through my chest as I said that. “I cannot forgive him for what he did!”

“No one is asking you to forgive him. I’d be delusion if I asked you to do so. It’s funny how people always throw that advice but you cannot forgive someone who doesn’t show remorse or that they’re sorry. You cannot and now that. . . anyone who tells you to forgive him tell them to come to me because that would never bring back your mother, my sister, my mother’s daughter back. All I am saying is. . .” I have never seen my uncle this serious about anything before. “. . .happiness comes in waves it will find you again and do not give yourself ultimate to healing. We tend to attach happiness to love but it’s a fleeting emotion. Love is much bigger than that. I don’t believe in ownership but love to me is sacred. You shouldn’t ask anyone to love you, that

is a height only time gives. I want you to find self love first by digging, isolating, ache from being lonely, heal, accept and then look in the mirror and see the goddess that you are. You are beautiful nkosazana yami and any man should worship the grounds that you step on and not make you an option. If you're an option than he's not for you but what is for you will find you. I want you to find love without question and beyond the body but firstly take a break. Go away for some time and focus mainly on you then when you come back tell me whether or not you still think love is when ugogo wakho epheka amadombolo nomgxabhiso (when your grandmother cooks dumpling and tripe)"

I breathe then we continue to walk "After finding out that he's dead I have been feeling totally different. My heart is not as heavy anymore and I dreamt about my mother" I manage to open to him. This is another reason I have been in that bedroom without coming out because I am trying to navigate my thoughts and emotions. "I am not angry anymore and I am not just saying this but for the first since mama died she visited me in my dream"

"And that's because you got what you wanted. As much this may make me sound as an antagonist but that man deserved it. If your grandmother did not stop me trust he would've be gone long time ago" We are about to reach home. I cannot believe

that this short walk somehow felt longer. “Who do you love between the both of them?” Jongimpi is seriously not giving up anytime soon huh? I told him that I have no feelings for none of them.

I cannot answer because my phone starts to ring from my pocket and he creases his eyebrow then shakes his head.

“When you done, come inside the house and start cooking to make your way into your grandmother’s heart and think about what we spoke about okay and I still need answers” After that he kisses my forehead and walking in front of all the way to the gate.

“What do you want Nqaba?” I cannot believe that he has the audacity to call me after that stunt he pulled he should be somewhere hiding and not come back.

“I thought you won’t pick up” He winces then he pauses talking “I have an explanation Krotoa and I know that you’ll understand where I was coming from”

“Oh you better have a good explanation because if ever we cross paths again you will regret the day you set your eyes on me” “The contract was fake”

What? This is a bolt out of the blue. “My father basically was playing us. You mostly because he was using you as a pawn. At the end of all of this you weren’t getting nothing. When I found

out I was confused about a lot of things hence I didn't coming there for negotiations because I would be wasting your time when there's no deal here, it's a coward move yes. I know for a fact I won't be getting anything from him now but my uncle promised to give me something long ago but I guess I wanted my father to accept me"

"And how did you find out about this?"

"Bandlaethu found out. . ." He knew! He knew! He knew! And he didn't tell me? I don't know why I am feeling daggers around my hurt but the pang at the corner of my heart is not familiar. I don't know her and we've never met before but she feels brand new and taste so too. "I also had a chance to get away to think deeply about things and I wanted to tell you that I love you Krotoa" "Go grow a spine and fuckoff!"

They planned this!

I am telling you know that this was all just a plan and you see that older one, I must give him his cup because I almost fell for whatever bullshit and necromancy he was doing to me. Oh Jesus Christ this was so well planned. . .I mean Nqabayezulu being "caught up" at work and his brother "checking up on me" I should've just know from right there and then. I was taking my uncle's advice for that matter but fuck this.

I am finessing my phone screen and calling him and he instantly picks up. "At least with Nqaba I knew that he was playing a fucking game but you Bandlalabo, you're smart I give you that. I didn't see this one coming"

"Is that how you were taught to greet people?"

"Oh please I don't have time for this!" I seethe "Well your brother's intentions were getting the shares back and what did you want from me? To make sure that I lose my head in the game? Is this what is about? You knew your father was using me as a pawn but you never said anything so what do you want? You want to fuck?"

"You're raising your voice and I can hardly hear what you're saying Makhosazana so please calm down mphefumulo wami and tell me what's wrong"

"I hope you run out of that air you're busy calling me with and then you die. And stay away from Bandla then bring back my grandmother's car!" "Haibo Krotoa!"

"Fuckoff!"

"Okay now that's enough!" I can hear the vexation in his tone. "I am on my way right there right now so we can talk about this and I hope by God's grace that was the first and last time you said fuckoff to me yezwa Krotoa!"

"Stay away from me!"

28.

polygamy

/pə'liɡəmi/

- the practice or custom of having more than one wife or husband at the same time.

ZENOKUHLE

It had been a week since I ran into my mother's arms covered in tears and mucus when she welcomed warmly. I waited for her to ask me what happened, I was ready to narrate the gruesome scene and how I had force another mother to mourn the death of her son after he was slaughtered but I was never plagued with questions instead she peeled off my clothes and bathed me in a bathtub, the warmth of her hands consoling me and leaving kisses down my spinal cord then she hold me in her arms on the bed until eventually I managed to fall asleep.

When she heard from someone that there were people who were looking for me and wanted me dead she came into my room at dawn and nudged me. "Zenokuhle wake up!" she said and I quickly got up wiping the sleep off my eyes. "You need to

leave sthandwa sami. I have packed your clothes; they're people looking for you and when they find you they will kill you. I spoke to your aunt and she's waiting for you" she said and I looked her shaking my head. I wanted to die anyways for my sin and I couldn't leave my family behind. "I cannot lose you. I cannot lose you so please get up and leave!" I didn't have a chance to take a bath that day but rather washed my face and teeth before changing into something that could hide my face.

We got into my father's Toyota Sprinter 1999 and my head was covered with a scarf as we drove out of the gate. The sun wasn't in the sky as yet and the darkness was stubborn to walk away when we reached the bus station. "When you get there go to this is the address. Your aunt will be waiting for you and make something out of yourself Zenokuhle. Go back to school and make me proud. I will call you okay"

"I didn't mean to kill. . ." I couldn't finish what I wanted to say, she never wanted to hear what happened and how it happened. I guess she was saving herself from trauma and nightmares already she was cosseting a murder under her armpits. "I cannot leave you behind ma"

"Leave I am going to be fine and your sister is coming back soon as well. Your father cannot find out about this so you have to go. Go Zenokuhle Mazibuko!" Then tears danced in her eyes, like a contemporary dancer performing a somber piece of art. I

hold onto her tightly as the warmth of her tears touched my shoulders before I walked away from my mother getting into a bus and sitting by the window. I could see her waving her hand at me while wiping the water beads at the corners of her eyes.

I sunk on the seat ignoring the man who was sweating next to me and devouring the piece of meat. The moment the bus took off the people who were at the backseat in church uniform started singing “Woza masingene ebukhoni benkosi” and their a cappella sounded beautifully as though the gates of heaven were opening. I listened to their tones as cold tears laced with agony trailed down my cheeks and I quickly wiped them and this was just the beginning of my life journey just when I thought it was the end.

•

I can feel sweet kisses at the nape of my neck waking me up and interrupting yet another dream that reminded me of who I am and what I am. “Wake up!” Oh God his morning voice has to be his greatest weapon because my walls were found trembling and swollen with hymns. “Wake up Ka Mazibuko” I can feel than see his smile against my skin and whenever he calls me like that I just want to spread my legs for him to enter me and

deeply thrusts until I eventually forget about what is going through my mind but rather focus on the journey to nirvana and orgasm.

I slowly open my eyes and turning to face towards him, the smile on his face spreads further before he kisses my forehead. "You look beautiful when you wake up" A compliment covered in passion lands to my very own ears makes me cover my face with my hands and he kisses both of them. Jesus his lips against my skin are soft and have that cold texture into them. Instantly my heart starts thump-thumping and wanting more than just that. "I made breakfast and then maybe we can talk since we haven't had a conversation about you remembering things. I need to know you Zenokuhle. I want to know everything about you" I cannot tell him everything about me because that look on his face right now will be replaced by revulsion and he'd hate me.

I attempt looking away from him but his hand cages me as he caresses my cheek causing me to nuzzle and take in the scent laced there. "You cannot know everything about me Yezulu" I open my eyes to be met with his that are staring at me with gentleness. A frown appears on his face, he seems distant from the moment he arrived at his brother's house and announced that we were going away to catch a break he seemed. .isolated. He gripped on the steering wheel as though he was

transporting whatever was going through his mind there. “And I don’t think you want to meet that Zenokuhle. I don’t want you to meet her” I tell him with raw emotions and greedily gulping for air pushing him aside and getting off the bed and my feet propelled me to the bathroom as I wash my face, then I look at myself in the mirror.

-

I remember hearing my aunt’s guttural screams and hysteria causing me to run into her room

she was on the floor gazing at me with tear stained face. “They killed them. They killed them Zenokuhle and it was your fault. My sister is gone because of you and I want you to pack your shit and leave my house because if these people find out that you are here what’s going to happen? What’s going to happen?” Grief is like a catastrophic physical injury. I remained in that position trying to process the news as she sat there and drank from the bottle of vodka, with her eyes spitting fire. “Leave!” she said and pointing towards me.

I was young and obviously fell in love with a man who took so much from me—I was abused and he made me happy, very happy that those moment when he would lace punches on my

face would be quickly replaced by him putting a smile on my face.

And my aunt was right. My family was burnt into ashes because of me. I killed them. It was my fault because if I had remained on that bed as I usually would do after being strangled then woke up following morning to cover the marks around my neck none of this would've happened. My mother would still be here to embrace me with warmth then a smile dances on her face. My father would be basking under the sun listening to Hugh Masikela and smoking "imboza" and my sister would be swathe in her traditional wear and beads elated in our bedroom as she tells me all the tales about "emhlangeni" and how she's going to marry someone who'll value her closed hymen.

As I was packing my bags unable to understand how my life took a drastic change my aunt walked in stumbling and still holding a bottle. "Ya wena mbulali!" she chuckled guzzling from her bottle and calling me a murder. "You can stay here until the funeral but after that you are leaving. I don't know where you'll go but you must leave my damn house are we clear?" I kept nodding my head before another hysteria erupted from her.

-

I just finished washing my face and brushed my teeth when I return back into the bedroom and Nqabayezulu is nowhere around the room, the bed has been neatly made with a tray of food on top. I cannot help but smile and taking a deep breath. I walk around the house looking for him only to hear his voice it sounds as though he's speaking over the phone standing outside the terrace. "I love you Krotoa. . ." I hear him saying on the phone and I instantly feel my urethra becoming full with urine, pressing hard against my bowels. My heartbeat has picked up and my medulla oblongata has neglected to fire any synapses to make me breathe and this leaves me completely paralyzed.

When the call ends he finds me standing right behind and I can see he's thunderbolt holding his phone in his hand and the moist on his neck shouldn't come across as attractive.

"I asked you Yezulu! I asked whether or not there was someone and you lied to me!" I seethe.

"I can explain sthandwa sami"

"What is there to explain that you're in love with another woman that your brother is in love with?" I ask him and he frowns. I know why Bandlalethu changed. I saw it from the moment we saw her at the mall, that bitch. It was how his eyes flickered with unnamed and indescribable emotions that turned me ghastly green. I swear it was as though he saw god standing

in front him that even when we returned home he was all over the place—she’s the damn reason he has been smoking like a chimney and drinking as though he wants to burn his livers to death. I heard his phone call once talking to a woman with that deep baritone voice that invites cascade on your vagina but I’m not sure whether it was her. It how he speaks to her with gentleness. “Oh you didn’t know?” I crease my eyebrow at him.

“What are you talking about?”

“We met her at the mall and I could see that he was in love with her. You want me to give you a description of how she looks?” I ask him wiping tears at the corner of my eyes reminded of my other history. “So do you love her?”

“I love you Zenokuhle” I can see that stress is churning his brains and he keeps chewing on his jawline, running his hands on his head. “. . .I love you so much”

“And what about her?”

“I’m confused”

“You’re confused?”

“Remember when I told you about the business and asked you to give me three months?” I nod my head rapidly “Yes, she was the business and my brother has nothing to do with this. I know you think you might’ve seen something but there is nothing. Bandlalethu will never betray me like that instead he helped

me realize and understand this situation a lot better. Ever” It must be the jealous that might’ve made me see things. Oh oh so that’s why he froze when he saw her? That was because he knew what his brother has been doing or assumed that she might say something. I am suddenly perplexed about what I saw and what I’m hearing. “My brother loves me Ka Mazibuko and I hope this was first and last time you accuse him of something like that” The way his tone came out was frightening. “I love you sthandwa sami”

I almost caused deadly war between brothers because of what? I’m also not a saint but my thoughts and feeling are forbidden and should be left unsaid.

“I asked you what about her Nqabayezulu? And you haven’t answered me. Now that you confused what is going to happen? You want me to let you explore whatever is that you have with her?”

“Yes” Is he fucking crazy? “I want you as much as I want her”

29.

hypnotize

|'hɪpnətaɪz|

•capture the whole attention of (someone); fascinate.

BANDLALETHU

I was about to drive to meet this woman who seems to relish in seeing me in total misery and demented when my uncle called me on the other hand I need to find out what kind of car Mam' Ziqubu bought for my father's church so I can get her new one, as I manoeuvring through the traffic I attempt calling this woman and she's not taking any of my calls, that's before it takes me straight to voicemail.

Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!

I don't understand what my uncle wants from me when I have such matter at hand and worse part he called me at the office. Upon my arrival and walking through the glass the door the

receptionist tugs her luxuriantly black hair behind her ears and although it's fake it looks almost real as she smiles at me with seductive facial expression. "Mr Zungu. . ." then she says with a smooth tone. I keep my straight face and nod my head then she clears her throat "Your uncle is waiting for you" then she says and fixing her blouse.

I don't say any other word but walking towards the elevator and scrambling my way in, summoning it to the seventh floor and grabbing my phone out of my pocket trying to call her again and this time it keeps ringing and ringing without answering. Nxarga. I hope I am being called here for a good reason otherwise the small piece of sanity left in me would crawl out of my body and I'll be an animalistic deranged creature that feeds off from blood. I don't dare knock on the door but rather make my way inside to find him swathe in a suit and standing by the skyscraper and he turns looking at me "What happened to knocking? You're looking great with that suit" Then he smirks at me as I stand by the entryway and he opens the cap to the bottle of water and guzzling it. "Why you're standing there? I called you so we can talk" I crease my eyebrow and making my way inside closing the door while unbuttoning the buttons to my blazer. "You haven't been sleep and I can see those eye bags under your eyes"

“I am not here to talk about my sleeping patterns. Why am I here Mkhululi?” I ask him making myself comfortable on a chair but we are interrupted by a knock and he casts his eyes towards the door as though he was expecting someone and in that moment my brother walks in but he seems perplexed when he meets me here. What is going on? I can feel the sudden discomfort on my chest because my uncle knows entirely everything about what has been happening and I am not ready to dance to that tune of the music not until I have sorted out things with this woman and know where we stand. “Nqabayezulu” I dart my eyes towards my uncle with a quizzical facial expression and he just shrugs nonchalantly then sips from the water while I stand striding towards my brother and pulling him in for a hug. When I pull away we stare in each other’s eyes for a moment—something is wrong but he is attempting to conceal whatever emotions and thoughts going through his head.

“When did you come back malume?” Nqabayezulu directs the question to our uncle who remains in that very same position that he was in from the moment I walked through the door but his body now facing towards our direction. I return back to my seat as he makes himself comfortable on the brown couch in a corner of the office and pouring water in a glass. It seems everyone wants to stay hydrated and I want something to burn

my throats and lungs in this moment, I have a serious buzzing headache and needing nicotine to calm me down.

“I came back two days back because it was your negotiations only to find out that you have disappeared and no one knows where you are including your brother here. . .” Then he looks at me. I don’t like playing mind games and this right here is not something I find pleasure in, not knowing what is happening or going to happen next so I can prepare myself for. “What happened and where were you Nqabayezulu?” I keep my head focused on looking at my uncle and his movements not once removing them from him. I can hear my brother’s breathing in the corner of the room and I tap my fingers on the table waiting to hear his response, “I asked you a question”

“I needed sometime to think” That is a very good answer that doesn’t involve me.

“You needed time to think about what? You called everyone to leave whatever that they were doing to what, waste our time?”

“Chabo” he says in flash of brilliance “. . .I was confused between two women” I want to turn and look at him but I decide not to.

“What are you saying? I hate it when people starts speaking in riddles” I would love to suppurate with laughter because he already knows what is happening but when this man is like this

you cannot show your canines because he can shoot them off your gums if you dare smile or laugh while he's afloat in seriousness. That solemn expression is very dangerous it gives you a clear image of a man that he is. "I speak you respond Nqabayezulu. What happened with two women?"

"I don't know how to explain this but. . ." that pause feels like eternity and already I swimming in perturbation about what will roll out of his mouth. "I am in love with both of them" Uyahlanya Nqabayezulu! Actually udakiwe. "I spoke to Ka Mazibuko this morning about wanting polygamy of course this was a hard pill to swallow for her and she asked that I give her space and then other one—

"Her name is Krotoa not the other one" I have turned to face towards him and he gazes at me with squinted eyes trying to read me but he can never be successful at doing that. "I thought you were uncertain about what you feel for her so where is this coming from?" I am surprised at how calm I appear to be because at any given day I would've splattered his brain with one single bullet already but this is my brother not some stranger who's in love with the same woman who drives me to utopia.

"And now I am certain" At his response I get up feeling vexation pumping through my veins and striding towards him and I can see unexplainable fear appearing in his eyes but instead I grab

the bottle of water on the table next to him opening the cap and holding myself from what I wanted to do. “I know this sounds crazy but. . .”

“That polygamy bullshit you want is not going to happen Nqabayezulu. You’ve never heard of anyone in our family having two wives and that’s not about to start with you. You need to grow up and that needs to happen right at this moment” my uncle says and now making himself comfortable on the chair and leaning back with his hand clasped on the table. I remain standing with my eyes transfixed on my brother who keeps stealing glimpse at me then quickly look away intimidated. “I have made a decision to retire” Oh we already know that. . .I mean I already know that so what was the reason for me to be here? “I have decided that Bandlalethu will be taking over all the businesses” I wasn’t expecting this announcement, this is absolute the wrong timing although we had an agreement that he brings a dead body to me and I’ll take over but we could’ve find another way. “And then you Nqabayezulu can run the business that you’ve always wanted that even forced you to fake a wedding but you’re not having it while your brain is drowning in sperms and thinking about polygamy you need to decide what you want and after you’ve made up your mind then it’s all yours. You’ll be working hand in hand with Bandlalethu with the construction business so

choose between you being a confused piece of shit whom wants polygamy or the business?”

“Bandlaethu knows nothing about the business and he chose to walk away from everything to become a doctor so why does he have more than I do?” that sounds like he’s undermining me
“I don’t understand his involvement in this”

“Look at him. . .” my uncle says and my feet remains planted here impatiently waiting for my brother to cast his eyes on me
“. . .you see that doctor over there? Is the reason the business is still standing on it toes otherwise it would’ve fell on it feet long ago. You know nothing behind the doors Nqabayezulu as you think you do”

“I am just saying that he made it clear that he doesn’t want to be involved in any of this when he chose to be a doctor and I’ve been studying the business” Ha ha studying the business? With what logic?

“No, no, mfanana he chose that path because he was doing it for you. You have no idea what your brother wants because it has always been about you. I have made my decision and it remains that way. I am giving you two days to make up your mind but for now stop going to the office, figure things out and if you choose your polygamy then you can start waking up in the morning and look for a job to maintain yourself”

“I am being given an ultimatum? I have to choose but why? Because no one has ever found themselves in a situation like mine and therefore I have to compromise, is that you saying malume?” I seriously can no longer stand here anymore and be in this atmosphere for that matter unless if I want to expose myself of course.

Before Mkhululi can open his mouth to say something I immediately pester. I can see from his eyes and how his eyebrows are furrowed that what is going to come out of his mouth is nothing but venom. “I have to go” I make an announcement. Usually I would be standing up for my brother to get what he wants without any hassle or ultimatum but this time everything is different. “I have something that needs my attention so I have to leave”

“Bandlaletu you can't leave please speak to malume and make him understand”

“You seem to have everything under control

Advertisement

you don't need me” I say then turn to my uncle and walk out of the office. I grab out my phone and she hasn't gotten back to me or even sent a message at least. At this point I don't care whether she throws yet another insult or cuss but I want to

hear the sound of her voice to wash me with unexpected tranquility.

As I step out I grab cigarette and shoving it in between my lips to inhale the smoke as I strike it open. “Bandlalethu!” I turn around the moment I hear his voice from behind me and he’s striding towards my direction until he stands in front of me. “I never thought you wanted to be part of the business more especially since we’ve had this conversation before and you made it clear you want nothing to do with it”

“I was talking about the one where Mzobanzi was involved, which is yours now. What else you never thought?” I crease my eyebrow sardonically and inhaling the nicotine deeply into my lungs and a sense of calmness drape me around like a cloth.

“That you made so many sacrifices for me and I was unaware of it. I appreciate you so much” Then he chuckles “You know Ka Mazibuko thought you’re in love with Krotoa” Ungenaphi ezindabeni zami lowo?—what is her involvement in my business? I can feel the smoke starting to choke me and making me rapidly cough and hitting my chest.

“What when did she say that? And how that came about?” I ask him when I stop coughing and attentively looking at him to see what he thinks and feel well he remains too nonchalant about this meaning that he didn’t take it serious but I can see some doubts drawn on his face. I need to speak with that girl to stay

out of my fucking business and she might as well just leave my house.

“Well she was eavesdropping my phone call and then she said something like “you’re in love with a same woman your brother is love with” I don’t know where that came from but she said you guys saw Krotoa once. I told her you’ll never betray me that way”

“Betray you and how would I be betraying you?”

“Because you know I love Krotoa” I can feel the same clench that I felt earlier around my heart and I throw away the cigarette in my hand, already burning my fingertips forcing me to take out another one. “I know she won’t agree to polygamy”

“It seems you didn’t do the introspection but instead you took a woman along with you to my house, you don’t respect me Nqabayezulu. No one enters that house without my permission, I gave you access there for a reason. I thought this was about you finding out what you really want”

“I couldn’t leave her behind after she called me saying she remembers some stuff and I didn’t mean to disrespect”

“You could’ve taken her to your house and now that you have nothing to hide you need to figure out what’s going to happen or she must move in with you but I cannot stay with her anymore”

“Just few days back you said she’s like a sister to you and she can stay as long as she wants and now what happened? Is it because she made that accusation? Oh please man I’m sure she was just hurt about finding out about all of this and meant no harm”

“Nqaba she’s your girlfriend not mine so please make a plan and make sure that you do that by the end of today. I want my space and I have to go” I turn leaving him there and getting into my car while smoking. I have no intentions of dragging this conversation longer. When my phone starts ringing the moment I get into a car I quickly answer seeing her name on my screen. “Makhosazana” I immediately answer the call with a smile on my face.

“My grandmother kicked me out how does that sound to you after you got me in trouble?”

“What happened? Where are you and I’m coming right now”

“No she didn’t really kick me out but she’s selling our house in Durban something about me having to grow up and finding myself, creating new memories blah blah blah so I have to get myself a new place because she’s moving back here, she said she has nothing left for her there anymore which makes sense” Then she takes a deep breath. I think she’s venting to me and she sounds as though she has been crying. I halt on the side of

the road and inhaling sharply. “Why did you do this Bandlalabo?” “What did I do MaKrothazana?”

“I know the story about the contract being fake was just bullshit. You and your brother played me. You planned this didn’t you Sengwayo?”

“If you call me like that again I’ll be forced to drive to eMthwalume and have your legs over my shoulders mphefumulo wami. We both don’t want that” Her breathing hitches and becoming ragged. I am sure she must be squirming and that thought alone is ungodly, “There was a misunderstanding here and I am hoping that you can give me a chance to explain myself to you but what I want you to know is that this wasn’t planned. I will never treat you like that in any way or even lie to you for that matter and I’m sorry that I may come across as someone who just wants toy with your feelings but I’m not capable of doing that”

It scares me how she’s so calm whereas hours ago she was breathing fire, I can hear her taking a deep breath in and drowning in her thoughts. “I don’t care what’s your explanation Bandlalethu. I have to go now”

“Are you going to forgive me ever?”

“I don’t know right now I just have a lot going on. I’m trying to deal with my emotions and I’m all over the place. I went on my

periods too this morning so I'm overly hormonal. My grandmother is not talking to me because she's so sure that I was sleeping with you and your brother, and a whole of South Africa. My uncle wants the money you promised you were going to pay. The person who killed my mother is dead. I am forced to deal with pain and start healing my wounds and that's something so brand new and alien to me. It's a lot right?"

"You know my arms are really warm and they can make you feel better" Then she laughs, "You're not helping"

"Let me see you this once"

"I need time to think Bandla. I need space, I really want to see you but I cannot trust you with how everything unfolded"

That really hurt.

"I understand whenever you're ready then let me know I'm going to give you time"

"I don't love your brother" I shouldn't be smiling but here I am leaning back on this leather chair in celebratory. "But. . ."

"But what?" "I have to go, bye Bandlalethu"

"Ngiyakuthanda kodwa"

All I know is I'm going to see her tomorrow, I am sending back the car to her grandmother and Mkhululi has to help me with paying the fine. I have to see her one way or the other.

30.

cyclical

| 'sɪklɪk(ə)l |

- occurring in cycles; recurrent.

B A N D L A L E T H U

We are standing outside their gate with a brand new quantum that Makhosazana's grandmother bought for the church and a goat as well and if my uncle dares say something once again I am going to murder him, eventually the man who actually punched me appears from the door and walking towards us with his broad shoulders and taunt muscles. I swear if he wasn't an uncle to someone special to me then we would be singing amagugu and not coming here with a goat for "ukuhlawula". I can see a smile appearing on his face as he walks towards us and whistling before they hold a conversation with Mkhululi and I am not really paying attention, I keep wandering my eyes around in high hopes of seeing her around the yard draped in that traditional entire and head wrap I once saw her adorned in—well we are not here for negotiations so I know for a fact she won't be wearing that but she looked extremely beguiling and all I can tell you is that woman could be wearing a sack of

oranges yet it will still look like a high end fashion trend on her and even be splashed on our magazines with that platinum blonde hair and eyebrows. What I find attractive is that she is absolutely different and isn't afraid to be the only one not seen as "normal" in a room full of people.

The culture says we are not allowed to go inside the house but rather this conversation should be held outside the gate and leave after what we came here for and that is it but Mam'Ziqubu just said we should come in. I cannot even conceal my rapture at this moment that my uncle just glare at me to keep my composure he's wearing his usual solemn face and it seems he has met his partner with the "boxer" here because he also looks like a no-nonsense person and I know for a fact one wrong we will be walking away with free punches.

We get inside the house and it's very homely with brown and white interior design and my eyes keeps wandering until I see her pictures hanging on the wall from when she was young with an afro and small earrings on her ears, the radiant smile on her face evokes my very own. I move to another picture and there she's wearing her netball uniform. When my eyes move to another it was when she started shaving her head, this looks like her graduation day because she's swathe in black dress that has an open back showing the tattoo spread on her attractive back with bald head and looking like an epitome of breathing

goddess even with that make up on her face then on a same collage she's swathe in her black gown with her grandmother who's embracing her and they are wiping each other's tears—it's polaroid images. From there on her hair is just platinum blonde if it's not braids than it's her natural hair and eyebrows, with skin that looks like pearls in a glass of water glistening in the sun.

Yet again I haven't catch a glimpse of her around the house or even her scent. My trip to her images is quickly interrupted by a woman walking with a tray in her hands swathed in a dramatic sophisticating dress and heels, she's one of those who are always adorned in elegant garments and their faces painted she could be a television personality she would totally make it.

"I said I wanted my car back and I didn't say go buy me a new one Bandlaethu. . ." her grandmother interrupts my thoughts and I must say that black doesn't really crack because look at this woman. I cannot even see any sign of wrinkles on her face but instead she has purple lipstick on her lips and long earrings, clad in a black dress and jewelry with her curly fringe bob-cut weave on her head ". . .what happened to the one I bought with my own money?" she creases her eyebrow and Mkhululi next to me seems lost somewhere else. I cannot sharpened my orbs to follow where he's looking.

You'd swear when she says "car" she's not talking about a whole taxi!

I clear my throat, "I thought since the quantum was old I should get you a new one. It was going to give you problems in a long run"

"That's not true you didn't want to embarrass your father when your family did more than just that with my granddaughter" I have noticed how they would turn the world upside down for her, she is most definitely their gemstone. "I totally understand though. I have decided to come back home. I am selling the house and I'll be exploring the transport business with my taxi" Then she smiles, I am sure at the idea of becoming a businesswoman. It shows where Makhosazana got the ambition and her fierce side. "Well after making enough money I'll buy few more taxis. I've always wanted to be part of that world more especially because it's dominated by men. You all had fragile egos" Then she tells us about her dreams. You see? This is where Krotoa got that powerfulness.

"We can buy you three more taxis and you can start your business but we will have to work as partners if that's okay with you of course it would be great if we can work together" There is my uncle now hands on with his entrepreneurial spirit. I can see the grandmother looking towards her son who seems like he doesn't like the idea. "In this business world you are going to

need protection and that's where we come in" Then he says so confidently on that sofa with his hands on the side. Although he keeps the superior facade but at the same time there's humbleness and respect exuding from him.

Where is Makhosazana?

"It sounds like a great deal but working with you doesn't mean I am selling my daughter and handing her to you on a silver platter. Krotoa is our child, I wouldn't want anyone or anything that would hurt her because I don't mind spending years in jail for murder" Ha ha ha murder who? Well I understand that he's being overly protective but we shouldn't be throwing threats instead of promises now. From the way he just glared at me perilously that was directed to me. "We are going to think deeply about the deal and then get back to you" I hope my uncle here doesn't want me involved in this taxi association. I have heard enough tales about it and how you need to sleep with your one eye open.

"When you've made your decision then you'll let us know" We shake hands and the grandmother seems raptured that she just poured herself a glass of juice. I cannot drink or eat anything regardless of the fact that it all looks divine on that tray but I need to see her even from the distance, I am hoping she put some love potion in here for me. I cannot even hear the sound of her voice that alone is the reason I just got up excusing

myself to have a smoke, what we came here for is done anyways and now my uncle is just having a conversation with Jongimpi as though they're long lost friends, they will make a perfect match at the rank and stealing other people's lanes since the other one is good with punching while the other is sleek with guns.

I walk out of the gate to stand distance away to have a smoke. I am sure someone is going to tell her that I just walked out then she will follow

Advertisement

she hasn't been taking my calls since this morning, I am hoping that she could be in her room since she said it was that time of the month. I am disturbed by that woman who was serving us and I am just wondering how the hell women make weaves look like their real hair these days? This is actual witchcraft if you ask me. You see this woman you can tell that she spends hours doing her make up because everything is up to par. "I am Lerato, her cousin. . ." she extends her hand with white nail polish and smiles with warmth. I have to throw away the cigarette in my hand to handshake her. ". . .I saw you were looking around for her and to take you out of the misery Krotoa left last night"

"What you mean she left last night? Are you saying she went back to Durban?"

“I don’t know” then she shrugs. Is she kidding me right now? They don’t know where the fuck she is? She could be in danger or something. “But she called this morning to let me know that she was safe and okay but needed some time away”

That’s very relieving, I run my hand through my beard, “did she mention where she was?”

“No, ugogo said she shouldn’t tell us because she needs this time away from everyone to focus mainly on herself and come back a better version of who she already is. Krotoa has been through so much but she will never show her weakness, that woman is strong, probably one of the most powerful woman I know” Then she hangs her head low and smiles “Give her the space and when she’s fine, I am not saying she is not fine but she is absolutely perfect she just needs to heal. And she doesn’t need a man or anyone to neither help her with that nor hold her hand, she’s going to be just fine” Then she pats my shoulder and walk away. This sounded like an indirect instruction to stay away from her cousin. It warms me how much her family truly adores her, they would move mountains for her. But how am I supposed to stay away from her? In minutes of standing here I’ve smoked about five cigarettes and now I am returning back inside the house when my uncle announces that we are already leaving and Jongimpi is walking us out since they’re still holding a conversation while my focus

is on the phone to see any messages from her and her number has been said it doesn't exist.

Are you kidding me? This woman really wants to take my sanity along with her.

We bid farewell and getting into a car when my uncle starts the engine and grinning. "Who was that woman?" Then he asks me. I look at him frowning. At then it comes crashing like a tidal wave that he is talking about a Bonang Matheba of that family. "All I can say is she would look perfect with me at the alter"

"You're not going to do that Mkhululi"

Then he grins. What a complete imbecile, he has taken off his blazer and rolled up his sleeves drumming his fingers on a steering wheel. "What? You helped me meet my soulmate and for that. . .I want to thank you mntanami" I just glare at him.

"You're not about to date my girlfriend's cousin and it stays like that. What is wrong with you? Act your age" I shake my head and chuckling underneath my breath.

"Your girlfriend? Isn't that Nqabayezulu's woman? You're brave ain't you"

"Makhosazana is not his girlfriend"

"And not yours either. I said stay away from this girl"

“Very rich of you because you’re about to venture on a business with this girl’s family”

“No, no I am doing business with my future in laws. Mzobanzi doesn’t know about her meaning my brother is not in love with a same woman. It sounds perfect to me”

“Mkhululi Zungu you’re not even funny”

He laughs, “I am just hoping in all this Nqabayezulu can make the same sacrifices you’ve made for him. I like seeing you like this. When was the last time you actually slept?” Oh he’s being comical today huh? “And whatever that unfolds I hope you don’t end up killing your brother or the other way around. I saw how you got up on that chair yesterday. You wanted to kill him right there and then but you pretended to be getting water”

“I wouldn’t kill my brother”

“It should remain like that. I didn’t. . .” What did he want to say? What was that? “You’re my son and I care about you” His tone has totally changed and coated with adoration that I have never witnessed before. “Your aunt is beautiful isn’t she?”

“Hhayi stop!”

“And tomorrow I need you at work”

“I need one of your guys to look into someone for me”

“Who is that?” He glances at me.

“Zenokuhle Mazibuko. I need everything from the time she was born. Which hospital, where she stayed. Every single record on her”

“Isn’t that Nqabayezulu’s first wife?”

“I hope you’re not saying Makhosazana is the second wife because you’ll be found dead malume”

His irksome laughter suppurates like a volcano with his shoulders moving up and down. “It’s going to be a nice movie to watch this one. I just need to make sure that my woman would be by side. I’ll look into it for you but you need to allow me to get to know your aunt”

“Angivumi!” I tell him that I do not agree.

“You can forget about me helping you then”

“Fine Mkhululi but you’re only getting to know her nothing more to that. No dating. No marriage. Nothing”

“I’m not making promises why you want to investigate this girl anyways?”

“She seems pretty much invested in my life that she told Nqabayezulu that I love Makhosazana”

“And how does she know that? Where did she hear that? What Nqaba said?”

“He didn’t believe her but I know she planted questions in his head. I asked him to take her away from my house”

“Good. You’ll talk to your brother when the time is right and I’m going to pay her visit, for someone with amnesia uyaphapha—she’s forward”

31.

màgoa

- (n) a heart breaking feeling that leaves long-lasting traces, visible in gestures and facial expressions.

ZENOKUHLE

I never had a chance to mourn although and the grief was like boomerang it kept coming back and wounding anew. As much as my aunt wanted me to be at the funeral and hold my hand throughout but she was afraid, everyone was. They thought in the middle of the ceremony an angry mob might show up wanting to kill me because obviously I would be present. I wanted to succumb to everything. I was ready to have them burning me with a tyre around my body and pouring paraffin from my head. I knew I wasn't going to feel any sort of pain or whatsoever because I have experienced much more than that. I remember clawing my head trying to uproot the fiendish talons from their iron grip the moment she announced that I had to run away with my parent's death certificate and claim the money they had left for me to go start over in Johannesburg—she had already spoken to someone who was going to give me a place to stay and I gazed at her shaking my head rapidly. “I

want to be at the funeral please mamncane!” I held onto her as she gazed at me with eyes that were luminous with tears. I was sad, sad as the sullen winter weeps seeing her face watery and dim.

“Your mother asked me to protect you and that’s what I am doing” It was the aftermath and she was now in total sobriety, she wasn’t holding a bottle of vodka in her hand anymore, drinking and calling me a murder while she blames me for the death of my mother, father and sister although the forensics couldn’t identify the third body of which until today we have no idea whether or not my sister’s ashes were there. But she was sober and downhearted facing the harsh reality of losing her sister who she shared womb and breasts with. I on the other hand couldn’t wrap my head around everything. “You have to go Zenokuhle. Your mother wanted you to be someone that’s what she asked me that you go back to school, study hard and be something. The money she left for you is enough now please leave” her hands were trembling already swathe in all black and a head wrap. The funeral was going to be held at my father’s side of the family as they were married, they clearly stated that they didn’t want me there because I was going to bring my bad luck there and they were convinced that I was a curse and possessed. And around that time illuminati was an actual thing. We had people speaking on radio and television about how they got into this devil worshipping thing and how some joined

in their dreams. I remember that one person I heard on radio who said she was promoted to soon work hand in hand with Rihanna and I knew right there and then that this was total bullshit, another one said he could turn into a snake and travel the world and any country that he wanted to go to. I was tempted to join and sell my soul to devil because I had nothing to lose anyway, I had no one.

It felt like deja vu and I was back on the bus again sitting by the window with my head leaned on and my right hand on my cheek although there was some unnamed emotions that sat heavily on my heart and squeezed painfully but those salty water beads couldn't crawl out of my eyes. I just sat here in total silence and ignoring the man who was asking me out next to me, with just one murderous glare he decided not to dare say a word and fell asleep with his mouth opened. I wanted something that could take the pain away. I had thought about suicide so many times, that thought continuously spread throughout my brain but I wanted something that could make me feel physical pain first, affliction that would be unbearable until I succumb to death. I mean overdosing pills didn't sound like a great idea to me or even having to use razor blades for my wrists.

I had nothing that I could touch or look that would make me revisits the nostalgia or reminisce about the people that I have lost but only visual images.

“Baby girl wake up we are here!” The same man who has been asking me out from the moment the bus moved at Durban Bus Station to Park Station woke me up, nudging me. I slowly opened my eyes and wiping the web of sleep in my eyes and we happened to have sex in one of the toilets with this stranger because I needed a good fuck that could make me forget about what has happened and everything. The sweat that covered my forehead as he deeply thrust into me while my back crashed against the mirror was what I needed. After we both got what we wanted we walked out pretending as though we don’t scream “fuck” and “you feel as good!” in each other’s ears.

I was in a total different province and city where I can be able to give myself a new identity. I was in search for freedom to taste the sweetness of it and the velvet texture of it. I walked out grabbing my suitcase and dragging it along with me ignoring the man who just ran towards me asking whether he could carry my bag at a cheaper price. Another said he was going to show me a taxi rank, I was warned about them the moment we were in our neighbor’s car who drove me at dawn to the station that I shouldn’t dare come along with those people because they were going to take all my belongs and also

my phone was supposed stay in between my cleavage and be on silent.

Eventually I found the woman who was already waiting for me, she was swathe in a beautiful floral dress and her natural hair was silk because of the chemicals she used on it, she had a beauty spot on her cheek as she opened her arms to welcome me with warmth, it seemed she had no idea about what I was running away from but rather raptured to see me. “Awwww Zeno come here!” she took my hand and at that moment I didn’t know how to react to her being so motherly. It was totally eccentric because for some reasons I wanted someone to remind me of what I have done. I wanted to sit opposite them on a table and narrate the story about the death of “umuntu wami”. I wanted to tell them how beautiful he was there on the floor regardless of being soulless, even that scar on his cheek still made him attractive. I wanted them to question my sanity about smooching his death body but I was treated like just a young girl who has lost family in a house that caught fire without knowing that I was a reason behind all of that. “I’m sorry for your loss. I am Izibele and you can call me your mother from now on” When she saw the frown on my face she quickly cleared her throat. I didn’t want a replacement of my mother. “I understand. You can call me your aunt or whatever is that you prefer” then she said showing all her teeth before she took my hand.

The way she walked with her high heel shoes she appeared to be like those women on television entering pageants white women would take the crown but these days we see women like Zozibini Tunzi, Shudufhadzo Musida and Lalela Mswane representing us black women and showing the beauty of color. I wish at my age around that that time I saw women who were like me more often on media so I can feel as though I was acceptable by the society and maybe I wouldn't have demoralized myself then.

We then got into a car and she drove into a much more affluent neighbourhood than where I came from.

-

I am interrupted when I hear a knock. It seems as though my life is cynical because what had happened before is once more happening again maybe as a reminder of what happened. It has been what? I cannot even count hours since that man stood before me and told me that he wanted me as much as he wanted another woman—I cannot even swallow how bland it tastes against my pallet and I only see this as a bad omen because it seems in this life I cannot have what I call “my own” or maybe they were right about calling me a curse because

that's a much better explanation to all of this. The dampened pillowcase were itching against my face in the middle of the night as I fell asleep after being smothered by too many emotions after a driver came to fetch me from that house where we were supposed to be spending time together to the polygamist's house who left after he held me in his arms. Even though I wanted him to fall and lose his front teeth but I nuzzled on his neck as he kissed my forehead listening to the sound of his sensual tone as he whispered that he loved me closely to my ear and awakening sexual sensations from my toe nails all the way to my hair follicles the vibrations were so powerful that I was even too afraid to stare at his eyes because he would've hypnotized and make me completely forget about that rubbish he vomited with his mouth. I fell asleep and he left because he needed to attend an emergency something about business and I was hoping that it wasn't that "business" he has told me about

I am totally restless and can hardly even keep my sanity intact.

I am so damn sure that Nqabayezulu smokes amphetamine or meth, it could be any potent drug honestly because there's no way a sober minded person could be raw and that unfiltered with a woman. Isn't he afraid of death? I shouldn't be asking that question with my past. I thought he would be coming back since I am at his house but he said he was going to book at the

hotel to give me my space then he told me unexpected news about having to find an apartment for me because his brother didn't want me back to his house. That wasn't something that should've made me feel my breath wanting to escape my rib cage or that aggressive pull on my medulla oblongata, I assume he told Bandlaethu about the accusations that I made which is totally understandable and I cannot blame him, I wish I was given a chance to explain to him that I was floating in so many emotions and maybe I was looking for someone or something to blame at that moment and she was that "thing" that immediately crossed my mind. But I know what I saw that day unless obviously I was imagining things. It hurts that I can never sit across him at the restaurant anymore or him being my anchor when he was protecting me from that violent woman. I still have no idea who she was by the way but she called me a "bitch" and didn't he say he was attracted to one? Which means. . . I quickly flutter my eyes closed and getting up from the couch with my feet propelling me to towards the door. And this house looks absolutely gorgeous by the way just more masculine and needs that womanly touch. I am adorned in his clothes and that could be him knocking on that door so he could gaze at me with eyes that are painted with sincerity.

When I wrench the door open I become static open seeing a total stranger standing here with his hands in his pockets then he smirks at me before he walks pass me before I can even

allow him to come inside the house. I can feel fear following right behind him as he hands me a bouquet of flowers with a wink then makes himself comfortable on a couch swathe in a sweater vest and trousers, I am telling that he is one of those men who gets fine like wine with fascinating shades of grey that transcends his good looks to godliness. And strangely enough I automatically assume he might be the brother's father because of the resemblance and features. "I thought I should get you flowers. It would have been very rude of me to come here without a gift don't you think?" There's a sense of loftiness oozing from him. It's how he has changed this place to a palace and dominated it. I cannot really move from her. "I am sure Nqabayezulu has whisky here. On rocks please and then we can talk" In a nanosecond he changes. I have no any other choice but moving from here to pour him a drink and I haven't managed to say a word to him. I place the cherry blossoms on the kitchen counter stealing glimpses at him and now all his focus is on his phone, with a smile on his face and when I appear with his drink he clicks his tongue, shaking his head yet still grinning and placing his phone on a table alongside his car keys leaning backwards on the couch, while carrying a glass on his hand. "Zenokuhle Mazibuko am I correct?" Then he creases his eyebrow at me. I nod my head in agreement. "I prefer when someone uses words when we are talking"

"Yebo"

“Good we are going somewhere” Then he brings his glass closely to his nostrils inhaling the scent. “You know yesterday I met my soul mate. I am so sure that woman was made for me, you should’ve seen her walking around the house with grace and ladylike mannerism. . .” Well why is he telling me about this? “. . .she is very beautiful. Actually gorgeous, I have been trying to think of something else but it seems I cannot really get my head straight” This time he takes a sip from his glass then he directly looks at me. With burning gaze that makes me hang my head low, and stare at my feet appearing from the hem of the grey sweatpants that belongs to a polygamist “As I was doing my research I found out that you once caused her pain” That caught my attention, what is that supposed to mean? I quickly look at him with my throat needing moist and his eyes are cold. “It happens that her husband is the man who was funding you when you were studying in University of Witwatersrand, doing a Bachelor of Arts. Fine Arts? If I am wrong then please tell me so I can apologize. You’re a qualified interior designer right Zenokuhle Mazibuko?” Where did he get all of this information from? About me? “Well since it seems you’ve been involving yourself in my family’s business I thought why not involve myself in yours? I must say you have quite an interesting history”

“I don’t—I don’t know what you’re talking about Mr Zungu” I stutter as my head is raging with turmoil of emotions

“Ziphathe Mpungose?” I have to look at him again and he raises his glass at me “Oh well cheers to you” then he shrugs his shoulders.

“I didn’t know he was married”

“And when you found out?”

“I loved him. . .” I can hear the anguish in my whisper. My voice choke with so much emotions but my eyes remain dry. “. . .and he said he loved me too. He told me he married her because she was more acceptable and she was good for his image. I was young and naive”

“You were young and naive even months ago before you lost your memory?”

“You wouldn’t understand” I state, “I can assure that I am not that person anymore”

“We are not done here Zenokuhle, we are just getting started” What more does he know about me? I keep digging my fingers on my palms and wanting to chew the insides of my cheeks until they start to bleed. Where did he get this information? I am wool of tattered nerves right now seeing my skeletons falling from the closet, there’s this certain aura about him. He gulps down the liquid in his glass until it’s empty. “Bandlalethu and Nqabayezulu are my sons. I raised them and I would do anything for them. The other one just makes bad decisions in

life which makes me want to grate his balls and the other is fighting his demons as well which by the way I blame myself for how he turned out, he's more like a version of myself.

Whenever I look at him it's like looking at myself in the mirror but I also want to grate his scrotum by the way regardless of them being imperfect but I will never let anyone get in between them. You included" From hearing him saying "sons" I have come into conclusion that this man is their father. "You do understand right?" "I understand Mr Zungu"

"No please call me Mkhululi" And then he looks at the watch on his wrists before he casts his eyes towards me. "I would've continued to have this conversation with you but from the little that we had, I am sure by now that you're aware that I know everything about you. I mean everything. It's not my place to tell anyone anything but you will when you are ready" Then he gets up from the sofa and grabbing his things. "Why are you're so interested in Bandlalethu?" My eyes almost crawl out of their sockets. "I am not" I defend.

He inhales sharply and wince, "For your own sake I hope you're telling the truth and stay out of his business. Now that you've regained your memory what's your plan?"

"I haven't thought of anything Mr Zun—

I don't finish what I wanted to say because of the chilly gaze that I received from him. "I am not sure as yet"

“Are you sure about Nqabayezulu?”

“There’s a lot going on right now”

“Yet you’re still here at his house without any plan or whatsoever? Let’s say he decides to choose another woman over you what’s going to happen then? What are you going to do Zenokuhle?” I can feel emotions expanding on my throat. “I am a father before anything else. You’re old enough to be my daughter now please take time and think about what you want. I am going to help you get back at your feet. I don’t want to sleep with you and I don’t want to use you in any way. You understand?” “Yebo”

“I’m not going to say leave, I’m not one of those people because I know for a fact that could cause a drift between Nqabayezulu and I but you are going to tell him everything. And by everything I mean you won’t be leaving anything out even the time you were born, don’t think about running away because I’m going to find you. We are done for today. The love of my life is attending some event today she’s a guest speaker and I must thank you for handing her to me on a silver platter. I have to go now, enjoy your day”

This man knows way too damn much!

32.

ukiyo

|u-key-yo|

- (n) living in the moment and detach from the bothersome life.

BANDLALETHU

The second week is now about to end and surprisingly I am still levelheaded. I think maybe being at the office, doing something that I've always been passionate about is the reason I have my sanity on a jar but rather than that I spend my time with that short imaginative image of her constantly playing in my mind. It's how her thick lips moved as she was chewing and the sound of her silk textured tone.

What makes me want to scatter my brain is not knowing whether or not she's okay because last time she sounded emotional and complained about "that time of the month". A part of me wanted to find her from the moment it was announced that she is gone but I chose to rather respect the decision that she has made. You see? Makhosazana is not a woman that would need someone to save her but she can save

herself and that's something I truly admire that she values her energy and is fully aware that she's god.

From my observation she is going through resurfaced trauma that she wasn't aware she was going through and for some time she has been one of those people who don't deal well with grief and pain. I think she's now acknowledging the weight of what she's feeling with no need to take it off, allowing herself to feel all of it because it's never a shortcut emotion. Everything we go through has a lifecycle that goes for trauma too. The more you run, the bigger the shadow so therefore you have to face it knowing you are capable of change and more importantly, deserving of freedom. I know she'll be okay and come back much more celestial than she is. As much as I would love to have her crying on my chest with our smiles in between while I am trailing my fingers on her bare scalp but I want to be someone she can feel safe to say "no" to.

In all honestly I have no idea what the person who has been taking care of the construction business has been doing because in such a short period of time we lost almost up to five clients. Not one but the whole damn hand and the were some contracts that were not renewed, I haven't had time to pay attention to anything excluding drowning myself with work and I have sent my resignation letter at the hospital, bittersweet—and on the other hand my uncle was actually dead serious

about being involved in taxis and guess who he wants to include? Bandlalethu Zungu as if the amount of work that I have on my table is not already too much. I haven't had a chance to actually talk to him as well and whether he has found information on that other girl but he assured me that he was going to handle it and I should mainly focus on adapting to this new environment and manoeuvring from one meeting to another getting home exhausted with my back hurting and throwing myself on the bed then being awakened by the chirping alarm.

I am on a meeting when my phone starts vibrating and it's an unknown number and therefore I choose to ignore it focusing on that lady standing at the front doing updates when the incoming call interrupts yet again. "Excuse me and you can continue. . ." I grab my phone and walking out of the boardroom pressing the green button. "Sawubona" I greet because who would call my personal number? I am total irked by this nuisance by the way for not having any timing or whatsoever and there's silence for a moment. "Uzokhuluma?" I ask the caller whether or not they have any intentions of saying anything. It could be insurance, I don't need one because I am covered.

"You seriously need to relax Bandlalabo" At the sound of her voice I completely forget that I even called her a pest and I am

taking that back, her voice is sultry, sweet and gracious all at the same time.

A smile? A damn smile evokes from me, curling my lips and I clear my throat. "I haven't been thinking straight ever since I found out that you're gone. Are you okay? You sound so much better" I shove my hand in my pocket and looking behind me to see what is happening in the boardroom. I might as well end that meeting because I am not ending this call. "I am losing my head here mphefumulo wami. You need to give me something to hold onto before I lose my sanity" I take off the same hand from my pocket and running it through my head after inhaling sharply. "Makhosazana say something"

"I heard you went to my house a couple of days ago and you're starting a taxi business with my uncle. What is this nonsense that I am hearing?" Oh she called me because she's mad? I think she was just finding an excuse to call me. "Whatever this is it has to end Bandla"

I walk into the nearest office here and making myself comfortable on a chair, balancing my elbows on my knees, "And how are your periods pains, are you okay? I saw somewhere on the internet that they can get chronic and black coffee actually helps" I hear the sound of her laughter from the other side of the phone causing me to lean my head back now,

with a grin dancing on my face. “What? I told you I had sleepless night because of you”

“You’re not giving up?”

“On what? I told you I wasn’t giving up on you so I don’t understand where is that question coming from” I tell her and for a moment we have total silence as though we are aligning our frequencies. “I just want a chance Krotoa”

“I don’t want you to hurt my grandmother, the idea of being in this whole transporting business really has her calling everyone because this is what she always wanted. I’m asking you to not involve her in any of this. You’ve done enough already”

“What do you mean I have done enough? What is that supposed to mean ma?” I can feel the one brain cell that I had left is about to deplete right after this call. Well this woman just wants me dead. Gone. “Where are you?” I quickly ask her. I can find out on my own but I want her to be the one who’ll tell me so she doesn’t think I am invading her privacy. “If you’re ready to hear what I have to say then you are going to tell me where you are. Ngimdala mina Krotoa and the last time I played hide and seek I was five years old”

“I know for a fact that you won’t make it here but anyways I am in Rwanda” What the fuck this woman not even in the country. “I want to hear what you have to say but I guess you’ll have to

wait until I eventually come back. I am working on my skin product brand right now so I'll be back in the next two months" I am not waiting that long

Advertisement

she must forget about that one. "Yezwa Sengwayo?" Ah ah ah she sounds as though she's that crescendo a sensual vocalist reaches in the middle of a soulful song. "I don't think this is a conversation that we should be having over the phone truthfully speaking because I really to want to look into your eyes so you can tell me why you lied. It's strange that I am not even angry at the fact I didn't get what I wanted from this honestly but this all happened to somehow shift my position and where I was standing. I was investing my energy where I shouldn't be doing so"

"I cannot wait for you Krotoa"

"Great then Bandlalethu, I guess this conversation ends here and also whatever you're trying to do with my family end it!" I heard a tongue clicking there and she hangs up the call. Is she demented? I can already see her face playing right in front of me and as she flares her nostrils. I get up from the chair and returning back to the boardroom where the meeting has ended before walking to my office and calling my personal assistant.

He appears swathe in a suit and looking prim and proper, very enthusiastic to make a mark for himself, an ambitious young man. “Mr Zungu I heard you were calling for me. Is there anything you want?”

“Yes please cancel any meetings for the rest of the day and get me a flight to Johannesburg that I can get today. Then please find out, how many hours does it take flying out from South Africa to Rwanda?”

“One flight ticket from Johannesburg is actually three hours and forty minutes” Oh that’s totally great which means the trip in total it’s going to be let’s say five hours? That sounds much more perfect to me. “. . .do you want me to book you a ticket as well there? And a hotel?”

“Yes please. I am going to let you know what hotel you should book me in but for now please make sure you get me those flights. Well since I’ll be away Londisizwe then you can have your leave” After he has thanked me then he walks out. I need him to make sure that he gets me on a flight out. At least tonight I should be there and that way I can still pacify her since she surely thought I was brushing off having this conversation with her under the carpet. A knock coming from the door quickly interrupts me as I want to find out where she has been booked in. “You’ve got the flights already?” I frown the moment I see him back and standing by the door.

“No, no but someone is here for you” and that could be my annoying uncle or my brother who surely has made a decision. I don’t want to revisit the thought about what is going to happen with us. We will cross that bridge when we get there.

“Let them in” I tell him and returning my head back on the laptop screen in front of me after he has nodded his head then I hear footsteps and not a familiar scent voyaging through my nostrils, that alone catches my attention making me cast my eyes all the way to the door and seeing my father standing there with a smirk, while his hands are on his pockets. “I was expecting your visit and I must you are late, quite disappointing if you ask me Mzobanzi” I say to him returning back my attention to what I was doing hearing the sound of the closing door then he strides towards my desk, wandering his eyes around the office before he makes himself comfortable on the chair opposite me leaning backwards. “Sawubona baba ka Nqabayezulu” I greet him closing my screen and looking at him.

“I am your father too Bandlalethu”

“What are you here?”

I can see him attempting to intimidate with that stern and honed face, but I remain on a same position directly meeting his gaze as I am drilling into his orbs. “When you found out about the contract you didn’t come to me to ask questions why?”

“I don’t care about you” I shrug my shoulders nonchalantly and he blinks rapidly. “I also didn’t want to hear what you have to say then and even now. Is that the reason you came here?” I elevate my eyebrow and he squints his eyes.

“What game are you playing Bandlalethu?”

I shake my head and chuckling sardonically before getting up from the chair to stand by the window looking at the beautiful view of the high mountains and it looks even more gorgeous as the sun dances in the sky but hours from now she’ll disappear.

“You really like making everything about you don’t you? I am not playing any game Sengwayo

but seeing you like this is a sight. I might as well start playing one. You haven’t paid me a visit in a while baba” I glance at him with both my hands in my pockets. “You turned your son to become just like you. And sadly I am the one to blame at that as well but he makes everything about him. Nqabayezulu doesn’t really care about other people and I came into that realization sometime ago”

“I asked you to be part of the business and you said you wanted nothing to do with it now suddenly you’re on this chair. What happened to you being a doctor?”

“The problem was that you’re the one who was asking me to be part of the business which is why I didn’t want anything to do

with it and when someone who's not you gave me an opportunity I decided to take it with both hands. And that's someone who really care about me, who always did. Who knows what I've always been passionate about. The worst pain is neglecting what you need and love thinking someone else will fulfil that" I focus mainly outside the window "I am good in this space where I'm with people who wants to be here with me. I am not going to beg you to be a father to me anymore"

"I had to be hard on you because—

"I was the stronger one? I was the first born? I had to man up? Which one?" I turn my body this time facing towards his direction. Well this man doesn't want to be pushed on in a corner in anyway or rather feel defeated. I know him. "You came here to ask me to walk away from all of this because he came running to you right? He feels he deserved a much better steak than what he was given? And don't get me wrong I really love Nqabayezulu. I would do anything for him and he's fully aware of that but this time. . .this time I'm really choosing myself"

I can see that hellish smirk appearing on his face as he rubs his chin totally bruised this time with no one to gently stroke his ego. "We both know that you are doing this to prove a point to me"

“I’d rather stand at the pulpit and preach about Genesis than try proving myself or any point to you Mzobanzi. I think we should end this conversation because I have somewhere to go to but if you want you can stay behind and look around what you thought would never been mine regardless of showing you so many times that I deserved this but sadly you are not as powerful as you appear to be when it comes to making any decisions with this family business. . .” I then smile at him, a dazzling complacent simper. “I should go” I pack my laptop in my bag winking at him, taking my car keys and attempting to walk out of the door.

“That girl. . .he’s suspecting you’re love in with her but he isn’t too sure about it. Is it true?” That caught my attention because I turn around facing towards him. He is still facing ahead and not looking at me. I remain holding onto the doorknob with words perched on my throat then walk out leaving him sitting there. I know that’s not what my brother said he surely might’ve told him what that girl said to him and my father being smart—not as smart as he think he is, he thought I was going to tell him the truth.

As I am walking out my personal assistant approaches towards me. “Mr Zungu your flight to Johannesburg leaves in three hours. And the flight I got to Rwanda arrives at 6pm there is that fine” That’s totally fine with me of course. I need to see

her now than ever. After nodding my head in agreement he assures to email me everything and I thank him before scrambling into the elevator.

-

Upon my arrival here it's already dusk, draped in the husky hues of the sunset and it looks rustic and picturesque. I found out that she has booked herself at the Kwitonda Lodge boasting with breathtaking views of Sabyinyo, Gahinga and Muhubura volcanoes and surrounded by high altitude forests and this place is an epitome of serenity that she needed.

I want to go straight to my lodge and take a rest then see her tomorrow morning when I have freshen up but I know I will end up tossing and turning knowing that she is just few meters away from me and these white tulips stems that I have bought for her won't be looking as beautiful as they are right now the following day.

I instruct that they should go leave my bags and in my room while I make my way to her suite. I already where is hers—I spoke to someone here and claimed she was “my wife” and I came to surprise her. After knocking twice on her door she screams from the inside that she's coming. I have my hands

behind my back impatiently waiting for her when the door wrench open then she appears in a long knitted cream dress that shows her caramel cleavage and she's frozen like a gazelle staring at me.

“Bandlalethu?”

“I am here”

“What are you doing here?”

“I told you I cannot wait”

33.

redemancy

- (n) the act of loving the one, who loves you, a love returned in full.

I never thought that my grandmother would actually kick me out. Ha ha ha. Well it wasn't a direct "Get out of my house!" or maybe "I want you to pack your bags and leave my damn house." I mean I could be exaggerating everything but it still plays so vividly in my mind about how cautious she was with her words and it seems that everyone has been preaching to me about healing which is something that made me really take some time and deeply think about. It seems the universe has been sending me some sort of message that I needed myself to save Krotwa. It wasn't my grandmother that was going to hold my hand, cousin or maybe my uncles but me. It really matters how you see yourself, like really matters, work hard on seeing yourself more gently, more enough, more and enough.

When she came back from her shopping she screamed out for my name. "Makhosazana!" In total mimic of that man who was shouting for me outside that other night before he got punched and I couldn't amiss the cynicism in her tone. As I appeared

with my hair platinum blonde yet again in her living room, she wasn't her dramatic self where she gasps and clutches her chest calling me "satanism" as she always would but rather a smile appeared on a her face. "I am happy seeing you being yourself again. I was afraid you were changing because of a man. . ." And then she pat the empty space on the sofa, you should've seen how of magnanimous angel she was. ". . .you have always been expressive when it comes to showing who you are through the way your dress. Well that's something I was not used to but eventually understood you so much better from that time you went bald" Then she chuckled in between because I remember how she shoved her fists on her waist shouting at me that she spent years taking care of my natural hair, braiding it every night into bantu knots for me to just wake up one morning and shave. "I don't ever want you to tone down who you are to make someone comfortable in your space. If a man wants you to change to be more acceptable than he's not for you" It was surprising hearing those words coming from her mouth but her tone then changed as she reprimanded me about sleeping with different men and brothers. I kept opening and closing my mouth to explain but she raised her index finger, she told me about how sexual intimacy was sacred and spiritual. Well she stated that she's not against people who don't believe that intimacy is "special" but she also warned me about how women are not the same,

apparently I would've had a frog coming out of my vagina for sleeping with someone's man, insects or some totally weird creatures. "Listen some women are not really the same and they not raised by a prayer. Once a woman calls and say stay away from her man, leave sthandwa sami and they're so many impacts of fighting for amapipi out there" I don't know where that one came from but I was warned about cheating men and that I was going to die for double crossing brothers like this. "And now I have seen that you haven't healed from the loss of your mother. You are still longing for your father's love. You haven't found it in your heart to forgive. I'm not going to gaslight you into forgiving that rapist because it will help you heal. No! I want you to heal in a way that you feel and think is good for you. Take a break and inhale deeply into your lungs, be in the moment and be the moment. Go somewhere where I cannot find you. Where no one will find you and heal. You've been angry for far too long that you're not breathing for you, but vengeance and now that he's gone. You got what you always wanted. Now go mourn you mother and allow these emotions to explode. Go cry. Go shout on top of a mountain. Go search for you and maybe then you'll come back in a different state of mind. I love you nkosazana" After that she announced about selling the house because when I return it was time for me to capture new images in my mind and format the past, she wants me to drive through the garage and not

think of my mother hanging there, she wants me to walk into my house and not think of my mother sitting on a couch staring into blank space and talking to herself. Then she kissed me gently on the lips. “You’re so beautiful with this hair. It shows your complexion and work on your relationship with your cousin, she’s like your sister” And well? We have been more of like. . .I think we are friends but we do talk over the phone with Lerato and she told me about how she is maneuvering her divorce. To me she sounded more elated about walking away with money, cars and the house in Umhlanga, I stan a focused queen.

I took a deep breath walking into the lodge that resembles everything that has to do with serenity and peace of mind, it’s called Kwitonda Lodge, in Rwanda.

it’s very intimate, with volcanic-stone pathways meander through lush, flowering meadows and cross rushing streams, linking eight statuesque rooms to the villa. Architecture is boldly scaled, many of the building of the materials locally sourced—oven-fired clay bricks, river stones, bamboo and eucalyptus poles. And there’s a sense of mystery pervades, knowing that mountain gorillas are deep in the mist-shrouded clouds forests of the Volcanoes National Park.

I remember walking in here with a smile and this lodge has rich, molten lava colors, a mix of textures, and bold design in

everything from the armchair to the chunky, handmade pottery mugs enhances the experience of the being ensconced indoors, while floor-to-ceiling, double glazed glass is window to the forest. A living room with the stuffed-to-the-rafters pantry—this is no mere mini bar—leads one way to a covered veranda with an outdoor fireplace and heated pool, the other to the bedroom and bathroom. Then there's dozens of touchy-feely details too, such as scented candles, aromatherapy oily burners, woody incense sticks and organic products.

I remember that as I called him I was already in the backseat of a cab that was taking me to the airport the sounds of his baritone sound made me involuntarily flutter my eyes closed as he kept pouring words into my ears

Advertisement

strangely I was calm as we spoke, hearing the eloquent sound of his chuckles and grin. I could imagine him running his hand that has artful veins on his beard. I have noticed he does that when he is at war with his thoughts or trying to find the right words to send his point across. One thing about him is that he takes time before anything could roll out of his mouth, he thinks deeply in few seconds laced with comfortable silence then speaks with that tone that demands you to listen and not fight. I hate that. There's something about him that needs you to be respectful and admmissive in his present. As powerful as

that is but I have managed to compose myself and keep a fierce face. I am not scared of him but somehow he makes you be more reserved around him or be careful of what you say like that time when he said I shouldn't use that language to him when I said "fuck". That's a what I want in a man, sadly he is not that man. I could hear panic in his tone when he found out I was bleeding from my vagina and I think he thought there was whole ocean coming out of me and I was in chronic pains. For some bizarre reasons I wanted to tell him that I was leaving regardless of my grandmother saying, "no one should know where you are, go heal" but the moment I heard how he demanded to see me I knew he would've stopped the flight that day and made sure that I don't go anywhere without hearing his explanation but I needed this, for myself.

Then on our phone call this morning I had told him where I was which wasn't supposed to come out of my mouth so bluntly now here he is, standing on my door with his hands behind his back looking diabolically hot. I have my eyes almost touching the floor at this moment. When did he get here?

What is he doing here?

And this can only mean that right after our call he found the earliest flights and came here. That shouldn't be making my vagina walls dance kwasa-kwasa actually. He smells like masculinity personified and something combination of danger

and absolute security tingle through me igniting every nerve ending my body. A man that knows how to dress with perfect blending of colors? Is the one you should be opening your legs for the moment he casts his eyes towards you, sadly I was told to treat intimacy as something sacred and this is something that I am still learning by the way.

“Bandlalethu?”

“Makhosazana” He smiles a trance of satisfaction glinting in his eyes.

“What are you doing here?” You see? You see now why I asked my grandmother to pray for me? This man is capable of possessing you with his demons my darling but not me though, his necromancy is not working.

“I told you that I cannot wait” That man with horns is nothing but a liar! I am not falling for this! This man planned my down fall and he knows exactly what he is doing. “Aren’t you going to let me in?” he asks as his hands reveals bunch of white tulips stems with mint flower spray.

I move away from the door and make a way for him to enter. I close the door behind and lean against it watching him wandering his eyes around. Well I am pleased that my room doesn’t look messy, my grandmother’s teachings should be given an award right now. I look at him trying so hard to

analyze him and get into his mind. "I want to know how did you find me Bandla?" I plague and he frowns then run his hand through his beard.

"I have my ways Krotoa, I would've looked for you the moment I found out you decided to just pack your bags and leave without saying anything but I respected the decision you've made" He hands me the flowers and I accept them.

I actually deeply inhale the scent and I closely hold them to my chest as he smiles at me. Yes, I am appreciating them when they're not decorated with money or whatsoever. I think it's because their color matches with my dress. I attentively look at him as my body, mind and soul celebrate for whatever stupid reasons.

"Why are you here?" I crease my eyebrow.

He walks pass me into the lodge and then takes a sit on the couch, looking like a perfect Picasso piece of art as he makes himself comfortable and starting to rub his temples with his fingers. I can tell that he's under a lot of pressure and there's something going through his mind but he's concealing all these emotions appearing to be a demigod that he is. "You want to go smoke outside?" I noticed that is his copying mechanism. I am still standing on a same position with flowers in my hand swathe in a cream knitted dress that shows my saggy creamy breasts with thunder veins, but they're hardly even breasts.

Our eyes meet and I can see he has no intention of looking away from me, I don't avert mine either as I gaze into his with an ocean of emotions.

"I came here so we can talk. We have a lot that we need to address Makhosazana"

"You don't want to smoke?" I plague him again seeing him cracking his knuckles then he sharply inhales. "Okay then do you want something to drink?" I ask once again after he has shook his head in disagreement.

He shows me a dazzling with all teeth showing smile and scanning his heated eyes through my body causing me to tremble at the intense stare.

"Chabo"

Well he's turning down my offer yet again. "You're looking beautiful mphefumulo wami" A compliment that comes from him changes the atmosphere.

"I was about to eat do you want to eat?"

Why is he smirking like that? He has never had anyone offering him food before? Aww that must be really sad actually. "Chabo makhosazana I don't want anything"

"What you want then?"

"You"

I dramatically roll my eyes and propelling my feet to where is sitting placing flowers on the table before crossing my legs. We are just distance apart but somehow it feels as though he is sitting right next to me hearing the sound of my drumming heart—I can witness the prana energy from him. “You want someone that you lied to? You’re lair dude!” I glare at him remembering what he has done and completely shoving what has happened in a mere few minutes since he walked through the door. The smiles, the flowers and somehow me wanting so bad to see him smoking outside as I am busy preparing something for him to eat, pouring dry red wine in a glass and handing it to him with our fingers almost touching. Actually fuck this shit man!

He rubs his hands against his trousers “I hope that was the first and last time you called me ngo-dude. I am not your dude” I tug my head in at his authoritative tone and when I open my mouth wanting to say something he raises his hand “Angiyena u-dude mina ngiyakucela” Now he pleads that I don’t dare call him dude. “And now let’s get to that part where you called me a liar. There was a misunderstanding here. . .” he leans forward; while balancing his elbows on his knees. “. . .you think and assumed that I knew everything from the start which is not true but I found out about this because I started investigating this whole thing you were doing with Nqabayezulu and I wanted to know what were you walking away with in this deals because I

wanted to offer you something better since I have shares into all these companies that was the only way to stop this nonsense”

“You have shares?” I frown.

“Yes” He states with confident that no one can take away from him. “When I was growing up I always wanted to be a businessman and an entrepreneur. It was my dream that became my brother’s too. I had so much passion for this but my dad always made me feel like I was undeserving but my brother should be given a much greater chance than me that I ended up falling out of love with what I had ambition for just to see my younger brother in a limelight because I cared so much for him that I chose to breathe for him and not myself. That’s when I decided on being a doctor which was my second option anyways in terms of career choices If ever all don’t work out so I walked away from everything and four years of finally working I was not happy. I was utterly broken regardless of always being praised at work for doing a “great job” in my department but it never felt that way. I didn’t feel like a hero for saving people’s lives. I studied business part time online and graduated, only my uncle knew about this actually. . .” then he pauses talking for a moment taking much time to inhale the oxygen into his lungs “. . .I always had a dream of having “famous, successful and hard working businessman” right next to Bandlaletu

Msebeyelanga Zungu. I didn't want to be like my uncle but I wanted to be a much greater than he was, more powerful. A version that had renovations and I think you walking into my my life in a short period of time made me realize that I needed to fall in love with myself first before I can fall in love with you. I have to choose myself first before I can be brave enough to choose you and that is what I have been doing, constantly choosing myself and putting myself first. I have become selfish, in a positive way. I am selfish about my space, my energy and I want to be selfish about you" There's something about a way he speaks that you could put instrumentals in a background, playing softly then close your eyes while sitting somewhere in a serene lake and listen to him talking while you meditate.

"I wish things were different"

He frowns and perplexed, then runs his finger at the contours of his lips, "What do you mean?" he asks me. I move my eyes away from him staring at my hands with newly done manicure and they smells like the skin product brand I am working on. I found inspiration when I was here and Amanda Du Pont channelled the idea with her brand "Ielive." and the aesthetic of her package. "We are talking here Krotoa. I want us to have this conversation once so we can both find a way forward to this. What do you mean?" Now he has narrowed his eyebrows impatiently waiting for my response. "Ngiyacela uze la" He calls

me to him and extending his hand for me to take. I hesitate at first but the anguish of his facial expression is palpable with his brown eyes drawn with passion. I stand on my feet as he pulls me closer to him and then he makes me sit on his lap. A shockwave of salacious energies travels throughout my body, this man's sex appeal is the reason why I find myself straddling my legs into the sides and he holds onto my waist with his hands embroidered there as though a pattern that should've been on my dress. He takes my hand to kiss my knuckles and sniff the scent "You smell so good. . ." his tone has changed, sounding like honey dripping in caramel cake with a soft texture. For the first time my mind is locked into the present and my own hands are laced on the either sides on his face, with my fingers disappearing on his beard. The hair on his face is soft and that means he uses essential oils ". . .what did you mean by that?" Our breathing is like a perfect duo performing in an intimate audience where the venue has been dimmed and only the twinkle lights are illuminating.

I open my mouth to speak and he leans forward to kiss my arm moving all the way to my shoulders and collarbone then he pauses to dart his eyes between mines causing my breath to catch up my throat. I am strong woman and the devil cannot tempt me okay? Yes great. "I mean I wish we met under different circumstances. I wish we met at some other place and other time. I wish maybe we met when I was drunk and

couldn't remember my name. . ." I look at him. Our voices have become much softer than they were, we are almost whispering and you won't be able to hear us if you were in a room. If you could touch them they're featherlike ". . .when I was drunk and about to make a wrong decision and you saved me from that. I wished we met when I was at some store and you bumped into me, causing a collision then you caught me in your arms and we both laughed about it. I wish our first meet up was almost novelistic but not like this"

"I saved you from almost making something stupid didn't I?" Then he creases his eyebrow and I glare at him. He chuckles then kisses my shoulder once again, deeply inhaling my scent so it could swirl through his chest and feel the seas dancing in his lungs. "You could've married him, probably fell in love with him"

"I wasn't gonna fall in love with him"

"But I saved you and you saved me"

"It's complicated now Bandla and this is like cellophane"

"What?" I see a bewildered facial expression painted on his face "You mean that thing we use to cover food? The plastic? And how is it like cellophane"

"I don't know how to put this but people won't accept our relationship and they'll want to see us apart. I've been through

this a lot of times before with different men but this time it's different and back then it didn't mean anything but this time everything is different, too different and even alien for me" I continue to stroke his beard and soothing my throat with my own saliva. "I know that even when we try to keep this relationship alive and learning how to love but all of the aforementioned anxieties will take a toll on us and the feelings that we have will be wrapped in cellophane" this time I am trailing my fingers on his eyebrows and he experiences my touch rather than feel it "and to go further, cellophane is commonly used to wrap food or leftovers to preserve them for later consumption. I am implying to cellophane because I don't want what we have to spoil so we should wrap up these feelings because this will never be accepted and the timing is bad, too much food. I'll always been seen as that woman who was supposed to marry your brother because no one knows what happened and the story. And therefore I'm thinking that maybe in future we can have this love again. When are hungry for this love. When we are ready for this love"

"In future don't you think people will still see you like that? I want to see you as my wife in future gugulami" I can feel his hands grabbing onto my plump posterior "I am ready. I am ready now but I want to know if you are ready. If you are then what people think shouldn't bother us. I am not one to care about people. We will cross that bridge when we eventually get

there then I'll let you walk away but I won't just let you walk away without us even trying to see where is this going and where we can take it. You don't have to be good enough, that's a false measurement to progress. You are good if you show up enough" "You love your brother"

"That's true. I love him so much and I'll do anything for him"

"And the same person you'd do anything for has confessed to be in love with me. You know what this is fuck up. . ." I attempt to remove myself from him but he holds onto me tightly with eyes that speaks volume. "Bandlalethu" I'm too raw and too vulnerable, that's not me. "I have felt almost this way for someone and I realized when it was too late. I was so focused on wanting to destroy him that I couldn't understand my feelings for him. I was pathetic. . ." I chuckle dryly and this time not looking at him. I can feel his eyes transfixed on me ". . . I have been feeding my own empty soul by hurting others. I don't want to be that person anymore. I learnt that I actually loved him as he was pacing up and down in that room after I took his money. I was not in love with him. I know I wasn't going to be able to call him my own because he already belonged to someone. I cared about him and he treated me differently from all men I've slept with"

"Why you're telling me this?" I can witness the hurt in his eyes and voice, but his touch on my skin is still velveteen.

“I am telling you this because I want you to know that I am imperfect. I know that perfection doesn't exist but I want you to see me unfiltered so that you don't have an image of me in your head that you glorify and by the time you remove the filter and see me for me you get disappointed”

“I will never judge you. I have a past too. It's quite dark but I'll never use your flaws against you” then he tenses up.

“You've cheated?” I giggle. “I've done some things much darker than that” I look at him attentively “You're beautiful”

“Hhayi makhosazana!”

“I'm serious take the compliment” I gaze deeply into his eyes.

“And you seem tense. You know they actually have spas here? You should get a massage tomorrow”

“I am not having another woman touching me unless it's you”

“You're indirectly asking me to give you a massage?”

“I'm taking chances” “Okay come then. There are some oils”

“You want me to come? I take too long to come”

“Bandlalabo!” I warn him with that smug on his face.

“MaKrotoathazana?”

“Get up so I can give you a massage”

34.

forelsket

- (n) the euphoria you experience when you're first falling in love

I attentively gaze at his hands and his fingers are unbuttoning one button at the time, slowly revealing his chiselled chest and he has his eyes fixated on me not focusing on what he's doing but—me. I drag oxygen into my lungs and feeling the river of intense emotions swirling through my chest threatening to explode all the way in between my legs while my knees are suddenly vibrating. Every time when I deeply inhale into my lungs I can feel my skin disappearing in between my collarbone and my mouth is sealed with liquid cement when he reaches the last button taking off his shirt and showing me what glory really means, what is a 'god' in a human form with those broad shoulders and beautifully sculptured arms looks like. Jesus maybe the massage was a bad idea. I greedily gulp for air yet again as he bends to take off his shoes and crispy white socks appears then he peels them off showing his naked feet, he stands straight piercing his eyes through my own, seeing the effect he has on me by just peeling off his shirt and taking off

his shoes. “Makhosazana. . .” the sound of his voice smothers me with intoxicating sensations and I blink at him seeing that charming smile appearing on his face “. . .I am ready for the massage” then he announces turning around to lay flat on his stomach on the bed waiting for me. Oh oh oh I am going to make him pay for this.

I smile underneath my breath seeing his face against the pillow and my feet propels me towards the bed pulling my long dress all the way to make myself comfortable on his waist, the moment the warmth and softness of my plump posterior comes in contact with his skin it feels as if the stars are dancing on my body and the soft groan that just escaped his lips made my vagina walls clench. “I thought you said you take too long to come” I emphasize on the last word teasing him and he picks his head up looking over his shoulders to meet with my face blooming with a smile and he has a charming smirk dancing on his. “What? You’re already groaning Sengwayo” Oh yeah my grandmother would be disappointed in me that I am calling this man by his clan name. I should stop, I don’t know who said it was cute but it’s not honestly. Not even my darling.

“I really want this massage but it seems like ufuna ngik’camise before I can get it” I swear vernacular sounds so wrong. Ha ha ha the rawness of this language as he said I want him to make me come? Jesus it made me subconsciously start flooding, “are

you giving me this massage noma ziyasha?” and then he creases his eyebrow. I guess people are burning then or what?

I grab the bottle of massage oil that is made of sweet almond and smelling divine waving it at him and chuckling, “I already made you fly out the city looking for me, do you want to plan a surprise wedding now Bandlalabo?” I crease my eyebrow at him and he erupts with laughter leaning his head on his hand with his shoulders vibrating until he catches his breath then glimpse at me shaking his head and returning back to sleeping. “I am that good you wouldn’t believe!” I am such a braggart but who wouldn’t be? I didn’t spend those nights as a teenager watching porn just for fun. Just leave the fact that I once froze on top of a man whilst doing woman on top but I am not that bad in bed—ha ha ha—I mean that.

“Trust me I believe you mphefumulo wami” I had to take a moment there before opening what is in my hand and the moment the oil moves down the line on his chest as though golden water being poured on the floor there’s total silence looming between us.

I close my eyes for a moment as he transports his powerful energy to me and mines to his. I watch how the liquid travels down his waist in slow motion before my hands spread it all over his chest and out breaths colliding. No one is talking. Just my fingers and hands communicating with his fingers with

shamanism, my finger digits making love to him. Eventually there's a sound coming rolling out his mouth meaning his luxuriant in what I am doing to him, moving to his shoulders and my hips sensually moving around my waist. The glistening melanin causes all my insides to tremble inviting me to lean closely to him and planting a gentle kiss on his shoulders, he tenses.

I wait for a moment to get his permission to continue but his body screams for more. Oh good. We are about to see who's going to burn between the both of us but all I know is that it's not Krotwa. I brush my lips against the back of his skin once again and goosebumps starts to bloom as I move from his neck all the way to his spine, moving salaciously to his waist with butterfly and delicate kisses. Abruptly he turns around and facing towards me, with a single ragged breath he makes sure that my mound is in contact with his growing bulge. I can feel him at my opening and when I attempt throwing my head back to drown in this moment he wraps his hand around my neck choking me with gentleness yet violent as the same time. When he pulls me closely to his face, our lips are almost touching, goosebumps streaks across my skin and he draws me in with a long lasting, powerfully seductive hypnotic amber accord that collides to form a sensual scent and I cannot resist.

As our eyes dances in a same tune he tightened the grip around my neck, that evokes the gorgeous slut in me as she starts to move her hips on top of me, the attraction of our male and female organ causes a moan and groan to escape our lips.

“What are you doing to me?” The sound of his tone sounds much deeper then he smirks bringing me closer to his face as though he wants to enter my nostrils or my skin to himself a citizen.

“I haven’t started Bandlalabo”

“Bandlalakho”

“Bandlalami?” I elevate my eyebrow.

“Yebo mphefumulo wami so what’s your plan making me come?” This man—a man who can fucking dirty talk is so attractive.

“You want me to?” I’m whispering back, running out of breath. I can see that he wants to come screaming outside my house yet again and I am going to give it to him because he’s asking for it.

“You can try makhosazana”

“You don’t trust me Bandla?”

“Bandla labani?”

“Bandlalabo” That thrust from underneath me regardless of having our clothes on but I felt it including the tightening grip around my neck while he stares darkly into my eyes is the reason a whimper rolls out of my mouth. “. . .Bandlalami” I stare deeply into his iris and the fire that warms, can also destroy. “Are you going to kiss me?” I ask him and simpering at the same time.

“I won’t stop if I start”

“Let me kiss you then” Instead he pulls me closely and planting a warm kiss on my lips. He sucks into them with soft passion and I savor into his lips and the quickening of his breath matches my own and my nails slices through his skin, my soul grows deep like the rivers. Us like this isn’t so alienated at all. It feels as though our tongues were meant to dance like this, his hands were meant to be wrapped around my neck and choking me at each stroke of kissing

my hips were meant to sashay on top of him like this while we both hum at the sexual pleasure and being in this moment. Away from judgements. Away from what people think. Away from the war that could ignite. But us in this bed, with the smiles in between our kisses as he bites my lower lip swirling his tongue into my mouth right after feels right.

“You smell really good” his raspy tone yet sexy tone fills the room. “Let me make you mine makhosazana, I want to love you

in a way you've never imagined, please. You already have my heart and I just want you to trust me yours" and this time he cups my face and devours my lips.

I cannot use words to respond. I can't seem to shop the right one at the shelf of my brain but instead I push him back on the bed his hands are laced on my hips when I grind against his erection. I nip at his lips then move to his jawline, kissing him down his neck, have you seen someone with a beautiful neck? This man right here has one and he is threading his hand behind my back and he tugs my hips down and thrusting yet again from beneath me. If he does that once I again I swear 'ngizocama'—I am going to come without even being penetrated and still wearing my clothes on. What sorcery is this actually?

I gently bite the behind of his neck and I can feel him even going harder than he already is behind the trousers he's wearing. Okay people are really burning. I return back to capture his lips and the taste of nicotine and some sweet he was surely eating on his way here evokes my tastebuds and I hold onto his jawline with desperation. I reach down buckling his belt and he cannot touch enough of me. He grasps into my shoulders, palming my breasts and calling me the air that he breathes as I smirk at him after I've managed to remove the belt and unbuttoning the pants that he's wearing.

I kiss my way down his chest and slipping down in between his legs. He inhales sharply into his lungs and his head falling back to the bed. When my teeth scrape his nipples, he hisses—this is their soft spots my people, and behind the knees, oh don't forget in between the thighs too—my breath sweeps through his abs as my kisses dip lower. He grit out a sigh as he lays his palms at the back of my neck. “Makhosazana you won't continue with what you're doing until of course you're agreeing to being mine” What this man is not serious “I would rather take a shower and leave my brain drowning in sperms as my uncle always says than you doing this to me knowing very well what are you intentions. If you don't want to be with me then fine. We are not having sex, You're not going. . .” he cannot finish what he wanted to say because the warmth of my mouth has been wrapped around his phallic. I am not going to what? Ha ha.

I pull out and look up at him with a wink before sucking him once again, sending his mind to start running a riot and gently, almost reverently start licking and nibbling massaging his hard skin with my tongue. I push him at the back of my throat and he cusses underneath his breath this time grabbing onto my head and gritting his teeth. What did he say again? I wasn't going to, to, to what?

I don't move as he continues to harden inside my mouth then start to choke and gag. "Jesus Christ mphefumulo wami!" now he sees why I am the oxygen for his lungs. Finally when he's fully engorged, my tears starts to run down my face regretting my attempt of being a porn star because this man is thrusting deep into my mouth without any remorse or whatsoever. He keeps plugging in and out, screaming for sweet heavenly God while I am massaging his balls and the moment his tasteless liquid shoots into my mouth I look up at him swallowing and he smirks, sending back the wink that I gave him earlier on. I quickly withdraw him from my mouth and lean down to kiss him in between of his thighs, he's still trying to recover from the tidal wave of orgasm. I crawl all the way up to my place on his chest listening to the sound of his heart beat while he trails my shoulders with gentleness, his are eyes fluttered closed. We are both harmonizing with our breathes. "Why you did that?" I think he's frustrated yet the ecstasy is too powerful for him.

I look up at him, the muscles around his face are too relaxed compared to when he got here, his shoulders too and then his lashes are brushing against the bottom of his eyes. "You said you've never been a choice" I thought he'd open his eyes but he doesn't, "And I'm showing you that you're a better choice not because of me but because of the man you are. You don't need anyone to validate that for you Bandlalethu and I love the fact you're don't do anything to prove yourself to anyone but

you do things to prove yourself to Msebeyelanga and that what makes you be my better choice not an option but. . .”

“You cannot be with me, is that what you want to say?”

“Let’s be honest how are we going to go on about this? Are we going to hide? Is our relationship going to be a secret?”

“I can never keep you a secret, I told you we’ll cross that bridge when you get there. I don’t want you to even think about that Krotoa just leave that on me”

“You really take too long to come by the way” This time he opens his eyes to look at me with humour dancing on his face before he slightly laughs shaking his head then he kisses my forehead. “Are you sleeping here?” It’s all so strange how we can be solemn and in a nanosecond be two wannabe comedians. “What do you want?”

“I want you to stay and please wake me up with some head. That would be highly appreciated”

“Only head?” “For now yes! And I want cuddles”

“What are you saying we’re trying?”

“I told you my grandmother is selling our home?”

“Yes” “As my boyfriend you should get me a place to say ke”

Look at him!

35.

sabotage

/'sabətɑ:ʒ/

- deliberately destroy, damage, or obstruct (something), especially for political or military advantage.

N Q A B A

It just came as a realization to me that I have never made a decision on my own, let me rephrase I've never took one without having my brother guiding me and I have been weaving through the turmoil of emotions and to make the matter worse he hasn't reached out to me. I thought by now he would be knocking at my house with that honed face that would break into a smile before he forcefully makes his way inside or maybe wake up to one of his calls but I spend my days staring at my phone screen expecting something. And for some reasons I haven't been bothered about the business or the women who has my heart divided into two with a same shape and same size but he has been the only thing that has been running through my mind. He seems different. In a sense that I cannot even

recognize myself and the warmth in his eyes has become wild fire, too dangerous. I saw something about him when we sat at the office as my uncle made an announcement about the decision he has made about the business. I kept my gaze fixated on my brother whose posture was suave and that chair he was sitting on looked as though it was meant for him even the brown and white office. He seemed to belong there, as if this was meant for him but I cannot allow Bandlalethu to just take what I have been fighting for. Yes he is my brother but I've been working so hard to prove myself to my uncle and he is going to just shove all of that aside just because I am in love with two women? It's not my fault he has never found himself in that situation or my brother doesn't have a love life or whatsoever. I wanted to explode in that moment and my migraines wanted me dead upon hearing malume Mkhululi praising him as though he was the best thing that ever happened since the sliced bread. I went to see my father and had this conversation with him it seems he is the only person who has my back and he has decided to just give me his shares. Well he said he was going to have a talk with his son and make him see that I should be the one handling this. It was a great opportunity for my brother to grab anyways and this way he could make amends with his father since they have a lukewarm relationship but I haven't heard from Zungu and even my brother for that matter and I seriously think the universe is

sending the message that I should lose my sanity because each and every minute passing by I can feel my brain cells not functioning but I know that Bandlalethu loves me so much to sacrifice his lungs and kidney for me to stay alive.

I take a deep breath standing behind the door and not knowing whether or not to knock and walk through this door. I am fully aware about how I have thrown her into a room of perturbed emotions and she must be floating in questions. After sometime of making up my mind I decide to turn the door knob and immediately she turns around facing towards me. I am totally mind-blown with my jawline falling to my penis since she has changed her hairstyle and her relaxed hair is now honey blonde, it has been well trimmed at the ends to same length with her bare face appearing ethereal she's on the couch in nothing but an underwear eating from bowl but she pauses immediately upon seeing me with unshed tears dancing in her eyes surely reminded of our last

conversation and we haven't shared words since, just exclude the part where I had sent someone to take her out for some retail therapy but we haven't touched any words to feel their toughness texture in our mouths.

"Ka Mazibuko. . ." I stand by the door and feeling by bulge wanting to escape my pants. It's pumping loudly with blood

moving in different direction at the swollen flesh against her chest appearing from the bralette that she is wearing. And the thin thong shows she has just freshly shaved as she remains there immobile “. . .I am sorry” I half expected her to say something but instead she gets up giving me a much clear view of her amazing body and firm plump posterior. I grunt underneath my breath and running my hands through my head to calm my exotic and unholy thoughts. God when was the last time those warm walls clenched around my phallus with slow thrusts, hearing her breathing closely to my ear as she locks her legs around my waist, darting her eyes between mine while she screams under my mercy that it all belongs to her, seeing the watery beads at the corners of her eyes as the sound of her voice becomes husky when a wave upon wave of orgasms paralyze her, our hands interlocking then I nuzzle on her neck. Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! If I don't format these thoughts immediately my pants will be found drenched in my own sperms.

It feels as though I am a foreigner in my own house. It looks different now with brand new vases and more indoor flowers, she has turned this place into a home. Even the scent swirling through the air smells welcoming and divine. I am scared to touch anything for that matter. I thought twice before making myself comfortable on this couch lithe and then she walks back wearing my sweatpants that looks baggy on her along my shirt. This woman is looking incredibly mesmerizing as she strides

towards the couch she was sitting on and pretty much still pretending as though my presence is not felt. “Ka Mazibuko” Again I call her and she looks up at me with red rimmed eyes. “Can we talk?” I ask her with a soft tone but she just stares at me with unexplainable emotions dancing in her eyes. “I know that. . .” she raises her hand dismissing me.

“You know nothing Nqabayezulu. There’s nothing that you know please” I cannot miss that hurt laced in her tone. “You know absolutely nothing. I have been making your house warm here while you were with her so you don’t know shit” she changes and this time the sound of her voice acidic. “Were you with her?”

“Chabo” I answer honestly because I haven’t heard from Krotoa for such a long period of time after she told me where to get off when I told her that I love. Her number is unreachable, maybe I should just go to her house and speak to her. I know that this came unexpected to her. “I was at the hotel and just trying to get my mind off things. I haven’t seen her” I continue to explain. “I promise” I look up to her wanting to touch her and embrace her in my arms, “Zenokuhle. . .” I call her and she looks at me then flares her nostrils “Ngiyaxolisa phela sthandwa sami” I apologize and I can see the sultry expression on her face, although she is swallowing back her smile but her eyes cannot hide it from me. “You were not supposed to find out

about this in that way and I didn't choose my words wisely. That was completely wrong of me so please forgive me" I hope I sound as sincere as I am. The cloud in her eyes starts heavily raining with her head hanging low and I immediately get up from where I am sitting striding towards her, holding her into my arms and she nuzzles on my neck

Advertisement

burying her head further and I can feel her inhaling me deeply. And that alone makes my mind runs wild, wrong move because all I can think about is being deep inside her. I keep stroking her back and kissing her head that smells like watermelon. "I am sorry mama" I lift her head up so she can look up at me. I swipe my thumb through her cheeks then smile looking at her covered in tears and mucus, showing me her vulnerability.

"What is going to happen now?" I don't know what is that supposed to mean.

I tug her hair behind her ears, revealing her earrings. "Like I said I was waiting for the right time to talk to you about this because she is not even aware about what is happening. I haven't had that conversation with her so I don't really know how I'm going to manoeuvre this moving forward but I need you to be fully aware that I love you and if this polygamy happens then you have nothing to worry about. You won't even feel that she's there, I won't disappoint you in anywhere"

“What if she doesn’t agree? What if I don’t agree to any of this than what?”

“I’m not going to hold you back but I’ll totally respect your decision. I’ve come to learn that I am polygamous”

“And that means regardless of her saying no you’re still going to fall in love with someone else while I am in a picture? If I say no that means even if she’s stays you’ll still find another sister wife for her?” the translucent water beads manages to fall down the valley of her cheeks. “You don’t have to answer me because I already know what is the answer to that. Yezulu how many wives do you want?”

“Just two” I answer honestly. I can feel the thump-thumping of my heart against my chest. “I understand that this is too much to take in but I am only being honest with you. It’s a hard pill to swallow yes but I can give you time to process everything”

“Why can’t it be someone else? Why her?”

“You guys are different from each other, totally different and I don’t want us to have this conversation because you’ll continue to question me. Listen I love you sthandwa sami kakhulu” I tell her that I love her so much and the hurt that she’s feeling overshadows everything else on her face. Even the rosy hue that should be appearing. “Okay Zenokuhle what do you want me to do?” I finally ask because those tears continuously falling

down her cheeks really are covering my own heart with daggers and it keeps clenching. “What do you want me to do tell me?”

“I understand why you cannot love me alone. I’ve never been enough for anyone so it’s absolutely fine Yezulu. If you want three wives or four then good for you. I love you, yes. I would be lying if I say I don’t want all of you to myself but I do. I really would love us, like this without another person in the picture hence I asked what will happen if she doesn’t agree to this”

“I haven’t met anyone as yet. Of course if she says no then it’s just you and I”

“And then what happens when you meet someone you love as much as you love her? Five years from now when we are married with children what will happen then? When I cannot walk away like I could right now. When this love holds me back and grows? What will happen then Yezulu?”

She has peeled herself from me, creating a distance between the both of us but I can still smell her feminine and bloom scent. I don’t know whether the new hair color enhance how ethereal she already is or maybe how the sun coming from the window shows the color of her brown eyes. “I don’t know what to say Ka Mazibuko but I don’t want to hurt you that’s something I am fully aware of and know”

“You think you’re not hurting me now?”

“I am trying to handle this situation differently. When she says no I won’t meet another woman after seconds of her saying that”

“What if I am in love with someone else? What if I love him as much as I love you? What if I spend my nights thinking about him and during daylight I am thinking about you. What’s then Yezulu?” I don’t like the solemnness on her face and her tone.

“Are you?” And slowly but surely my heart starts dropping to the pit of my stomach. The taste of my saliva is much bitter. I cannot swallow it. “Is there. . .Is there someone?” I cannot believe how much I am stuttering. It’s true you can cheat on a women so many times and she forgives you but if she does it once, just once then the lunatic in you is always channelled.

“No” Then she looks away and wipes her tears “I just wanted you to be in my shoes so you could see the amount of pain you’ve eliciting from me” Her eyes remains looking away from me “I’m going to need more time to think about all of this but right now I need space and if possible can you please sleep at the hotel again since you haven’t got me the apartment”

“I’ve been calling about that but you don’t answer my calls, when you’re ready we can go look for places but for now I’ll just go to my uncle’s place. I’m going to call you every minute to check up on you”

“Good”

“I’m leaving now”

“Bye”

Fuck!

“You’re looking beautiful mama” I compliment her with a smile sewn on my face and she gazes at me then get up from the sofa leaving to the bedroom, closing the door behind. I messed up. I really messed up and I don’t know how to get myself out of this mess. I will go see my uncle rather and maybe we can talk about the business.

I leave a note placed on the table before leaving. The drive to my uncle was filled with my thoughts smothering me. At this point I think I should just find out about how Krotoa feels about me so I can be able to see and know where to go from here. God what is wrong with me? I’ve seen that she has slight interest in me. Especially when I once invited her to church and we had to pretend, that to me seemed real. Even how she held my hand, the way she was smiling at me and the way her eyes were luminous gazing at me. I know for a fact that was real. I also know that what I feel for Ka Mazibuko is intense and genuine. I want her so bad. I want her with me so bad that if ever she chooses to walk away I’ll lose my sanity.

When I knock I am welcomed by a helper who directs me to where my uncle is. He is talking to his laptop screen with a glass of cognac in his hand and cigars. He looks up at me with a frown as I take a sit on an opposite chair to him. “When are you coming back?” Then he asks the person on the screen with a wide smile. I hear a baritone deep voice that belongs to my brother responding. Wait he is not around? When did he leave. “Your brother just walked in here” Mkhululi says to him.

I wait that he could ask to talk to me but instead he said a plain “Okay” then continued with what he was saying. I can see my uncle looking at me and reading my face. I cannot say that didn’t hurt. We have a great relationship with my brother, not once anything has come between us. Maybe ubaba said something to him that really demented him and it nothing related to me. “I have to go now” Bandlaethu says on the video call.

“We don’t do things like that, talk to your brother” my uncle says with a stern tone to him and turning the screen to face towards me when my brother appears, in his background it seems he is in the bedroom with wide window and you can see everything outside. It looks serene. He seems different too and radiant. When our eyes meet his are cold.

“Sawubona” he greets as though he is talking to a stranger. I nod my head instead of responding. “Manje awusakhulumi yini Nqabayezulu?” he asks whether or not I can speak.

“Sawubona Bandlaethu Zungu” I cannot help but grin at him, now he’s being the usual brother that I know who would tease me and do anything to see a smile on my face. But we are interrupted when he picks his head up from the screen. I cannot see who is he looking at but his face immediately blooms with kaleidoscopic hues. I’ve never witness that simper on his face actually. I try to look on the glass behind him hoping to see a figure but nothing. I focus on my brother who’s surely having a conversation with someone doing sign language because right after that he grins and shake his head. The way his eyes brightened him, makes me wonder what is that he looks at. Is it a woman? Maybe a movie? Or delivery at the hotel?

What’s going on?

“Nqabayezulu we will talk when I come back. I have to go” Before I can respond back to him the screen becomes dark and he’s gone. I turn to my uncle and he shrugs with a cigar in his mouth.

“Where is he?” I ask my uncle again he shrugs his shoulders.

“Who is he with?”

“A client” simply he answers “Well we have a client that left us three years ago. It was a big client and he managed to talk through with him and he’s back to doing business with us if he really signs this contract that could take this company to a great height and that will put us on a map globally. Your brother is doing great” he praises Bandlalethu.

Only if I don’t sabotage that!

36.

hedonistic

/ˌhɛdəˈnɪstɪk, hiːdəˈnɪstɪk/

- engaged in the pursuit of pleasure; sensually self-indulgent

If I am having a wet dream then I swear my mind would start a riot and singing struggle songs but immediately as I slowly flutter my eyes open he is hovering on top of me with a smirk on his face. I cannot believe this man was watching me sleeping. “What’s the time. . .” I cannot finish with my words when he presses his lips to mine and the dominance that’s emitting from him causes ultimate submission to his every whim. I grip on his wrists as he holds my face kissing me with so much passion and even snatching my soul out of my body. Once he pulls away from my face he slides down my body and level himself by knees. What’s the time? Is it already morning? I know for a fact he fell asleep in my arms after sucking my breast like a new born infant while I was massaging his head and running my hands through his beard.

He takes hold on the back of my knee and pulling me to the edge of the bed. And he throws the hem of my satin night dress up and pulls me scan closer I gasp and swallow the moment I

feel one of his fingers separates my now drenched folds, groaning when he feels my wetness. I mean I slept with the warmth of his phallus pressed against my butt cheeks it was expected. He takes the hold of my thigh and dips his tongue into the same spot his finger was, licking a stripe up my centre. I can hear my vagina chanting in celebration because she hasn't been praised and baptized in this manner for some time. I let out the most genuine moan. I think I had ever let out in my life. His tongue is on fire. I cannot dare think of anything else when his tongue starts working my swollen berry magically. His tongue flicks hard and fast against my berry that surely tasted like pineapple and cranberry because I make sure I eat those, don't forget dried fruits too honey. I arch my back in response. He has such a tight and firm grip on my thigh, somehow that evokes something from me knowing he'll leave marks there but also a part of me wants to reprimand him. And not matter how much I wiggle there's no way I can escape from him. It's few minutes in this and I already feel as though I am going to explode. Is it our chemistry that makes this intense? Okay maybe he attends the most powerful sorcerer or he watches porn but somehow he is learning which spot makes me whimper when he runs his tongue through eventually he learns it's the sweet berry. He wraps his lips there while sucking at the same as he flickers his tongue. The muscles around my lower belly and upper thighs starts to tighten and I can feel I'm about

to lose my mind then repent all my sins to him. “Bandlaethu. . .” I shout and earn a slap against my thigh. What the fuck? That sent some electric thrill running all over my body.

“Bandla labani?” He asks barely moving away from my core. “. . .I am stopping because awuphenduli” then he threatens to pause before my orgasm since I am not answering as yet. It’s still dark outside which can only mean it’s midnight or dawn.

“Bandlalami” breathlessly I moan and his tongue is almost torturous as he dorks me into hallucinations. I almost leave my body when another slap lands on my thigh causing me to cascade in his mouth. What for? God. I empty my lugs groaning as he continues to salsa with his tongue around the delicious berry through my high but he doesn’t stop. He feasts and pushing his two fingers into rubbing my sensitive spots.

“Bambela mphefumulo wami it’s going to be a long one” He instructs that I hold onto his head. I look down at him and I cannot help but smile, drenched in sweat and following his words that leads me, my fingers digging the intelligence on his head feeling as if I would combust from the pressure in my stomach.

“Msebe!” I call out for him and my hips meeting the rhythm he had created in between my legs. He groans into my wetness causing vibrations to surge through me and turn my blood.

“Sengwayo. . .” I can see my great grandmother with her

glasses on the bridge of her nose glaring at me with nothing but anticlimax. I've let go and holding onto my the sheets. I let out shallow breaths while moaning from the back of my throat while continues to lap on, showing no end to come to end. "Oh yesssss!" My knuckles start to change color gripping on to the sheets.

"Makhosazana!" That's a warning that my hands should return back to his head. I think he just finds bliss in feeling my finger digits violently digging into his scalp and pushing him back in between my legs so he can give me more. His fingers starts to go deeper, pumping faster, making me want to promise giving him back the shares that I've never got from his father and his tongue doesn't falter once from caressing my berry hard and long. I know this is embarrassing but have you have cried real tears at how sex is so good that you feel connected to God and ancestors? And dancing with Samson? And fighting Goliath? Like your screams can bring the walls tumbling down? Have sex with people who you are attracted to please and even sexually, someone you feel intense chemistry when you're around each other.

Now the coil in my stomach starts to snap and I scream out of pleasure. He pulls his fingers out of me after my high had peak and he keeps his tongue licking me slowly to ride out the climax. My entire bottom half of the body is jerking over the

sensitivity until he brings out his fingers, he finally let me go watching what he has done with my body with an intense facial expression but the passion remains in his eyes. This is the most vehement feeling I got to experience, mainly because I wasn't having sex for fun, or because I needed an orgasm but I was doing it with someone whom I genuinely want to learn what love means with. I was here in this moment, not thinking about whether or not my mission was now done. I am still drowning in my small hysteria when I feel small kisses between my thighs now he's learning my body. I learnt that his nipples are his sensitive spots, I cannot wait to have them in my mouth again but this time with the walls of my warm temple clenching around him underneath me.

His kisses starts going up over my hip, then my stomach when he sees my body shivering he starts licking my bellybutton. Yes, yes, yes, that right there is my window to my libido after my neck. After that he moves to my covered breasts and to my neck. He sucks hard on my sensitive spot and I let go of another whimper. When he let go he levels his face with mine and I flutter my eyes opened, my lids are heavy. He is smiling at me and his lips glistening a bit from where my juices were. I lean with my hands disappearing on his beard, stroking him then capture his lips. I kiss him and licking him clean from the taste of my vagina. He takes my hands to hold them as he straddles

my hips. He works his hand over each hands massaging them then he pulls away from me to stare deeply into my eyes.

“Waze wamuhle” His infectious tone pours into my ears as he calls me beautiful. I want to give him children. I want to swallow his sperms so they can grow on my throat rather. Ha ha ha I’m joking. I think I am more attracted to him when he speaks vernacular, there’s this thing about a man being “indoda” and yes what I just said doesn’t make sense.

I smile at him as our eyes move in a same cadence, “Waze wangichaza” I tell him about how he has charmed me. “I want you Bاندلالامي” I say in a desperate and salacious tone.

“What do you want mphefumulo wami?”

“I want this with you. I want to try. I want you so bad”

“Yonke?” This man. I look at him with that complacent smirk painted on his face before we both grin softly, our breathes warm against each other’s faces while I rapidly nod my head after he asked if I want all of it. “I’m to give you what you want” his velveteen voice says.

He instinctively takes off my night wear then he starts unbuttoning his linen pants. I admire watching him peeling off his clothes, it’s how his fingers just move to be honest. He smirks at me and then bite onto my lip gently pulling it before his tongue massages my mouth. He leans back and kisses me in

total slow motion; the dance move with our lips is a sensual one. He turns his head starting to kiss me softly on the neck when I arch my back with my breathing pattern changing, he smiles after he has found yet another sensitive spot. His kisses become more wet and heavy. I can feel his tongue caressing my skin. I am humming in appreciation and sliding my hand inside his crispy white briefs lightly stroking using pre-cum as a lubricant.

“Makhosazana” His tone comes out much deeper than the usual as he groan and my insides starts to tremble.

“Yonke Msebe” I whisper reminding him that I want all of it. I love it when we talk in between and grin, smile and chuckle. And with that his grip on me tightens and he grinds into me. He looks up at me eyes flashing with lust. My eyes are hooded so I can barely see him through the pleasure of him rubbing himself to me.

“Are you ready?” He breathes. By the look in his eyes I know right there and then that this man is going to give it to me—I am emphasizing that. I swallow thickly and then wink at him as my response. Like a switch being flipped his eyes burns with lust and he mischievously simpers. He dips low and kisses me hard running his lips over mines with intensity I have never experienced with a man and my heart escalate as I feel the tip of his phallic brushing over my wet opening, making me grip on

his biceps and I whine a bit in anticipation. I am scared. I am so scared of what I am feeling for this man and it still continues to grow. It's scary I cannot fabricate because as he is between my legs right now that man behind the sky is watching. "You really want me huh?" he asks in a low sultry tone, "I'm all yours" Before I can speak he presses his lips directly on the sensitive spot on my neck and sucking causing me to moan out loud. I try wrapping my hands around his neck but he pulls away again and takes hold of my thigh, pulling me closer to him. He sits back on his heels and pulls me so my plump posterior is on his thighs and my core rubbing against his hard and throbbing Zungu. I gasp when he leans over and takes my erect nipple into his mouth. His tongue flicks softly and he occasionally sucks. He goes back and forth between each nipple teasing me, all while his phallus is brushing against my slit.

He is still rolling my nipple around his tongue. "We don't have condoms makhosazana" At this moment no rubber shall prosper. He gazes into my eyes searching for his answer and when he finally receives it he smirks returning to his necromancy then he thrusts lightly, his phallus now brushing against my swollen berry. "I am going to pull out" Who said I want him to? Anyways I gasp loudly at the motion. It is hard to think at this moment, hard processing what he is doing. I don't like being teased but I am consuming every moment of this. With his mouth on me, his hands on me, he is harmonizing in

satisfaction and his phallus throbbing as he is coating my juices to nirvana. I feel like a waterfall, every touch evokes my wetness and after a few minutes of this I am at breaking point.

“Ah!” I yelp as he takes his hand and placing a smack in my plump posterior.

“Why you didn’t tell me when you were leaving?” And his face changes. God what is wrong with him? “Why you didn’t tell me? I was losing my mind Krotoa”

“I needed to heal Bandla. . .” Then his face becomes a marble. I know the reason behind. “Bandlalami” He reaches down and takes my chin making me look at him and then another slap lands again causing me to groan and throw my head back. He smiles, I guess I am forgiven now then he strokes my face softly which is only a distraction as he thrusts into me in one fluid motion. I scream at the fullness that he gives me and totally understanding why he was teasing me. Okay he is good looking charming, smart, he has an impeccable sense of style and he exuding “big dick energy” so it’s either he is capable of killing, he has blood in his hands or something but there’s most definitely something dark about him. Ha ha ha I am joking. A man can be a full package without any flaws. Why we always tend to look for something “bad” in someone that we can point out to overshadow their perfections?

Bandlalami ngedwa (alone) wanted me wet enough to be able to do that. He stays back on his heels with my plump posterior on his thighs only this time he has completely disappeared inside me and he starts panting a bit while tightening his grip around my thighs. He tilts his head back and groan. “God you feel so warm” When he looks back to me he smirks. Then slowly he starts to thrust, each part of him pressing on every sweet spot inside me. My eyes roll at the back of my head as I lose my senses. I want to reach out to him but he pauses and shakes his head. No touching? I guess I am not forgiven about packing and leaving but we were not even together that time.

He starts plugging into me at a pace that I cannot comprehend. Not only that but I can hear his groans and moans with each thrust which only turns me on even more. “You are mine makhosazana!” I think I should forget about real name and accept this is my new one. He grunts as he continues with his shamanistic thrusts.

“Zungu!”

“HMMMM” He hums.

No fuck this I’m going to give this man quadruplet. A man that’s responsive—a damn turn on I am telling you. It has been sometime since he started moving. He is hitting all my g-spots without falter and the momentum from his thrusting causes my breasts to bounce heavily which is another stimulation all of its

own. The muscles in my thighs start to shake, the bottom of my stomach becomes heavy and bolt of pleasure surfing through me as he shoves his fingers inside my mouth making me suck on them almost silencing my screams while he continues to thrust deeper, faster and harder. He feels my pending climax coming to the shore and he slows down his thrusting to a sensual body roll. "I told you I take too long to come so please wait for me, don't come as yet" Women have preferences and mines is two minutes noddles by now I'll be catching my breath and sleeping. "Ngiyakucela I want us to come together" and then he pleads, at my nod he takes one of his hands and let go of my thigh and I quickly tighten the grip around his waist with my legs. His hand lands on my swollen berry and he starts circling it with his thumb. "You're such a goddess. You're so beautiful" And this has to be the best compliment I have ever received and he can take five years before he comes, I will wait with him to ride that wave. "Are you aware of how stunning you look right now?" He leans down and kissing my stomach continuing his thrusting and his circling. I can barely even make out what he is saying at this point as I put all my effort into not water-falling as yet. "I've always imagined this with you underneath me, writhing from pleasure"

We are smiling with our eyes that are filled with passion and risqué. He gives me one hard thrust and I yell out. "God damn Msebe!" I scream out and he thrusts into me hard once again.

Then he picks up the pace, he pauses so I can calm down from earlier. “Yes! Yes! Yes!”

“You’re mine ain’t you?”

“Yes, yes, I need to release”

“Not yet”

“I cannot take it anymore” He picks up the pace again and my back arch at the sensation. There is a coil in my stomach and all I need is a command. I want him to give me my release and I’ll shatter. “Ah! Ah! Ah!” Now my legs are locked around his waist and he leans closely to my ear.

The wet kisses on my neck makes me continue to shiver, “I love you” he whispers with velveteen tone. You see this? This is how people get pregnant. “Ngiyakuthanda MaMakhetha yezwa” Now he looks up at me to see my unshed tears as I am nodding rapidly. I cannot find the sound of my voice. The thrusts are now ethereal. “Now please come with me!” And with that the coil shatters and my body is lifted to the air. Every fiber of my being is ignited with fire burning my insides with pleasure. I don’t want him pulling out so I wrap my legs tightly around his waist. I want to feel his juices traveling in between my legs. My climax heightens as he now thrusts in and out an irregular paces, chasing his own orgasm, my waist meets with him. I cannot see it or hear. All I can feel is my body responding to

him. To his touch and his kisses. After a moment or two he ceases but he doesn't move and my eyes are closed with my head thrown back and my hands still holding onto the sheets. I'm still panting hard, unable to regulate it from the intensity of my climax. I didn't feel him pulling out and climbing over me, kissing my forehead while I am still swirling in euphoria and his face is hovering over me. "Are you okay mphefumulo wami?"

"HmMMM"

"We can't talk?"

"HmMMM"

He smirks, clearly impressed. "I have a meeting with a client this morning. Are you going to be fine?" Oh it's the morning. I look around the orange hue dances in this room before my eyes return back to him. He kisses me softly then pulls away. "I'm not leaving without bathing you first to make sure you're okay. Are you sore?"

"HmMMM"

Now he is smiling. Oh he must me proud. "Let's go. You must stay in bed all day and indoda yakho—your man will take care of you okay"

"What time are you coming back?"

“Around afternoon. I just need to go to my lodge and change after we’ve took a bath. I’ll call your very minute to check up on you”

“What time are you leaving?”

“After our forth round”

Haibo!

•

In all my sexual experiences I have never been exposed to the after care where I am being bathed with him behind me on a bathtub, trailing kisses on my neck and his touch caressing my skin with soap. I have never had a man moisturizing my body with so much gentleness and tender before he tugs me into bed, cuddle me, stroking my head until eventually I fall asleep before he leaves because I was worn out. Also what I’ve also learnt is that I am a two minutes noddles. Yes women can be one too and I think on my side is because with all the men I have slept with we were there to just give each other the orgasm that we both needed then leave so we never went pass two rounds actually and now I have to keep with this man’s high libido, Bandlaethu takes too long to releases his juices.

I have been in contact with my workers and that stupid receptionist made a mistake by saying the person who was there is an aesthetician where else she's actually a dermatologist, I wanted to fire her right there for making such a mistake but I was in a good mood. I am looking for people I can work with since I am going to start my skin care brand. I think I don't want to work anymore as in wake up every morning but go to work once in a while and just be "umlungu" —CEO and pay people to just work for me.

Anyways he just sent a message saying he is on his way back from the meeting. Well he somehow managed to find out that a former client was around here so he secured the meeting. For strangely reasons I already miss him so much and I keep staring towards the door. I don't know how we are going to make this work, remain in our different lodges? I don't know. I wish also life could be this simple when we return back home but I am going to luxuriate in this moment for the next two weeks. I don't know when exactly is he planning on leaving or he'll stay here with me until my trip ends? I would love that.

Upon hearing the door opening I immediately push back my laptop from the bed and pretending to be asleep. I don't know why I am doing this, being cute maybe? I guess so. Anyways I can feel his footsteps getting closer and before I know it his scent odyssey to my nostrils. I cannot pretend anymore

because I flutter my eyes open and seeing him standing there watching me sleeping. This man is totally attractive and he makes breathing seem golden. He has boxed flowers in his hand and a bouquet of snacks in his hand.

“I missed you” He says still standing there and watching me on the bed. I want to get up and crawl under his skin and he’s swathe in a brown suit and a sweater vest underneath and wearing white sneakers. “I am coming there to kiss you” can he just get here and capture these lips already? Firstly he hands me my gift and guess what? The flowers are decorated with money. I look at him grinning and he shakes his head.

“Sawubona ke mphefumulo wami” His tongue is insistent against my lips and I open to take him in. He tastes like dry wine and sweet, and he kisses me like he would never be able to get enough, stealing my breath away. I wrap my arms around his neck, stroking the back there “I really missed you” he says , tendering kisses along the line of my jaw, moving to the hollow of my throat where he presses his lips to my pulse, his hand wriggling between our bodies and then pulls away to look at me. “How are you? Are you still sore? I bought the pills you asked for” Great.

“I am not sick Bandlaletu, I just had sex hangover and how was the meeting”

He smiles, I already know whatever he went there for it went well. “It went well. I mean I’ve been friends with Mabutho Mthabela so convincing him to work with us again wasn’t that much of a big deal and did you look for houses online?”

“No I haven’t so you got the deal?”

“Yebo makhosazana. I have to call my uncle so I can put him on the picture. The house did you look for it?”

“I missed you too”

“You asked for this house so please stop avoiding this conversation did you look it?”

I focus my eyes on his lips that forms a simper upon seeing the lust dancing in my eyes then we look at each other and chuckle. “You want all of it again?” Yes and yes and yes.

“Yes but now we have to celebrate. And thank you for the flowers. Let me get wine while we celebrate”

“Let me call my uncle. You look beautiful”

When I get up from the bed he pulls me back to his lap and grabbing onto my plump posterior then wrap his hand around my neck, just to stare into my eyes. “Bandlami” I moan at the violent yet pleasurable grip from him, my breathing becoming ragged. “What’s wrong?”

He shakes his head, something is going through his mind then takes a deep breath. “When we go back home it won’t be this simple but I am going to make sure that we make this work and I’m going to protect you in whatever yezwa?”

I engulf his face in my hands and stroking his beard, my favorite and then kiss him gently before pulling away and rubbing my fingers against the contours of his lips. “I know you love your brother and I will never make you choose between us and I know very well you’ll do anything to make this work. I don’t doubt that Msebe” He hangs his head low and leaning his head on my chest breathing out heavily. “Look at me. . .” I ask him with a soft tone. His hands are no longer around my neck but my thighs. “. . .We are going to be fine. You’ve given me your heart to nurture and I’m going to take care of it. We got this and stop overly thinking. I am taking you out on a date tonight”

“You’re taking who on a date?”

“Bandlalabo”

“MaKrotoazana I am the one taking you out on a date, please don’t start with me and I am going to ask these people to move us to a villa not this lodge. I’m going to need an open space to learn your body”

It’s my vagina singing Adiwela for me!

37.

knuckle

/'nʌk(ə)l/

- a part of a finger at a joint where the bone is near the surface, especially where the finger joins the hand

N Q A B A

I guzzle the liquid that flows through my throat before raising the glass to stare at the with beautiful, dark, amber and golden alcoholic drink in total admiration and the aromas are magnificent, they are captivating, they are enchanting. Yes it belongs to my uncle who has an exclusive and impeccable taste. “You’re drinking my Rémy Martin XO” I almost crawl out of my skin upon hearing his tone speaking causing me to quickly get up from his throne—home office brown leather chair and for a moment I felt how it would be like to take over. “And you’re in my office” I can hear the unimpressed tone in his voice as he creases his eyebrow. “What happened to respect Nqabayezulu?” What? I am almost finishing the calendar soon and this man wants to treat me like an adolescent? I just had

one glass of his expensive personalized cognac not a whole tank. God what is wrong with me? I don't know but I am irritated for no reason. "But I am going to let it go so what's wrong?" He walks through the door ". . .you can sit on that chair and pour me a drink" I didn't expect that after that he smiles, but it last few seconds, he sits on the opposite chair as he makes himself comfortable leaning back as I hand him a short glass and he runs his fingers on it before he closely brings it into his nostrils for a scent to odyssey then he takes a sip. "Why you're here in my house?" I guess it's about me sleeping over at his place.

I clear my throat and leaning forward on the chair. It feels uncomfortable sitting here now that he's opposite me. I get up and standing on my feet moving away to make myself comfortable on a couch and taking a sip. "I cannot help but feel like you care about Bandlalethu more than me" I tell him about what has been chewing my brain and even suckling my narrow bone while causing discomfort on my chest. "You always protect him and support him"

"Are you out of your mind?" he narrows his eyebrows at me, chuckling dryly, sardonically and dangerously. "You're the last person to say that Nqabayezulu, you out of all people. I supported you in all that you've ever done. When you made the stupidest decisions. Remember when you just turned twenty

years? What did I do?” We were given the first fifteen percent into the business and I decided to sell it because I was made to believe that when everything returns back to me it would be doubled. But I opened the door for an enemy and the business came tumbling down but my uncle saved the day. Although it took some time for things to get back to normal. “I would’ve killed you that day. I should’ve killed you actually but guess who took the fall? Who saved you? Who saved the business after you threw everything down the drain? Even so I have just given you yet another chance to take part in this business” His face remains marble and then takes a sip from his glass and he comfortably shifts on the chair that he is sitting on. “What makes you think I have never protected you”

“It’s just that. . .I thought you would give me a better portion than what I got. Yes I understand that I wanted the business you’ve gave me but why I cannot have the upper into the company? I am technically working for Bandlalethu”

“You are working for yourself and he’s pretty much doing that too awuyeke ukuhlanya wena—stop being crazy” Then he flares his nostrils. “Even so what is wrong with that? This is a family business” Now he’s clenching his jawline. “What made you “thought” that? What makes you think that at some point everything will belong to you? What exactly did you do? In two weeks or three of taking over the business what have you

done? I have never not even once took any sides when it comes to you and your brother. I love you both equally but you. . .you want to be treated better. Nqabayezulu no one is going to nurse your feelings here especially not this callous world you want to be part of. I am not going to pat and embrace your ego to make you feel better about yourself so it's either you work hard to get what you want or you can start your own business since you're better than everyone of which only you can see that potential but don't dare come at me with that nonsense of not being supported and protected. Why can you not protect yourself? Kanti uyindoda enjani wena?" He asks what kind of a man I am and I remain hanging my head low feeling my rage pumping through my veins and muscles making it swollen. I cannot believe that he's questioning me in that manner after everything. "Now tell me what decision have you made?" I didn't really want to talk about this now especially after the conversation that I had with Ka Mazibuko. I seriously just need something to calm all my turbulent thoughts and emotions about everything.

I gulp the drink in my hand that burns my demented emotions causing me to groan. "I haven't made any decision as yet" That wasn't supposed to roll out of my mouth so unrefined now it makes me look like a complete dullard especially with business involved it may seem and come across as though I am not

capable of this. “I just wish you understood where I was coming from maybe you would’ve been less harsh”

“Where are you coming?”

“I am in love with two—

“The other one you were supposed to marry then decided to be a boy and ran away have you spoke to her family? Have you spoken to your father and what did he say? Because in the end you have to go to that family and apologize for what you’ve done. What are your plans then Nqabayezulu? You think she’ll want to be with you and be your second option after what you’ve done?” As he seethes I swallow my saliva that still has a bergamot taste against my buds. “And then the other who had amnesia. You said she regained her memory but have you guys spoke, did you take a chance to get to know her or you just want to rush into having two wives without knowing any of them? Nqabayezulu do you even know these women?” I look up at him then shrug with a scowl taking a sip from my drink. “What are you shrugging for? You’ll use words when you speak to me boy!” His tone now changes sounding stern and deep, that scares me. “You cannot marry someone you barely even know. You know literally nothing. You haven’t got to know these women yet you want to jump into having polygamous marriage? When you don’t even know whether or not they feel the same about you?”

“I know they feel the same otherwise I wouldn’t be in this state. Yes I decided to go on about things the wrong way but what am I supposed to do? Ka Makhetha is fierce and Ka Mazibuko there’s something bold about her”

He laughs and shaking his head placing his glass on the table then he stands on his feet. “You think you have everything under control but clearly you don’t. You have no slight clue about these women

Advertisement

you know nothing” he comes to pat my shoulder “I have to go somewhere for business and today this person when she wakes up I’ll be the first thing that she sees this morning. It’s going to be a good day” Who is he talking about? After that he winks at me. I look at the time on the wall and it just blinked four am. You got to be kidding me. I’m sure that person might’ve double crossed him and he wants to make her life a living hell, typical Mkhululi Zungu.

It’s very comical that he thinks I don’t know about these women. Yes maybe we’ve never had a conversation on a much deeper level. Krotoa doesn’t easily peel off her own skin to show you what is on the inside and then Zenokuhle she has just regained her memory and we haven’t had a conversation after she found out about the fact that I want polygamy and also my intentions.

I pour yet another glass before deciding that I might as well drive to see this woman who hasn't been taking my calls or answering my messages. Okay fine I understand that I messed up about not showing up at her homestead but I have been trying to reach out so what is there to be immature about really? Instead of just answering my calls so we can have a conversation like two grown adults then we'll find a forward to this so we can get this over and done it with she just chooses silence. I just want to know what decision she has made and how she really feels. Yes she might've told me to "fokkof" but those words were coming from a deranged place and now I want us to sit down, look in each other's eyes and then make physical contact. I seriously need to talk to her. I also need to embrace Ka Mazibuko seeing that hurt drawn on her face and unshed tears made me shatter right in that moment. After that one long gulp and my chest immediately burning I push away the glass on the table running my hands through my head before walking out searching for my car keys and finding them on the coffee table in the living room.

It doesn't take any minute for me to get there and the monolith house seems abandoned and as though there's no one, the sun is now starting to hum in the sky. I haven't even winked a sleep and I can feel my body wanting to shut down, there's aching back pains as well and that's not what I want right now. "God save me!" I mumble underneath my breath getting out of the

car and trying to open the gate but the gate is actually locked. “Ka Makhetha! Ka Makhetha! Ka Makhetha!” I scream outside the gate half expecting that she’ll hear me then come out seething with her hands on her waist. The last time I saw her she has changed her color to black and damn that woman exude celestial magic even the way her body has been sculptured, she is a damn muse. Tell me how am I supposed to choose between these two women? Two women who are absolutely beautiful in different forms. When they’re both driving me wild. “Ka Makhetha! Ka Makhetha! Ka Makhetha!” I scream once again and again there’s no response but rather a woman from the next house comes out wearing a gown and a cup of tea in her hand. When she sees me she immediately shows me a radiant smile.

“Nqabayezulu!” Her voice sounds motherly almost shaking at the same. It reminds me of my grandmother somehow. I smile back at her as she comes closer and closer. Why is this woman awake at this time? It’s exactly six am. “You don’t know? They have moved from here. Just yesterday there was a truck taking furniture out. This house is being sold. It was all your fault angifuni ukungasho” Haibo?! Is she blaming me? Right after that she takes a sip from her tea and leaning closely to her short fence. “What are you doing here screaming? You have no respect or whatsoever wena” I swear the way this woman was smiling when she was approaching towards my direction I

didn't think this conversation will take such a turn. "Where did you hear that you scream outside people's houses and gates? The thunder slap I want to give you"

I hang my head low respectfully—let me emphasize on that since this woman is calling me disrespectful. I rub my hands together and trying to thread the right words. "I'm sorry ma but I was looking for Krotoa, have you seen her?" I ask and she shouts a loud "iheeeee" while taking yet another long sip from her tea. I'm really holding myself from telling her where to get off because of my grandmother's teachings otherwise I would have just shut her mouth already. "I understand I was disrespectful yes. . ." I admit and my stomach squeezes. Lord I don't even know what I have done ". . .I just want to see and talk to her"

"After what you've done to that girl? What do you want from her?" What does this got to do with her? She is not even related to this person I am talking about. "Well she is back home with people that loves her. What you did is no different than leaving her at the alter" I cannot bare hearing another word from her instead I bid my farewell returning back to the car, driving off and my en-route is UMTHWALUME. I cannot sleep today without seeing her and knowing where we stand. But I know what I have seen in those eyes, the adoration, caress

and lust. I need to hear the sound of her voice coated with sultry and salacious.

By the time I have arrived the darkness that was like a mat in the sky turns light reminding me of what Zenokuhle said. I am sure she didn't mean those words well she assured me that they meant nothing. The sound of her voice echoes and spiral around my head as what she has said spread throughout my brain. Why would she assumed that my brother was in love with the same woman I love? Why would she randomly say that about thinking about me in the daylight and another man at night? The only logical answer to this is that she might've been hurt and found venomous word to spat on my face.

I drive through the hill to the large homestead with two huts, to small flats and large beautiful house with two taxis parking outside and I can see large kraal. I am hoping that I am not getting myself in trouble here. The moment the engine dies I get off the car after another prayer underneath my breath making my way towards the gate only to see a tall frame. I know I am tall but this man here is a giant swathe in a nylon tracksuit and talking over his phone while playing with car keys in his fingers.

When our eyes meet as I am standing behind the bars he frowns while narrowing his eyebrows then he waves indicating that I must walk in. I drag oxygen into my lungs. I don't think I

thought this one through. I close the gate behind me and my feet propelling me towards his direction until I stand in front of him and his cannabis scent smothers me after that he bids farewell to his “princess” whom I assume is the girlfriend because that smile dancing on his face says it all.

He shove his hands in his pockets. “Who are you?” We are not doing the greeting business then. Intently he looks at me. I clear my throat to find the right voice.

“Sawubona. . .” I greet and he gives me that don’t dare waste my time look. “. . .I’m Nqabayezulu Zungu and. . .” I didn’t get a chance to even finish what I wanted to say because in thunderbolt a fist meets with my face. As I am still trying to wrap my head around what is happening he grabs me by collar and he throws yet another punch causing me to stumble back. I cannot even get a chance to fight back because this man is on me, he uses his knees to knock my own and the next thing I am flat on the red soil while he gets on top of me throwing punch after another until blood starts oozing from me, I can taste it inside my mouth as I groan and grunt while apologizing. “I love her!” I say before my eye is closed with just one powerful punch that knocks doors to my unconsciousness.

“Jongimpi!” We hear a feminine voice screaming and exclaiming from behind. I have a hand wrapped around my neck, strangling me. “Jongimpi stop that man!” Again she

screams sternly. At this point I can taste and see my own grave. I am helped when someone pulls him away causing me to groan and catch my breath as I rapidly cough. Every part of my body burns. It could be from exhaustion and not sleeping combined with the punches that I have just received. “What is wrong with you. Jongimpi you could’ve killed him!” I see through my swollen eyes that it’s her grandmother talking.

“Nqabayezulu what are you doing here?”

What is my uncle doing here?

38.

choice

/tʃɔɪs/

- an act of choosing between two or more possibilities

N Q A B A

I am trying to make sense and connect the dots as to what is my uncle doing here and the only logical answer could be that he has been following me but then again I cannot seem to understand that since he is the one who actually left the house first and why would he follow me?

Maybe after our conversation he decided to come here and apologize on my behalf to make amends?

Right now I am covered in blood and red dust with my one eye swollen, I can assure you that this man has iron fists. I attempt on getting up but my head starts to painfully throb, making me dizzy and everything somehow seems duplicated. If this was another case scenario I am telling you now that I could send this man to his early grave or fucking jail for even daring to

touch me, “ma-malume. . .” I drag my words and stutter with my tongue feeling heavy. I swear I am going to fall unconscious. As I groan and trying to get up once again a woman whose hands are extremely soft helps me get up, her scent dances through my lungs. I force my vision to be enlivened to see her wet curly hair falling down her shoulders and swathe in a satin red robe, she is coming from a shower. I search for eyes but someone forcefully drags me away from her, holding me by collar, “. . .malume I can explain” I have witnessed that medusa like rage dancing in his eyes but this one seems much more violent. He could blow my brains. He could kill me and bury me in front of these people. “I needed to see her. I needed to talk to her” I don’t know what exactly is holding him back but I know for a fact he would’ve baptized me with another rain of punches, breaking my ribs and sending me to death. “I want to talk to her this once please” I plead again and his eyes move towards this woman who helped me get up from the red soil then he glares at me clicking his tongue and dragging me. Well no one seems to care about what is happening here but rather they watch the scene without any word murmured or reprimanding him not to roughly hold me like this. I thought I may see her coming out still swathe in pyjamas with her luscious bare face but she is nowhere.

I am shoved at the backseat of the car and the door was sonorously slammed before he returns back walking into that

yard and talking to that man who did this to me. All my high hopes of seeing my uncle grabbing out a gun and pointing it in between that man's eyes are shattered because they have smiles on their faces, shaking hands while her grandmother looks towards the car then returns them to my uncle who is pleading. The gorgeous woman in satin fabric is standing aside with her hands against her chest pushing her caramel small breasts for a much more enthrall view.

Who is that? Who is she?

I lean my head back groaning in unbearable pain after wiping the blood with the shirt that I am wearing when eventually my uncle walks towards the car getting in then he maneuvers as though the whole hell cast is chasing behind us, the veins on his hands are showing and somehow resembling his thunderous emotions.

“You thought it was a good idea for you to come here after what you've done? And worse without an adult? What does our culture say Nqabayezulu?” The sound of his voice echoes. I'm still trying to block the blood from seeping through my nose. This chat about culture is making me doze off at this moment. I still want to know what was he doing here? But I cannot even speak because somehow my mouth is also starting to swell. “What were you thinking? I am telling you if she wasn't there I would've murdered you right there and then” Who is she? Oh

oh oh. That gorgeous woman with beautiful breasts and voluptuous body? “That was your first and last time you look at her like that otherwise you’ll eat your own fucking eyeballs yezwa wena?” He threatens looking at me through the rear view mirror. He means that and now I am wondering what is going on but anyways I rapidly nod my head. Eventually as I am sitting at the backseat of this car I fall asleep because of the amount of pain that I am drowning in.

We haven’t had any exchanging of words regardless of my very own pool of questions that I want to drown him with and by the time we return from the doctor he is the first one to get off the car leaving me behind without helping me then he walks inside the house. Well I cannot help but think that he is being overly dramatic about everything to be honest. I get off the car with a brown paper bag of medication with my gelatin feet propelling me inside the house to find him drinking from the bottle of his expensive cognac. A whole bottle? Something is not right. When my eyes are met with the poisonous pistol on the coffee table I feel my own breath knocking at my rib cage. “What were you doing there Nqabayezulu?” He doesn’t even give me a chance to take sit. I remain here immobilized as though I am statue watching him continuously drinking from the bottle. “You’re not going to stand there and just watch me after that stunt you pulled. You’ve been disrespectful enough

for me to pull a fucking trigger through that skull of yours with a nonexistence brain” What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

“I should be asking you that question” I respond back and he turns to glance at me once then devilry smirk to gulp from his drink. “I am not trying to be disrespectful or anything like that but I am trying to make sense has to why you were at my girlfriend’s house? You seemed comfortable with her uncle”

“Your what?” He laughs in mockery and placing his bottle down to turn his whole body to face towards me. “You said I was where?” And directly he blazes at me

Advertisement

causing me to swallow the bitter taste of my saliva. “Your girlfriend? You have confident and that’s expressive, reminds me of the same confidence that I had assuming that she was mine” If you weren’t paying attention you wouldn’t witness that hurt. Who is he talking about? “You see somehow you remind me of myself when I was delusional” After that he grabs a bottle from the table again to open it “I thought that we had something when there was absolutely nothing. . .” he guzzles his drink then groan. I take this time to sink on the couch and listen to him. “. . .nothing. What was hard was having to let her go after I assured myself that she belonged to my arms. It was not her fault but it was mine and most definitely his. He knew that I loved her. I told him about us and he went to meet her

pretending it was some scripted movie and sweep her off by her feet” I cannot help but feel my own guilt seeping through me. I hang my head low and running my hands through my beard, attentively paying close attention at his fairy tale story “Are you sure that girl loves you Nqabayezulu?” he asks me again. I don’t know for how many times but his face is solemn with red rimmed eyes from different amount of raw emotions, his hands are trembling with visible veins. “I want you to honestly answer this question and then after that we can move to you telling me what were you doing there?”

“Yes, she loves me” my tone exudes sureness after I cast my eyes towards him, “I know this is hard to understand for you or anyone for that matter”

“And how do you know that she loves you? What is that she has done for you to sound so sure that Ka Makhetha loves you?” I can feel a pang of different emotions at the corners of my heart, squeezing me with indescribable emotions. I cannot answer that question right now because of the pulsing sensation whirling around my head. “You cannot answer me okay fine. What were you doing there?”

“I just wanted to make things right”

“You don’t make things right that way. Your father should’ve been there with you so you can cleanse that house, not that stunt you pulled Nqabayezulu!”

“Yebo” I rub my hands together. “I am going to contact him later and then we can find a way as to when we can go there. I am going to call Bandlalethu as well”

“You know he is on a business trip”

“I know but this is a family matter that needs all of us here to make amends and do the cleansing. I know you and your brother are not on each other’s right side but we have to make it work. I don’t know maybe family dinner so we can all have this conversation?”

“I am not going to sit on the table and play happy family with you Nqabayezulu. This is your mess now fix it on your own and don’t drag anyone to clean up for you” After that he takes along his gun and bottle of cognac. “Oh another thing. Remember what I said if ever I see you looking at Lerato?” I guess that’s her name “I was not playing but I mean it. You’re my son but don’t dare me” the vexation in his tone awakens goosebumps all over my body.

I just had few hours of sleep after taking a shower. I just woke up because of these migraines and the sun is already starting to set behind the mountains when I grab my phone calling my brother who doesn’t answer but eventually he picks up.

“Sawubona Nqabayezulu” he sounds nonchalant.

“You have to come back home”

“What did you say?”

“I’m saying you have to come back home, we have a serious matter at hand. I need to do cleansing after not showing up to the Makhetha family on the day of negotiations”

“Oh manje mina ngingenaphi lapho?—how is that any of my business?” I look at my phone screen to make sure that I am talking to my brother before pressing my phone against my ear.

“You want me to drop everything just because you want to do cleansing that has nothing to do with me?”

“You’re my brother you should be here!”

“You should’ve asked me with a better mannerism to come back home not this nonsense. You were telling me to come home and not pleading me. Yes I’m your brother and not someone who works for you. Are you done running to your father to talk about me?”

“I have never spoken about you with your father” I also emphasize denying.

He chuckles dryly “you’re not ready to take accountability as always and that is totally fine with me. You’ve showed me Nqabayezulu that you don’t care about me as much as I care about you. I made so many sacrifices for you but regardless of

that this doesn't lessen how much I care about you and how much I love you"

"You've changed Bandlaletu, what happened?"

"I think we should end this conversation and I am sure your father will be there to take you through that process not that I think it's necessary for you to that cleansing but it's culture and I am not mad about this" Why would he be mad?

"Is this about Zenokuhle accusing you of being in love with Krotoa? I understand that those were strong accusations and you have every right to be angry but come on now Bandla. You kicked her out already"

"I did and please tell umalume to sell that house for me and I'll be sending people to move my stuff. I have to go"

"You're selling that house because Zenokuhle used to stay there?"

"Yes"

"You're being absolutely petty right now. If you come back she'll apologize. I need you. I went to Krotoa's house today looking for her and her uncle beaten me up"

"Oh she's not there, usale kahle" Then he hangs up the call. Not asking me about why that uncle beaten me up? Or whether not

or I am okay. What happened to him? He seems not to care about my feelings or me for that matter. That's strange.

Yes my father was right that this new title will make Bandlalethu feel better than me and it will sure his true colors.

I have to get back to work and make my uncle believe that I've chose one of these women so I can be able to prove myself to be a better choice than my brother then he can get off that high horse.

39.

antebellum

/ˌɑntɪˈbɛləm/

- occurring or existing before a particular war

He can smoke!

I can see him standing outside with a cigarette in between his fingers that were nicely manicured this morning making his hands appears absolutely attractive than they already are. I cannot wait to have them inside my mouth like couple of hours ago, I am slowly learning to keep up with his high libido and it's such a beautiful experience as we learn about each other's buttons, almost tantric. I glance at him once again as he shoves his phone in his pocket grabbing out yet another cancer stick—this is forth one—I can only see his back now.

I have no other choice by propelling towards him still barefooted, opening the sliding door and I wrap my hands around his waist and placing my head on his back. Immediately he starts to calm inhaling the smoke one more time before he throws it away then he takes my hand from behind to kiss my

fingers. “Who made you angry so I can strangle them?” I say and he chuckles turning around to engulf my waist in his hands, deeply looking into my eyes then he kisses my forehead. “What happened? You seem tense” In these couple of days of reading him and paging through the pages I learnt he is my favorite novel with different genres with a scent of nicotine instead of brand new piece of paper.

The strokes on my waist from his fingers awaken powerful and pixie dust sensations traveling through my bloodstream then he smiles charmingly. Haibo! Haibo! I am so sure that he is so fully aware of how of an enchanting portrait he is. “It’s nothing that cannot be solved makhosazana” I know that he is concealing the truth away from me. His mood has changed; we should be going to our date because that day we ended up not going. Our clothes flew in the air and my legs were spread pointing different directions. I woke up with reddened marks on my neck and my thighs that are pretty much still visible. We went from slow and sultry thrusts to him plaguing deeply and rearranging my guts, choking me salaciously, his fingers inside my mouth, him asking me how much I wanted this, me begging him to give me more to him biting in between my thighs and his phallus going all the way down my throat. “You have nothing to worry about I promise” And then he spans and grab my

buttocks, my shallow breath gusting and he smirks with those molten pools onto me as he watches me through his lashes as he nuzzles to drag the flat of his tongue along my neck, agonizingly slow and it feels as though my skin is burning and I start to melt. “You smell so good makhosazana” he really adores my scent because he always compliments me.

“I am not letting this one go Msebe so tell me what happened?” When I use his second name he furrow his eyebrows then he complacently simpers and he leans to bite into my nipple underneath the white linen shirt that I am wearing which belongs to him then he looks into my eyes. “I am going back inside the house because you don’t want to talk when you’re ready come in so we can eat. . .” I attempt turning around to walk away from him but instead he grips into my arm pulling me closer to him while he pushes me against the glass sliding door creating no room between us, his breath with a smell of nicotine voyages through my face, “You’re not going to do that Bandlalabo”

“Your business partner went to your house today” and that should be his brother—that mockery in his tone is the reason I chuckle softly at him as he moisturize his lower lip with his tongue

“and now he was summoning me to come back home because he wants to do cleansing for not showing up that day. He

wasn't nicely asking me but it sounded more like a demand that I should come back" this is the reason why menace is painted on his face and sheer rage at the corners of his eyes. "I don't want this to seem as though I am changing towards him because. . ."

"Because of me?"

"Chabo" he protests infectiously ". . .I don't even know why would you think that but because my uncle has handed half of the things to me but truthfully speaking I have endure his disrespect even when we were young and used to fight he always had his way" I just don't know how to navigate through this situation because I want to tell him to forcefully make his brother drink battery acid because from what I've heard Bandlalethu is always making sacrifices and then his brother just opens his mouth to be fed everything and that is why he tends to undermine other people because he thinks he can have his way with anyone and literally everything. "And this needs to come to an end. Yes I love him so much and I know that I always say this but if he cannot respect me then we are seriously going to have a problem"

"I really do hope that you understand sometimes I hold my tongue not to say much about the relationship you have with your brother because of how the fire between us was ignited. It makes me uncomfortable in a way" I tell him truthfully. I would

really love to tell him so unfiltered that his brother is a stuphethu that went to private school and undermines people because he thinks and believe they are beneath him. When he doesn't get what he wants he feels threatened that's why he wanted to scare me off by saying he would murder my grandmother just to get these "shares". "But and I am going to be careful with my words. I cannot help but think that your family shielded Nqaba from seeing the real world hence he feels entitled to this business. He'll do anything to be seen as your uncle because he just wants to prove himself. You guys made him believe that he can never be wrong because at every mistake that he would make you clean after him, that's why he always run to you for help because he cannot handle things on his own but in his mind he doesn't think coming to you, your father, your uncle for help is wrong but he feels that you are obliged to help him anyways and for that all of you are to blame. I had him all figured out and if I didn't fall in love with you trust me your family business would've came falling down on its knees and that's all because of him since he would've made things so easy for me. If you don't attentively pay attention to him you could lose everything while he just wants the chair and be seen as another version of your uncle. I personally feel you shouldn't have walked away from something you're passionate about because you wanted the

spotlight to be focused on him but taught him what it means to share and not be greedy when the table is full”

“I hear what you’re saying but did you just confess that you have fallen for me mphefumulo wami?”

I make an eye contact with him not ready to admit my own words that came out of my own mouth then I capture his lower lip to mine pulling on it slightly before releasing it and reconnecting our mouths. He groans a bit, seeming to find bliss in what I am doing. His fingers feel soft on the side of my face and he kisses me slowly, diving into my waters with his tongue, caressing the back of my ear and that somehow has a butterfly effect on me before he pulls away. “We are going home” then he announces. I witness that dark portrait an artist uses charcoal to paint almost animalistic “I should’ve handled this matter differently and we cannot continue to go on about things this way. There’s no cleansing ceremony that would be taking place here and I might as well just have this conversation with Nqabayezulu that we are together” That kiss seriously made him lose his marbles. I swear look at him. Oh God Bandlalethu uyahlanya yini? Is he crazy? Already my grandmother was accusing me of sleeping with both these brothers. Well the other one who has made me fall for him and basically went home to pay a fine for entering my homestead disrespectfully when he just heard me screaming. The other

one surely must've disappeared because I don't even know what was he doing at my house from the start because we had an agreement that this was a deal and now he's acting like a man who has been fed "bheka mina ngedwa"—love potion when I don't even feel nothing for him. Yes I must admit that the horny wanton in me might've wanted to sleep with him at some point but it would've meant nothing, absolutely nothing. "You heard what I said?" I push him away from me and returning back inside the house a clear indication that I am going to grate his scrotum. I can feel his footstep right behind me as I stride to the kitchen.

Also the villa that we moved to is absolutely what dreams are made of, I hope that this man whose brain cells are no longer working got the hints when I said I wanted a house that looks like this. It almost looks like house that belongs to him. I remember when I found myself standing outside his doorstep with my brand new white dress but his had more darker tones in terms on interior design.

"Makhosazana" And then he walks into the kitchen. I turn to glimpse at him once as he stands by the entry way then he leans on the wall with his hands on his pockets. "You want me to hide that we are together until when? When I decide that I want to marry you? When you're pregnant? When exactly tell me" Oh shit I need to take the pill immediately. It hasn't been

overly five days as yet so I am still on the safe side and if there's a big head who smokes two packets of cigarettes a day growing inside my stomach then he has another thing coming. "When we kissed that night I should've just told him. I should've looked for you that day I saw you crossing the street once. I was in a car and the robot just turned red. You were wearing a sheer dress that showed the dragon behind your back" I analyse him trying so hard to remember when was it when I crossed the red robot? I have crossed the street far too many times to even have that memory captured in my mind. "Then I hired a sweeper PI and detective to find you" I choke. He serious and there's no even slight of smile dancing on his face. "I mean I had to find you. The first day that I saw. And hopefully marry you but then we discovered that you had a man. . ." It was surely just one of the men that I used to exchange. That might've deeply hurt him. "I knew everything I had to know about you Krotoa but I had to step back because I realized it wasn't the right time for us to be together. And strangely enough I met you again not crossing the street this time but in my brother's arms. You don't know how hard it was for me to even put a smile on my face and pretend as if I wasn't going crazy about you just years ago" I am dating my bloody stalker!!! Jesus Christ save me.

"I am not going back home with you Bandlalethu" It takes everything in him not to come here and break all these buttons

to this shirt then pick me up to a kitchen counter and fuck me until I am breathless for not saying “lami” there. I don’t care. He used to stalk me. He wants me to go back home? I cannot even imagine what would happen when the truth comes out. That crazy numbskull he calls a brother surely will be overly dramatic about this. “I understand that you feel guilty about—

“I’m not feeling guilty about anything” Immediately he interjects. He is still sullen about the fact that I didn’t use that term of endearment. “As I was saying there are so many ways as to how I should’ve handled this. And I’m on my knees asking you that you come with me. I understand that you’ll be compromising your trip but this would be the first and last time you make any sort of compromise for me, ever Krotoa” Oh suddenly I am not makhosazana? I am not mphefumulo wami now? Are we breaking up already?

“I don’t want your brother finding out about us at least not now. We are still peeling layers to each other. You used to stalk to me. It has been overly hours of being together and already you want drama? Yes I can agree to go back home because you want to stop the whole cleansing matter but. . .”

“You want me to play hide and seek with someone I have intentions of making my wife I don’t smoke cannabis mina” Is he saying that I smoke weed? That basically means I am on cloud nine as we speak. “I found a house for you that has

something similar to this in terms of interior design. I wanted it so be surprised” I’m stupefied then, very, very. Now he is changing the intense atmosphere between us. I don’t know why he hasn’t come here to hold me but his hands are shaking there. We look at each other with cosmic love floating in the air and my anger is being washed away but tranquillity. “Woza ku baba” I seriously don’t want to laugh but here I am chuckling at my bloody smoker stalker standing there and gorgeously smirking. At first I hesitate but his smile blooms from his face. I have no other choice but dragging my own feet towards him and he picks me up making me wrap my legs around my waist and taking us to the bedroom. He places me on top of the bed then he settle in between my legs placing his head on my chest and taking out my breast to start sucking on it. This is to calm his thoughts and whatever emotions he’s going through now. I start massaging his scalp. “You promised that we were going to be okay” “And I meant that Msebe”

“Now I’m asking that we go back home because we cannot stay here forever. Nqaba thinks that you have feelings for him”

“Udakiwe nje” No really he is might’ve drank the most cheapest alcohol what gave him that bloody impression that I was in love with him? What drug is he taking? Were we both not acting? “I don’t even know what makes him think that I could ever fall in love with someone that threatened to kill that one person who

means so much to me. I'm not crazy" I tell him honestly not even caring whether or not we are talking about his brother. "I'm going back home only because I have to return back to work" That's not entirely the truth but because I know few seconds of him being away I'll be miserable and I'll masturbate five times in just two minutes at the ungodly thoughts of him raging through my mind.

He attempts to pause covering my nipple with his mouth but I push him back there, I can feel him laughing with my dark berry inside his mouth and his breath fanning there causing me to laugh and moan at the same time. "Are we going back home? You can stay with me while we finalize everything regards your house and that will take three days. I'm going to have a conversation about Nqabayezulu once you've settled about us and we can take it from there" "Can I be honest?"

"Yes"

"I'm scared. I'm scared of how this is going to end up mainly because you'll be provoked enough for him to see the other side of you that he has never met. And when you reveal that to him you won't be able to control yourself for that matter. This could either end with an explosion or something beyond that. And that. . .that what makes me scared knowing that it could effect the relationship you have with your brother"

He looks up at me, "I need to smoke"

40.

“icala lise majajini enkantolo”

BANDLALETHU

I left her home peacefully sleeping with a red dragon spread on her back while the line to her buttocks slightly peeked from the white fabric. I couldn't help but trail kisses from there all the way up here spinal cord to the back of her neck then she murmured with her tone sounding too soft as warm breeze and her scent has been weaving through my house emanating my sheets, after she has taken the pill she complained about nausea and not feeling well, we returned back home in the middle of the night yesterday but she assured me that I should go to work this morning since there is an emergency that needed me. I am just going to have this meeting and return back home so she can be in my arms. I don't think I am going to normalize not waking up to her every morning after these few days of being together or not falling asleep with her sweet berry inside my mouth while she massages my head, somehow that's like a lullaby that I need.

A part of me wishes I dragged that trip longer because of the serene atmosphere we were surrounded by for a moment my thunderous thoughts had fallen asleep and now they're fully awoken, menacing through my mind and each needing special attention from me as the sound of a feminine voice in an elevator announces that we have arrived to the floor it was summoned to. "Mr Zungu. . ." my personal assistance says the moment he sees me and a smile is sewn on his face. ". . .welcome back and you're looking great" attentively I look at him with a creased eyebrow then he follows me to my office as I take off my jacket he closes the door behind to clear his throat with some device on his hand, already waiting for me to say something.

"I want you to send bouquet of flowers to my house with a note that my wife should get better soon and I'll be home early" The pronunciation of the word wife sounds almost electric against my tongue but the after taste is not bitter but rather sweet, "I want as many as you can get for her, she's not a fan of flowers though apparently but I have seen that secret smile she gives me whenever I buy them for her" I am standing by the skyscraper deeply in my thoughts and floating in my own delicate and divine memories. A smile lingers my lips as an image of her just catwalks through my mind mostly when her fingers disappears through my beard, the way she strokes me

while her eyes move in a same cadence as my own while we are talking.

I hear a gasp rolling from him causing me to look towards his direction. And then? What happened? “Is there a problem?” I ask him with a frown and he rapidly shakes his head with a smirk on his face.

“I didn’t know you were married”

Mxm.

“I’ll give the address to my house”

After rapidly shaking his head upon seeing the facial expression drawn on my face we are interrupted by a knock and I nod my head that he should upon him eyeballing me and in that moment my uncle walks in. “Mkhululi. . .” I haven’t even told him that I am back so how does he know? “You can leave” I turn to my personal assistance who walks pass my uncle nervously but the moment the door closes my uncle smirks at me indecently while he unbuttons his jacket making himself comfortable on the chair. “And then what happened?” He has an unusual smile on his face then he drums his fingers on the table.

“I’m going on a date” Then he places his finger at the bottom of his lip to swallow back the smile dancing on his face. I cannot amiss the mirth in his eyes. “Well finally she agreed so tonight. .

.” I haven’t seen this man like this before this time he leans backwards on the chair and chuckling underneath his breath as though he is deeply thinking about this. “. . .table for two, but I’m planning on having something private. Just the two of us and then I am going to propose”

“You’re going to what? Are you crazy?” I quickly take a sit down to look into his eyes. What is wrong with him? “You want to scare her off or you want to win her? We are talking about someone who is going through a process of divorce”

“I told you when I came back that I wanted a family and wife. Just tonight ngizothi phahla iqanda I’m not here to play” he says that he’s going to make her pregnant just tonight. I hope that somehow a smile or the sound of his laughter will appear on his face but rather he remains solemn and grave. “I’m going to marry her, she’s my one. That woman is my wife Bandlaletu and I am telling you now” He darts his eyes between mines to lean forward.

“You want children and marriage but what about what she wants? You’re way older than her and she has so much to life”

He chuckles and shaking his head “do I look old to you? Uyahlanya” Oh now I am the crazy one? When he has a woman holding him by scrotum and now he is suddenly talking about marriage and I am the one whose sanity has crawled out. “And why you came back? Is it because of your brother?” The smile

that was dancing on my face as I watched and listened to him being an imbecile disappears as take a journey to reality. The reality that could change our lives and our relationship with my brother, it could resemble what he has with Mzobanzi and I don't even know what happened between them by I know for a fact that my mother wanted a pastor and my father became one then sent his brother to jail. We have no idea how that happened and how Mkhululi managed to make everything disappear and pressed the button to freedom. "You look different

you have been having enough sleep huh?" Then he winks looking around the office before his eyes return back to me. "Now tell me what happened?"

"I just decided to come back and talk to Nqaba well I decided to go on about things the wrong way so I might as well just come clean to him" I tell him and he has a look of disapproval upon his face "We made things official with makhosazana. I'm sending a letter soon" I tell him expecting a change of facial expression on his face maybe delight or bliss but he seems displeased.

"You cannot continue being with this girl. . ."

"A woman, she's a woman and what is the reason I cannot be with her again?" A frown grows on my face attentively looking at him with potent eyes. "Is it because of Nqabayezulu?"

“You need to make this one sacrifice and after that I won’t let you make any other. Yes I understand you’re in love with her and so is your brother from what he has said a numerous times but both of you cannot date intombi ka Makhetha”

“I’m not making anymore sacrifices”

He squints his eyes and running his hands through his head like he is experiencing some sort of pain there and he is trying to calm it down but he cannot that forces him to get up on his feet to pour himself a glass of water then takes gulp after another before he glimpse at me. “Your father and I almost killed each other” That is nothing surprising to me. I would’ve splattered his brain too long ago. “We were in love with a same woman, I wasn’t what she was looking for and my brother changed to be what she wanted. Of course she had no idea that we were brothers but Mzobanzi knew exactly how I felt about this girl because he went on and pursued her then changed and became a pastor” I can feel an unfamiliar sound ringing through my head, so loud and turning me temporarily deaf that all I can see is his lips movements and unshed tears dancing in his eyes. “I remember he pointed a gun on my stomach and I had mine on his forehead, just one bullet both of us would’ve been gone by now but I sacrificed my love rather. I had a conversation with Nqabayezulu and I didn’t tell him the full story but I was in his shoes once assuming and thinking that your mother was

madly in love with me but I wasn't what she was looking for and my brother either but rather he pretended until he became what she wanted from him. Now we are here again. . .I made a sacrifice so why can't you? Blood will be shed Bandlalethu"

"You made that sacrifice because Zibuyile didn't love you and our situations are different. I cannot imagine what you had to go through and the pain but I know for a fact you wouldn't want me to go through that as well" I tell him in a mist of quietness looming between us and he clenches his jawline painfully our eyes interlocked with naked emotions, one we cannot hide and conceal from each other. "I am not leaving Makhosazana for anyone and even if you want to give me an ultimatum between her and the business. I'm not going to take a minute thinking about it but I'll choose her. And business? Trust me I can build my own thing and in the next two years it will be much bigger than what you've built. You trained me. You created me to become a better version of yourself and that's exactly what I am Mkhululi"

"I know you're capable of doing that" Then he hangs his head low to swallow what must be strangling him. "But I am going to ask you to hold your tongue for now" I don't agree to this. I am not going to love makhosazana in private as though I have no good intentions for her.

“Mkhululi. . .” I call him as he is about to walk out of the door but he turns around facing towards me. This conversation might’ve opened wounds although they were healed but it dug deeper into them and left him bleeding. “Ngiyakuthanda. I may not say this enough but before you walk out of this door I need you to know that you’re more of a father to me than an uncle. I truly appreciate you and I’m sorry you had to go through that. I really hope that Lerato can see how much of a man you are so you can love her loud and I hope she accepts you for you. I believe that Zibuyile wasn’t made for you and now you’ve found your woman. Now don’t let anything stop you”

He stands there looking at me with red rimmed eyes. “I was wrong for asking you to make this sacrifice, ngiyakuthanda ke nami Sengwayo” A smile breaks through his face and then he nods walking out of the door leaving heavy energy to continue weaving through the air.

I’m going home!

It has been a dragging day of uninvited emotions haunting me. At some point I thought I was going to lose my mind as I kept rewinding and replaying my uncle’s words through my head. I cannot seem to allow what I’ve been told to consume me in all honesty. What? That image of my father that I have in mind is

just a callous and weird creature that is subhuman. I cannot think of anything else much better than that.

At least Mabutho Mthabela has signed the contract and that means the business is moving to a much greater height especially with him being from the royalty.

As I am driving through the gate I see a car parked outside my house. Who is this? Because no one knows about this place. I get off the car immediately and the door to this foreign car opens when my brother comes out. What is he doing here? Well Makhosazana sent a message just minutes ago saying she went to meet up with her cousin and she'll be home late this evening, her flowers were delivered and she was pretty much elated and sent me pictures.

“Nqabayezulu” I greet him approaching towards his direction and he smiles, his one eye half closed and some bruises on his face. “What are doing here?” I ask him and he follows me, I look at the time on my watch and it's around six pm. I drag out my phone and there's no message that she might be home already. Great because she has made it clear that she wanted me to touch this conversation with my brother after she has moved into her new house.

“I heard from ubaba omdala that you came back so I thought I should come here so we can talk” I hear him saying behind me as I unlock the door walking in and he follows right behind me

closing the door after him. "I have decided that I am going to be with Ka Mazibuko since. . ." We are interrupted and he pauses talking looking towards the direction where we hear footsteps coming from, I already know who they belong to before she appears with an empty cup in her hand swathe in my sweatpants and shirt then she freezes upon seeing my brother standing here looking at her with perplexity then he directs his eyes towards me and her again. I remain here impassive as he flares his nostrils, I don't know what to feel at this moment really or even say. "Krotoa what are you doing here? Bandlalethu what is she doing here?" I witness the changing on his facial expression becoming a dangerous creature while he chews on his jawline and balling his fists. "Wena sfebe you seduced my brother to get back at me?" He seethes the venom at her. Abruptly I just grab him and pushing him against the wall.

He cannot dare call her names!

41.

war

/wɔː/

- a state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups within a country

Being slut shamed is not something that gives me heart palpitations, seizures or maybe stroke for that matter. I'm used to people who hardly even know me calling me a "bitch, whore, sfebe, nondidwa" you name it. Not because they've seen me doing anything or heard anything about me at least but sometimes it's because I'm so comfortable in my own skin and women shouldn't be "too comfortable" that's what the society says by the way. I am most definitely one of those women you stalk on instagram, twitter and even pinterest then you use their pictures on your mood board because you want to look like them either during the festive season because you believe that is the only time you press people's necks and looking "hot like heatoooo" and sometimes some use their pictures because you manifest being a perfect image as I am once you have "enough money" or have an expensive phone because you want to celebrate how beautiful you are when you've reached

the beauty standards that has been set by misogyny. It's a crazy world that we live in and borrowing oxygen into our lungs.

I have my feet planted on a very same position and frozen after those poisonous words have been spat on my face and I am not mad although I do want to pour hot cooking oil into his ears, but I am unmoved. The only thing that has my nipples itching is seeing Bandlaethu with a different mask that he has worn on in his face, completely different from what I have seen before that even his brother pinned against the wall with one swollen eye is rigid and glacial upon seeing this image. I can tell that my man there wants to strangle the breath out of his young brother but the love he has for him is holding him back as they glare in each other's eyes. I swear this could've been a perfect scene in a movie, two attractive men fighting each other over a woman. One thing about their parents though? They had a passionate missionary position that involved eye contact and hands holding when they were intimate and conceiving their sons because these two are absolutely beautiful although the other one is too masculine than the other.

"You've sleeping with her? Is this the reason why you've changed? Because you have been sleeping with a woman you were aware that I love? I was going to choose her Bandlaethu!" I hear Nqabayezulu seething with vexation and gritting his

teeth. Haibo love me how when you said I'm a bitch? What a clown. "If you didn't put a fog in my mind I would've went there and married her! You knew exactly what you were doing. You knew that I had feelings for her regardless of Ka Mazibuko being in the picture" Whoa wait what was that now? Also this moment is not as how as I expected it to be, a catastrophe but rather they're intense emotions between two brothers. The other one has unshed tears luminous in his eyes with total adoration and the other one is draped with menace and rage, I don't understand where is it coming from since I'm nothing but a bitch that seduced his brother and these emotions wants to come out in a most violent way as he continues talking about choosing and blah blah blah. "Wena sfebe is this what you wanted? Me fighting with my brother?" Oh no he shouldn't have said that again because a punch just landed on his face. Not just a punch but this one is laced with superpowers because almost immediately he starts to bleed. Another one follows before his head is banged against the wall causing him to groan. I see some animalistic characteristics in this man I have fell in love with as his brother falls onto the floor then Nqaba starts to chuckle as an antagonist who cannot accept defeat in a film.

"You don't get to call her names!" The baritone voice that always invites my orgasms whenever he whispers in my ears roars. I don't know what to do at this moment. I cannot open

my mouth because my tongue feels suddenly heavy. I still cannot move from this very same position or even scream that they should stop for that matter when Nqaba gets up stumbling and trying to find his balance and when he eventually does he attempts to throw a fist towards his brother who manages to dodge it then throw back that same punch on his stomach. God what am I supposed to do? Who should I call? They are fighting now pushing each other against the walls and their faces start to bleed from bruises. "Stop this Nqabayezulu so we can talk!" he pleads after he has rearranged him in that manner now he wants to talk? I haven't dared uttered a word.

"What is there to talk about? That you are nothing but my shadow? Are you doing this because you have no relationship with ubaba and you are jealous of me? You are nothing wena!" The room looks like there was a tornado here and my urethra is full with urine that could seep in between my legs anytime from now. This is a true definition of bloodbath. I fear that there's a body bag that could leave this house when Nqabayezulu grabs a vase breaking it and he stabs Bandlelethu on his shoulder. This is when I regain my voice and movements screaming at him.

"Nqaba uyahlanya?" I scream at him seeing the only person who has made me feel something so foreign with a broken vase stuck on his shoulder. I can now move because my feet propel

me towards him but instead he raises his hand that I shouldn't come near him. He is not groaning. He is not grunting. He is not showing any pain. "Bandla. . ." I can feel a gigantic lump forming on my throat. I have no idea where the fuck that gun came from but it's there in his hands even his brother's eyes are out of their own volition. I cannot pray and I'm not prayer because I've long divorced God but right now I am pleading and begging him that he should do something, anything at this moment.

Unexpectedly that gun lands on Nqaba as Bandlalethu hit him on the head with the back of the pistol and immediately Nqabayezulu falls on the floor giving Bandla a chance to get on top of him and callously hitting him with all the amount of anger he has been nurturing finally exploding. I pull him back and hold him into my arms, for a moment he embraces me but quickly he pushes me to gaze into my eyes. With so much powerful emotions and passion, although his red rimmed eyes attempt to conceal them but he cannot hide from me. I place my hand on the side of his face. I have no idea whether or not his brother is alive at this moment but rather there is a pool of blood around him. And Bandlalethu is also losing a lot of red liquid from his shoulder. God of gods I cannot have two of them dying on me not now. What happens when something like this occur?

I run around the house searching for my phone with my face covered in tears and mucus. I keep trying to wipe them off with the back of my hand but they keep pouring. I have called the ambulance. They said they're on their way. I run back to the living room with blood on the walls, broken vases, two brothers on the floor. I check Nqabayezulu's pulse and it's faint. Jesus if these people do not make it on time he could die and this man whose head is on my lap right now as I am begging and pleading him not to die could go to jail.

“Bandla. . .” I call him his face is on my hands and slowly he opens his eyes. I am scared that if I remove the vase stuck on his shoulder he would feel unbearable pain. “Bandlalami please look at me!” I cannot imagine their father preaching about me every sermon that I killed his sons. They would change the whole story and say I was found having sex with one of them when I was going marrying the other. This would be splash all over media and I'll be on the cover page. “Ngiyakuthanda” I confess what I haven't told him and a smile slowly starts to form on his gorgeous masculine face. “Now that you know you better not die on me!”

He inhales sharply, he wants to glance towards his brother. I can see the regrets slowly being painted all over his body then he looks at me. “You didn't kill him. The ambulance is coming.

He is going to be okay and you are going to be okay” I assure him scared that if he finds out about the faint pulse then he’ll want to die too.

He nods his head rapidly “remove this mphefumulo wami” The vase? No I cannot. Okay that pleading facial expression is the reason I’ll need a therapist when all of this is over and done. I gulp breath into my lungs and at my first attempt I scream realizing that this is deep even from the way he grunted. It might’ve sunk deep into his skin because I cannot easily pull it. “Makhosazana try again and stop crying. I’m not going anywhere” I have never feared anything in my life. Even that time when my legs was stuck in between a tree and everyone screaming that my leg should be cut off instead when I was young I was just there motionless but today I am scared of losing a man? God will really show you wonder I am telling you.

I managed to grabbed it out and finally I hear the sound of the sirens and the blue and red lights illuminates the room. I try getting up to open the door but he holds me. He doesn’t want me to leave his side. “I have to open for them

I’m not leaving you. I love you. Ngiyakuthanda” I repeatedly tell him and he smiles. A beautiful simper I haven’t witness before then I peel myself from him wrenching the door open when paramedics come flooding into the house before an attractive man swathe in a suit gets off the car—what? What in the world

is my cousin doing here? They're even holding hands with a demigod with grey strands on his beard. Who just attacks me with a fatherly hug upon seeing Bandlalethu and Nqabayezulu being pushed out with stretchers. At this moment I don't even fight him but rather the warmth of his arms soothes me as I start to cry.

"You must be Ka Makhetha and I'm their uncle. . ." as he was about to finish we are interrupted by a paramedic because that man who can only fall asleep and be calm by sucking on my breasts is demanding for me. He said he is not going anywhere without me and now I must be at the back of an ambulance.

"You can go! We will follow right behind you" then he says he seems totally frustrated and diving in thousands of emotions before he keeps in taking sharp inhalations and running his hand through his beard. I have no choice but nodding my head and my dearest cousin here embraces me and kisses my cheeks, a part of me is glad she's here at least when this family throws insults at me she'll be there to hold my hand.

I get in the back of the ambulance and holding his hand, his eyes are fluttered closed and he has oxygen mask covering his face, already sedated. I keep caressing his bruised and bleeding knuckles, I cannot believe how much I am crying actually because I am even hiccuping at this moment until we are at Umhlanga Hospital where they're attended and pushed into

the emergency room, now I am here alone in a waiting room covered in blood and traveling with my thoughts. Who was Nqabayezulu talking about? When he said something about choosing? What am I? A pair of socks at the retail store that he's not too sure about?

In a nanosecond that man who's a duplicate image of these two men who almost murdered each other approaches my direction holding hands with my cousin. What in the world? And they're looking absolutely gorgeous as though they were attending some sort of MET GALA, is this man a reason she is divorcing? Because if that's a yes then I don't blame her at all. I cannot even dare.

"Have the doctors said anything?" The moment he reaches towards me he asks. There is something about his demeanour that reminds me so much of Bandlaletu even his intimidating aura and that need to give him respect without him even asking for it. He is a very charming and attractive man. It makes me wonder what kind of genes do they have in their ancestral lineage in this family? Because they're all just captivating. "I'm Mkhululi Zungu, I already told you I'm their uncle" Oh so this is the person they are always talking about? I cannot blame anyone for wanting to be just like him. He is so suave and also in this family they're very hairy and the full beards on their faces says it all.

I shake my head in disagreement and wiping my tears again. I want to steal a glance at my cousin with a quizzical look but I can't because of how this man's eyes are piercing through me. "No, no they have been taken to the emergency room but Nqaba had a faint pulse" I announce and that really caught his attention. He runs his hands through his beard and nods his head. "They're going to be fine" I feel a need to assure him.

Instead he gives me a "you have no idea what you're talking about" look. I cannot help but also feel that way. That version of Bandlaletu I had witnessed today was dangerous and venomous, the way he was hitting his brother with the back of the gun really elicits goosebumps all over my body. It was as though he was possessed by something he cannot even control himself. The way his eyes were burning with wildfire and his veins showing on his arms is the reason I remained static in that position and unable to find my voice but Mkhululi nods his head anyways announcing he was going to talk to the receptionist and make a phone call leaving me behind with my dearest cousin here who holds onto my hand and squeeze me.

"I will tell you when we are going home not now. Do you need something to drink?" she quickly says before I could plague her with questions. Of course this man is a charmer but he is old enough to be her father so what is happening? I hope she is not doing this for money, she is doing so well with her clothing

brand, she is indeed a designer. Those dresses she gave me the other day is one of them I was wearing that night Bandlalami showed up at my doorstep. He kept throwing compliments at me from time to time and even asked that I wear it again the following day, of which I didn't by the way but my point here is she is absolutely gifted with those hands.

"No. I am fine, I need to know if he is okay" I tell her and she smiles sweetly squeezing my hand again when her man returns back looking deranged about something and even clicking his tongue before he starts pacing up and down the room. Funny how he hasn't called his nephew's parents and he seems so unbothered about that part. He just wants a feedback about how they doing or whether they've killed each other. I'm in a state of trauma from what I have experienced actually. That wound on his shoulder was really deep, so, so deep and I cannot believe I had to grab out that broken vase. Nqabayezulu was not recognizable with his face covered in nothing but blood.

It has been overly hours already and my butt cheeks already hurt from sitting here when a man swathe in all black approaches towards us and he's with a woman that should've been part of the Kardashian clan because of how beautifully she was sculptured with that honey blonde bob cut sleek and straight hair, she is wearing grey sweatpants and matching top

with sneakers with swollen eyes showing that she might've been crying from receiving the news. Aww shame she might be their sister or something I have no idea but she is absolutely gorgeous even though her face changes upon seeing me. Strange. Actually I remember meeting her with a different hair color at the restaurant once. They might be closed then with these brothers from how emotional she is.

I remain on this very same position as she greets then asks what happened and Mkhululi doesn't answer her instead he thanks the guy who brought her here and that is that. "Oh this is Zenokuhle and she is Nqabayezulu's to be first wife apparently you were the second wife Ka Makhetha" Haibo lo mfana! I mean lo bhuti! I mean lo baba! He says with no fucks given or whatsoever and I seriously want to erupt with laughter "And Zeno that is Krotoa, you were already told about her and then right there is my wife" he says pointing towards my cousin although he is not smiling but his eyes are doing so for him. This man is in love. I have no energy to even look at my cousin because what in the world? I was going to be a second wife? Ha ha ha. Oh this is the girl Nqabayezulu was talking about when he said something about choosing? And Bandlaletu knew about this and never told me?

We really wish you a Merry Christmas!

42.

truth

/tru:θ/

- truth is the property of being in accord with fact or reality. In everyday language, truth is typically ascribed to things that aim to represent reality or otherwise correspond to it, such as beliefs, propositions, and declarative sentences. Truth is usually held to be the opposite of falsehood.

ZENOKUHLE

Upon moving into another province it was hard having to adjust into this new environment as it was totally different from what I was used to. I was living in an affluent neighborhood and until this day I have no idea how my aunt knew Izibele who was motherly towards me but that was a problem. I didn't need a mother, she was gone and burnt down into ashes because of me, I didn't get a chance to say farewell. I wanted to sing along with the church members while my face was covered in tears and mucus upon seeing their coffins at the front. I wanted to see my parent's wedding photo surrounded by candles.

Aw umama looked so beautiful on her wedding day with those lace gloves and black liner around her lips that were painted in red as my father held her closely to him swathe in a white suit that matched his shoes and his head was bald shining and reflecting the sun; he had a beam drawn on his face as he was marrying his soulmate that he met down town as Mbongeni Ngema was playing in the background when she caught his attention.

I became a rebellion hiding alcohol under my bed and drinking my sorrows away, finger fucking myself and masturbating into complete oblivion. And some days I would sneak to stand outside Izibele and her husband's bedroom to listen to their love making. Their groans and moans sounded so exotic against my ears making me pound my own vagina hard and fast until the wetness seeped through me, for a moment nothing mattered when I was drunk or having an orgasms. I couldn't feel pain and I couldn't even think about anything but all that mattered was the ecstasy that I was draped into, the gates to freedom being opened at the crescendo of my own moans and burps when I was drunk. And then one day; one dreadful day as I came back from having sex with our neighbor who had become my very own amphetamine because of how he wasn't so gentle with me, he fucked me as though I was one of those women in those pornographic videos I always watched. That's what I needed. The spanks on my butt cheeks as I was holding

onto the headboard and the bites in between my thighs is exactly what I needed from him while I sunk my fingers and teeth on his broad shoulders. I smelt like sex with a bottle of “four cousins” wine hidden in my bag and cheap chocolate when I walked into a quiet house assuming there was no one but I heard a groan as I was going to my room but this wasn’t from sexual intimacy. I knew exactly how this couple sounded whenever they were having sex as though it was my favorite melody.

I have no idea why my feet controlled me to that room but the door was opened; I was met with a horrific image that I cannot format even after losing my memory. “Zenokuhle. . .” Izibele said when she saw me standing by the door while she was sitting on the floor covered in tears and blood while her husband was there naked and dead, his mistress was on the bed with a knife stuck in her stomach and her eyes wide opened. I couldn’t scream. I couldn’t cry but I just watched as the room was painted with blood and the woman who had been gentle with me and so tender was sitting there and completely broken “. . .I am going to jail. I killed him! I killed him!” she was regretting it. I knew exactly what thoughts were going through her mind. That she wished she could turn back the time and rather walk away than reacting with anger; she wanted to wake him up and make love to him one last time but he was gone, she killed him and his mistress who was having

sex with him in her house and in her bed. In their room that was surrounded by their wedding photos. “I am going to jail Zenokuhle” she looked at me with her eyes shimmering with tears.

I walked towards her and embraced her in my arms; helping her wiping her tears. “You are not going to jail. No one is going to jail mama” It was the first time I call her in that manner, I couldn’t let that one person who has been nothing but generous to me go to jail. Even though I was one of the women her husband had slept with; screaming his name as he found his own nirvana in between my legs, “You cannot go to jail” I repeated again.

“We have to call the police”

“No, no, no” I quickly said and looking at the death bodies, the smell of fresh blood voyaged through my nostrils. “We will have to bury them but we cannot report this; you will spend the rest of your life in jail is that what you want? Your career will be gone. You will lose everything now please don’t think about the police” I thought of myself too. I was going to be homeless with no one so she couldn’t go to jail. “We have to wait until it’s dark outside and come up with something” her eyes darted between mine although she didn’t want to agree to this but using her “career” was a great idea because she was one of those women who cherished their work more than anything—she was a

lawyer and therefore a lie drawn with glitter and pearls wouldn't be hard. I knew she'll create a believable story about her husband's whereabouts but these dead bodies were meant not to be found.

We sat in that room static until eventually it was dark outside when she asked me to go change, I came back adorned in all black sweatpants and sweater; with a beanie on my head. I watched her as she rolled both those bodies in a carpet before she draped them with black plastic then we dragged them all the way to the garage and shoving them at the boot in her car. I remember how silence was that drive; we are both lost in our thoughts until we were in the middle of nowhere where we took out our shovels and dug deeper before throwing those bodies there and burying them, we were covered in sweat and soil not forgetting darkness.

It remained our secret!

•

This moment reminds me of that day I don't know whether it's how the shirt that she has adorned on is covered in blood or those tears in her eyes, but that sight evokes a bitter and distasteful taste against my own buds. I have no idea what is

more heart aching between knowing that the shirt she is wearing belongs to him or the reason that we are here, restless is because of her. A part of me seeing her brown hazel eyes fixated on a very same position with luminous tears dancing in her eyes makes me want to hold her but another part is in total bliss. Upon being introduced to her the reaction I was impatiently waiting for didn't happen. I waited for her to start a hysteria as she heard that I was the first choice and she was nothing but the second option but she remained there total unmoved but rather she just gazed at me with a smile, a genuine simper that showed the perfection of her teeth behind those plump lips that looks moist even though they are not moisturized. And her skin is as though she has been drowned in a bathtub of milk and honey because it looks absolutely flawless and satin, her long legs are firm as she stand up because her butt cheeks are starting to hurt. I trail a blaze from her white painted toes that seemed too soft all the way to her head that is platinum blonde

Advertisement

the waft of her scent invaded my very own nostrils that I immediately hang my head low to avert my eyes from looking at her as I am turning ghastly green.

It has been more than three hours without her plaguing me with questions about how we met with the very same man that

wanted to marry the both of us. I wanted to narrate to her how he was swathe in stylish garments with an earring on his ear, his fingers were decorated with silver rings and the moment I turned around he stood there with a simper on his face as the sun created patterns on his skin. I have been impatient to narrate our very first love making when he held into my thigh, deeply looking into my eyes and whispering sweet nothings into my ear but she seems so unbothered by my existence and the fact that I am here with a tear stained face wondering what happened.

The woman whom I recognize from the pictures stand up then she glances at me, she has no idea about who I am and now seeing her in person damn it makes sense why that man said she was good for his image and was more acceptable in that business world from that weave that comes from her scalp to her brown dress that shows how silk her skin is to the square shaped shoes that are so expensive. I cannot look at her long enough because her man just attentively glared at me, with a devilry smirk painted on his face. "I am going to get us something to eat. We have been here for hours. What do you want to eat Zenokuhle?" I almost crawl out of my own skin upon hearing her calling out my name. Why is she being generous to me? I cannot comprehend or find the right reasons to that. I have slept with her man, countless times, she should

be hating me but instead she stands here as though on billboard with a ravishing smile.

Before I can say anything her man pesters and announces that she shouldn't bother because there is already someone who is bringing us something to eat then she glances at him with absolute vehemence but she remains standing and yawning. "You want to sleep sphephelo sami?" You cannot miss that this man is madly in love with this woman covered in a rosy hue as we speak. "I can send someone to take you home and you'll come back later" she doesn't get to say anything because she yawns yet again. "Okay that's it sphephelo I am sending you home. Krotoa do you want to go home so you can change?" she just shakes her head and warmly smiles "And you Ka Mazibuko are you not tired?" I also just shake my head and then he looks at the both of us then smirks before he takes his woman's hand and they walk out. Leaving complete silence and awkwardness looming in the room. Yes this is her moment to question me, this where she starts throwing nasty remarks about me but instead she leans forward on the chair and saying a silent prayer.

"I wasn't supposed to find out about you but he was hiding everything from me the same way he was doing to you" I speak out first with a potent voice and she gazes at me as I tug in the hair behind my ear. I thought she'll say something but instead

she gives me yet another smile then she nods her head, “do you love him?” Finally I get to ask with my fingers digging at the palm of my hands.

“Love who?” then she frowns.

“Yezulu, do you love him?”

“Is that how you call him?” I guess she has another term of endearment for him. What is it buttercup, sugar cane or maybe sweetheart? “Yezulu. . .” then she repeats after me as though she is getting used to the pronunciation of the name. “you don’t have to worry about me being in a picture. I have no feelings for him or whatsoever it was just business that didn’t go well it ends there” she has a fierce attitude, she is actually intimidating and this conversation is not as how I expected it to be.

“And Bandlalethu what about him?” I can feel a lump starting to grow on my throat and emotions expanding on my chest. I drag as enough breath into my lungs with tears starting to burn the corners of my eyes. “Are you in love with him?”

That might’ve caught her attention because this time she looks at me, with an impassive expression dancing on her face then she just smiles once again without answering my question. We are interrupted when the uncle returns back and he has taken off his blazer carrying brown paper bags in his hand alongside

doodle cups when he reaches us he gives us the food and the cups of coffee but right in that moment as he was about to take a sit down a man and woman approaches towards us, she seems as though she has lost her marbles with her eyes red rimmed but upon seeing the sight of Mkhululi she tenses even her eyes are hard as steel. What is happening? And her man? Is burning with emotions I cannot put names to as he charges towards what I assume is his brother because of how much they look like each other breathing fire but the brother just remains there lithe, attractive and he smirks. It is so freaky how much they all look alike in this family. Very scary. So scary and that is how I caught myself in a web, assuming the one was the other.

“Hawu Mzobanzi bafo I didn’t know pastors can throw fists” he says taking a sip from a cup of coffee and looking at his brother flaring his nostrils ready to start war. “Just sit down and stop acting like a young boy. I don’t care about you. You don’t care me. We don’t about each other so let’s forget about each other’s existence huh? And you look cute by the way. Just like Zungu” I am sure he is referring to their father “You remember how mama always told us that he never spoke but fought. You remind me of him” Then he says as though the nostalgia is both colorful and somber.

But who was called Mzobanzi attempts to charge towards him with a murderous blaze on his face. “Zungu please don’t do this not here” his wife holds him back and he remains standing there while she goes and got sit next to her—Krotoa. I cannot help but swallow hard and needing something to smoothen my throat therefore the burning coffee helps. I watch how she is motherly holding her hand then she looks at me totally confused.

A sangoma from nowhere approaches our direction but the moment she gets here she goes down on her knees, starting to grunt with her shoulders moving up and down with “ishoba” in her hands.

“What have you two done?” Who is she talking to? I swear almost immediately the room becomes intense with everyone’s faces pale. We all have secrets to conceal mostly me, I have turned glacial because I have no idea who is she talking to and talking about for that matter. “What have you done? What have you done?” now she is looking towards the wife and the brother then she turns to Mzobanzi “Yey stop hiding who you really are, stop misleading the church! It has to end now. Your ancestors are not happy, you never had a calling to lead the church, you are not a leader!” I swear my blood has turned cold become it seems she is going to reveal the truth about who I am. When my eyes cast towards the gorgeous woman wearing

pajamas I can see she is not herself but rather looking like a piece of biltong. “This won’t end! It won’t end! Stop misleading the church!” And every time when she looks towards Mkhululi and his brother’s wife she starts crying, a hysterical and gut wrenching sound “What have you done?” A security is called for her and she drag out of the hospital. “They were introduced to them for a reason, ooZungu want them to be part of this family for a reason” she points at me and MamMakhetha as she is being drag out “You must tell the truth! You need cleansing” I know for a fact that is meant for me.

I exhale the breath that I have been holding onto my lungs but this room, I swear even blinking has become a laboured thing.

“Ka Makhetha and Ka Mazibuko someone is going to drive you home!” This is a clear indication that Mkhululi who seems bewildered by what the sangoma has said, says to us. A clear indication that he is telling us that we are leaving and not asking.

43.

revelation

/rɛvə'leɪʃ(ə)n/

- the divine or supernatural disclosure to humans of something relating to human existence

ZENOKUHLE

As we get into the car she hasn't said a word and we haven't exchanged any but rather she makes herself comfortable on the leather seat and leaning her head on her shoulder focusing outside the window; afloat with her emotions and deep diving to what the sangoma has said. I am too—mostly about us being in this family for a reason. What is her reason? What is mine? I have teeming questions swaying through the corners of my mind and each needing my undivided attention and answers. I remain on the seat distance apart from her and steal a glance towards her direction but she remains focusing on the palm trees that we keep passing and Mkhululi asked that the driver takes to to Bandlaletu's house in Umhlanga and I want to open my mouth and tell her that I've been there before, I stayed there before. I want to tell her that I've woke up every morning to Mbuso Khoza playing in the background as he stood

in the kitchen with his eyebrows furrowed while he patiently gazes at the boiling eggs in the pot. That I've seen him standing outside and smoking like a chimney while running his hands through his beard and head as though he had a lot he was at war with in his mind.

I wanted to tell her but she is not paying any attention to me instead she only faces towards me once when she casts her eyes in my direction then she asks whether or not I was okay, surely because of what occurred at the hospital, but she is not matching my energy and the antagonist in me is burning to her have my fangs on her throat and her watch her bleed.

As the driver is about to reach the house she pats him and her fingers has this new trending manicure with what looks like swirls on her nails, she demands his attention with just one touch. There is something enchanting about her demeanor and each movement that she makes is almost sensual, sultry yet so innocent at the same time. "If you don't mind please turn back and take us to Zimbali" that didn't sound like a plead though but an instruction because after she has said those words she returns to focus outside the window without even asking whether or not I was okay with that and changing of destination but I hold my tongue anyways as the driver starts to reverse then he gazes at her on the rear view mirror with admiration and then me too with an amiable smile bouncing on

his face then he pretty much follows the instructions that has been given to him.

The only sound in this car is that from the moving wheels against the tar road and the cold breeze escaping through the half opened window on her side.

The mat of darkness in the sky has been defeated by light and early morning birds dancing without being held by gravity when the gate opens, we are surrounded by hillscares and tall greenery trees. It's so serene here. This house, I remember this is where I found out about her in a phone call—she is the first one to get off and I follow right behind her. We haven't exchanged bitter words or fought for that matter but she "doesn't see me", she is not intimidated by my presence or whether or not we are eating from the same plate.

The moment we walk through the door I cannot hold back my gasp there's blood on the floor and broken glasses. Even on the wall they are some splatters meaning whatever happened here there was a war. I can see tears that want to crawl into her eyes but she pushes them back. "Let me show you the guest room" she says turning to me. I don't know but there is something about her that makes her belongs to this house, she makes it home before anything else. "I'll clean here"

"I know my way around I was here before with Yezulu it was the day I found out about you" I feel a need to tell her and she

nods her head again. Not bothered. "I can help you clean" I quickly say in realization that I have made a numbskull out of myself. What was a need? This woman has constantly showed me that she doesn't care about me or the man who wants the both of us.

"You're the guest" she emphasizes "you don't have to worry about cleaning just take a shower. I'll get something for you that you can wear" Again she shows not to care.

-

Just like how I never cared when I saw a ring glistening on his finger after he has spilled hot coffee on my brand new blouse with puffy organza sleeves as he kept apologizing while I yelped in pain. "Ngiyaxolisa sis' wami" he kept saying not knowing where to touch me but the moment we made physical contact an electric thrill ran through my spine and I know he felt it too because of how he looked at me, with his owl eyes with long lashes boring dreams at me. I've never seen anyone with those eyes before, it was as though there was a sorcerer behind them. "Ngicela ukuthengela elinye" the he insisted on buying me another cup of coffee. It was surprising hearing someone that fluent in IsiZulu in Johannesburg but later I discovered that he was from Durban, my hometown and he was here for business, talking to him that day made me miss home as he told

me about how nothing has changed. That we still have people who perform maskandi at The Workshop and how busy it gets in Havana every Friday night to Sunday. And the school kids who meets at the bus terminals. We sat there at The Zone for hours, laughing, giggling, chuckling and gazing in each other's eyes. It was as though we have met before. The ambience was too familiar. The sound of his voice. His touch against my face and his lips on mines after that warm and butterfly kiss. I missed my lecture for the first time as a second year student but I did not care, returning back I was dragged back to reality as Izibele has lost her sanity, she said she could hear her husband's voice and feel his presence. She would wear what was his favorite dress and prepare a candlelight meal talking to herself on the table with a glass of wine in her hand but the following morning of that day she succumbed to the voices in her head and slit her wrist to death.

As I come out of the shower a guttural scream drags me back to my reality instead of being lost in my own head. I quickly drape a towel around me feeling something pressing hard on my bowels with fear, my feet propels me to the living room to find her scrubbing the blood of the floor while she's on her knees cleaning. Already it looks clean it's just the remaining dry red liquid there but her emotions that she has been suppressing

has finally exploded. Ka Makhetha doesn't look like that one person to cry. In this few hours together I've gathered that in a room full of people she'll never be afraid to be herself, she is brave and doesn't really give a fuck about anything or anyone

Advertisement

I wish I was like that. I wish I taught myself to be like that. But seeing her crying there is an answer to the question that she ignored, she loves him. I can tell by how her body is shaking. I can tell by the tears in her eyes. That being away from him and not knowing how is he doing is what poked the balloon of emotions and churned her brain with stress. It's how she is scrubbing the floor and wiping those water beads with the back of her hand roughly.

I have no idea whether to kneel there and embrace her or just watch her tears falling down the valley of her cheeks. It's too perplexing for me. The galaxies that dances on my chest overpowers the pang that was so unexpected upon the confirmation that she loves him—it's bewildering yes maybe because it also has revealed something to me. But I internally celebrate that her not being in a picture means he's going to love me and only me. The other ungodly thoughts would be baptized, be reborn and saint. I remain here watching a woman I would've shared a man I've found myself deeply in love with crying. A man we would've shared. Yes I cannot understand

myself either and the intense emotions and powerful feelings that I feel for Yezulu. I found myself drowned in an ocean of this love after the last time I saw him because of how he looked at me, the way he had sincerity in his eyes. It's so scary that I'm too afraid to show my true self to him because he'd walk away. I've waited for a moment where he'll do something so that I run away and when he finally did I couldn't. Ever since he wrapped me around his arms I felt myself healing. I thought maybe having wet dreams about. . .Jesus what is wrong with me? I thought that will remind me of a wanton that I am and I'll easily just ignore what I have for him. I have never had a man who loves me. A man who wants me alone. Yes he loves me but he loves her too. I thought I'll walk away from this. From him. From him loving another woman. Yes it wasn't him before but he made me love him, deeply. He made it easier for me to shut down the exotic thoughts about another man and mainly think of him even though those images of him were accompanied by the picture of another woman between us. But I thought of him. His touch. His breath. His rough fingers on my thighs. His deep pounds. How he made love to my body with each bite and kiss and eye contact. I love him maybe I had dark fantasies about another man because this space "being in love" wasn't so familiar to me. I love him. Maybe not mourning the death of my family and my first lover is the reason I turned out like this. Maybe if I met up with a therapist and talked about my

problems instead of trying to heal with alcohol, sex and masturbation I would've turned out differently. Maybe if I allowed myself to be a young girl and let Izibele be a mother to me the situation now wouldn't be like this. Maybe believing that he loved me and eventually he was going to leave his wife for me is the reason I am here. He never said that he was going to leave her. On those nights at five star hotels with me on his chest listening to him talking he never said anything about leaving her. I am the one who planted those ideas in my mind.

That day when I jumped off the building from the fourth floor it was one of our trips, we were in Durban. After so many years from running away from here I decided to face my traumas. But the vacation turned bitter. He was leaving her. . .I mean she was leaving him but even so he didn't belong to me. There was already another woman. He told me he loved her and he loved me too. This has always been my life (bitterly chuckles)

I stood on top of the balcony and threaten to jump thinking he was going to save me but he didn't maybe he was in a state of shock. Although he stood there watching me with tears in his eyes while swallowing his saliva but he never said a word. I jumped. As my body was floating in the air I thought all the pain and hurt would finally be silenced. I don't know how I didn't die. The doctors don't know too, they said it was a miracle. I couldn't walk for a while with my memory erased and broken

bones. Right in this moment I realize that I loved a man more than I loved myself. It wasn't really succumbing to the despondent that I was in from the time I was only eighteen and killed for the first time but it was knowing that one person who kept me sane loved another woman. It wasn't me again. It wasn't his wife. It was just another woman. Maybe I'm the huge problem. Maybe from the starts it always has been me who has a problem, because I allowed men to fight their demons in between my legs. At the age of just eighteen I allowed a man to fight whatever he was fighting through me, I created that monster he was because after he has beaten me up I reminded him how much I loved him. I made it seem it was my fault that he has beaten me up, and never took accountability for it because I never allowed him to. Maybe if I didn't do just that things would've turned out different. If I went back home after the first slap my family would've been alive. But I can stand here and confidently say that I love Nqabayezulu Zungu. I don't know what's love without toxicity looks and feels. I don't know what love feels like. But I know that I want to be with him.

When she picks her head up she is met with me and unshed tears in my eyes but she quickly wipes hers. "I'm sorry" These words roll out of my mouth. I apologize. What for? I think for not consoling here and just watching her as she cried. "What happened?" I still want to know but she doesn't answer me but

instead she continues to clean until there's no stain of dry blood.

"I'm also going to take a shower and change my clothes. Mkhululi said he is coming here few minutes ago. I don't know it must be about what the sangoma said" she says, she has made it clear in different occasions that we are not friends and therefore I shouldn't attempt creating some sort of conversation with her. "Zenokuhle how long you've been with Nqaba?" she pauses by the hallway and then asks me squinting her eyes.

"For some time now. While I was in hospital. We met there. I thought he was Bandlaletu when we met at the garden because he was my doctor but he turned out to be his brother. . ." I might've said way too much because her lips turned into a scowl ". . .they saved my life" I guess using that plural sounds much better.

"Okay" And that is it, she disappears and leaving me standing here. I return to the guest room and change into the dress that she has given me. I didn't think it would fit because she is more "thim" and I am much more thick. But this brown dress and the design reminds me of someone's sense of style.

I am about to fall asleep when the door opens and she walks in smelling divine, she is also wearing a white long dress. In different occasions that I've seen her she was barely hiding any

skin but what she is wearing is long and the cowl back shows her dragon tattoo, "I didn't mean to disturb you but Mkhululi is here and he wants to talk to you" That's all she says with her swollen eyes and plump lips. I nod my head getting off the bed and following right behind her.

In the living room? You can hardly even tell there was blood and broken vases. It looks clean and crisp, well it seems she is the type that cleans when she is stressed.

"Ka Mazibuko" He greets upon seeing me. He doesn't have that devilry smirk. He seems as though there is so much on his shoulder. He has barely slept. I'm sure he didn't because he is wearing the same clothes from this morning. He smells like cognac and cigars. I don't know where is this conversation going but that stern look on his face is enough to let me know that I might have to run. "Did you tell the truth?" Is the first thing he asks the moment I make myself comfortable on the couch. I look around to see whether or not she is here. "Don't worry she is already gone to the hospital, she is driving herself there. Both of them are awake. I had to find that sangoma and she came back few hours after both of you left, she gave them something and they're awake. Both of them could've died. But they are awake. I asked Ka Makhetha to wait for us to have this conversation but she is stubborn and she just left" he tells me. He seems fond of her. Everyone seems fond of her. "I don't

trust you” He says so unexpectedly “And that’s okay but I also don’t know why I haven’t made sure that you disappear out of my son’s life. I think it’s what umkhulu said about you and Ka Makhetha, remember? That ooZungu brought you here for a reason?”

“Yebo”

“You told him?”

“Chabo”

“Why not?”

“A lot happened and—

“What are you doing here Zenokuhle? You could’ve left and returned back to Johannesburg. That woman who killed herself left that house to you. Also trying to kill yourself because of a man was very stupid mtanami very stupid” I hang my head low and not knowing what to say “What are you doing here?”

“I love Yezulu”

“You do?”

“I do”

“Then what is hard about telling the truth?” I don’t know how to answer “We are leaving this afternoon to eHlophekulu koDedangenabe and we will see isangoma including you after

what was said about you and Ka Makhetha we need to know the meaning of that. Is this how you want your truth to be revealed? With everyone there? Is this how you want everyone to know about the three dead bodies in your hands?"

"Chabo"

"I am not going to judge you. I'm not even judging you because you did what you had to do to survive at that time but you won't mess with my family. You won't mess with my sons. You won't mess with my wife. I will kill you Zenokuhle and I'm not even going to hide it from anyone that I did. . ." And for a moment he breathes out, there is something that awakened this version of him. I wonder what is it. He runs his hands through his beard and flare his nostrils. I've realized that he tends to vent about things in between a conversation, ". . .we are going to the hospital and you will tell Nqabayezulu the truth" Then he takes a moment again "You know the sangoma said he has been acting like this because of idlozi? The anger? The hatred? The jealousy? The madness?" Now he sounds frustrated "We should leave"

44.

yin and yang

- love is meeting of two souls, fully accepting the dark and the light within each other.

I have never been a “visitor” at the hospital so this is my first experience and my feet are touching the ocean of perturbation as a scaredy-cat. In my family no one has ever been hospitalized excluding my two cousins who are always pregnant but I haven’t been here worse to see someone who was stabbed by a broken vase. A part of me cannot wait to see him regardless of the fact that he won’t be standing in the middle of the room watching me with those beautiful enthrall eyes and a smirk painted on his face nor will I see him standing outside smoking his third cigarette before he comes inside the house and forces me to come and sit in between in his legs while his tongue keeps swirling inside my ear. I’m afraid I’m going to cry seeing him in that bed unable to move, I have no idea whether he can move or not. What do you buy when you’re visiting someone at the hospital anyways? I got one of those baskets with snacks, flowers and balloons. now that I am walking here through the long hallway with bright lights on top of my head

and a smell of vacuum voyaging through my nose I realize that I am overly doing this. I cannot believe that I opt wearing a long dress. Strangely enough these days I somehow feel as though I shouldn't be showing too much skin but only do it for him and I think I am going to call my grandmother to take me for second baptism because my first one I was just a teenager and had no idea about what was happening.

I cannot wait to see how a smile would be sew on his face and I am going to wipe it off with just one slap because he knew about this and never told me. I was going to be a second wife? Ha ha ha. Every moment and time this comes crashing through my mind I cannot help but laugh underneath my breath because this was a stamp that, Nqaba needs deliverance much more than I do. How do have plans of polygamy with someone who doesn't care about you? I am wondering what gave him that impression that the could be more between more than that act between us, yes I can agree that we had a platonic relationship but there was nothing more than that and then that "other girl" she has been acting really strange as though she is provoking me to say something and react to her words or actions, somehow she wants me to know that she knows the brothers much more than I do and she's projecting her anger towards me and not her man. I can see it. I know that she may assume that I don't but I choose to ignore event though there were events where I wanted to give her the exact same

reaction that she wanted from me. Especially when she said she has been to my house and knows her way around. That's my house, yes. The moment Bandlaethu opened the door that day we came back from Rwanda he asked me to turn it into a home he said it was my house so no matter how many times she has been there and had sex somewhere in my kitchen counter that fact remains that she is a guest. I have nothing against her, I don't even know her to hate her for that matter but those emotions that seem to be brewing from her chest should be directed to her man and not me. I have nothing to do with that polygamy.

And Lord Jesus it has been said that we were all going to their homestead, I am going to make it pretty clear that I'm not leaving with them. I am not the wife here but a girlfriend and the culture doesn't allow me to go there, my uncle will make them come apologize with a cow this time including a horse. They will have to make a request to my family first and what that sangoma said really left me questioning a lot of things. What was that supposed to mean? I really hope that their ancestors do not want to use me because I am not cannabis they cannot smoke me like that. I am a powerful drug that will make them lose their minds even after life. They said the pastor isn't even supposed to be leading the church but misleading people. I think there is more to be peeled here than what that has been said.

As I walk into his private ward he has a bandage over his shoulder. I want to run into his arms when he casts his eyes towards my direction then his face blooms into a smile. These bloody tears again? I feel them prickling at the corners of my eyes so acidic and powerful while my emotions starts to expand on my chest but I manage to wear the facade that I planned being adorned on. I am about to burn and toast him for concealing yet something from me. “Makhosazana. . .” His deep voice says the moment our eyes meet then he looks at what is on my hands and his simper furthers. He seems too euphoric to see the flowers in my hand. “Woza kubaba” While other men out there are calling themselves dzaddy and daddy this is how he calls himself. I just glare at him and he frowns perplexed as I stride into the room closing the door behind and placing the balloons behind his bed without saying a word, then the flowers on his lap and the baskets on the table. He looks at the flowers and then me. Again he charmingly smiles. For what reason I don’t know? Now that I am seeing him I am losing my marbles. I don’t know whether to take a sit down or stand here or maybe just poke him where he was stabbed but he has figured that he has done something. “What did I do mphefumulo wami?” Why he can’t read my mind?

I just look at him and then make myself comfortable on the chair breathing out and clasping my hands on my thighs, “how are you feeling Bandlalabo?” there is this way of how he

clenches his jawline as though his teeth are at war and the way his eyes darkens whenever I don't say "lami". I don't care I am also angry because I was going to be his brother's second wife and he never told me. He looks at the flowers again as though he wants to chew them to show me that is getting angry then he pushes them away from him to crackle his knuckles. Ha ha ha ha the drama of this man. "I want to find out first how you're doing before you can tell me what more you've been hiding from me?" I ask him opening the basket of what I've bought for him, he seems surprised that I still want to feed him. What? He thinks I want him to die, shame. Let me just close the basket then.

"Hhayi mina I don't like it when you call me like that. Yes maybe I did something wrong and I'm not aware of it but please don't break my heart Krotoa" He is solemn. No really he is actually serious and hurt because of a name? "Now please tell me what did I do? Is it about what happened because I am not going to apologize when someone called you names"

"Your brother not someone"

"I don't care. I really don't care" He is angry. Not because I was called names but because I haven't called him Bandlalami. He glances at the basket to see what is in there then he looks at me although he wants to avoid making any sort of eye contact but he cannot. As we speak he glimpse at the flowers by his

feet then the basket and then the balloons before he wanders around my face. “What did I do?” he says in a monotone.

“I know about Zenokuhle”

Nazo!

Look at him opening and closing his mouth, with his eyes out of their own volition then he reaches out to grab out an orange and starting to peel it off. I cannot believe that I haven't kissed him from the time I got here. I don't care. I am mad. “You knew that your brother wanted to make me his second wife and you never told me. What else I don't know?”

“I want to marry you” I'm seriously going to kill him. I am really going to dig my fingers on that wound on his shoulder. He looks at the orange he is peeling it off with a magazine on the bed so that all the juices could leak there. “You haven't even kissed me and already I'm being asked questions” Then he shakes his head “I want to marry you” Again he says—he's crazy that's all I am going to tell you.

“Why you didn't tell me?”

“It wasn't my place to tell you because it had nothing to do with me. I wanted to make you mine and I did that. But that part had nothing to do with me”

“What was she doing in my house?” He pauses with the peeling then smirks. Mxm. “I want to know because she seemed too

familiar with my house so I want to know what was she doing there?”

“What was she doing at your house?” A frown appears on his face, he doesn’t seem pleased about that part.

“We had to go there. I had to clean the blood on the floor but she has been there before with Yezulu” He laughs as I mimic her and throwing his head back before he swallows the piece in his mouth then he gives me one. Now I am here shoving an orange inside my mouth and being soften about the fact that he thought of me. “What was she doing there?”

“I am going to tell you when I get out of here so I can explain everything that I need to explain to you. Did she say something? That made you angry?” I think. I’m not going to tell him because he is going to overreact. I know him. Another slice disappears in his mouth and we share the orange before he takes the wipers to wipe his hands then mine before inhaling sharp, “please come here” he takes my hand pulling me to him and making me sleep on the bed with him. It’s not big enough but he made space to snuggle me to him. Now that I am up closed to the bandage and wound I am reminded about what happened

Advertisement

I reach my hand to trail my fingers and he flinched, looking down at me as my hand trembles “. . .don't cry I'm fine mphefumulo wami even though you wanted to kill me” I look at him and he kisses my forehead “Bab' mkhulu told me how you almost lost your mind worrying about me. I promise not to ever make you go through that again, not intentionally of course and I'm sorry for hiding this from you it wasn't too important to me to just come running and telling you about my brother wanting polygamy. I still had to fight to have you” And then he kisses me again. He has so much going through his mind and I just realized. I'm sure his uncle has told him everything. I place my hand on his face, mesmerized completely forgotten that I was deranged and capturing his lips to mines. Our kiss deepens and he holds my head in place, his tongue exploring my mouth, and mines also fighting for dominance. The kiss becomes consuming and I feel my lungs on fire and lack for air. From how his hands are now traveling through my hips and I pull away as I see fuzzy black spots to my vision. My breathing is heavy and out of control as I open my eyes to see his that are in total control then he slides his hands down my body to grab hard on to my butt cheek before darting his eyes between mines again. There is something hidden behind them. I wonder what has happened; I know the sangoma came back few hours after we left because they called her back. Have they told him already? I'm just wondering.

“Are you leaving with me? I’ll be discharged later this afternoon and Nqabayezulu as well. I haven’t seen him. We haven’t spoke”

“I can’t leave with you Bandlalami, I’m your girlfriend and not your wife. You’ll have to make that request to my family. . .” I breathe out. I’m leaving with him. “But I’ll come with you otherwise who’ll clean your wound?”

He smiles slightly, “you are going to find out things about me, dark things about me mphefumulo wami and maybe you might leave but even so, even when you do I need you to know that ngiyakuthanda”

“What are those things?”

“We cannot really talk here but we will have this conversation when the time is right. I’m going to call your uncle and tell him about you coming with us” God now I must buy head wraps and long dresses? “Ngiyakuthanda Ka Makhetha”

I cannot help but feel whatever it is must be scary. I can tell by how his body has tensed and his eyes a molten pool.

“Ngiyakuthanda nami Zungu”

The door wrench open and Mzobanzi walks in looking prim and proper as always but he reeks alcohol, expensive cognac to be exact as he stands by the door with nothing but rage in his

eyes, veins showing in his forehead. He keeps flaring his nostrils again and again, showing animalistic characteristics.

“You knew that you were not mine didn’t you?” What? Excuse me? I want to get off the bed and kick him out. He has hurt Bandlalethu enough. Instead this man holds me closely to him, for me not to escape his grip. I look at him and he is cool as a cucumber. “Not only you’re not mine but you also killed my brother!” The saliva in my mouth becomes dry and my heart stops beating for a moment, his eyes are not on me but his father. Him saying ‘you’re not mine’ can only mean one thing. But what does he mean about Bandla killing his brother? “Why? Why did you kill him?”

“He wanted to kill Nqabayezulu!”

Mzobanzi dryly chuckles “You killed my brother! You killed him!” Hold up! Hold up! “. . .and I know that wasn’t the reason you killed him so I’m asking why? Why you killed Mangenhliziyoy?”

“I am telling you he wanted to kill Nqabayezulu. I saw him and if I didn’t walk into that room he would’ve killed him. He would’ve sacrificed him, I know what I saw and if ever given a chance Mzobanzi I would kill him again and do the same to you!” He seethes. He means it. I can tell by the poison laced in his voice that he means it. I want to escape his grip and run out of this room but I can’t because my bones have become liquify

the moment I get up I'll just fall into these tiles. "Ask yourself what happened to your father? Who would kill a chief of the Madlebe tribe in broad daylight? He slaughtered him like a goat because he wanted that chair. And now I am tired of you. I am not the one who sent your wife to go sleep with your brother. Any questions about their affair go seek God he'll answer you!" He attempts charging towards the bed but someone holds him behind, my vision has become a fog. It his wife with tears falling down her eyes pleading her man. I just want to leave. I want to leave this place. What chieftaincy? That can only mean one thing.

If I leave this room now I'm not turning back, this family needs more than the only son dying on the cross!

45.

sacrificial offering

- the act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or a person

I've never been scared of anything!

I mean ever even when I found my uncle's gun underneath his bed with a bag of money I was not terror stricken. And that time at school when a group of girls tried to attack me? I was unmoved but rather diabolically glared at them and they ended up asking about some stupid assignment but that moment in that ward was different and that discovery too. I felt my own blood slowly freezing and becoming glacial, turning me absolutely pale as he seethed. I don't know whether it was the sound of his voice that is forever velveteen yet baritone that sent goosebumps throughout my body when he threatened his father. Was it the bonfire flickering in his eyes like hot scarves? I don't know maybe it was the conflagration spread like a flaming garland has his hand remained on my hip while he spoke and the other holding my hand, to calm the turbulent of his mood.

I'm not scared about finding out that he murdered his uncle when he was protecting his brother but the horror blooms because I want to know him, hold him the way thirst carves water with my sweat dancing on his fingertips. I want him the way a mouth craves the truth. I want to unveil all his secrets but I couldn't sit on that hospital bed listening to his breathing so heavy but rather I ran out. I walked pass his mother who stood by the door with mournfulness in her eyes. His father in indescribable pain seeing an image of his wife and brother's betrayal, I don't know what's the story there and who are on whose plate. His father is not my favorite person but that wasn't pretty to watch. The tears in his eyes and how he was unable to stand on his own.

I get into the car and start to drive without knowing where exactly I am going, I've been using his sport car and I think it suits me perfectly. Home? My grandmother would ask me questions that I do not want to answer, it doesn't help she still thinks that I am not back as yet but still "healing" if only she knew. That I have a man who smokes a thirsty pack of cigarettes a day, sucks on my breasts and has my heart on his palm. That I am not that girl she last saw who was seeking revenge. That I'm suddenly so uncomfortably with wearing my short and sheer dresses that she hates so much. That I need deliverance and God to save me. That I have changed my sentiments and perspective in this short space of time about

love, marriage and kids. That I've learnt growth is totally normal. That transformation is good. That it's okay not to be who you were two months ago because you've out grown that version and become another version of yourself. That you can love color pink today and tomorrow fall in love with green. I wonder what would be her reaction. I wonder after a powerful prophet has helped with this love potion that Bandlalethu fed me what will happen then? Oh God help me.

Guess what? I actually drove to his house. Right in this moment as I look at myself on a rear view mirror I've come to realization that I'm a clown. I'm going to pack my bags and book at the hotel. I need time to think about this. About everything. It has been what? Two days since we got back and already I am smothered. I just really hope that the "other girl" is not here but with Yezulu and cuddling at the hospital or maybe she returned where she stays. I'm seriously not in a mood to entertain her and her remarks because I am going to do exactly what her boyfriend did to my man. Ha ha ha I'm not vile.

I'm in invited by quietness as I walk inside the house and that means there is no one here. I just need to pack my bags and get the fuck out here. Not forever. Even the thought of leaving is actually just blinking at me as though I've lost my mind and my brain cells are depleting. Udakiwe u-subconsciousness because I'm leaving. I literally just packed my tobacco colored

underwear only in this suitcase and I cannot get myself to shove the rest of my clothes that somehow looks like they belong there on his closet.

I almost crawl out of my skin and ran away upon the sound of the risqué tone speaking from behind, “Where are you going makhosazana?” What? What’s the time because he was being discharged late this afternoon? I was actually sniffing his shirt so that his scent swirls through my chest then it washes over me. I turn around to be met by him wearing jeans. Where did he get clothes to change? Maybe someone brought them for him at the hospital. It could be the uncle who’s his father. I direct my eyes at him firmly as he take off the cap throwing it on the bed then returns to lean on the wall with his presence felt. “It’s not enough you’ve done this before and I almost lost my mind so what you want this time, me completely going crazy?”

I turn away and throw his shirt on the bed. I am not going to say a damn word. He is moving and I can see his movements at the corners of my eyes with his feet propelling towards me. And by the time he stands in front of me my breathing is ragged and my eyes are fluttered closed. “Sengwayo. . .” He he he this is me? This is my life now? A man makes me weak. “I was not running away”

He hasn't touched me. We are standing so close to each other and it feels as though he is underneath my nostrils because I keep inhaling all of him in and his proximity is intoxicating. I finally get to look into his eyes, they move in a same tempo has mine with my collarbone dancing to the same melody. "You ran out of the hospital what if something happened to you? I told you that you're going to find out dark things about m

"What was I supposed to do Bandla. . ." I can see he is waiting to hear how I am going to end his name. Am I going to use a term of endearment or that one that gives him heart palpitations. "Bandlalami" Well he is not smiling. He is not smirking. He is not grinning but his eyes speak volume. Already he smells like cigarettes. I wonder how many he has smoked since he left the hospital. "Yes you told me you have a dark past. We both agree that we'll love each other with no judgements and I'm not about to do that now, I showed you my flaws and you still loved me. . ."

"Loved? I love you, don't use past tense"

"You get the point"

"No don't say I loved you. I love you. I love you in this very minute. I love you tomorrow. I love you in few years to come and I love you forever. Not loved" I know when he pulls me so close to him like this it's because he wishes he could be a citizen under my skin. I swallow my saliva. Again he hasn't

touched me. "I did what I had to do to protect my brother, to protect this family and I'll do so too for you" The warmth of his breath is like pixie dust on my face. He has been drinking. It has been literally just two hours out of the hospital. His chest moves up and down. "I cannot make you see or use words for you to understand the love I have for you but I can only show you Krotoa"

"How many?" I am running out breath and becoming breathless. "I want to know how many people you've killed?" My hands are trembling on the sides of my body. I don't know whether to touch him or grip into my dress. I raise my hand to touch him but quickly pull it back. "When someone mention it to me I don't want to be surprised now tell me how many?"

"I cannot tell you that mphefumulo wami"

"The brutal ones then. How many?"

"Ten"

Jesus Christ!

I shudder at that thought and attempt to hang my head low to avoid any sort of eye contact but I cannot. He won't let me. His gaze is burning through me as the apple on his throat moves up and down. He witnesses the opaqueness tears on my face. We both don't say anything for a moment. "Have they ever hurt

you?” I want to know. I want to know all about his wounds.
“Did you ever feel pain? Where was it?”

I think maybe he thinks I am losing my mind because he narrows his eyebrows. But I want to know. I want to know where exactly he felt pain. “I cannot point out exactly where I felt pain because I’ve never given myself a chance to feel it. . .” Again that stupid lump smothers me and my tears still remains there drowning my iris and not wanting to fall “. . .Look at me” He demands when I hang my hand low and I shake my head rapidly. We haven’t touched. Our breathes are making love though. Our souls are fucking. Our minds have experienced the orgasms. Our bodies are trembling but we haven’t been in contact. He heavily exhales “. . .mphefumulo wami” Now he’s pleading. He knows it’s time for him to touch me in any way regardless of not wanting to. He feels he doesn’t deserve that privilege. He thinks I am going to leave him. “You know I hate seeing tears in your eyes unless ngikubhebha” Yeah no fuck Bandlalethu! I quickly shoot him a look and he smirks. Nxarga. What happened to his manners. That sounds bloody wrong man. “Are you leaving me?” Even though his vernacular words were raw but my pulse kicked up, every hidden place inside of me heating in anticipation. When he finally touches my cheek with just one finger and I close my eyes to feel the celestial magic “Open your eyes and look at me” I snap them open to look at him. “Are you leaving me?” The vehemence in his tone

makes my vagina drags itself on the slippery floor from the juices flooding from it.

“I’m scared. Last week we were floating and now. . .I can’t look at you without wanting a future. What are you doing to me? I’m scared”

“I told you I was going to love you didn’t I?”

“You did” I whisper as his thumb moves through my cheek “I cannot walk away from this anymore Bandlalethu”

“Bandla labani?”

“Lami”

His gaze is singeing my face “But if ever you want to walk away I don’t want you to ever be afraid to do so. No matter how much you love me, I don’t want you to make any sacrifices for me”

“Msebeyelanga Zungu”

“Makhosazana”

“Ngiyakuthanda. . .” I tell him truthfully and honestly. A glitter stocks his eyes and he smiles beautifully, “ngiyakuthanda kakhulu”

I bite my lip hard. He slide his fingers beneath my dress to caress the flat plane of my stomach. My muscles quiver beneath his touch. Lower his hand goes, setting me on fire with

every centimeter he travels. His unzip my dress from the back with a one-handed dexterity that makes my accelerated pulse ratchet up to full speed. "Sengwayo. . ." I gasp looking at him as he sweeps the zipper down and tunnel both his hands taking my dress that pools on my feet. He looks at me from my toes all the way to my thin thong with my waxed legs and vagina. He admires my sagging breasts and swallows his saliva before he looks into my eyes. I am surprised I haven't fall on my feet but I ululate when he gently pushes me to the bed as his heated eyes uncover me ". . .I'm sorry" I say with my head against the duvet looking up at him as he hovers over me. We continue to stare, swallow and breathe. "About your father I'm sorry"

"I'm sorry too"

"What for?"

"For what I'm about to do to you" His eyes are feasting on me. I have never felt so covet, so perfect, in my entire life. He runs the pad of his thumb over my hard, puckered nipples protruding through with his gaze shooting with fire. "What has happened in my past doesn't matter. What matters is that you're here. You love me. And we are in this moment"

My heart contract. I want him closer. I want him inside me stroking me with that impressive length of his then he presses a lingering kiss on my mouth and I taste him as though it's the first time I'm doing so.

I press my lips together, continuing to savor him as he stands up and taking off his top in a leisurely fashion that has me on the edge of my seat. I paint this picture in kaleidoscopic hues at the back on my brain, the sharply cut collar bones highlighting perfectly cut abs that narrows down to the vee that makes me want to run my tongue there. He is unbelievable, almost unreal.

My breath is caught in my throat as he undo his pants with that deft one-handed maneuver. I brace myself for what is coming but he turns around and unveils his amazing backside instead. He has the best thighs on the planet as though he is an athlete of some sort and it all stemmed from the rock hard, perfectly-chiseled foundation above them. A bit of juices oozes from me at a mere sight of him.

When he turns around I admire that is so exquisitely formed so powerful he takes my breath away. I am going to give him one thousand kids I am telling you and some of them will be swallowed down my throat as a glass of water.

My heart assumes a frantic beat. He slides his fingers into the sides of the boxers and stripped them off. The pure virility of him had me clenching my fingertips in the bedspread.

His eyes hold mines "You're ready?"

I can only nod.

He climbs on the bed and catches my foot to press erotic open-mouth kisses to the soles of my feet, first one then the other. They are clearly erogenous zones I didn't know existed because his touch stimulates and unearths a low throb deep in my abdomen.

My stomach clenches as he nudges my legs apart to sit between them, working his way up my thighs with hot, worshipping kisses that destroy my ability to think. He meant when he said he is sorry for what he is going to do to me. He is going to make love to me. In a way he hasn't before. In a way no one has before. In a way I'll deeply think about and reminisce about when he's gone.

I want to scream when he bypasses the pulsing flesh at the core of me and instead crawls up to capture one of my nipples in his mouth—his favorite part of my body that has the same effect, the rhythmical way he takes me deep inside his mouth, his palm on my bare stomach holding me in place.

I moan and claw at his scalp, wanting, needing more. He comes up to me and catches my lips in a soul-destroying kiss that wipes away any last inhibitions I had. His big palm is firm and sure as he brings it down my stomach and between my legs. I open for him as a sacrificial offering and he finds the hot, honeyed nub at the centre of me with an expert, tantalizing stroke of his thumb. I whimper and move against his fingers.

He brings his mouth to my earlobe while simultaneously taking his caress deeper, goading me on with his heat promises. I close my eyes and arch my hips, intent on taking every bit of pleasure he has to give me. But it is not soon enough. I need the stunning hardness of him inside me.

“Bandlalami—

He palms himself and brings the tip of his erection to my slick flesh, caressing me with it. I arch my hips and say his name again, this time more urgently. He lifts himself up on his powerful forearms, muscles bulging as he sink into me in only the briefest of forays. I clasp his amazing buttocks to urge him deeper. He presses a kiss to my lips. “Easy mphefumulo wami. take it easy. You’ll get it yonke, don’t rush”

Then he gives me more, his slow, deliberate possession driving me out of my mind. By the time he is half way inside me I want to crawl out of my own skin.

That is when he starts to pull out of me in between strokes, moistening my body with the passion we share then moving back inside of me to stroke deeper. Finally he is in to the hilt. My breath hisses from my lungs as our gaze locked. “Keep your eyes on me makhosazana” I nod and nipping at my mouth while he gives me time to adjust. I try close them “Open those eyes Krotoa! I want them on me please” Now he is pleading.

He kisses me, a long, lush meeting of our mouths that lit my insides. Then he starts to move, his deep, demanding strokes touching every part of me. I am so ready for him, a sweet, urgent release built almost immediately. He rocks me into it with his magnificent body, joining me when my muscles clench around him. The shudder of his powerful frame beneath my fingertips is a wondrous experience I will never forget. I am wrapped in his arms, cocooned in a feeling I know as the truest I've ever felt, I confirm what I sense from the time I walk out of the ward. I'm in love with him. He continues to move with my hands digging into his skin and our eyes interlocked.

"I love you" I tell him again and again until he releases all his juices inside with invited tears at the corners of my eyes while I dig so deep into his shoulders that his stitches start to bleed.

46.

unveil

/ʌn'veɪl/

- remove a veil or covering from, in particular uncover (a new monument or work of art) as part of a public ceremony.

ZENOKUHLE

I put a pillow behind him to make him comfortable and I keep averting making any sort of eye contact not to show him the sheer red ribboned sympathy that he doesn't want drawn on my face and painted in my eyes. I swallow my saliva as I sit beside him with his one eye closed and a bandage around his stomach since he is bare chested, his face is red and covered with bruises. "I made you a soup. . ." We have just returned home few hours ago and I still have no idea what happened. I know that he has a close-knit relationship with his brother so how did it end up with the other one being stabbed while he was beaten up to complete unconsciousness and almost tasting early grave. "It's chicken soup" I grab the bowl that I have placed on the side table and we gaze in each other's eyes

before he opens his bruised mouth at the corner while I feed him and I watch him swallowing in his mouth yet our orbs are piercing through each other. I have my bags packed and hidden, waiting for that moment he falls asleep so I can leave, run away. I am going to where no one knows me and start over. "What happened?" I ask him as he opens his mouth for me to feed him again. Then he holds my hand, his finger digits planting magic into my skin causing my breath to hitch and pause what I was doing but rather stare at the brown eyes staring at me. Although he is covered in all these bruises but you cannot amiss his good looks. Ever. The shimmering beard with his hair growing because he hasn't had a haircut but he is still looking as gorgeous as he sat at the corner of my ward and told me a fairytale story with chuckles in between, buoyant laughter and egoistical personality "Was it her?" I ask him and feeling the lump made of knives stabbing me on my throat, "I met her at the hospital and. . ." I take time to breathe, his hand still caressing my arm "Even when she found out about me she was indifferent" I tell him the truth although I cannot expose the other revelation, "Was it her?" I plague again.

Instead of saying a word he opens his mouth that he wants more soup and I feed him my hand is no longer on his. I keep swallowing the bland taste of my saliva. "I wouldn't want to talk about another woman with you. I don't want to hurt you again mama" then he says whenever he calls me like that I feel pixies

dancing in my stomach and singing. “But yes it was her. I found her at my brother’s house” I can see that as those words rolling out of his tongue made him revisit the past event “I’ve never had a fight with him before, no matter how angry I make him he has never laid his hand on me or even look into my eyes with that. . .” With that what? I see him clenching his jawline painfully and his eyes shimmer with emotions that remains unnamed “. . .this was her plan to get in between me and my brother and I’m not going to let her do that” I don’t want wait for him to open his mouth but raise a spoon for him to eat. He shakes his head indicating that he has had enough. I give him a hard stern look and he smiles charmingly then eat. Great. I feed him three spoons at once trying to find words to say next.

“What makes you think that this was her plan to get to you?” I pester and he pats the empty space next to him taking the bowl in my hand and putting aside. I crawl to sleep next to him and he places my head on his chest kissing my forehead as I look up at him and run my fingers at the contours of his lips. I am in his arms for the last time. I appreciate this moment and feeling the powerful watery beads in my eyes wanting to escape. I compose myself. “We had a conversation with her and I asked her about you. . .” I can feel his body tense as he runs his fingers through my shoulder listening what I have to say “. . .and now I am wondering what makes you think that she wants to take some sort of revenge on you Yezulu?”

“I said we are not going to talk about another woman Ka Mazibuko. It ends there” I look at him and then see that he is concealing the truth from me. But I have something much more enormous than this to unveil to him. All of this is going to turn into nothing but dust. It will all be images playing in my mind. The sound of his voice will be nothing but what was once my favorite song and laughter too. Although he has one eye closed but I can still see how his almond shaped orbs look and I cannot help but admire and fascinate on this kind of beauty, so rare and precious.

We were supposed be leaving late afternoon to his homestead but he hasn't said anything about it and it seems he has no intentions of even going there for that matter since it's the evening now. I want to tell him that there's so much fire that he can play with but not supernatural. You don't turn ancestors into a sport ground just as you cannot do so to The Lord and uMveliqangi. “I have something to tell you” I cannot hold my tongue and this is not what I had planned. A part of me wants to know what is going to happen when he sees the unrefined woman in me. What will happen then? Is he going to still wrap me around in his arms and continue drawing patterns on my bare thigh. I cannot silence the deafening voices screaming in my head wanting me to open my head into two, choking from anxiety as I am about to unveil myself and before he remove his hands from me I decided to peel off myself and getting off the

bed to stand at the corner of the room as little girl who was afraid of her father. A girl who saw her mother crying with heavy tears in her eyes because my father was one of those men who would leave for “work” and only come home twice a year or come home unannounced, sometimes in the middle of the night. But the rule of thumb he would whistle on the street. He never rushed home when he was coming and only went to a local tavern first then tell the neighbors kids to inform us to come and fetch his bags and that way my mother will know that he’s around, my father was there but he was never really “there”. He was a strict man who wore pants that stayed in his stomach, small things irked him, like us cooking while on our periods, wearing pants at home, missing a prayer at seven pm, my mother not wearing a head wrap or her inviting her friends into her home. It was more light at home when he was not around that means almost half of the year he wouldn’t be home. I knew I had a father but I didn’t know what having a father feels like. I’ve never shared a dance with him. We’ve never sat down and talk, when I left home it was in the middle of the night right after he left in the afternoon with a brown suitcase and a hat on his head. He brought my mother who wore a dress with polka dots into his arms then kissed her forehead. I saw them affectionate with each other only when they thought we were not watching with my sister, Noludwe loved these moments—she was such a sucker for love. It made

a tingly and she'll talk about umama no baba's tongue dancing together.

I can see the quizzical expression painted on his face wondering what is that I want to say. "Are you leaving me Zenokuhle?" I hear hurt I never thought I'd witness from him at any point when I told him that I was going to leave. His eyes have sheer pain causing my body to start buzzing "Why? The polygamy is nothing we can worry about now and you know that" she may have chosen another man but I am aware that he loves her. "She chose him" There's bitterness as he spits those words and he ball his fists on the bed ". . .I saw it in his eyes that he chose her too. He chose her over me and that has never happened before"

"He wasn't choosing. He loves her and he loves you why does he have to choose?" I ask him. I've witnessed the love his brother has for him. I witnessed how this one time Yezulu spilled a coffee on his shirt and he ran towards him quickly to see whether he got burnt. I've seen the protector in him more than anything. I've heard their loud laughter erupting from another room. Their hands shakes and hugs. Their moments watching soccer. I've seen it all that I know he'll never choose anything over his young brother. "And yes I'm leaving Yezulu" I inhale sharply and look down to my feet then at him. He wants

to get up but he cannot because of the unbearable pain in his stomach then he forces himself to “No please don’t

Advertisement

don’t do that!” I raise my hand rushing to him and pushing him back on the bed, my tears sting at the back of my eyes causing me to blink and they fall quicker than I thought.

He holds my hand and witness the emotions in my eyes, “Why? Why now?” Then he plagues me darting his eyes between mine, my lips starts to quiver from the amount of emotions about to explode, “Ngiyakuthanda Ka Mazibuko”

“You do?” I ask him needing assurance “And what about her? Do you love her?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know, can we not talk about this now and just tell me why you’re leaving. . .I will do anything for you not to leave. Anything you name it”

“Erase the memories of me and how the society looks at the woman like me, change the narrative. Make me pure, cleanse me from the core to remove the darkness that wanders within my soul. Instead of grabbing the knife and killing him that night but rather make me remain on the bed and nurse my neck as I usually did after being strangled. When my mother asked me to run away make me refuse so I can pay for my sins because I made a woman sit on a mattress to mourn the death of her

son. A son whom I allowed to fight his demons through me, who beat me up black and blue then whispered how much he loves me in my ear after that. Make those people who burnt my house down with my family in it change their minds and see, understand and believe that it was either me they would've found dead there one day or him because I was defending myself as a powerless woman who has been abused. Silence the screams of my mother in a burning house, remove the images of my father trying to get them out of the house with my sister but because the fire was too much he couldn't do it he succumbed to his lungs burning and his body melting. Now please would you do that for me so I could stay? Would you make sure that I call the police instead of helping a woman who became my mother bury his husband and mistress that she found in her bed? The husband I've once slept with after listening to their sexual intimacy. Can you make sure that I don't wait for my neighbor's wife to leave for work before I could go fuck her husband? Can you do that? Can you. . ." I feel a lump on my throat forming and choking me while he looks into my eyes with his that are squinted "Can you make sure that I don't make him my sanity and healer knowing very well he'll never leave his wife for me? Can you stop me from jumping off the balcony wanting to kill myself for a man because he was finally separating from her but not to be with me but another woman. I've felt a need to choke you to death

that day you told me about her. I wanted her to say something to me so I can push her against the wall so that her head could bang there, bleed and die. I don't know how else to deal with my emotions. Now can you do that for me?"

I know that look. It's shock. It's. . .actually I have no idea what's going through his mind because he remains impassive just looking at me with tears falling down my eyes. "I'm not one you can fall for. You will never love me alone and you've stated that. Now that you've heard about my history then please let me go. Let me leave. I'm not the one for you" I get up from the bed. A part of me thinking that he was going to stop me and hold my hand, but he remains on that bed immobile and motionless. I walk out thinking his voice would chase after me. He knows about me. He knows the woman behind the one I've been trying to become. He is going to forget about me. I take my bags and feel my knees being rubbery as I open the door Bandlalethu stands before me and our eyes meet. I almost throw myself in his arms but rather remain here. Looking at how radiant he is than the last time I saw him. He seems totally different.

"Where are you going?" He creases his eyebrow neutral and his hands inside his pockets. The way he asked showed no care, unlike that time at the hospital when I was packing my bags.

The gentleness in his tone was opaque but not it's not there this time.

"I'm leaving" I hang my head low "I don't belong here" I tell him afraid looking at the virility in his eyes. "I cannot stay here"

"Please leave after we've returned back from home. It's compulsory for you to be there from what I was told the sangoma said we need to know what was that supposed to mean when she. . ."

"You want to fuck her too? It wasn't enough that you slept with Krotoa now you want her?" We are interrupted by a voice from behind and I know exactly who it belongs to. I turn around to see him standing there exuding menace, medusa-like rage. I'm afraid of what is going to happen.

"I'm not here to fight with you Nqabayezulu" There is this way of how he calls his brother. It's beautiful honestly "We should be leaving today and I wanted to come and check up on you so we can talk. Yes we had a fight and I'm sorry but I'm not going to stand here and apologize for falling in love. I won't apologize to you for loving her" Then walks in and closing the door behind. I can see the passion so translucent at the mention of her name. "Zenokuhle give us privacy" He turns to me and I involuntarily nod my head, swallowing my saliva and walking pass Nqabayezulu who gazed at me with fire and then he holds my hand. He holds my hand to just pierce his orbs into my eyes,

I try to recover from the stupor but I can't rather my vagina floods with risqué. Then he let me go and kisses my forehead. I have no idea what is the meaning of this but I leave anyways not really leave but hide to listen to their conversation.

"What are you doing here? You've come to ask me that I should accept this relationship you have with a woman you knew that I wanted? Then you'll count all the sacrifices you've made for me so I can consider your happily ever after?" I hear Nqabayezulu seething.

"I'll never count anything. I did all those sacrifices because I wanted to do them and because you're my brother and I love you. Whether you accept this relationship or not that doesn't really bother me now please we are going to our ancestral home, ebukhosini and therefore you need to be there, your girlfriend is needed there"

"I'm not going there"

"Why not?" I can hear his tone becoming rather stern now, supreme. "You want me to beg you to go there?"

"Chabo but I want you to know that it doesn't end like this Bandlalethu, this was just the beginning of what is about to happen"

"You can start by fighting these walls then. If you want war from me that's not going to happen. Ngimdala we are not

teenagers who are going to fight over a woman. I want to see you ekhaya tomorrow morning and goodnight. Ulale kahle mina ngisakuthanda” he says that he loves him. Even his tone says so.

“Mzobanzi is not your father!”

Nqaba says.

“Oh I know that and I’m glad, kusasa ekuseni” he says so nonchalantly reminding him about tomorrow morning.

47.

In The Beginning There Was A War

We are weaving through the road in a “get out of my fucking car” and the sun hasn’t even danced in the sky while the mat of darkness remains in there with music softly playing in the background. I have no idea who sings this song but this woman just wants to be happy with her partner. I am floating into many emotions at once. I look at myself on the rearview mirror again and running my hands through the silk textured hair worn on my head to cover the platinum color and also I dyed my eyebrows to black, I wanted to shave them off actually but remembered no one will understand that aesthetic. This man here has not stopped throwing compliments at me even though he came home demented from the conversation that he had with his brother and he hasn’t told me what happened but with that bonfire that danced on my favorite orbs I am so damn sure I might’ve been slut shamed again or maybe something venomous crawled under his skin. But he just came home and grabbed out my breast from my night dress, covering my nipple with his warm mouth when he saw that I wasn’t massaging his scalp he took my hand placed it on his head then moved them until I start stroking and brushing with succulency as I was

anointing him with kisses. This was the first time he actually sleeps before me, I guess it was also all these thoughts that danced through his mind about how everything is going to turn out.

I am floating in so many emotions at once while I am draping and peeling off the head-wrap emanated on my head. I had no idea what to wear or how I should look anyways I don't care how I appear to anyone to be honest but I cannot disrespect his ancestral home and to make the matter worse "Ebukhosini" otherwise I would've came here with something that shows my thong to make men choke on their saliva to death.

As I am busy applying a lip balm I feel him making his hand comfortable in between my legs and my warmth seeping through him, when he has to change the gear he seems piqued because he has to peel it off from me so I quickly change it for him and he glimpse at me then smirks indecently then focuses on the road. "I already told you're beautiful makhosazana. . ." he says when I am staring at my reflection in the mirror for the third time to see whether my makeup is still painted on my face. I think I should wear this head wrap now. I am thankful for my dearest cousin for being a fashion designer who by the way has a collection for modern wives. I asked this one who just reminded me that he has thrown countless compliments to buy me two or three dresses and guess what? He bought

everything. I cannot help but have questions now whether or not he might be involved in a dodgy business because the people from the house he bought for me finally contacted me. When I saw that house I gaped. What if he has a snake? He he he also why we always assume that a black person is involved in some sort of witchcraft or shady business whenever they're successful? We always think that Bheki sacrificed with his wife and that is how he got his riches and now single because he is afraid he may have to sacrifice his next partner. If you black and successful it's either there's satanism involved or tikoloshe, such a strange mentality but I cannot wait to buy chicken livers for Bandlaletu's mkhovu, “. . .umuhle mphefumulo wami” Again he compliment and smiles at me. I glimpse at him shaking my head before making myself comfortable on the leather chair. “Last night I went to see my brother” Oh now we are talking about this? I guess.

We are interrupted by a phone call on his connected device and when he sees his uncle's name flashing I see he facial expression changing. Ever since the discovery and the truth came out they've never sat down and talk. All of them. The mother, the father and the uncle. The bitterness was shoved down their throats and they seem to be in a traffic blinded by lights not knowing how to deal with these emotions. I've noticed how they seem to hurt each other with words. A weapon doesn't hurt as words. Those remain sunk on your

brain and drowning you in unnamed emotions. They echo unexpectedly at different times reminding you of the space that you are in. You see words? They have a great impact than being stabbed on a shoulder with a vase, that wound heals big words remains.

The weather seemed bright but now suddenly changing. I am telling you the early morning egg horizon was approaching in the sky but suddenly it crepuscular as the night with no stars. I just saw a powerful lightening underneath the clouds and so aggressive. What the fuck? It doesn't look like the morning anymore and in a nanosecond the rain will start pouring heavily.

And I can tell that this man can see that, "Bandlaethu you left your spear" Oh so his uncle is not going to greet. Actually in this family sometimes they lack mannerism "Where are you now?" For some bizarre reasons he sounds absolutely panicked about him forgetting this particular thing.

"I am closed to Stanger right now. We are not that far. What's wrong? I thought this whole thing is just unnecessary now. That's what you said didn't you Mkhululi?" fretfully he asks, with furrowed eyebrows.

"We are on our way there

two minutes away just wait for me. I have it with me” After those words there is a sense of serenity on this man’s face who immediately halts on the side of the road, and the droplets of rain starts slapping against the windows. I saw this one coming.

I turn my entire body facing towards him as he leans back on the leather chair inhaling sharply through his nose and covering his face with his hands. I have so many questions that I want to plague him with but at the same time I want to embrace him so he’ll know everything is going to be okay. “I didn’t know that he was my father. . .” The baritone sound is sonorous in the car as speaks to me “. . .I really had no idea about this. And maybe the reason I was really hurt about this was because I’ve always wanted him to be that male figure in my life. We have a bond, he always seemed to understand me and what was wrong with me. When I was twenty I started bleeding from the gums” What? “And the doctors had no idea what was wrong with me then I went blind” At this point my eyes are on my hands and I am quickly trying to wear them back as he takes yet another sharp intake of breath, he takes my hand, rubbing my fingertips on my lips. “I think maybe the time is here. I have no idea and I want to do this with you but if you can’t, don’t sacrifice your freedom for me” What exactly is he talking about? What time? I am so perplexed that I cannot even produce words inside my mouth. I have questions yes but I cannot thread the vowels in a perfect sentence.

When we look behind we see a Bugatti La Voiture Noire and you know what? This is a stamped that in this family they sell human organs and turn them into herbs. With so much wealth? I'm joking.

"I am coming makhosazana" I don't know why he has that smirk on his face as he gets off the car regardless of the rain and his uncle pretty much does the same thing. Hehake I can see my cousin here—ha ha ha. I am thankful because at least I'll have someone to talk to but that means she is my mother in law. What on earth? I cannot wait for us to go back home to that my grandmother would slaughter us.

They are having a conversation before I see a spear on Bandlethu's hand and the weather becomes not so aggressive but rather calm, even the rain is that one you'd rather listen to as a lullaby when he runs back to the car, carefully placing it at the backseat before he slides behind the wheel maneuvering the car on the road and Mkhululi drives pass us hooting. We are following each other—tail—at this point I do not want to believe what I have made up in my mind because my head is seriously buzzing and I am feeling dizzy. No I am really feeling drowsy. I grab the bottle of water and gulping from it when he glances at me once running his one hand that has been removed from my thighs through his head. "Makhosazana are you okay?" No, no I am not.

“Why you became blind and your gums bled? I want to know. Who was doing that to you Bandlalethu?”

He looks at me and fixes the rearview before looking at the spear. “I have no idea but now something makes sense. You see my uncle?” I nod my head rapidly “Well he was supposed to take a sit on the throne but he ran away so it seems the ancestors were fighting him through me since he is my father but we had no idea then. No one knew beside my mother and she made sure that we don’t seek traditional help because we didn’t believe in those things. I was sick from time to time. Even now sometimes my legs just get swollen and I cannot move for days and chronic migraines” Oh shit it makes sense. Whenever he is rubbing his temples it’s because of the pain throbbing there. “The other day I went to the pharmacy and bought painkillers and your morning after pill because I was in unbearable pain but I couldn’t really tell you about that” I take his hand to mine and kiss it the way he always does with me. I think this is some sign of assurance and serenity to wash over me. “I think maybe we are going to find all the answers now that we are going home. And we may find grounds with Nqabayezulu” We are still following behind that car that looks like a toy. “Ngiyakuthanda ngane yakwa Makhetha” That was totally random as he said he loves me and I cannot help but leer.

“Whatever happens I am here with you”

I have no idea how many times I have fallen asleep on our way there. Well the weather remains the same and the sky is still dark the moment we pass the green board with “Welcome to Emahlabathini” and we are about to drive through the gate to the African version of the Southfork ranch surrounded by rondavels and the yard is enormous enough to be turned into a mall or yet another community when we see another cars following right behind us. I am guessing that maybe should some family members? I am telling you that it seems like the weather was waiting upon our arrival because the moment we drove through it starts heavily pouring. The rain that makes you drenched within a second.

I saw a strangely man standing outside his house in this rain watching the cars as they drive in before he returned back to his house. In this darkness I saw him. I felt a pull through my spinal cord and medulla oblongata.

“I am taking you to my hut because you cannot enter the main house as yet” Bandlalethu announces interrupting me as I am looking outside the window and drowning in my thoughts. He is not okay. I can tell from how his body tensed when we drove through that green board that welcomed us warmly. He doesn't want to be here but force by circumstances and situation that we are facing. I want to know what that sangoma meant on

that day and what made him blind and bleed from the gums. I want the reason behind his swelling feet. I am holding his hand for him to calm down from whatever that he is internally fighting.

I thought we were driving to a “hut” as in a small house made of mud with a circle shape. I cannot believe he called this house a whole hut when it can be placed in an affluent neighbourhood and match perfectly. We are still in a same yard but everything is distance apart.

As we get off the car he takes my hand covering me with his jacket from the rain before we walk inside the house with a concept that is encased with sleek dark wood panelled walls. I have noticed that this is his style when it comes to anything interior design.

We both make our way to the bedroom and changing because we are drenched. I am swathed in a turtle neck black dress and my new hair glued on my scalp remains on my head with edges floating around my forehead when he changed to black trousers that I packed after ironing for him with a matching shirt then he sits on the edge of the bed running his hands through his head. It must be the migraines but we are interrupted by a knock. I am exhausted. I want to sleep. I have no idea what is the next stop from here. Am I supposed to go cook? God could never be me. Ngizotefa mina until my man

decided I should hide in the bedroom so that I do not touch anything. I'm joking. There is so much going on at once, I might have to call my grandmother so she can calm me.

We both make our way to the living room as he walks to open the door when Mkhululi appears and Nqabayezulu, when he sees me he squints his eyes then avert eye contact. I saw unnamed emotions emanated from him but I choose to ignore them and clasp my hands on my thighs. If he wants to say something to me then he should say it. I also feel that we need to have this conversation to get this out the way. "We are leaving now! You must take Ka Makhetha to your mother's house we have something to sort out" Mkhululi says. It makes sense why the other brother seems forced to be here. He is standing by the door with his hands in his pockets. "You want to fight huh? Both of you are going to fight until you've had enough let's go!"

Haibo!

We hear a loud bang and at first it sounded like fireworks from the distance but then the double sound makes these three men exchange looks. "Fuck!" Bandlalethu cusses underneath his breath. That's a bloody gunshot. We have been here for literally three minutes. Not an hour. What the hell is happening. "That was a warning not an attack. We need to leave!" Then he says to his uncle—father—whatever.

Mkhululi shakes his head, “We are not going anywhere. Let’s get this shit over and done with. Take Ka Makhetha to your mother and Nqabayezulu go send Ka Mazibuko there as well”

Thixo!

48.

trepidation

/ˌtrɛpɪˈdeɪʃ(ə)n/

- a feeling of fear or anxiety about something that may happen.

I think I should've gone to my mother in law's house but I thought about how uncomfortable, awkward and unbearable it was going to be for me. I know for a fact she was going to glare at me diabolically because she has discovered about her sons almost murdering each other because of me and I am partly the reason we are here. And then my cousin who is here is with the man she betrayed her husband with I have no idea what in the world of "Hello Aunt Momo" is this because we all seem to be connected somehow.

I am stuck in this room with a modern sectional sofa dominates the house layout, on a living room rug that visually and texturally defines the split of space between the sitting area and dining zone.

There's a slim line, black floor reading lamp that almost disappears against the dark surround, as does the black television screen.

The smooth, dark wood wall panels encase the apartment, with lattice panels marking a decorative border around the base and ceiling lines with small floor vase houses a burst of greenery that freshens the darkly dramatic wall treatment. I am in love with the floating wall shelves in the same dark wood finish seem to extrude from the panelled room perimeter. A minimalist collection of books and design items sparsely cover their surface.

I don't know what I should do with myself and my trepidation has managed to chew on my brain and this thunderous weather? I am so scared. I want to call him and find out what happened but he said I should wait for him and he is the one who is going to make that phone call. What am I supposed to do with myself? I think I should actually be one of those women who cook up the storm for their men then massage his feet when he returns home.

I can actually cook, my grandmother taught me at young age, the first meal that I cooked to impress her was mince with cheese and rice with grated cheese. Everything was so creamy that everyone was throwing up their intestines. My uncle uJubezizweni kept saying, "Heh rice and cheese? Abakuyeke mshana" I have no idea whether that was sarcasm or he was praising my cooking skills.

That clownery costume really was made for me I am telling you or should I call my grandmother? I can't because she is going to plague me with endless questions and then throw bible verses. I wonder what happened to her and the taxis. I will most definitely find out from her tomorrow or maybe when this man returns home.

The weather has calm now and although we have the cloud crying for whatever reasons. After the war with my thoughts my feet propel me to the kitchen with a pure white microcement floor effectively lightens the dark walled living room dining room combo and there is two low-hanging dining room pendant lights that are paired above the length of a modern black dining table. The lattice wood panels that border the walls are utilised underneath the dining room windows as aptly perforated radiator covers and the beige upholstered dining chairs make light contrast around the edge of the black dining table, and palely coordinate with the window drapes.

The beige drapes fall tidily alongside the end of the kitchen run, which stops short of the wall for this purpose. A simple clear glass panel partially covers the wood wall panels in the kitchen to form an invisible backsplash. A brass kitchen tap warmly complements the rich wood backdrop. White base cabinets make clean contrast.

We have no grocery so I might as well just have a glass of water to calm my turbulence thoughts when a knock interrupts me. Who is that? I am going to be silent until whoever it is leaves. No one knows me and they are fully aware that their son is not here so what is the reason. "Krokro please open!" Who is that? Because that is not my name. What the hell? If I am not MaKroathazana then I am Krokro. I was not meant for this family. "It is raining weh ngane open!" she says with humor in her tone. It's the mother. I have no any other choice but making my way to open the door when she appears with a ceramic serving bowl and a gigantic smile weaving through her face when she makes her way inside. There is a head wrap draped on her head reminding me of that woman who sings soulful music about weed and vegetables and chakras. I have no idea what is she doing here and honestly it makes sense why one of the brothers was tempted because is gorgeous with that beauty spot on her cheek and she has that sophisticating facade. "I thought I should bring you something to eat" then she makes her to the kitchen placing what she has in her hands on the table then looks up at me with a smile. "I know why you refused coming to my house. I have no reason to judge you when I am not so perfect myself" Then she turns around opening cup boards and grabs out two plates placing. I haven't moved.

“I’m not one to judge anyone, I have my past and I am not perfect”

A smile appears on her face, “A past that involves sleeping with brothers and having two children with the other one?” O-kay I wasn’t expecting her to be this open with me. I blink twice seeing a smirk on her face embroidered with regret “The truth will come out anyways so I might as well just talk about it. Yes, we have two sons with Mkhululi and no one knows about the second one. Not your boyfriend. Not him. Not my husband who thought our child died but I had them swamped at the hospital, then two months later I was carrying Nqabayezulu” Why she didn’t just come here then leave that macaroni and cheese at the door? I am involved in her secrets now. “You eat pasta don’t you?” A part of me seriously resent her because of how she was never there for her son. A son I am in love with but that is not my place. I really wish I could embrace the young Bandlalethu in my arms. I really wish I can show him love that he deserved. Although he doesn’t really want to talk about this but the relationship he had with his “father” had an impact to what he became. “What was I supposed to do?” she pushes the plate towards my direction as I make myself comfortable on the chair with a fork already in my hand.

I shrug my shoulders “you were supposed to tell the truth and take accountability of your actions because I do not think

Bandlalethu or the child you gave away would've suffered. You were protecting yourself. . ." I chew what is on my mouth. Then she gazes at my face with thin eyes "Why did you do this ma?" I look up at her. I have no idea whether I am asking why she hurt my boyfriend or concealed the truth. I can feel my saliva not tasting as divine as what is on the plate

my hands are trembling with a fork on my hand. "Also it's not my place to plague you with questions"

"In our society a woman who sleeps with different men is always slut shamed—

"That is not the case here" I pester.

"Let me finish. . ." she radiantly smiles "I was wrong yes. I needed to understand what I was feeling for these two men. I was confused. Yes it was a wrong thing to go on about things that way but can you blame me?"

"Yes" I boldly say and her eyes are almost out of their own volition that she chokes on her saliva. "When two innocents souls are involved in this I cannot help but blame you. There is a child out there surely in constant battle without an understanding what demons is he fighting with, when his umbilical cord was buried where he doesn't belong. Your son needed you, when his father constantly pushed him on the side-lines he needed you. I am not a mother, I have never been

one and maybe you had reasons for being absent in his life. . .” I can no longer eat because it tastes bland and the tears start to dance in my eyes “. . .Again I am not here to judge you” I hang my head low.

“You love him don’t you? You are different from that woman who I once shared dinner with. Yes there was fire burning in your eyes and I can still witness it but I can tell from that glow that you love him”

“I do” An unexpected smile escapes my lips to be met with her wet face as the canvas that stayed outside the rain. “I am learning a new meaning of what love is”

“And Nqabayezulu did you love him?” I don’t know maybe I am just overly thinking things but this is somehow comical. I cannot help but feel that she is opening up to me because she is assuming we might’ve been caught up in a same web, falling for these brothers’ necromancy, which by the way is totally fine to share something with someone that might relate, “did you ever share something with him? Because from what I’ve seen you were. . .”

“No, I’ve never loved him”

She nods her head and gulps her breath, “Well I should leave now. I have no idea when they’ll come back but if you change your mind then you can still come to my house Ka Mazibuko is

there . . .” she smiles at me leaving her food that hasn’t been touched and getting up from the chair to kiss my cheeks. Who is there? I’d rather stay here and be stressed, “. . .you are going to do just fine” then she says and walk towards the door. I have no idea what she is talking about but I am doing just fine not “going to”.

I cannot stomach this pasta really, maybe because he is not home as yet. I keep looking at the time and it keeps moving. What? When we arrived here it was the early hours of the morning and now it’s in the middle of the night. His phone is on voicemail. I do not know how to pray but I know that God can hear my thoughts; he should do something, anything. We heard gunshots and I am sure whatever that is happening involve weapons. I shouldn’t have let him go. I cannot be a widow, I am so beautiful for that shit honestly.

The conversation that I had with his mother left me ruffled because of the war that is about to erupt between Mzobanzi and Mkhululi and to make the matter worse there is another hidden son? I am telling you this is a movie. An award winning one for that matter. This family is messier than messy.

I check the time and no he is not back yet and right now it’s actually eleven pm. I am going to lose my marbles. A call makes me jump hoping that his name may appear on the screen but instead it’s my dearest cousin.

“Do I call you my step mother now?”

She laughs but quickly calm down. We are drowning in a same ocean. “Where are they Krotoa?” I don’t know. I have no idea. “He hasn’t called. He just left a ring on the coffee table and we are not even dating as yet and now he is gone?” He what? He did what? That old man is not here to play.

“Do you want me to come there?” That might calm the both of us.

“Woza! Woza! Woza!” she quickly say and hang up the call when a message then comes through with his name flashing on my screen.

‘Ngiyakuthanda’ That’s all.

No heart emojis. No meme. No gif. That’s how the message reads. ‘Where are you Bandla?’

‘Touch your breasts and think of me, ngiyabuya’ I asked where he is not this.

‘If you don’t come back, I’m going back home tomorrow morning Bandlalabo’

‘Ave ngizokubhebha mina. Who said I am not coming back? Have you eaten? Are you okay? I cannot call you right now’

Mxm, he can choke on gas!

49.

mizpah

- (n) the deep emotional bond between people especially those separated by distance or death.,

It has been two days!

I said two days of praying without any words coming out of my mouth because I don't even know where to start. I would remain on my knees with my elbows and hands held together on the bed but tears uncontrollably waltzing down my cheeks. "Our father who art in heaven. . ." and then I'll pause translating that prayer into vernacular and it hasn't make sense to me how "who art" means "ose". Wait do you get it or I have lost my marbles since this man is missing? I am demented.

Every morning we wake up to a sangoma in our yard with guttural grunt escaping her lips while her shoulders are moving up and down. I swear she is the most beautiful human I've set my eyes on, an essence of divinity and celestial magic with those dreadlocks that falls down her back and curves with her skin that illuminates the room, her small shaped lips looks plump and soft. There is this song that I've memorized in my

mind where she sings it's like the heaven will fall on her feet, her voice sounds as though she's clothed with gods.

We have been plaguing her with questions about what the fuck is going on and she keeps saying everything will unfold soon. What in world do you call that? I have a man somewhere surely stuck in between trees and has lost his legs out there. We are drowning in trepidation and perturbation, this ocean is bitter and the waves leaves us paralyzed. I can feel a punch on my bowels each time I wake up in the middle of the night and he is not here and his phone is unreachable. We are praying. We are crying. But I appear much more calm than these women whom I'll stand outside with every morning to watch the seer doing what she has been doing, seeing unshed tears dancing in the their eyes and their bodies trembling with mournfulness. I avert my eyes from them, for strange reasons I always feel something in me that wants to embrace them even "her" regardless of the devilry glances she has been directing to me because we almost shared a man. It's not even "almost" because it wasn't going to happen. Whether or not Bandlalethu walked into me with my small sagging breasts out it in the open, it wasn't going to happen. We both had a plan and agendas, love wasn't part of mine.

I haven't slept a wink and I am on the bed with a tear stained face and wearing his shirt impatiently waiting for him. I have no

idea what's the time I do not care, but rather the eye bags makes my eyes heavy when I am interrupted by a knock on the door. I ignore it. I do not want to talk. I do not want to look at anyone with a smile and concealing what is on the inside. They keep plaguing me with questions as if I have an idea with what is happening. Jesus he is not even answering my calls. When he comes back I am dumping him. Nxarga. Why am I doing this to myself? I should be at work right now and speaking to my workers about the skin products we are launching. I asked them to hire the dermatologist and so far she is doing so great maybe this is what I want to do, hiring people to work for me while I am home weeping for a man. Mxm. I am not doing that nonsense but I am leaving the moment he walks through this door I am telling you. But I want to expand my business to different provinces, now I really want to be a "boss" and enjoy.

The nuisance knock has not stopped either and I am fully aware that it must be one of the maidens who wants to announce about breakfast—It cannot be though because the time just blinked half past five and I haven't slept.

A moment of ignoring and not answering I hear the door knob turning. What in the fuck? I get up from the bed dragging my feet to the living room when I find him closing the door behind him. I have no idea how he managed to unlock but when he turns around he sees me and froze. I remain in the very same

position not knowing whether to shout, scream, cry or just murder him. I do not mind going to jail.

When he takes a step closer I raise my hand and immediately he pauses, he is swathed in nylon shorts showing his firm legs with some hair and matching round neck top with sneakers. Damn, damn he still manages to look charming even after years of disappearance. I want to grab the keys in his hands and throw them on his face—what a satan.

“Is this the reason why you came home demanding to see me? Then travelled all the way to where I was to leave me here wondering where are you? You said you were coming home Bandla, those were your words and not mine” I seethe and he remains in that position, not moving just standing looking at me with an apologetic facial expression then he swallows whatever is that on his mouth, I am sure to give the fabrication he is about to spit some moist. What else is he swallowing for? What else tell me? “I was here praying for you and what were you?” I crease my eyebrow at him “I do not understand why you smiling Bandla” No really what is the reason? Why is he showing those crispy white teeth. I can really pray. Yes I can.

“Makhosazana. . .”

I raise my hand again and this time pestering before he can continue “that is not my name, uphumaphi Bandlalabo?” You see? I managed to wipe off that bloom from his face. Ha ha ha. I

know all his damn red buttons and right now he is playing with the keys and hanging his head low. Mxm. I walk away from him and my feet propelling me to the bedroom. I can feel his footsteps right behind him, when I quickly run through the hallway so I can lock the door for not him to enter but he caught my plan fast because he just sweep me off my feet and throwing me over his shoulder when I was about to reach the door. "Put me down!" I punch his back as he walks through the room and places me down on the bed. I want to laugh but this facade remains on my face. After he has put me down he just stands in the middle of the room. "Where were you?"

"Before we continue with this conversation please do not call me like that, you know how it makes me feel" I do not care.

"Where were you?"

He looks at me furrowing his eyebrows before he raises his hand to run them through his beard. I see his knuckles freshly bruised with the red color. I am holding in my breath right now and he gazes at me as I clasp my hands on the side of the bed ready to grip at each word that he is about to say to me. "You haven't been sleeping Krotoa!" Okay by that hard stern face I am fully aware that he is scolding me for not sleeping

Advertisement

“Have you eaten? Have you been eating?” Why he is worried about something so stupid when I want to know what happened? Where was he? When did he change his clothes?

“Where you Bandla?”

“Udlile makhosazana?” Nxarga. Now he wants to stand there and ask me whether or not I have eaten. I flare my nostrils at him and getting under the duvet to sleep. When I wake up I am leaving, I’m not cannabis and that is not about to start now. I face the other side to avoid seeing him or anything that has to do with him “mphefumulo wami. . .” I ignore him and close my eyes. I can hear sharply inhaling then there’s movements before he gets on the bed his hands crawl and wrap themselves around my waist while nuzzles on my neck. He smells like nicotine. I am sure he has smoked five cigarettes since this morning started or double that number “the number is now thirteen” I freeze. I run out of breath. I flutter my eyes tightly closed, I know exactly what he is talking about and his body becomes rigid. He sniffs me, he said my scent calms him. “And we just opened the door for yet another war but I’m going to protect you” No, no, no this is not what I wanted when I said I need some action in my life “. . .this started when my great grandfather stole Mashobane KaMangete’s cows” You want to tell me all of this is happening because of cows? They have money why they cannot buy cows and return them back?

They're lives being lost here. "And when he was supposed to take them where they belong he killed him and came back carrying Mashobane's head as a trophy. And used it as some sort of decoration outside the gate of our house. We have no idea how the fight between them started" my blood runs cold, leaving chills running up and down my spine. I think it has to do with my imaginative mind because I can see the visual image of this picture, the cruelty of this. I don't know what to say but rather the grip on my waist has tightened I place my hand on top of his caressing the bruised knuckles. "And since then they've never been peace between us not until they have someone's head from this family on their gate. I'm sure they heard that we were coming and well prepared. I have no idea who told them when we arrived" I might just be spiraling out of control with my mind. No, no it cannot be. I'd rather don't say anything "And I'm sorry for not coming home but I'm here and safe"

I turn to him and seeing those unnamed emotions that always remains there. "I do not care whether you were fighting under the ocean but you were supposed to call me and tell me you won't make it home. I was devastated here Sengwayo, I was scared. . ." I inhale sharply "I couldn't reach you on the phone. I hope for your own sake this never happens again because you'll come back to an empty house" And now my hands are massaging his beard as he keeps opening and closing his eyes. I

think he may fall asleep soon because now his hand is holding onto my breast massaging it like a stress ball. “What is going to happen now?”

He forces his red rimmed eyes to open and look at me before we both chuckle in between at how sleepy he is. “I don’t know. We are going to figure out a way to bring peace but it needs to start here and hopefully this morning the sangoma is going to guide us about what has to be done” Then he closes his eyes again but they are moving “I need to speak to Nqabayezulu as well”

“You were not supposed to go to Yezulu’s house that day. . .” When hear my sarcasm and mimicking that name he looks up at me and laughs softly, gently squeezing my breast in his hand “. . .yes you wanted to check up on him but Sengwayo both of you almost killed each other and you thought it was okay to just show up at his house? Worse to rub salts in his wounds. Your brother is probably someone I’d grill and eat if ever there’s drought but because he is your brother I told myself I am going to respect him but a part of me understand where he is coming from. No one is to blame here. Not you. Not me and most definitely not him but we are all finding grounds to this new space and balance. You cannot blame him for acting like a toddler who just lost his toys because he is used to having his toys with him”

That might've dragged him out his sleep

“Ubani u-toys ke? Is it me or you? Because I know for a fact that I am not a toy mphefumulo wami. And since this has happened somehow he has been finding ways to say something that would hurt me. I understand that finding out about this relationship was hard for him but all the time his aim seems to attempting to see me in pain of some sort. We are finding balance in this new environment and that's totally fine but going around and hurting people to feed the void and feel better is totally unacceptable”

“Everyone made him get used to that and he thinks that's okay. Your brother is used to getting away with things because he has never in his life took accountability in any way but rather you'd take the blame to protect him or your uncle, or anyone in your family. Everyone's lungs are burning to spit fire right now. For instance I understand the reason Ka Mazibuko was acting the way she was acting when we met and I know for a fact that if she continued to say things to somehow provoke me it we would've ended up with us fighting but I chose to hold my tongue”

Okay he is definitely awake although his eyes are purely red and dragging his lashes at the bottom of his cheeks. “What did Ka Mazibuko say?” He frowns and no longer squeezing his favorite part of my body. “And you never told me about this?”

“What was there to tell you? She said nothing and I’m tired so let’s sleep” I close my eyes but I can feel his burning me with fire and he wants to plague me with questions. “Ngiyakuthanda now sleep” I know that he is smiling. I’m doing great. I flutter my eyes opened once to find him grinning like a numbskull before he takes out my breast and starts to suck—yeah neh.

•

We have been called to a particular hut and the atmosphere is pretty much rigid, I have no idea what is going to open there but after what my mother in law told me I am fully aware that we might leave that room with at least with one body bag. I am afraid as if I was there holding a candle for them while they were doing their shenanigans. I wasn’t even born for that matter but I am swallowing cupboards down my throat.

I propel my feet to the bedroom and I find him sitting on the edge of the bed, deep within the river of his thoughts when he feels my movements he casts his eyes towards me then smiles. He has a lot of in his mind about what happened and on the other hand my brain has been screaming wanting to know how everything happened, I need narration from when they got off the car to his knuckles being bruised. I don’t ask anyways but

rather I sit on his lap after he has maneuvered me and nuzzling on my neck. “You’re looking beautiful mphefumulo wami. Are you ready to go?” He look up at me touches the earring hanging on my ears “When can I send the cows to your family?” I search for humor and it’s not there. He is out of his mind it has been barely even a month. “I’m asking you when because I need to know when you are ready. I just need your go ahead and that’s all” What if a long run he learns about my bad habits and hates them? What then? “Makhosazana”

“It hasn’t been a month of us being together”

“You want me to wait for five years to marry you when I already know that you are my wife? Haibo sis’ marry me please”

“We will talk about this when we come back”

I get up and pulling down my dress as he takes my hand after I gazed at myself in the mirror. I know for a fact that I have nothing to hide because of this man whose fingers are intertwined with mine knows everything about my past. Unless something I might’ve completely forgotten about appears from nowhere but I cannot brush off this feeling that something thunderous is going to happen. As we get out of the house we can see everyone already making their way to the hut and even their father is here, he wasn’t here that day we arrived but I am

guessing he also needs answers. I can feel urine overflowing my urethra.

We take off our shoes outside and his delightful feet appear and the warmth of my tongue craves from them. I look at him and he gazes back before we smile and enter the room, immediately the scent of herbs smothers me and turning my stomach. I have a headache throbbing on my temples but nothing a glass of water cannot cure right? I need to be here.

There is Mzobanzi distance apart from his wife on the reed mat with his knees on his chest and hanging his head low and then my mother in law has red rimmed eyes and not so radiant as last night. I look closely at her and she has marks covered with make up around her neck. I have no idea whether those are love bites or maybe she was man handled. They look like both from where I am standing. I make myself comfortable on the mat and I have no idea whether to bow my head or wander my eyes around the room and everyone has worn different masks: perturbations of course, anger, quizzical, impassive and murderous. There is complete silence when a grunt erupts from the sangoma as she burns the incense and calling out clan names.

“Before we start as there anyone who wants to confess anything? All will come out anyways but is there anyone who

wants to say something?" She looks at us; she has such beautiful skin. "Heeeehh!" Then she drags the grunt, her shoulders moving up and down, there's a disapproval look dancing on her face with her eyes closed and a scowl painted on her lips. Everyone keeps looking at another and feigning innocence. I'm going to avoid looking at Mkhululi because he makes this too humorous for me. "Ye! Ye! Ye! Ye! Yeeeeeeeeee!" As she animalistic-ally groans again I swear the ambience in the room is not the same. We are not alone. It's not only us here but the cherubic magic and people are here. It's somehow scary because you can feel the supreme presence. "Oooooohh!" Yet another grunt I steal a glimpse at Bandlalethu and he has tightened his jaw. I want to be sure that I'm not losing my marbles and feeling this alone. We all are and my mother in law has tears dancing in her eyes. "Anyone wants to say something!" That sounded like a half shout. "Mama go fetch him now! He needs to be here!" I have no idea who is she talking to but when maMkhize stands on her feet I already know what this means, her husband hasn't lift up his head. Her sons exchange looks totally perplexed with what is happening and their uncle is floating in a same boat. It seems I am the only one who knows about her sins and I hope they do not mention my name when the truth comes out. I hope they're no guns in place here. I know we are going to turn into referees.

When she walks back with an average height frame following behind her I cannot really see him because my head is hanging low. "Mkhululi this is your son, Melikhaya" Silence. Heavy breathings. I pick my head up to be met with him.

God you got to be fucking kidding me!

50.

“two damaged people trying to heal each other is love”

Everything has become static!

I cannot move from where I am and even blinking has become a laboured thing because my eyes suddenly feel as though I have dry cement in there. Am I supposed to speak? Is an apology supposed to somehow crawl out of my mouth but I am praying inside my mind that my eyes do not dare fall off their sockets for everyone to see the state I'm in. I greedily gulp for much needed breath because I am suffocating I have no idea whether because of the incense burning or seeing my past haunting me and knocking at my door. What the fuck is this? Is this how karma comes and collect? If yes then I am raising my manicured middle finger to him because he is just petty and bitter. I am sure he has small penis dangling in between his damn legs.

Right now he has his feet planted on that cement floor unable to move, opening and closing his mouth when his wife also walks into the room. Is this what the Zungu ancestors brought me here for? For this fucking catastrophe when all I did was just falling in love with their son. They dragged me from my very

own peaceful life to come see blood painted on these walls made of mud?

I want to yell at him that he should peel his off my eyes from me but they remain transfixed at my direction and I can see there's so much running through his mind.

Until this man next to me notices that those brown enormous eye balls are on me. "Ngabe khona inkinga?" You see that tone? It's not polite but poisonous and laced with a brand new dead body that could fall on his feet. I glance at him to see his eyes that has darkened and a vein appears on his forehead. I have no idea where is that venom coming from. I am thankful to whoever that is guiding me right now when the sangoma starts to grunt loudly. Again its guttural and sounds painful as though the sound scratches her throat then she throws her head back. "What are you talking about ma? What son?" I look around the room and these two men whom are brothers are hyperventilating with anger. One who had no idea that he had yet another son with his brother's wife and the other one has been betrayed. I am here about to dance in bonfire with my demons.

It's so strange how their mother is just standing there announcing these news with no fucks given or whatsoever, I seriously think she has succumbed to whatever that may happen after this. I wish I was her but I am carrying a femme

fatale in all attempts to fight this war with these weird looking creatures.

“Sit down! Sit down! Sit down!” We hear the sangoma instructs the three people standing and well the wife is clueless she has no idea about what is happening, she pretty much seems innocent makes sense how they met on her way to “emhlangeni” and he used that tongue that once moved on my slippery folds on her, he is a smooth talker but he couldn’t tame me. I steal a quick glance towards his direction and hanging my head low. Something is about to erupt right at this moment.

“You. . .” Ugogo points at me and all my insides starts trembling as she points at me with a clean index finger and her nails? You’d swear she never touches herbs and worse they are not even manicured. “You are the nkosazana that was chosen to cause the catastrophe here so that the curse that started from one generation to another to continue and if this do not stop now, your sons are going to kill each other. Your great grandfather gave you away to this family” I am not going to have sons then. I will eat all my proteins to produce a girl child. “The problem started when none of the men in this family wanted to accept their position because they want power, no one understands that you don’t need a title to be powerful. . .” The room is in total silence they keep darting their eyes from me to ugogo skhotheni and impatiently waiting for all my dirty

laundry to be feed to them with silver cutlery down their throat. I just want to throw up all of my intestines in all honesty. “You’ve slept with these brothers haven’t you?” Oh fuck you couldn’t you just call me aside and ask me that question? “Have you?” she creases her eyebrow and I shake my head in disagreement. What do they say again? You must deny until mucus comes out of your nose forming a bubble, “Are you lying to amadlozi?” I need to find my voice.

“I’ve never slept with anyone” I cannot lift up my head anymore. I am afraid to look into his eyes because I just felt his body becoming rigid next to me.

“We never slept together” And then who was talking to Nqabayezulu? Who asked him to open his mouth. “Yes I might’ve been in love with her but we have never been intimate in any way” I think he is explaining to his brother. I steal a glimpse at him to see how he is flaring his nostrils and how his jawline looks like the sharp side of the sword. I place the palm of my hand on top of his and he is doesn’t even want to look at me. Although tranquillity appears on his shoulders, but he fears gazing into my eyes. The incense is still burning and the candles illuminates the room, the weather has changed.

“Which one of you has slept with her because I can see it? Which one ntombazane?” I cannot believe I was complimenting

how beautiful she is now she is being the satanism that wants to ruin my life.,

“It was me. . .” bury me now. I need a spade and a brand new grave that is perfectly made for me. I just remain hanging my head low because no words can come out of my own mouth. I cannot deny anymore but all I want to is to grab him by his collar and throw him across the room. I can hear the silent sob from the wife. My chest is burning with wildfire and tears I have no idea where they are coming from threatens my eyes. I might as well just cry right here and now. Where are my own ancestors now? What are they doing when this is happening to their own child? Why they can't protect me? “I am the one who slept with her” I remember that voice too well. There was something about it sometimes he would sound lazy and stutter whenever he was deranged. I am reminded of that hurt that was laced on it when he discovered I have cleaned his bank and all he has ever worked hard for was going to come trembling down. I saw the fear dancing in his eyes about losing his wife and children. I remember wanting to embrace him and apologize then make a promise that I will return it back. And yes maybe at that time I might've loved him but knowing that I was just a “thing” or yet another woman he wanted to release the stress and frustration too, after his scrotum sagged as it releases the sperms is the reason why I never felt bad upon

seeing the walls of my practice being built. He was playing me and his wife.

I played him much better!

“Your situation is different you had no idea they were brothers and it was not your fault. . .” I haven’t not once decided to look at anyone’s face and eyes “. . .you are going to get cleanse. You are here for a reason Ka Makhetha. You are here to carry the legacy of this family. You were not chosen by a mistake but you are a reflection of that man you are holding his hand right now. All you can do is touch him and calm him like that and if you didn’t do that just now we would be talking another story, listen to your intuition all the time it will never lead you to astray, protect what you are carrying” I do not care how smooth her voice sounds but she has ruined my life “Her story sounds familiar to yours doesn’t it?” Now she is looking at my mother in law “And that’s the reason you see yourself in her” I have no idea whether she is asking or telling but anyways maMkhize nods her head. “But you know what makes it different is that when you knew that these two are brothers you continued to sleep with them, nigcolile. . .” I lift my head up this time and Mkhululi is still perplexed. As if he was thrown to Jupiter. I am sure he is wondering what is happening but he has his eyes focused on what has been introduced as his son. “If you do not accept that you were not meant to sit on this throne

you are going to lose your mind. It's not yours. It's not meant for your children but you were chosen to expand this family hence your fascination with cows. You always feel a need to look into their eyes strange isn't it?" This woman talks from one person to another. Right now they are talking to Nqabayezulu, "you are going to marry your soulmate and a woman you are in love with, you're not wrong for wanting polygamy but you just wanted to start it with a woman that is not yours. Stop wanting everyone to nurse your feelings, you need to start playing your part in this family" Aww poor Ka Mazibuko, from the time we walked into this room she has not once lifted her head up. I can see a droplet of tear falling from her. "Why you're planning to kill your own brother? A brother who raised you? Do you have any idea how much he loves you? He doesn't even want to count the sacrifices that he has made for you because he believe it was his choice. You want the business that you should be expanding to come falling down because you are hungry for power? How long you have been planning to kill him?" I want to get up from this reed mat and bite him on his neck. How dare he? That all it takes for me to start crying.

"Can we go outside for a moment?" Bandlalethu asks, he doesn't seem to care about the fact that they were plotting to kill him but rather he wants to comfort me.

When Bandlalethu speaks to ugogo, she rubs her hands together respectfully

averting making any sort of eye contact with her head bowed. Is it because of his natural dominating aura. I have no idea. We get up from the floor and I almost stumble back when he takes my hand to his, our fingers intertwine then we walk outside. I haven't been able to really point out the emotions drawn on him. It has been too much for him to swallow, it's understandable. I did not expect him to pull me into his arms and listening to me crying. I shouldn't have bothered with make up because my foundation stains his crispy white shirt. "Why you're crying now makhosazana?" his chin is on top of my head "I knew he was planning on killing me" Excuse me what? "After that night I went to see him he called Mabutho remember the one I went to meet in Rwanda? He was trying to sabotage the deal and last night he pointed me with a gun. I have no idea why he did not pull the trigger" Now his body is here but his mind is traveling around the yard. We are both silent. I am calming down from crying. He continues to kiss the top of my head and I am assuming he has no words to say. I don't too. "Ubumthanda?" A random question. He asks whether or not I loved Melikhaya. I'm afraid to look at him. I did not want us to address this now. "I cannot really start the havoc because it happened in the past but I want to know whether or not you loved him?"

I shake my head and stick to burying myself in his chest “Look at me Krotoa” Hah! What happened to those names he usually calls me with? I refuse to look at him and instead he pulls away from the hug. “Did you love him?” Again he plagues and his eyes too thin as he looks at me “I need you to be fully aware that if ever he looks your way I’m going to kill him with no doubts” An electric shock runs through my body. “And angihleki, it’s not only him I’m talking about at this point”

“I don’t love him Bandlaletu” I raise my head to stare into his eyes that are paralyzed with fear. He’s holding his breath and my heart constricts.

“I asked whether you loved him, I didn’t not say you love him. I asked twice you failed to answer me. I am asking again did you?” his eyes burning with some unfathomable emotion.

“I didn’t know what love is until I met you. . .” The raw and unrefined truth rolls out of my mouth. He looks at me then look towards the empty kraal since the cows has been taken out to go eat the grass. I don’t know what exactly is fighting. His thoughts? His mind? His body? His soul? But he is in a serious battle that he glances at me once with red rimmed eyes then look away yet again running his hand through his head, beard and face before he shoves them inside his pocket. “I had no idea that he was your brother. You had no idea. He had no

idea” The taste of my saliva is like apple cider vinegar inside my tongue. “Bandlaethu?” He turns to look at me.

“Hmmm”

“Ngiyakuthanda”

“I know mphefumulo wami” Then he inhales sharply and looks towards the other direction “Ngiyakuthanda kakhulu” I guess he won’t look into my eyes. I know he needs to smoke until his lungs cannot take it anymore “Can we go back inside so we can finish this up? I have migraines already and I need to smoke”

“Ngicela ungiqabula”

“Manje?”

When else would I want him to kiss him?

“Woza phela ku-baba”

As he takes me into his arms we are interrupted by the screaming inside the hut. Sigh. It’s not enough that my life is taking another direction I have no idea of now I cannot get a kiss? Well congratulations they have won. We walk into the room and we find the brothers—older ones—on their feet, standing face to face with guns on their hands and venomously blazing at each other. I do not even want walk further inside because one of them is determined to pull the trigger I have no

idea what was being said while we were outside did they continue? I don't know.

Bandlalethu stands in between them “You cannot point at each other with guns in this hut. This were we communicate our ancestors, it's sacred place that needs nothing more than respect and this is the last thing you should be doing please” How can he speak to two bulls in a kraal like that “Mkhululi. . .” He really has a special bond with him because even from the way they look at each other it's precious but that is yet another punch in the stomach for Mzobanzi witnessing this, seeing how his “son” easily calm his brother and they communicate with body language. Mkhululi puts down the gun and steps away returning to where he was sitting. This room is just smothering. I have no idea whether it's the darkness looming around here and the secrets that are yet to be unveiled but I am feeling hot from my armpit to in between my legs. I am wondering what more is yet to unraveled from here? It seems somehow we are connected one way on the other. Are we brought together by ancestors so that some of us could find healing? Home? Answers? I am scared of what is about to happen when we have to leave this room.

“Mzobanzi ngiyakucela, please Zungu” Again he pleads with his “father” I have no idea how to address them now. His chest that is moving up and down is slowly calming now. Then he

returns to where he was sitting. I wish someone else can start another ruckus so we can delay this. “Makhosazana woza” Then he turns to me as I am standing by the door taking my hand for us to return where we were.

I have no idea what is the meaning of that pain in that man’s face. What is that wretchedness? We had sex, yes and that was it. Then his wife wants to murder me, that look says enough. I breathe out and make myself comfortable on the reed mat when gogo skhotheni burns yet another incense and I swallow back my cough.

“Hmmmmmm” she says and her shoulders moving up, down, up, down while shaking her head at the the same time. “You. . .” hello she comes back. “. . .you are followed by darkness spirit, you need to apologize to that family for killing their son” I am not following. Who is she talking to? “you would’ve died when you tried killing your self but it wasn’t the right time. You need to cleanse your heart, you constantly think of killing people who wants to take away what you think belongs to you. You feel full by hurting other people because you want them to feel the same pain you felt upon the death of your family. Can you see her?” Oh she is talking to Zenokuhle and pointing at my dearest cousin who wants to run out of this door already “Tell her what happened before we continue” Basically we are here to confess our sins and find solutions—wait did she say Ka

Mazibuko murdered someone? I cannot hold my gasp but I pretend that I just choked from my saliva and this man is hitting my back. He seems pretty much distant.

Her face is covered with tears and mucus while body trembles, "I'm sorry. . ." she is apologizing to my perplexed cousin ". . .your husband" Her husband is what? Jesus she killed her husband. I mean ex. "I had an affair with your husband and upon finding out that he was divorcing you I thought he'll finally be with me but there was another woman in the picture. I thought he'll choose me" Okay that's a wrap. We need to continue with this tomorrow. It has been a lot already. I seriously need a chance to breathe. I cannot process or consume anything.

"What's your father's surname?" They ask Zenokuhle.

"Mazibuko"

"That's is not your father; here I am shown that both of you are sisters and Bhesisiwe Zungu made a promise to Makhetha that a daughter from your family will be seated on the throne or either help expanding this family. Hence both of you are here it's for a reason; you were chosen by these boy's great grandfather and therefore you need to find your father's grave and let him know you found each other, because he has been restless. One of the reasons you've been followed by darkness is because you were using a wrong surname" she says her eyes

darting between the both of us “In the ancient times whenever you needed something it’s either you gave away with imfuyo or made a generational promise and this is the case”

Fuck this shit I am out of here!

I don’t even want to know what else she wants to unveil after this, I don’t care, I’m leaving at this very moment.

51.

blood spilled

- to hurt or kill someone in a fight. Too much blood has been spilled in this conflict.

ZENOKUHLE

Each every sound has faded and suddenly my skin is too small for my own bones, smothered by emotions that are inescapable with everyone's eyes mainly focused on the both of us and mine on hers. I keep searching for the sound of my own voice in every part of my body but I cannot seem to find it. I have no idea what makes my body shake and tears dance in my eyeballs between the fact that I cannot ask my mother questions now since she's gone or this new revelation. I don't know. I feel like I am losing my mind and sanity is something that I've never heard of. I direct my eyes towards her direction to see what is painted on her face and now I can see some specific features that somehow look like mine. The sharp jawline and the nose that is acceptable by Eccentric beauty standards. It seems she took most of her genes from her mother though. I'm expecting her to do something, say

something but rather she remains there impassive her hand intertwined with his, as he caresses her and I am in complete oblivion upon absentmindedly feeling his hand covering mine. I turn my head to look at him and I witness care, tenderness and unexplainable passion in his eyes that makes me want to scream at him, shout, yell or even run out of this room as he mouths something that I cannot really make out but somehow it calms my thoughts.

I wander my eyes around the room again thinking they'll be judgmental facial expressions on some people's face but there is nothing maybe because everyone has their own demons to be exposed and dance with but even the woman I've confessed to that I was her husband's mistress doesn't seem to care about that but rather she said I do not owe her apology or whatsoever. It's surprising. But what is more stupefying than knowing that your great grandfather made some sort of "promise" or "sold" you to another family when you were not even born to fulfil whatever. Bullshit I tell you.

A grunt from the sangoma interrupts my turbulent thoughts and I cannot peel off my eyes from her when eventually she gazes at me. I think we are both starting to see these features on each other. I have no idea whether to smile at her or maybe wave my hand, crawl to embrace—that's something that keeps pushing me to do this—or maybe just remain here static.

“You need to stop lusting over your own brother in law. That man is not for you. He was not meant for you. You are the one creating the mist and confusion when it comes to your emotions about what to feel because of that chaotic energy that you carry and that is the reason you found yourself in an ungodly space and questioning your emotions. Open your heart and mind, both these two cannot lead you to astray, here is the man you were brought here for. . .” I am exposed upon my hidden thoughts and I cannot help but hanging my head low, tears starts to burn my eyes “. . .you are going to be fine but if you allow yourself to take a moment to heal, take accountability, plead for forgiveness and also find it in yourself too. These dark thoughts will walk out of the door after the cleansing but it’s all in the palm of your hands what do you do after that” It was more somehow “blissful” hearing other people’s hidden shelves being drag out. And before the discovery that we are related I found delight in knowing that she wasn’t as perfect but there are rough edges there. Yes my heart danced with euphoria and my mind sang joyfully. I feel bare naked and everyone can see every part of me. I cannot possibly look into her eyes now that she knows I dreamt about her man with his head disappearing in between my thighs, tongue moving up and down my slippery slits before he plagues deep inside me. I cannot look at the man next to me because now he is fully aware that I dreamt of sitting on him with my

hips sensually moving screaming in ecstasy while his brother fucks me in my anal.

The smell of incense keeps moving around the room and there's this powerful presence

I have no idea which one in this family had such a dominating aura but whomever it is they are here. It makes a woman subconsciously just want to hang their heads low, keep fixing the clothes on your head and saying "yebo baba".

"Mzobanzi you knew that you were never meant to lead, you were fully aware that is not your calling. . ." Now they are talking to the father who is in the corner diabolically looking at his brother with venom "And then you went on to lead the people and worse you were not doing right in the eyes of The Lord. You were a pastor by day and then at night?" Ugogo creases her eyebrow at him. What was he doing at night? I've seen these things on television about false prophet. "You are not only going to be punished by your ancestors for not fulfilling what you had to do but also Unkulunkulu owadala izulu nomhlaba" Then she says throwing ishoba behind her back from left to right then repeat "Your calling was expanding this family. Your calling was taking more than two wives, you were told this and you ran away from it. Even you. . ." she points at the uncle "You ran away from the throne to go drown yourself in darkness for what?"

Mkhululi clears his throat “I did it for my brother” Then he speaks out with his deep baritone voice and glancing towards the man he made a sacrifice for “. . .We both made a promise that we wouldn’t find ourselves in a same situation that happened with my grandfather and other men in this family from other generations”

“But here we are!”

“I just want to know how were you making a sacrifice for me? When you slept with my wife and had two sons with her how was that a sacrifice? When your son killed my brother—

“Our brother Mzobanzi!” Mkhululi seethes and his eyes becoming dark molten pools “He was not only your brother but he was mine. A brother who tried to kill your son because he wanted power just as much as you were hungry for it, going as far as wanting to ukuthwala with your own son. I ran away from that throne because I knew we were going to turn against each other. You were going to fight for what was not rightfully yours. Even after that you turned your back and went to a woman I told you every single night that I loved. Every damn night Mzobanzi you listened to me, laughed at me then turned around to go pretend to be a pastor. Yes I fuck—then he pauses minding the language and running his hands on his face, “Ngonile” he admits that he was wrong. It’s an emotional image to witness. “And I’m sorry for hurting you like that. I wish I can

turn back the time and not act on my feelings and use my brain. I cannot pin point anything to anyone but I am fully taking accountability of what happened and I'm sorry"

"The first time is forgive-able but the second time? The second time udakiwe masimba kanyoko!" The pastor say with vexation. I wasn't supposed to be that specific but I guess it has already rolled out of my mouth. Well basically he is calling his brother by their mother's shit.

"Nawe umawakho—that's also your mother" This not something that I should be finding comical but at this moment I cannot laugh but rather I hang my head low swallowing the sound of my laughter. "How many women I've dated you've fucked?"

"Even that one can be on the list!" He says with a devilry smirk and using his eyes to point towards the quiet Lerato.

Haibo! Haibo! Haibo!

"Stop this! Stop it right now it ends!" Ugogo scolds as Mkhululi was getting up from he is sitting and grabbing out the gun behind his back. All we can do is gasp and catch our eyes from falling. I'm wondering how everyone will deal with this aftermath. Who is going to survive? And who will completely shatter and shut down.

“Inkosi Zungu. . .” gogo bows her head and rubbing her hands together. Whenever she address Bandlaletu there is this sense of respect embroidered in her body language and laced in her tone. It makes sense anyways he has that ability to hand him out the respect without him having to say a word, not surprising he was meant to sit on the throne. I guess she only gets the best all the time doesn’t she? First it was this man wanting to turning her into a second wife and determined in doing so and now the throne? She seems to always be a better choice. “All the dead bodies you’ve stepped on protecting this family, you need to be cleanse before the conversation about when you’ll take the chair starts but the curse has to be broken. We’ll have to find a person behind this and reasons why this has happened otherwise your sons will suffer the same fate. Killing your uncle was meant to happen it was written in the stars. . .” What is that supposed to mean? “But some deaths were fully just in your hands. The migraines that you often get and swollen feet will stop after you’ve claimed your chair. Yes there should be a bloodbath happening between three of you brothers but only you can stop it from happening, do not act on emotions but rather think first. Ignore Iqunga lokubulala. Just like how some killings became a habit to you not because you needed to do it this will be the same. You had that pastor killed because—

“Because he hurt makhosazana. I killed my uncle because he wanted to hurt my brother. I killed one of the relatives in the family they were talking bad about my mother and. . .

“You were only seventeen Zungu when that happened and looking back now you would’ve handled the situation better”

“No” He boldly says “I would’ve killed them still for saying those things about my mother. One thing I am not going to do makhosi is pretend that I regret what had happened because if ever given a chance I will do it again and again. The cleansing may happen. We may heal. We may find closure but the moment anyone hurts this woman sitting right next to me this will be nothing but a waste of time because I’ll come back needing yet another cleansing” He speaks with dark eyes burning with dangerous fire and veins resembling thunderstorm on his arms. “I would’ve killed him that day. . .” now he is talking about his brother next to me “When he called her names? I even forgot for a moment that I care about him and if she wasn’t there we would be grieving his death since I did not want her to see that side to me” It seems he is confessing for himself than anything else. “When she did not hold my hand at that moment the brother I had no idea exist’s body would be laid out soulless as we speak”

“That’s because you’ve made killing a habit. Even with him. . .” he points directly to the new found brother who is absolutely

charming with that beard on his chin, bald head and dimples deepening his cheek “. . .you’ve both made it an habit to kill even when there is absolutely no reason. Just like your great grandfather who came back using someone’s head as decoration at the gate. There was no need for him to kill that man. He was supposed to return the cows. Your father there has made it a habit too. Your uncle made its habit regardless of being a so called pastor but anyone who seemed to be a competition to him was got ridden off” This family is much darker than they appear to be. “You’re not in control. You’re fighting so many battles that you ancestors never had dealt with. Another reason there is no girl child in this family because they won’t be able to continue with this generational curse. We need to find a way to this Inkosi Zungu”

“What are you saying? Are you saying that when you killed my brother you never regretted it? You’re not sorry?” Mzobanzi furrows his eyebrows looking directly at what was once his son. That sounds wrong. I’m guessing at his nephew.

“He killed my grandfather. He slaughtered him like a goat and watched him die with a smirk. He wanted ukuthwala using Nqabayezulu so no I’m not sorry” He means this. You can tell from his eyes and tone. Mzobanzi quickly gets up from where he is sitting to grab Bandlalethu from the floor with his collar. Their foreheads are pressing against each other. All the men in

the room stand up and the only woman on her feet is Krotoa standing beside her man with a daring look and nostrils flaring. Nqabayezulu is standing here and I cannot read his facial expression and then Mkhululi is waiting for the next move from his brother before he moves like a prey. I think the new man in the family wants to play referee and his wife is there still recovering from the stupor of him cheating. “You might’ve not care about me and maybe your son that I protected since ungenandaba about what would’ve happened to him but I loved you. I loved you as my father regardless of you not being there for me and not caring”

“You were never mine Bandlalethu!” Now I can tell where is the anger coming from “You had all these traits that reminded me of him. . .” I guess it’s a venting session but he grabs out a gun pointing it in between his “son” forehead “Are you expecting me to be remorseful about what I am about to do?”

“Mzobanzi please!” MaMkhize begs crying.

“Baba. . .” Nqabayezulu pleads “. . .don’t do it please” This escalated much quicker than I thought because as we speak my bowels are shivering and my heartbeat is violently beating against my chest seeing his fingers moving to pull the trigger with intense emotions in his eyes. We hear a loud bang and a smell of fresh bullet voyaging through our nose, blood splatters on the wall when the body falls onto the ground soulless with

eyes wide opened. Loud screams, hysteria and exclaiming erupts from the room.

“Sekwenzekile Ohhhhhhh!” The sangoma loudly and guttural grunts with her eyes thrown back behind her head. When my eyes moved towards him next to me, his chest moving up and down, tears falling down his face as he is trembling. I have no idea where that gun came from but it’s in his hand.

“Oooooohhh” Again then grunts and groan. Their mother is losing her mind on the reed mat.

Nqabayezulu killed his father!

52.

cavity

/'kavɪti/

- an empty space within a solid object.

Z E N O K U H L E

The melodramatic opera music starts to play in the background as we ballerina to the aftermath of what has happened, the yard is buzzing with blue and red sirens as the white body bag is being pushed outside to the white and green van. Their mother is hysterically crying and taken away while the forensics are taking pictures of the scene, there's blood on the floor now turning dark as the sun is gone while we stand here with the droplets of rain caressing our skins.

“Can you all please come with me?” That's Mkhululi his face remains unreadable but his shoulders are sagging as a deflated balloon. We have no idea where Nqabayezulu went after shooting. I ran behind him and screaming, yelling and shouting his name while wiping my tears with the back of my hand but he ignored me and got into a car as the dust risen from the ground smothering me, causing me to cough. I am sick in my

stomach as my intestines are continuously being stabbed by a femme fatal that makes me bleed from my nose and ears, that's dark.

We follow right behind him—the women—all the way to the house around the yard when he opens the door and we all walk in at once, shaken from what has happened as we make ourselves comfortable on the couches, distance apart from each other, he stands with his hands shoved in his pockets while hanging his head low. “You were not supposed to see what happened there. . .” I can hear from his tone that he is moved and shaken, “. . .and for that I would like to apologize. I wish I could cleanse your eyesight or format your brains but there is nothing I could've done. Well there were so many ways this would've turned out but at the end of the day it would've been tragic. We do not have women in this family and therefore I am going to need all of you to support wherever you can and unite. Yes we met under different circumstances and somehow our pasts connects us but for now can we put that past us and just find a way forward. Can you do that for me?” We all nod our heads at once “We are going to solve the matter with the police and whenever they ask you questions just say a man walked in there and started shooting” Again we incline our heads “And this is Quqi uMaMsweli, be kind to each other. . .” he casts his eyes towards the woman who has been avoiding making any sort of eye contact with him, “Mfazi wami can we

talk privately?” Although she just gave him that look but she is the color of crimson as she gets up from the sofa and following right behind him when they disappear through the hallway and he takes her hand.

I can tell we are all dying to speak, to say something and face confrontation as my eyes glances towards the woman that has been introduced when she takes off the head wrap on her head complaining about headache as she reveal thin braids that immediately falls over her shoulders down her back, she is absolutely gorgeous with her caramel skin tone and thick feathery eyebrows. I cannot peel off my eyes from her face with those edges on her forehead, brown enormous eyes that seems dreamy with her lips painted in brown

chubby cheeks and a beauty spot on her bottom lip. And I can tell that the urge to speak is smothering her, wanting to plague questions but that chance is snatch away from her when what has been revealed as my sister walks out of the room without saying anything to anyone.

I smile awkwardly and clearing my throat. I cannot really act perfect when she knows exactly what color paint am I. “You should go talk to her, both of you just found out that you are sisters. . .” And then Quqi says with a eloquent voice “I’m sure you want to know what happened. Everyone has questions running through their minds just go talk to her” It’s strange

meeting someone who is generally and genuinely just being kind, warm and welcoming. I take a deep breath and nodding my head as she places her hand over my knee with comfort and I get up from the couch, following where she has disappeared looking around in all rooms until I find her in the bedroom sitting on the edge of bed and when she sees me she remains straight faced, waiting for my next move.

I double knock and entering the door making my way in when she makes herself even more comfortable, the weave on her head suits her face shape as she flicker it back even after finding out about her flaws and imperfections she remains being an epitome of perfection then she tugs the strands of her hair behind her ear revealing gold earrings darting her eyes between mines.

“Sawubona” I greet first and a radiant smile appears on her face as a way of greeting back remaining on a same position on the bed when she shows me the bedroom couch opposite her to take a sit on and then breathe out. “I wanted us to talk. . .” I look at her as she exhales sharply. We have a moment of silence looming between the both of us. The pink elephant in a tulle gown waltzes in a room to some high class opera music then I swallow my saliva as it was about to choke me “It seems like you always had that one perfect piece of the cake that everyone wanted” I start to speak and she elevates her

eyebrow as though I am growing penis on my face “I’m sure he might’ve treated you like a princess. . .” An unexpected unwilted tear touches my cheek and I quickly wipe it as my lips tremble with emotions “you get the best of everything and all my life I have to fight to have all of that. I have to fight to be a better option and it seems even in my destiny it was written that I’ll come second” I swallow the bitter taste “But I guess that’s life”

“I’ve never met our father either nor do I always get the perfect piece of the cake. I have no idea where you got that from but to me that’s funny. You came here in this room to make me feel bad about something I have no idea of because you looked at me and automatically thought I had it easy in life?” I can see the opaqueness emotions of anger and irk dancing and appearing from her face “I have a dark past as much as you have yours. In this life we are all victims, no one’s pain is better than the other so if you want to sit there and think that maybe I might feel sorry for you then you came into a wrong house. A man who has never been in my life wants me to go to his grave and let him know I’ve found yet another human he chose to dump and continued living his life?” Then she dryly chuckles with pristine tears starting to drown her eye balls as she directly looks into my eyes. I look away from her for a moment “I am not going to nurse your feelings or hand you sympathy on a tray. Just like you had a hard knock life I also had my own.

Your family was burnt down to ashes and died and I'm sorry for that but my mother was raped and she died. I watched her as life was eating her sanity every single day. I watched her becoming soulless in front of me everyday. I saw her body hanging from the garage, urine seeping down her legs but you'll never see me going and around, making people feel bad for their upbringing and perfect lives just because life has never been easy on anyone. Life has never been easy on me as much as it was never easy on you. It was never kind. It was never peaceful but don't come here and make me feel bad for whatever reason Zenokuhle" then she pauses to smile and shakes her head "A perfect piece of cake. You got to be fucking kidding me" I swallow again as she seethes with vexation. "You have no idea what's like having a perfect piece of cake"

I shrug my shoulders "I guess maybe you're right. . ."

"No I am fucking right not maybe. I am here stuck in this bedroom after witnessing something gruesome and guttural. I saw a man being killed in front of me. His body came crashing right on my feet and as I am sitting here I am constantly thinking about what would've happened if he pulled that trigger first. That one person who makes me feel good about myself and sees beyond the imperfections that everyone tends to search for in me would've died. I would've lost that one thing that means the world to me right now. Maybe I am having a

perfect piece of cake and that's him. And I am not going to apologize to you that I have that piece that you wanted" After that she looks away as the salty beads fall down her face then sniffs "The world is cruel and so are the people in this world. Everyone's just out to make everyone else not human. We want to find bad in other people to feel much better about ourselves. It's scary. It's weird. It's funny. And for the first time I met someone who sees me. Who sees me beyond the slut shaming, beyond every fucking single bad thing people have said about me. Now do not make me feel bad about that"

We look at each other then I quickly look away as my hands start to tremble. "I've never spoke to anyone about what happened that night. . ." randomly I just say as she pays attentive attention to me ". . .it made me question my own sanity how can I kill someone and just, sleep in that same room as if nothing ever happened. I guess that what makes me a bad person"

"You're not a bad person"

"I am, the things I've done are unforgivable"

She shrugs, "pain changes who you are as a person"

"I killed and I helped someone bury two bodies after she has murdered them, you still think that I am not a bad person?"

“I told you, you’re not and you want me to see you that way because every time you think something is unforgivable you keep doing it over and over again because what’s the different now? Without realizing that forgiveness is the key to change. We’re too busy running around judging everyone’s intentions and motivations as if we have some insight into the human soul” then she shrugs her shoulders nonchalantly “I’m not one to judge anyone mostly because I’ve done some things that are unforgivable myself. And I take accountability. I’m not going to go around making people feel bad about my own choices of what I’ve done because at end of the day no one gives chicken shit or a single fuck about you but yourself. Right now something could make me feel good and special then one morning it walks out and decides that I’m not good enough. . .” then she pauses “in that moment only I’ll have my back. Have your back too. Maybe you may not get the point as to what I’m saying and that’s fine but this whole thing of playing victim and wanting everyone to feel bad about your past is not cute. Find healing within yourself and do not project that anger in other people” she smiles wiping the last drop of tear from her face then get up from the bed walking out of the room.

53.

solace

/'sɒlɪs/

- comfort or consolation in a time of distress or sadness

N Q A B A Y E Z U L U

I am a murder, sounds almost like a comedy central stand-up comedy saying that, “I killed my father”, waiting for some laughter at the background and a round of applaud as people assume it’s something comical but this is not some made up story to entertain the audience but I pulled a trigger and watched his body falling into the ground with his eyes transfixed on me after taking his last breath. I captured that picture and it has been haunting me from the moment I walked into this nearest tavern and sitting at the corner watching everyone dancing to amapiano, patting each other’s shoulders and moving to the rhythm of the groovy song so ebullient.

I keep running my hands through my head when a woman with dark drawn eyebrows and blue glittery eyeshadow places yet another pack of beers before she attentively looks at me. I pull

down the strings of the hoodie that I am wearing to hide my face. “Ya wena muhleza, I’ve never seen you here before” she says chewing that bubble gum with an exasperating sound and pushing her gigantic creamy breasts up before she pushes her hair “Why are you stressed? You’re divorcing? Or running away from the wife and boring sex? Yindaba uyabanda?” Jesus Christ can she leave me the fuck alone and stop asking about my sex life. I shake my head and opening the bottle of beer leaning back on the chair. “You might’ve been caught cheating, I hope she dates your father and turns you into her step son. Weh oe!!” she screams at another woman while she’s walking away “Men are trash!! Here is this one he cheated and he was caught” she looks over her shoulders to catch a glimpse towards my direction with a scowl on her face and after that I cannot really hear what they are talking about. It has to do with our gender being burnt at dawn, she cannot wait because she has a bucket of petrol somewhere in her house well prepared. I cannot help but chuckle and shake my head before guzzling from the bottle of beer waiting for complete numbness to drape me as a blanket on a cold and rainy day, keeping me warm.

This place smells like cigarettes, beer, armpits and sex from the couple that went to fuck in the car because of their high libido then came back pretending as though nothing happened. I need that, something that will make me completely forget

about what am I drowning in. I look around to see someone anyone that could allow me to fight all my demons between her legs and there is no one. This bottle might as well just help me shut down these thoughts playing in my head.

The visual image that appears from nowhere plays in my head of my mother in a reed mat seeing her man dead on the floor makes me grit my teeth and run my hands over my face, grunting. I hang my head low feeling powerful acid threatening my eyes.

“You are hard to find” I hear his baritone voice and feeling the presence and aura that I have been feeling around him from the time I found him at my house in a couch and lithe, my head remains facing downwards as my tears defeats me in this war. “I’ve been looking everywhere and I thought I might find you in a kraal” Again he says sonorously and I eventually choose to cast my eyes towards his direction quickly wiping my tears and leaning back on a chair before taking a sip from the bottle and pushing the other one on the table towards his direction and he grabs the bottle looking around at our surrounding as he starts to take a sip. “Why?” I wasn’t expecting that question from him. He could be asking so many things with that particular “why” so many that I’d rather run away from because I have no answers.

I scowl and shrug my shoulders, “Why I tried to kill you or why I killed him?”

“You wouldn’t have killed me so I do not really care about that part”

“He wanted to kill you”

“And you wanted me dead Nqabayezulu”

“I did. . .” I chuckle and avert making any sort of eye contact, breathing out heavily before the alcohol liquid moves down my throat “The first time you—you know, how did you feel? Did the guilt paralyze you?”

“Guilt?” He huffs and lean backwards grabbing out a cigarette from the packet before shoving it inside his mouth “I felt alive not guilty” Then he strokes it alight and inhaling the smoke to his lungs “I couldn’t feel guilty knowing that I did what I had to do to protect you. I think the only time I ever felt guilt was not letting you know that I was in love with makhosazana. I was afraid actually that I’ll hurt you. That’s my worst fear, that’s always been my fear and maybe that’s why I protected you way too much for you to explore the world with your own eyes without me being the glasses that allows you to see the world from your own perspective and not mine. You know? I just wanted you to have everything that you ever wanted without fail”

“I think that’s where my fear of rejection comes from” I chuckle slightly and rub my nose while snorting my mucus “I never thought you were my shadow. . .” I truthfully tell him and flaring my nostrils “Yes it scared me seeing you becoming better than me, becoming whom I was fighting to be and stuff you know. But you’ve never been my shadow really” I scowl again and feeling my upper lip trembling while transporting all my emotions to a bottle of beer in my hand as his eyes focuses me. “I really did love her by the way but I guess she was never mine. I thought—I thought she might’ve felt the same way but I saw it” I point my eyes with my two fingers “. . .she can never really be mine. Ever

whether I kill you or not she wouldn’t come to me”

“You can never kill me and I meant that” He chuckles and takes a sip from his bottle when we both look towards the woman who was accusing me of cheating chasing someone out and we look at each other laughing at the same time. “I’m sorry for not telling you that I was in love with her” He doesn’t look at me “I saw her once crossing the robot and she was like wearing this other dress. . .” it seems as if he is revisiting that one image and he has a smile painted on his face, widely just beaming and rubbing his beard. I’ve never seen him like this “. . .she somehow appeared to be a god you know. Like it was all just imagination and I had to like find out more about her to know

really whether or not she was real. And surprisingly it wasn't a day dream. She was real. She is real. I feel magic at the feel of her fingertips against my skin. I don't know how to explain this" Then he takes a sip searching for right words to explain what exactly he feels "You know usually people say "I don't deserve you, you're too perfect" to their partners making it sound romantic and that to me sounds like complete bullshit. When someone is too good for you then let them go and be with someone who feels they're good enough and deserve to be with them. I never made a mistake with being with her, waiting for her and loving her. I deserve her, she's perfect with me. Do I make sense?" When he attempts on not being too poetic with words he's usually drunk. He might've had cognac before coming here. He exhales the smoke in between his fingers.

"You do, you make sense"

He rapidly nods his head with his eyes that has turned red when the cancer stick is short he places it on the ash tray then grab yet another one. "You didn't answer my question. I asked you why?"

"Because. . ." I avert his eyes. "I mean he seemed not to give a fuck about the fact that his brother would've killed me. He was more bothered about what you did then what would've happened. It got me thinking about how he somehow planted

these thoughts about you, he wanted to create a drift between us. I said some things to you and I'm sorry"

"I'm not the one you should be apologizing to, you threaten to kill her grandmother. How fucked up can that be? Where you got that moral compass? Going around and threatening women to feel better about yourself? And the slut shaming that was a low blow. You blamed her of seducing me and you didn't think that I might've done that? You wanted the business to come crumbling down because your ego was bruised? I hope all of this teaches you to grow the fuck up" Now? Yes he's giving me a lecture with a hard stoned tone and honed facial expression with thin eyes before he shakes his head.

"I wanted power, supremacy and all that we have been taught makes a boy a real man"

"The society is never too soft on us. That's why men end up being despondent and in darkness they cannot really escape. And some end up as sadists and abusive seeking for power, because a weak woman, crying and pleading him to stop makes him feel like a giant but toxic masculinity doesn't excuse their behavior. I hate those kind of men. Izinja nje"

"And dad was one of them"

He pauses and looks at me, searching for my eyes and gulping for breath "What he used to do to you was abuse when we

were young. I saw it and I witnessed it, you never wanted me to touch your wounds and marks after you've been beaten up" I speak up and feeling the tears that wants to burn my eyeballs until they liquify "You never wanted me or anyone to see you vulnerable Bandlalethu"

"And what you could've done?" I see his temples as they move with great violence while he chews at his teeth. "What you could've done? Beg him to stop beating me up for passing at school while you failed?" sardonically he chuckles "You couldn't have done nothing"

"Hold you, I don't know. You never allowed me to be a brother to you but a son"

He looks at me and then away once, there's a couple at the dance floor. The lady with her leg in the air then she wraps it around her partner's waists who dry humps her.

"First borns are always second parents. The moment you were born my childhood was ripped away from me. Dad was happy, never seen him that happy at your arrival. Yes maybe I didn't allow you to be a brother to me the way you should've been but it was circumstances"

"I'm sorry. . ." I apologize and he nods once and plays with the third cigarette in his fingers deciding whether or not to light it

up and smoke. But the craving wins because he is smoking again. "I don't want to go crazy"

He laughs. No really he genuinely just erupts with laughter and chokes on smoke. "I'm sorry" Then he pauses that elicited my very own laughter "I just imagined chasing cows"

"Ha ha ha you are so funny" I click my tongue and shaking my head. "No really I'm scared. I'll do all that I can not to end up going down that road" I wince.

"We have to break this generational curse"

"You need to sit on the throne too"

"I'm not doing that"

"Why not?" I frown "I mean that's what you were called for. I cannot lie and say that I do not want to sit on it but. . .I just think of myself chasing cows already because I didn't listen to our forefathers. I was already at the door of losing my sanity. I cannot gamble like that man" I look at the bottle that is suddenly empty in my hand "Do you think mama will forgive me?"

"Most probably will blame herself"

"And the new brother how do you feel about him?"

"Indifferent" We are interrupted when his phone starts to vibrate and he drags out when he sees the screen he quickly

picks up his phone, “mphefumulo wami. . .” A pang of an unknown emotions attacks the corner of my heart

“Makhosazana calm down and talk to baba. Stop crying. What? Get under the bed. Where is Mkhululi? Get under the bed Krotoa we are coming! No! I said no, sthandwa please get under the bed and I am on my way now, nothing will happen to you. Fine” Then the call ends and his eyes have darkened. He is angry. “There’s a shootout at home we need to leave”

“Who?”

“It must be ooNzimande”

“What is happening Bandlalethu?”

“We are facing the war that never ended”

“Let me call Ka Mazibuko and tell her to get inside the wardrobe” He looks at me and laugh “What? Krotoa is under the bed as we speak”

54.

tragedy

/'trædʒɪdi/

- an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe.

A perfect piece of cake, what does that even mean? Maybe I am not that much of an intellectual or understand the metaphor or just the figure of speech behind that. First of all the word “perfect” sounds boring to me, yawn. I don’t know why we tend to be so obsessive over perfection when it doesn’t even exist. I mean right now I could cut a piece that I think is the best piece of cake I’ve ever had—perfect—and then she might walk into the this room and also have a cut that I would think is much better than mine, and then another person, and another person so what’s going to happen now?

I’ll have to cry my eyeballs off because I didn’t get the perfect piece whereas I assumed what I had cut earlier was “perfect?”

Am I making sense? No? Yes? Whatever.

That conversation just made me hungry. I seriously need to eat a table mountain of a plate with creamy pasta then burp loudly.

I don't know whether I want pasta or stuffed cheesy garlic bread, I cannot have that but I might as well call this man who hasn't been here for hours to buy it for me. I'm absolutely irked and want to cry at the same time for what I witnessed. Okay it has nothing to do with that body falling down on my feet but the thought it might've been him with a bullet stuck in his forehead makes me choke from anxiety and even now the bubble of emotions on my throat wants to explode at the imagery that I grab the bottle of water from the fridge and gulping for it. I check the time on my phone and it just blinked half past seven when the rain starts again.

I hear someone's footsteps forcing me to turn around as I was about to look through the cabinets and searching for something I can cook for myself and everyone else has their own hands right? Just joking. I pause with a packet of pasta in my hand upon seeing him standing there seemingly nervous to revisits this conversation with me standing there and shoving his hands in his pockets. Well I cannot deny the fact that he looks absolutely gorgeous as he always been and I can see the undeniable resemblance as well which is do strange. What I can say is their father has such good genes, it must be the cognac he is always drinking and the cigars. I trail a gaze from his sneakers to these linen pants and matching shirt. His head is bald and the dimples on his cheeks deepen but his face remains

hard honed. I can tell he is searching for words. Am I supposed to say the words first? I guess.

“I’m going to pay the money back” I shrug and standing here with my legs shaking. And not from foreign sensations or passion but just trepidation. That he could strangle the fuck out of me right now seeking vengeance. “I don’t know but this might sound insensitive when someone hears it or to you for that matter but I don’t regret taking that money. . .” I tell him honestly and he nods as I speak “And for some time I thought I might feel a sense of regret or some other emotions that resemble that but I just don’t. I’m not sorry for taking that money. Of course I am deeply sorry for hurting you and the effect that might’ve erupted in your family but about the money I’m not going to apologize because at the end of the we both wanted something from each other” And that’s the truth. We met in that hotel room twice in a week because we wanted to gain something from each other.

“You were never going to pay it back if we never crossed paths right Krotoa? Then why you suddenly wants to pay it now”

I grab the pot and rinsing it from the sink before glancing at him “Because we crossed paths I guess and I want to make things right. I am not who I was anymore”

A sardonic chuckle escapes his mouth. Wait how does this stove works? Oh it’s more like a touch screen? Great the

technology keeps evolving. After placing the pot here I look up at him and his eyes are transfixed on me. “Do you know what you put me through? I almost lost my marriage. I had to start rebuilding from the start. Even though the business is running again but it’s not the same. It will take me four years to recover from that, but I cannot make amends with my wife”

“You should’ve thought about her when you slept with me. What happened with your wife has nothing to do with me honestly. You stood in front of the pastor and made vows with her not me. I wasn’t there holding a microphone for you or maybe at the front row but I am sorry you went through all of that but do not expect some empathy or sympathy from me” I have no idea why people keep seeking for these two. You got yourself in a mess, own it.

“I loved you Krotoa”

“That’s nice, I guess” What else am I supposed to say because I had no feeling for him or whatsoever. Yes I cared about him but that doesn’t have any association of that four letter word.

“That’s really nice” I say again upon the eerie silence looming between us. He remains standing there as though he just received a stainless steel punch on his scrotum. “I love him Melikhaya. . .” I tell him honestly maybe he needs to hear that. He knows some raw parts of me and the perspective that I had towards relationships “. . .Now don’t ruin that for me”

“I understand”

“Thank you”

He remains on that very same position static and not wanting to move. I gaze at his eyes before he inhale sharply through his nostrils then turns around leaving the room. Whew! That did not go how I expected it now let me focus on making this pasta so that I can serve Sengwayo who went to look for his brother. I wonder how is he right now, I am sure he might be battling with his thoughts and emotions.

I am cooking a “perfect piece of pasta” ha ha ha that sounded absolutely ridiculous. Already the water inside that pot is boiling alongside the straws that changes the color of the translucent liquid to pure white. I want something really creamy. I don’t know where is this crave or longing coming from. I check my phone again and he hasn’t called. Jesus, I might end up cutting my thumb here thinking about him. I am praying that this new discovery doesn’t affect us in anyway maybe he might see me in a complete dim light.

These onions have turned me into a wet canvas. Wait what was that? I just heard a loud bang that sounded like fireworks, those terrifying bomb ones. It could be the children burning steel wool or something. No it can’t be that is a gunshot. I pause what I am doing all at once as my legs become gelatin, I can hear the screams coming from the outside as the loud bang

continues going on when I leave the pots in a burning stove and my cousin appears from nowhere meaning she heard the same thing, she seems she is about to spew her intestines and her heart has galloped. “What are we going to do? Mkhululi left minutes ago and. . .” That was so loud that she immediately just urinates herself standing there and frozen. I can see the liquid seeping in between her legs and I wasn’t afraid but now I am shaking as I switch off the stove, grabbing her by her arm and getting inside the cabinets as children playing hide and seek. “If we survive this I am going back home. I cannot do this! I cannot do this!” Her tone is shaking and I have no choice but taking out my phone with my trembling hands making a phone call. For someone who is shivering from the inside I rather look too calm as a cucumber and that alone also scares me. Okay the phone is ringing. Damn Bandlalethu pick up!

Before anything I hear his breathing, “mphefumulo wami. . .” Tears well from deep inside and coursed down my cheeks, my body wrack with an onslaught of sobs. “Makhosazana calm down and talk to baba” I cannot do that. I am going to die right now and I won’t even get a chance to say goodbye or kiss him again or feel his fingertips writing poetry against my skin. “Stop crying” Now he is getting frustrated even the dearest cousin of mines.

“There are people here with guns, I’m going to die Bandlalethu”
What? Lerato just glared at me and a flood of tears gush down her ashen cheeks. It must be the word that I spat about us dying she wipes them with the back of her hand.

“What? Get under the bed” Is he serious? Did he take time to think about what he just said because that’s the first place the attackers search. I’ll be the first one to be found and be shot dead. I need to stop attracting this thought of death. I’m scared. I cannot possibly think of anything. “Where is Mkhululi?” Then he asks me. I can tell wherever he is he’ll murder even a stone. “Get under the bed Krotoa we are coming” He quickly says.

“If I die I want you to—

“No!”

“Bandlalami. . .”

“I said no, sthandwa sami please get under the bed and I am on my way, nothing is going to happen to you” Then he hangs up.

They just broke down the door and as Lerato is about to scream I quickly cover her mouth and pressing my index finger on my lips telling her to be silent, she nods her head rapidly, her warm beads are touching my hand. The prayer in my head right now? God better answer me because I am even praying in tongues. I don’t know where the fuck the urge to throw up is

coming from. I can hear voices exchanging sounding too masculine with deep vernacular. There are footsteps too before one of them sends instruction that they should search the house. The sound of my heart beat could be in a song as drums. We hear a gunshot and a female scream, that could only be one person, my new founded sister. Now I most definitely crying my eyeballs off and the water that wants to come from my stomach is threatening me dangerously. I can feel my watery beads on my forehead forming and under my armpits. I hold my cousin into my arms tightly as the tears starts pouring even more. I am so petrified. I do not want to die. At this moment I am willing to apologize for all my sins and the others I haven't done. If I am saved here, I am seriously taking over my father in law's church, I'll preach until I go down on my knees.

One of them announces that there is no one and they should leave. I slightly open this door in high hopes that it doesn't make noises and I catch a glimpse. That old man I saw from the other day is carrying an AK-47 and when he turns around I swear my urethra becomes full. Oh he didn't see me. I cannot possibly close this door right now because it might make strange noises. Heavily Gracious God you better save that woman in that bedroom.

They are gone!

I wait for a moment before running out of this cabinets and hitting my head to the bedroom telling my cousin to call the ambulance at this very moment.

“Zenokuhle. . .” There she is on the floor and in a pool of blood, she is still breathing with the red liquid coming from her mouth too. I grab the fleece blanket on the bed and kneeling in front of her pressing it on her stomach where she has been shot.

When she sees me a weak smile appears on her face. I am covered in blood in a nanosecond. “You better not die on me! Do you want the Zungu ancestors to choose me as your husband’s wife so I can expand this family? Do not do that shit to me please. . .” my voice quivers with a melancholy

“Zenokuhle don’t close those damn eyes! I’ll give you a perfect piece of cake” I place her head on my thighs, her breath is running out. I feel her pulse and it’s faint. This is the second time this shit is happening to me. Why me? Why me?

She smiles weakly and drags her eyelashes; I swear if she dies in my arms I am going to lose my marbles. I’ll start counting hair and rice grains. “You are so beautiful. . .” she reaches out placing her hand on my face “. . .all that I did was because I was trying to survive. The world is not kind on women Krotoa. Yes all that I did cannot really justify my actions or whatsoever but I was trying to survive. . .” the warm beads in her eyes starts to

build up. "I wish I can turn back the time and write my own story but I cannot" Then she pauses "You are beautiful"

"Have you seen yourself? I bet you haven't now please don't die and I'll compliment you every day. Yes you cannot turn back the time but you can change how your own story goes. We are going to start afresh and be reborn. But don't die" I wipe my tear "I hate our father. I hate him so much because a part of me feels that if we knew each other, I could've protected you" Well we are just few months apart but I could've been there maybe. It's hard. A young woman fell in love thinking that was her knight in shining armour because this is the narrative that's shoved down our throat as young girls but she was naive, in love and abused. After that she had to find ways to survive. Of course some of her actions cannot really be clapped hands for but cast the first bloody stone if you haven't sin. "Zenokuhle open those fucking eyes and I'm serious, don't die!"

"This is what I always wanted Krotoa"

"No, no, no! You are not dying"

Her eyes are closed. God no. Jesus please. Lord do not do this to me. I am losing my sanity at this moment when the they walk in following each other and Nqabayezulu seems defeated. They have guns in their hands. I have no idea whether they caught those men in time, I don't know whether she is dead or not. Yes she might've not been my favorite cup of tea but

death? No, no. I don't want her to die but rather she must have her perfect ending. When he takes over her I stand aside watching him beg and plead, he announces that he can still feel a pulse. He is covered in tears and blood.

“Makhosazana. . .” He takes my hand and pulling me up from the floor and leading us to the living room. “. . .I'm sorry” I have no idea what is he apologizing for but he is tightly and closely holding me to him when I let out a gut wrenching sob. The smell of this cigarette from him is intoxicating.

“That's my sister Bandla! That's my sister and she cannot fucking die now. You will find those people and you'll do exactly what you've done to those other thirteen people” I pull away from his arms. The paramedics are here and they rush to the bedroom to take her, she is not announced dead but rather have an oxygen mask as she is pushed outside. We follow right behind them until they get into the van including Nqabayezulu who is a mess when the brother next to him tells him we are on the way following them.

I turn to him again when the burning liquid manages to escape from my mouth, I spew all my insides and he holds my weave that I want drag out my scalp. I am bending and touching my knees. I haven't eaten so all that is coming out is water.

“Makhosazana what's wrong?”

“I saw an old man Bandla. I saw him that day when we arrived, he was carrying an AK-47 today. He looked pleased”

“You’ll tell me about that just now. What’s wrong?”

“I want him dead!”

He sighs, “What’s wrong?”

“I’m just feeling sick”

“Now come so you can change these clothes leave that to me. Your sister will be fine”

Now I want that man’s head as bloody decoration but I also want pasta. Zenokuhle better not die, please.

55.

tantrum

| 'tantrəm |

- an uncontrolled outburst of anger and frustration, typically in a young child.

“he has temper tantrums if he can't get his own way”

B A N D L A L E T H U

I can tell that she is not taking this well, although she is concealing it not from me to see but I've managed to read her, page through each chapter of her as my new favorite book with a sultry cover that I sleep holding closely to my chest. And seeing her in that state invites fears to come knocking at my door at midnight with its long manicured nails to be wrapped around my neck and choke me. It's scary. You know what scary? Knowing that if ever she chooses to walk away I won't be the same without her. I don't know in what sense that means but maybe I'll be a transfigured creature, strange I am not one after I found my mother on the floor with her head separated from the body while it was placed on the bed for us to see whenever we walk through the door to the room where she

was at. I don't know what I am supposed to feel right now and I don't think grief can be a space you normalize yourself with even mourning for that matter it's just a total lethal environment. I'd say it's under the water and you can hardly swim or maybe in a dark room with no windows or doors, you continuously smothered by unnamed emotions in that room, running out of breath, trying to survive and eventually you succumb to whatever that you're feeling and dance with the devil.

"What are you doing?" I burn my finger when the voice interrupts me and grunting underneath my breath, moving away from the pots as the steam moves around the room. "What are you cooking there?" He has a smirk on his face standing by the entryway swathed in black sweatpants and hoodie. I wanted to come along with him. I needed to be there to see this man's face as he takes his last breath, watch him beg me for mercy but he said I should stay behind since it wasn't really safe for these women and I couldn't possibly just leave makhosazana in that state.

I look at him as I am stirring the creamy sauce in a cup before opening my pot and pouring it in there, "If I didn't make this pasta bengizoshima—I was gonna be single" I tell him and although he wants to suppurate with that piqued annoying laughter he grins rather and throwing his head back, "I couldn't

possibly order something online right now isemakhaya la” I let him know when the strong smell of divine food starts dancing in the room.

“You cooking? They really threw a lace thong on your face” he cannot hold back the laughter he has been swallowing then he runs his hands through his nose to catch his breath still remaining in the same position there then he shove his hands in his pockets.

“You’re not funny Mkhululi”

“I’ve never in my life seen you cooking. I think I might as well send the cows for you Ka Makhetha behind your back” Not that I’ll mind he’ll be doing me a favor. I glare at him diabolically and grabbing out a bowl from the cabinets so I can serve. Well for someone who only knows how to cook pap and spinach then this looks really good. Otherwise another tantrum could erupts or she’ll sing that ‘I can’t make you to love me if you don’t. . .’ song in a bathroom while she is bathing, dedicated to me? I am guessing. I have been plaguing her with questions about her health because of her throwing up, she complained about being dizzy.

“What do we do now Bandla? There’s no woman in this family that could sit on the mattress. I want to know how are we going to move on from here? Should we return back home? What is our next step?” Not that we have no woman in this family. We

do have aunts and. . .everyone else part of this family but they distanced themselves when these “ukuthwala” rumours transpired and we were all accused of it. Not just that also just people fighting over the throne. No one has been sitting here for years but rather they die after three months at any attempts now that makes these news about us being involved in witchcraft sound believable.

“I know for a fact that both of them wouldn’t have wanted their funeral to be here. Even though Mzobanzi was not called to lead the church but he loved that place and my mother. . .” I take a deep breath clasping my hands on the kitchen counter “. . .leaving women here unguarded was not that much of a good move. Where were you?” I look at him under the curtain of my eyelashes.

“We had amandoda protecting this place, they were armed. I needed to sort something about the whole case of my brother’s death so they’re no loopholes”

“And clearly those men who were here armed didn’t know what the fuck they were doing because half of them are dead. As we speak right now we have women going trauma under our watch. Ka Mazibuko is fighting for her life and losing her is the last thing that we need right now because not only we will lose Nqabayezulu but makhosazana will be affected and that what scares me. MaMsweli saw MaMkhize’s slaughtered body, we

don't know where is my mother's head and MaKgamanye witnessed all of this mess, we are all to be blamed for that. Where were you?" I plague him again because I know him like the back of my hand. He is not where he said he was. "You went to find someone to kill because of these emotions you were feeling? You're bringing us more problems than what we have on the plate with this habit of yours"

"Our habit. Every man in this family and not only mine and don't dare speak with that tone to me again Bandlalethu" He says and we both become silence for a moment before stupid grins evokes from our mouths and he runs his hand through his beard and head. That's a characteristic that I took from him, makes sense. "I'm going to see my wife and then we'll talk later. Melikhaya caught a slight bullet and his wife is taking care of him. Also that's your brother

Advertisement

don't look at him as an enemy" And this how our arguments always end. We just chortle to both calm down from the burning.

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

"Your wife? What wife? And what was the plan Mkhululi? We had an agreement here and now what is this?"

"I'm your father and that's your mother"

“They need you on Comedy Central” I shake my head and grate parmesan cheese on pasta. I wonder how this tastes. I don’t care about that part but it needs to be creamy otherwise I’m dead.

He clears his throat, “I asked her to marry me” You got to be fucking kidding me right now. A step mother who is younger than me, what in the world of film is this? “But I’m scared she might say no”

“I’m five years older than her!”

“Haibo manje mina ngingenaphi lapho?” Excuse me? Excuse me what? Is he using his brain cells? Why is this man growing backwards? It must be the fact that he is not aging because only the grey strands on his beard says he’s old. Now it makes sense why his head is always bald. He still works out at the gym more than I do. And sense of style? Impeccable. “That’s your mother you should respect her”

“Mkhululi ngicela ungangiphuzeli mina” I try to make this sound respectful as possible. “You’re making this awkward for makhosazana, take time to think about this” No really what is he thinking?

“What’s awkward that her cousin is her mother in law?” Then he chuckles and shakes his head “Ngiyamthanda Lerato” Why are you doing this to me God? From the sound of his voice I can tell

that this is true. He loves her. I want to drown. Help me deep dive under the ocean because there is no way this man will take anything that I say, he'll marry her anyways. "I want to do right by her and show her that my intentions are good. I know after everything she has heard about me it will be hard for me to trust her"

"About MaMkhize?"

"Yes, she might think I am that person when I am not anymore. I made a lot of mistakes and I cannot turn back the time now"

"Your actions will speak for you, show her that you love her. . ."
I tell him and he nods his head ". . .you will have to sit on the throne maybe for two or three years before you hand it to me. Just do that one thing you were called for. It only makes sense for us to do so since you are alive"

"Hmmm" He murmurs "And take care of Ka Makhetha you heard what gogo said. Let me go check on my wife" He emphasizes the last part and I have no idea what is he walking about.

I remain here for a minute before taking a tray along with me making my way to the bedroom and upon opening the door I find her sleeping peacefully and she has changed into pyjamas with a head scarf on her head. All this cooking went down the drain? After she sang her lungs out. I just look at her with her

eyelashes looking like a brush against canvas and her face so radiant with her lips pouted with dry tears at the corners of her eyes. Sigh. I walk through the door placing the plate on the side table and getting behind her on the bed wrapping my hands around her waist and nuzzling on her neck but she makes a move then turn around, placing her head on my chest and holding me closely, so close as though someone whispered to her and said I was going to run away when eventually she opens her red rimmed eyes so they can dance with mine at the same tempo.

“Now that you’re awake you need to eat” I say in a whispery tone and kissing her forehead. I inhale sharply the oxygen into my lungs when she places her hand on my face and her fingers playing with my beard. The bloody emotions that I shoved in a hidden place come running. When she sees my emotional state she reaches up and our lips clutches, moving in the same rhythm like a dirty dance before she pulls away. “What am I supposed to feel?”

“All the in between emotions and this grief one day will remind you where you were at when you become whole again and at the centre. You just lost your mother and father all in one day. The other’s one death was brutal and gruesome; no one should tell you how to grieve. And with your father I know you may feel indifferent but that’s totally fine. You don’t have to feel

bad about being oblivion” Then she looks behind her and seeing the bowl, a ravishing beam follows right after.

“Tomorrow we are returning back home so we can make preparations for the funeral then after we will come back to do cleansing and hopefully everything will fall back into place” I stretch my hand and grabbing the bowl, she needs to eat. I poke the straws and she opens her mouth for me to feed her. “I’m sorry Krotoa” I apologize for putting her through this.

After she finished chewing she frowns at me, her mood totally changes. I have no idea whether she is angry or what but tears are even moving around her eyelids. “Who is that? Who is Krotoa?” Haibo. Isn’t that her name? I look at her perplexed. “Who is that Bandla?” I don’t know whether to laugh or what but, her face is grave, she is menacing. “Who is Krotoa?”

“That’s your name” I stutter in between with bewilderment. God she is crying. What should I do? I attempt to reach out and wipe her tears and she pushes me away grabbing the bowl in my hands and getting off the bed. “Makhosazana!”

“Exactly that’s my name. That is how you call me not Krotoa so what happened? What happened to you calling me makhosazana or mphefumulo wami?”

I-I-I am confused. I keep opening and closing my mouth and gazing at her flaring her nostrils and it seems she might throw that bowl in her hand on my face. “Hawu I was just. . .”

“You were just what Bandla? I shouldn’t have fallen in love with you. I should’ve waited for a soldier from Afghanistan to come back and marry me” she leaves the room after grabbing her phone. Wait is this funny? It is right but I cannot laugh. One that part about a soldier just messed me up and secondly I don’t understand what is happening here. Nxarga. I get up from the bed and my feet propelling me, looking for her everywhere. Maybe she is overly emotional because of everything that is happening right now. It’s only understandable but that part about her marrying another man, uyahlanya ke.

I find her in the living room and eating. No tears. Nothing. Just there eating and planked in front of the television and looking beautiful as though she invented that word when she hears my movements she glances at me and smile. Women are. . .I am not going to say it but they are just that. Now I am perplexed as I sit next to her and placing her feet on my lap to massage them. She just looks at me without saying a damn word or explaining what was that about as I am about to speak out her phone vibrate and her eyes widen before she answers the call and putting on loudspeaker.

“Gogo”

I can tell that she is nervous probably because they don't know that she is back and she hasn't communicated with them.

"Yah wena peace of mind. I want you here at home tomorrow morning alongside that cousin of yours because I am tired of dreaming about amanyala mina. You better be here before I even wake up" Then she hangs up. Ha ha ha. At this point we are both confused. I am perplexed because of her behaviour and laughing at her grandmother for calling her "peace of mind". No man I needed this to calm all my raging thoughts.

"I have to go home"

"I'll take you there tomorrow morning and then you'll come around Friday for the funeral preparations if you are okay with that?"

"Hmmm. I love you"

I attentively look at her and smirk "Asambeni so I can show you how much I love you"

"We are grieving Bandla"

"Bandla labani?"

"Angazi nami" This woman has an agenda of shattering me to death because there is no way. What is this? "I'm joking. I'm yours" Then she breathes out "Is Zenokuhle okay? Have you heard anything?"

“We haven’t spoken to Nqabayezulu but he said he’ll update me, she’ll be fine” I assure her and she nods her head. “I will ask him that they transfer her when we leave. It makes sense that way and before we leave in the morning I’ll take you to her. Do you have an idea what your grandmother was talking about?”

“No, but she just called me peace of mind mocking me maybe she knows I’m back”

Wait! Wait! Wait.

I think I know. I could be wrong. I look at her searching for her eyes and pretty much has no clue. It makes sense.

56.

“Birthing is the most profound initiation to spirituality a woman can have”

I don't believe in soul mates but I know that this man is the closest thing to soulmate that I'll ever find as I glance at him with his one hand on my knee and the other on the steering wheel mainly focused on the road, regardless of throwing my tantrums this morning and I have no idea what was the reason for me to be that piqued. Oh I actually wanted green apples, I know it sounds like I am deranged but I needed them.

I can feel the funereal emotions draped around me the moment we approach my house and they are taxis outside my house with men standing outside alongside my uncle who seems to be having a serious meeting with them with a frown plastered on his face.

I hear him sucking a sharp breath the moment the car comes into halt and when I look at him he is dragging to fingers across his lips. I can tell by that facial expression that he has a lot that he is dueling with in his mind. “I don't want you to go because I feel that being distance apart from you is the reason I'll start overly thinking about everything that has happened and end up probably doing something that I might regret and that's not just

that. I want you around me all the time. I don't know how to put this. . ." Basically he wants to get under my skin and comfortably relocate there "Ngiyakuthanda Krotoa" He means it. I can tell from the sound of his tone, from his eyes and body language including that solemn facial expression. "Kakhulu futhi that I know that if ever you chose to leave I wouldn't survive or give myself a chance to survive for that matter"

"You'd die for me?" I smile at him with mirth at the corners of my lips and he smirks with a weary face and nods his head. I don't know for some reasons he seems to be examining me with his eyes and observant about my movements, mood swings surely because my periods are approaching in the next two weeks. I guess and he is quite observant. He has a way of caressing my body more like worshiping me and paging me through like a bible from me one chapter to another. There is an absolute cherubic way of how his lips burn against my skin and how his fingers draw maps there. "I know that everything has been hard for you. It has been crazy couple of weeks of our lives since we returned back. Yes I might've expected a catastrophic but it wasn't necessary anything like this but I'd rather go through this with you than anyone else Sengwayo" He seems very conflicted this morning "I'm going to ask my grandmother whether I can come down tomorrow and I can help you with funereal preparations. There are some things

that I want to check out at the practice because I haven't been there for a month"

That's how long I've been gone!

"You need to rest" No, I don't. "I can go there and make the check ups but you need to take it easy. I prefer if you come around the day we agreed on" I thought he wanted me next to him? There is car behind us now and that should be my cousin and her man. "If you need anything call me at whatever time and you'll get it" At midnight? At dawn? I am so sure he is not thinking straight. I think I am sullen now as he gets off the car to come open my door then takes my hand as I get off.

We stand face to face and I can see that he is fighting himself from kissing me but he won't seeing my uncle now with his eyes transfixed on us instead this man smirks and takes off my bags then pulls me closer to his chest, his hand laced on my waist. "I will go check up on your practice and I'll call you to tell you how is it going when I said take it easy I meant it" Okay he is being totally weird with his fingers somehow massaging my stomach with tranquility while he deeply gazes into my eyes. "You're beautiful" That is not true, I am literally still in pajamas and did not bother with the bathing part because I had to be here before my grandmother actually wakes up and I am hoping that she is still snoring, I cannot face her wrath now.

“I love you” Well I haven’t told him this since he said it first leaning against the leather chair with his eyes fluttered closed in the car and dragging oxygen to his lungs. He kisses my forehead rather than I take my bags dragging them walking up the hill to the gate and turn around to him attentively looking at me with a charming smile and his ankles crossed until I walk through the gate, I see my cousin approaching now as my uncle has a frown plastered on his face.

I expected him to say something but instead he just watches me as I greet him and the men who just scattered getting into the four taxis in the yard and starting the engine. And by the way he is looking at me I am so sure he is about to punch me to death for whatever reason, I am glad walking inside deafening silence with my feet propelling me to my room immediately throwing myself on the bed but the sound of the creaking down interrupts me. “I’m sorry. . .” Oh that’s my mother in law and she smiles and putting her bags where I left mine before she comes bed. We used to share it like this when we were young and then talk about boys until the hours of the morning in our whispery tone. I feel her hands wrapped around my waist as she nuzzles on my neck and this feels nostalgic as I put mine on top of hers. “I said yes” To what? I feel something on her fingers that forces me to open my eyes. What the fuck? I can see a giant diamond ring reflecting the egg horizon that is rising outside and escaping through my white curtains when I

abruptly turn around to see her face. You know what this mean? That she is really my mother in law. There is no humour or whatsoever in this anymore. “I can explain. Are you mad?”

“What? No I’m not mad. Why would I be?” No really what she is doing has nothing to do with me

Advertisement

I want to know how we got here. She takes a deep breath and faces the ceiling then glances at me once. “Wait have you guys been together for a long time and you were hiding it?”

“No” she shakes her head in disagreement “I first saw him when they came here to pay your fine then he showed up at this event when I was a guest speaker. I got drunk and he took me home. . .” I can tell she is reminiscing and covered in color sepia, “I don’t know he has a way with things. A total different way of making situations seems like they are going to be okay regardless of knowing that it’s not even like that”

“Is his penis wrinkled?”

She glimpse at me as I face upwards too with my hands absent minded plastered on my stomach before we erupt with loud laughter and she even snorts. “What no! We haven’t been intimate. Basically he asked me out through proposal. And he said we will date while married. Mkhululi is a charmer”

I smile at her, “Is it different from what you had before with your husband”

“Yes” then she sharply inhales “I guess this time they are feelings involved that I don’t really care about what he has but I just want him for him” she uses her hands as she speaks.

“They are very wealthy by the way, bathwele and soon we will be playing hide and seek with ootikoloshe” I scare her and she remains nonchalant. Okay she is gone. Then she just laugh and shakes her head. “I am just joking there is not witchcraft involved here or whatsoever”

“It wouldn’t have mattered to me in any way” Excuse me? Well I was planning on feeding them chicken livers so I have no right to be judgmental about this. I want to throw up right now. I’m going to hold it back. I’m going to have a glass of water. I quickly get up from the bed ignoring her as she asks whether or not I’m okay when I stride to the kitchen to guzzle a glass of water, one glass after another.

“Take an orange and sniff it” I freeze at the sound of my grandmother from behind me. Is she awake? Of course she is. I turn around to meet her making herself comfortable on the chair here with her hands clasped. “You decided to come back with a whole Rwanda too hmm?” What is she talking about?

“Chabo”

“Lerato! Lerato! Lerato!” It’s literally just six in the morning to be doing this. In a nanosecond she is here and has taken off the ring, leaning against the cabinets just as bewildered as I am about what is going on. “I’m having dreams so I want to know between you two who is pregnant”

“Not me! That could never be me! No” I am the first one to protest and even waving my hand as a defense. “I am not even sexually active mina” I continue to say and then glance towards my cousin who pretty much seems relaxed.

“I just divorced couple of months back and we were not intimate anymore so it cannot be me” she says boldly as my grandmother has her eyes transfixed on her then she casts them towards me.

“Krotoa”

“Gogo”

“Are you pregnant? Because even if you are there is nothing wrong with that but I just want to know that’s all” I am telling you now that this is a trap. You see to these people we will never be grown. We are just their young grandchildren who should be attending umhlanga until we get married. Now this calm facade is just an act. Also I am not pregnant because I used the pill and that day when he got back from the meeting when I wasn’t feeling well when we were far away from home,

of course we had sex and again I—I don't quite remember what happened but I am not pregnant. I mean me? Psht.

"I'm not pregnant" I'm seriously getting piqued right now because I was called here in the middle of crisis to be accused about pregnancy? I cannot even run to the bathroom to actually throw up because she will say these are the symptoms.

"Lift up your top and let me see your breasts"

"Why am I the only one you want to see her breast in this room? What if you are having these dreams because you are pregnant? You are having these accusations about me because I was not married. I've never been married?"

"I don't know where is that coming from"

"Well is it because you think I have been sleeping with brothers? And now I am surely pregnant and too afraid to come out because I have no idea who is the father?"

"Krotoa!" I hear a sonorous masculine voice thundering and my uncle seems berserk standing there with his hands on his pocket. "Since when you speak to your grandmother like that?"

I shrug nonchalantly and looking down my painted toes with tears threatening my eyes, and remain hanging my head low. "I guess since they're accusations about me" I answer with a hoarse tone as vigorous tear falls down my cheek and I quickly wipe it. I whip my head up and my grandmother has a hidden

smile on her face, I know her while my uncle is standing with a black tracksuit with animal print decoration narrowing his eyebrows. “Gogo thinks I’m pregnant”

I see he is about to catch his eyes on the marble floor but he composes himself. This man right there is my father more than anything else. He scratches his chin and plays with the muscles on his jawline. “Is that true ma?” Yes! Yes! He is about to defend me. “You cannot make those accusations about mancane, she is a virgin” Ha ha ha ha. I haven’t expected that. I can see that cousin of mine about to explode from laughter. When this man was advising me about relationship he thought I am not having sex? Haibo. Also why my grandmother is covering her face? I know she is secretly laughing, what a sly old woman and they better keep on making him believe that my hymen hasn’t been broken. “You’re virgin Krotoa right?” “Yebo” I quickly say.

My grandmother looks at me between her eyes and then covers her face again. They are making it hard for me not to laugh. “I’m sure mama might’ve been mistaken but that doesn’t give you the right to talk to her like that. Now apologize” I am wondering why he thinks Bandlalethu dropped me here. What lie did he say to my uncle? I am wondering because Jongimpi hasn’t plagued me with questions. Also this is a nick name—his real name is Mkhonto.

“I’m sorry gogozi” I apologize and she just nods her head still covered with her hands.

“Good I’m going to the rank now. I’ll be back around lunch time with KFC” No man I seriously love this man. After that announcement he kisses my grandmother on the cheek asking for his blessings then he leaves the room.

“In Rwanda they sell virginity heh?” Mxm this cannot be my grandmother it’s a clone. I look at her with a coy pout as she gets up from the chair “You must cook porridge and we are not done with this conversation both of you” After that she leaves the room. “Wena peace of mind congratulations on your virginity”

At least we are having Kentucky for lunch!

57.

It Doesn't End, It Restarts.

N Q A B A Y E Z U L U

As I park they are cars outside the yard so full that I cannot drive in. I can hear the melancholy singing and hysterical crying coming from inside the house and in this moment my guilt churns my brain in small pieces and the beads of sweats wants to form on my forehead. An unexpected knock on the window interrupts my thoughts and I cast my eyes towards the direction it's my brother that was hidden from the father and everyone, he signals that I should unlock the doors. What does he want? I mean I have no idea where would I even begin starting a conversation with him. I force a smile anyways regardless of the heaviness that I am carrying because Ka Mazibuko has been sent to coma and at this point I am on the edge of the sword barefooted with my feet bleeding from fear. If that happens then I would start making love to my sanity before it walks out of me because I know I would lose it and be transfigured.

He gets in the car and leaning against the leather chair inhaling sharply with his eyes fluttered closed. I do not know what to say but rather glimpse at him and seeing a tear falling down the valley of his cheeks, "I am sorry. . ." I hope this is a consolation enough for him that he needs. I guess he needed to escape inside the house and that is why he came knocking on my window. Imagine finding out that you were a "secret" from your parent's infidelity and before you can feel your mother's warmth and connect on a much deeper level you find her brutally murdered and slaughtered with her body placed on the bed and soulless while her other pieces of her body are on the floor. ". . .I have no words to lessen your pain"

"What was she like?" Truthfully I don't know, she was there but not fully present. I cannot even point out days where I can say those were the best ones I spent with my mother. I never spoke about this but growing up I had some sort of hatred towards her because of how she was treating Bandlaethu but eventually that's something I pushed aside at some point but our relationship has never been one to write a novel about or give her an award of the century for being the best mother in the world. "You know when I first met her it was two years back" What? Who was my mother? "And that was because we came across each other through business and she made this face I cannot forget saying I looked like her sons. Then I guess she had some investigation made because I also pretty much

did my own only to find out that indeed I did not just 'look like' her sons but I was one of them. I wasn't angry but upon the conversation that we had she seemed not remorseful about what she did you know or how it may affect me. Even when she was narrating she was nonchalant about it which left me with questions that I needed to ask her now but I cannot" When she announced the news she seemed not to care either about the catastrophic that could possibly happen but that always been my mother, a part of me admired her for that and how she handle some situations with that attitude of not caring. Even in the family business of course she had great impact another reason I always thought they were a perfect match with my father.

"If you knew about her two years back then where were you all along Melikhaya?" I plague him and I glimpse at him while roughly wiping the tears that wanted to crawl out of her eyeballs again before he snuffles.

"Trying to get my shit together after my business came crumbling down on my feet. . ." Then his eyes open for him to steal a look at me with frigid emotion "Did you love her?" I know exactly whom is he talking about. Not a conversation I want to touch or even revisits right now or at any point because I have accepted how things are and I am totally okay with them.

“I just want your honest answer. I know that you don’t trust me enough to have this conversation with me”

“Yes” I swallow the bile on my tastebuds. “But I cannot blame anyone but myself for assuming they could’ve been more between us when we had an agreement that it was merely business”

I glance at him to see what his facial expression would appear to be but he seems to be deep diving in an ocean of emotions. “Funny how I have to easily forgive someone who ruined my life and just let her walk away like that huh? I almost lost my wife and my business but I managed to save myself and now I have to watch the same woman having her happily ever after. She took advantage of us Nqabayezulu” I don’t seem to understand that statement and she may not be my favorite human being right now and that comes from a place of a fragile ego being hurt but I cannot blame her for my actions honestly.

I laugh slightly assuming it might be humour but no, no, he is actually solemn gazing at me as if there is a vagina slowly opening on my forehead. “I do not understand what you mean by saying she took advantage of you when the fact is this is the other way around. We are accountable of our actions here man. I used my male privilege on her and assumed I was more superior and therefore tried to use her as a pawn to get what I wanted. You used her for your own sexual desires and it hurts

that it was totally different from other women that you slept with but this time you are the one who lost the game because she had an upper hand, you didn't think about wife and business then. The person who was taken advantage of here is Ka Makhetha not you and not myself" I am sure anyone who would hear these words coming out of my mouth would have their jaws hanging and ready to fall off their faces or when you narrate this to someone who wasn't at present about this conversation they would deny until they stand on their feet that these vowels were formed by my mind and spat by my mouth.

"Easy for you to say because a million that you worked hard for wasn't taken away from you" Then he plays with the muscles around his jawline. Strangely there are some traits that reminds me of what I've always known as my only brother. Like that jawline war and how he runs his hand on the beard on his chin with frustration. I am not sure whether I am comfortable about this conversation furthermore and well from the time we exchanged words, there is some sort of invasion of privacy that happened here. He could've went to his car to take a break or the backyard. Why me? Why we speaking about this? What are the intentions?

"Look I can help you with whatever that you need in terms of your business and paying your money back because last thing

we want here is a war between us as a family. I am telling you this as your brother and opening your eyes that you don't want to do whatever you are thinking. You can never win this, there are ancestors involved and I don't think you'll want to make yourself a sacrificial offering"

"Family?" He grins sardonically and shaking his head then he opens the doors, that immediately makes the irksome beeping sound as he gets off the car. "I spent thirty years of my life without this family and what makes you think I want to be part of it now?" He leans over and leaning to the door.

"And that is fine but if you want to mess with my family. . ." I make an emphasize on that part with a hard honed facial expression ". . .then you will have me to deal with and I don't make threats"

"I'm not your father who you can shoot to death and get away with it. You really want to defend someone who went on and fucked your brother behind your back? Now you'll be watching them sitting on the throne and wishing that was you. We both know that this is all an act. You were planning to kill you own brother Nqabayezulu and suddenly you want to talk about "family" I can give you an award" Right after that he smirks hellishly and closes the door behind before walking away. In all my attempts of composing myself I fail to, I aggressively grip on the steering wheel to transport the anger but I cannot but

rather I get off the car to stride towards him and as he is about to wrench the gate open I grab him by the shirt turning him around and hitting him with my head on his face causing him to instantly bleed. As he throws a punch on my face, I feel it re-arranging my nose that is still on the healing processing after being involved in such violence not so long ago. I can hear yelps and exclamation coming from the yard as we are fighting each other until we are on the ground with me on top of him while he is also strongly fighting me.

I feel someone holding me back and grabbing me to get up when I am met with a slap from my uncle who pretty much does the same to “my brother” on the floor covered with dust. In a short period of time I have received far too many punches that you’d swear I was a boxer.

He grabs the both of us and dragging us inside the house with everyone watching

Advertisement

the other one is trying to fight back but I remain calm. I can feel my emotions wanting to explode as we pass the living room seeing my grandmother we haven’t spoken to for years on the mattress with the picture of my parents on the floor surrounded my candles, wondering whether she knows what happened. Will she hate me? What will my family members think or say about the fact that I murdered my own father, my

heart is about to galloped but I am thankful upon us reaching the bedroom as we are thrown inside like sacks of potatoes then the door is closed behind but instantly Bandlaletu walks in, looking at me with anti-climax and the smell of nicotine and cigars dances in the room.

“What was that stunt you both pulled outside? What the fuck was that about?” We hear a thunderous roar rolling from Mkhululi who seems deranged and ready to snap our necks. That’s something he will never second guess on doing. “When I speak I expect an answer unless you want me to force it out of you” he demands. I look at him once without any intention of saying anything especially knowing what this could possibly cause.

“I need to go to the hospital to see Ka Mazibuko” I make announcement attempting to walk out of the door. I am berserk in all honestly and another minute spent here I might as well lose my last remained marbles. He blocks me on the door and flaring his nostrils. “I said something that offended Melikhaya” That sounds like a much better escape goat doesn’t it? I mean I am the one who is sick in the head in this family anyways. “Now can I go please?”

“What happened Nqabayezulu because I know that is not what happened?”

“I’ve already told you the truth now can I please leave?” He glances at me once then my brother at the corner of the room before he steps away. I clench my jawline and walking out of the room. I avoid using the door at the living room because it suffocates me from the reality that I want to run away from, I’m an orphan. I meet with people from church with their condolences and patting my shoulder, I don’t know whether to force a smile or confess what I did. I manage to keep my emotions intact until they all make their way inside the house. We have more cars parking here, you can hardly even walk out.

As I get in the car Bandlalethu also follows. I have no idea where he appeared from and when was he was following me. He makes himself comfortable on the leather chair without uttering word when he takes out a packet of cigarettes placing it on the cup holder. I know for a fact that he is coming with me to the hospital so I do not bother saying a word to him but rather enliven the engine as he busy finessing the screen of his phone.

“Do you have that app that delivers food?” He sounds rather frustrated and I wasn’t expecting that from him. “Otherwise this day would end with me losing my mind over a KFC” What happened? I look at him turning the steering wheel and chuckling before handing him my phone, he thanks me. And do whatever that he is doing before he places it on his lap, running

his hands on his head seemingly done doing whatever that he needed to do. "What did he say to you?" I should've expected that he will ask me this at a random time when I thought he has completely forgotten but rather we'll talk about Kentucky or something.

"Why you want KFC?"

He looks at me once then grabs my phone, I think to check out his order, he is really losing his mind here. "Its not for me but makhosazana" I'm not used to this as yet. I don't know whether the version of him when he speaks about her or the whole idea of their relationship. "I don't know what happened but she wants it, she was crying" Then he continues to look at the screen. "Are you going to avoid what I asked you? Because I know what you said was not true. I know you surely more than you know yourself"

"He said he doesn't want to be part of this family" I change gears.

"Oh" That sounds like he doesn't acknowledge what I just told him. "Okay they are going to deliver this thing in few minutes. Ngiyabonga Jesu. . ." After that he puts away the phone before it makes a ping. "I'm ready to hear the truth now what happened?"

"What is going on is Krotoa okay?"

“Mmm-mm” He murmurs “She is still going to drive me crazy for a long period of time but I can take that. What did the doctors say about Ka Mazibuko?”

“They just threw medical terms that she may not survive and that’s all”

“You are not losing hope are you?”

“I’m just scared” I reveal truthfully. “I mean I haven’t treated her right because of everything that has happened. I want to amend things you know. The thought of losing her before we could talk and find a way through this just petrify me”

“You won’t lose her she’ll be fine. And then you are going to have a lovely home with your two wives and many children Sengwayo otherwise the ancestors wouldn’t have given you this challenge only to take away that one thing that means a world to you”

I cannot help but laugh because supernaturals can be selfish. These people sin and sin then expect us to right their wrongs. What in the fuck? I am not the one who sent anyone to be a murderer, a brutal one at that and responding to my calling now we must suffer for their stubbornness? That sounds egomaniacal to me to be honest. “We are technically suffering because they couldn’t do one thing right”

“And you have a chance to do right for the next generation not to go through this”

“What if we don’t have same intentions? Because all of us here needs to do this, when one of us fucks up then we are all fucked”

“What did he say?”

“Nothing”

“What did he say?”

“You will kill him Bandlalethu and that is the last thing that we need right now. There so much blood shed already and you cannot kill your own brother”

“If it was about Krotoa then you don’t have to tell me for me to kill him because I will, blood or not”

“Not it wasn’t” I manage to lie “It was about Mzobanzi’s death and nothing about Ka Makhetha”

“You are not that much of a good lair and you need to work on that” He smirks diabolically and grabs out his phone.

Jesus!

58.

“alone by herself she built the kingdom that she wanted”

The cheap ice cream eater who throws such impeccable punches in this family didn't keep up with his promise but rather he came back home in the evening with empty hands, continuously saying “eish” as my grandmother was going on and on thundering at him because he made us fantasize about fried chicken only for him not to come back home around lunchtime. Usually at home we cook around lunch, that's a ritual, my grandmother goes all out. Anyways we should be driving back to Durban today with my mother in law who has been hiding the ring on her finger. I cannot wait for my grandmother to discover this one and maybe the pregnancy accusations will be shoved aside because it has been what? I think three days of her continuously plaguing me with questions and making that face I cannot seem to understand while murmuring underneath her mouth.

We are standing outside her bedroom door because we want permission to drive back, she is fully aware about what happened to ooZungu but my grandmother really belongs in the taxi associate business because she doesn't care a damn

after what happened on the negotiations day, she wrote them off and what awakened the rage was the fact that her “pastor” did not even bother calling or explaining what happened but rather everyone continued breathing as though nothing happen, it is only understandable because as the member of the church are you not supposed to be called and checked up when they can see your absentee more especially when you are playing a huge role? Hmm well my grandmother takes the crown when it comes to being petty I am telling you, but she is going to the funeral because that is a human thing to do.

“Why you don’t go inside first?” Excuse me? I glare at her and she chuckles. We have been practicing our speeches because we don’t want her to know that we are involved with these men. I am just going to say that I have to go back to work and then the dearest cousin of mine is going to help me since I have to get a place to stay because the house was sold. I am not sure whether that will work out but anyways the brave woman in me just opened the door to her room and she turns around upon seeing us, she has dresses placed on the bed looking for the right one to wear. Is she going to a function or something? We exchanged eye contact with my mother in law—this can never get old for me but rather always comical anew at the mere thought of it.

“I haven’t spoken to your grandfather for years and then suddenly he calls asking how are the children. . .” she says the moment we walk through the door. I had no idea that he was even alive. One thing about men though, they are extremely disappointing. “I have no idea why would you call me asking about people who are forty something. Nxarga that’s why I divorced him from the start” This might be a bad timing for us to have this conversation and to make the matter worse we are thinking of driving at this time of the day? Night? We are technically throwing ourselves inside the mouth of the crocodile. “You look nice is this what you went to do at the salon?” she darts her eyes between the both of us moisturizing her hands. That question sounded almost cynicism. Like why would you pay to do that? But anyways we went to the salon and I wanted to say that hairdressers are such magicians because my hair wasn’t that grown but here I am with platinum blonde butterfly locs and I cannot wait to see the admiration dancing on my man’s face when he sees me, he always pretends to be seeing my face for the first time even though I’ll have a head scarf wrapped around my head for the next few days. I miss him, it has been dreading three days of my life with my moods all over the place because of premenstrual syndrome.

We nod our heads with a forced smile. “Gogo. . .” Oh great Lerato is the one speaking let me count the crystals on this

dress. “Are you going somewhere?” Just great. Isn’t it marvellous? When I glimpse at her she shrugs her shoulders and making herself comfortable on the bed that caught my grandmother’s attention because she immediately stop what she is doing and our eyes were transfixed in all her movements but the knock interrupts us before Jongimpi announces that he wants to talk with all of us. What is this about now? The chicken he never came back home with or the fact that he is scarce these days and “too closed” with my father in law which is uncomfortable for this one who had one thing to do just one but she chose to ask whether her grandmother is going somewhere.

“We are coming!” my grandmother responds back to him, yes he was easily forgiven because the following day he took her out. I don’t know where but we were left behind. She picks up a wrapped up dress. “What do you both want?” she has done reading the both of us. “If you want to tell me that you are pregnant then. . .” Okay her eyes are unfocused. I have no idea who is she directing that too but I know for a fact that it cannot be me. “Wow I am so shocked that you are pregnant” she raises her hands in the air and laughs softly. Then she creases her eyebrow at me. What? Is she talking to me. “What do you want?”

“I’m not pregnant gogo”

“I can never accuse mntana o-mntanami you are a virgin. I am really proud of you at your age” I look at her as she wears her earrings and the sardonic tone cannot be missed because it laced in her voice. “Your uncle wants to talk to us what do you want?”

“We wanted to ask whether we can go back to Durban? I have few things that needs me at work”

“No, you are not going there to act as a Zungu wife when they’ve never come here to pay for even a chicken. No child of mine is going to play hide and seek. If he wants a wife then he must do the right thing. Both of you are not going anywhere”

I gasp pretending not to have any idea what the hell she is talking about and she presses her hands against her waist awaiting to hear what is my defense. “I am not acting as a wife to anyone mina and I need to return back to work because it has been almost two months already of being away” I hope this sells like dry and salty scones at the taxi rank because if she still doesn’t agree then I will leave without any permission. “I am planning on launching a skin care brand so I have to go and Lerato is helping me” You see this part? Sounds so convincing my darling. There is no way she won’t acknowledge this.

“Just do whatever you want” One thing about elders though they will make you regret your existence. Worse it’s already expensive just breathing, she walks out of her bedroom leaving

us behind now guilt is churning stomachs and we remain here with quietness looming between us and the waft of her scent in air. If I leave I will feel bad and if I don't—pretty much the same thing to be honest.

We don't even exchange words but our eye contact is enough communication about our misery before we get up and making our way to the living room and Mkhonto is talking to my grandmother about something that seems serious

Advertisement

well if the conversation wasn't in the middle I would've known and they speaking in whispery tones which makes the matter even worse. As we make ourselves comfortable on the couch they go silence I sit next my grandmother and lean my head on her shoulder with her my hands laced on her thighs. She kisses my forehead and touches my hand, we have already reconciled about whatever that may be.

"I was just talking to your grandmother here Krotoa and I think since you have managed to keep your virginity at twenty six we are going to have umemulo for you" Ha ha ha. Is he serious? He cannot be. I hope he is not because did he think I was actually serious about this? Haibo. "No money will come from your pocket but I am going to do this for you because you are my child and I want to show you appreciation" I would love to believe that God doesn't really like me. I mean I am aware that

we do not have that much of a great relationship but why? Why he got to do this to me right now? I need to find an escape before my grandmother finds bliss in seeing my fabricated lie caught in a web.

I need tears. I need to damn cry. When they are needed they are not here but when it's so unnecessary they are like a damn at a lake. Mxm. "I really appreciate that you want to do something like this for me but I have been meaning to have this conversation with everyone. . ." I remove my head from my grandmother's shoulder upon the eyes transfixed on me in the room. "I just found out about my father's daughter recently and we were told that our great grandfather made promises with us. Also there is a cleansing that has to be done and we need to visit my father's grave to let him know that we found each other"

"Why you must go to his grave when he was never present in your life? Your mother raised you alone after those men just left because he had to marry someone else and now he wants to make demands for what? For what? And what was that promise? Where is your sister?" Okay my uncle is demented and the topic about my father has always been like hot water.

"What was the promise made by that big head you call a great grandfather" Haibo so he had a big head or he is mocking? Only Jongimpi.

“It was back in the days when you needed something without money you had to make some sort of exchange. . .”

“We know that Krotoa and my question is what was the damn promise?”

I hang my head low with my eyes focused on my manicured fingers. “Well I was chosen to sit on the throne and my sister was chosen to expand the family. I didn’t know anything mina and I didn’t do anything I was just told by isangoma what I need to do and what has to be done” I murmur and also make it clear that I am innocent in all of this.

“I was there too” There she goes selling herself out and I am afraid of the questions about to be thrown at our faces.

Jongimpi is silent for some time. I think he is trying to calm himself down because he has quite a temper. I am afraid he may punch these walls and the house will come falling down. There is quietness, this is the first that my grandmother doesn’t say a word and I think it has to do with the fact that my father was mentioned, she hates him. I know this. I can tell. I am still not aware what really happened and why he never returned at the hospital. “Who was this promise made to mancane? What ways can we do to break this?”

“It was made to ooZungu” I quickly answer and my grandmother tenses next to me, she is about to explode. “I had

no idea that Bandlalethu was from royalty and he is the next chief”

“And how did you find out about this? Where is your sister?”

“She was shot” I mumble.

“Haiké!” my grandmother claps once, clearly defeated. “Yazi ningehlule singalwanga. Krotoa! Krotoa!” that’s her basically saying that we have conquered her without a fight. There is complete silence again. “We are going to Durban” she announces. “If it’s not your father with a big nose then it has to be someone” Hawu my grandfather has a big nose and my great grandfather has a big head.

“We sold the house ma!” My uncle reminds her, this one is surely about to get ice cream from down the street to calm down because from that vein that just showed on his forehead I’m scared.

“Your child here surely has that figured out because she was just asking me that she wants to go back there right Krotoa?” Jesus Christ. “And call Mkhululi I need to meet up with him including lomfana omnyana” That should be my man. “This just doesn’t make sense to me. Your great grandfather with a big head is full of nonsense and that Zungu family is right here. . .” she points her neck clearly she has had enough about them. “I also want to meet with your paternal family because they are

full of it. Nxaarha. Promises? What promises when they never even bought you diapers? Your father wants you to tell him you've found your sister when he has never been in your life once? Once. Hhayi bangangidakelwa mina. Not with my child. Not with my granddaughter" She clicks her tongue "We are leaving in an hour get ready"

My uncle remains there with his fingers pressed on his upper lip. It's pretty much intense than I thought it would be. "Do you want this broken or you want to marry that boy?"

"I want to marry him" At my response he closes his eyes, I don't know what for but they remain fluttered closed with his sharp breathing. That mother in law of mine has followed my grandmother surely to check up on her because her blood pressure can shoot up the sky.

"The last thing I want is seeing you hurt mancane and not being able to protect you. It will kill me knowing that boy doesn't love you but he wants to do this because it's a ritual that has to be done. Is your sister okay? Have you checked on her"

"She has no one" I tell him, "When she was young her family was burnt down and basically her relatives distanced themselves so she is all alone"

"She cannot be alone when she is your sister. I don't mind her being our own. Are you okay mancane?" I think seeing her that

day almost unable to breathe made me realize that regardless of the differences that we had but I would love to have her as a sister. I never had siblings. A part of me can't help but feel that things might've turned out differently for the both of us if we were present in each other's lives but that is something we cannot change now but the present can be. I'm not perfect, she is not either. She might've said and done things that makes you judge her character but you cannot be human and not make mistakes.

"I am okay malume" I assure him.

He nods his head and inhales sharply once again before rubbing his hands pulling the grey strands on his beard. "That spaghetti on your head looks nice" Haibo Mkhonto! What is wrong with you? "You look beautiful mancane" Then he grins after mocking me and getting up from the couch. I can tell there is heavenliness on his shoulders. "I am sure you want to get ready I need to make a phone call to someone. We are going to solve whatever that is need to be solved but I will make sure you are not affected in anyway yezwa" I smile at him and he kisses my cheek then grabs out his phone and going out of the room.

My bags were already packed and I am going to leave wearing this it pretty much seems my feet are not touching the Zungu household until the day of the funeral. I stride to the bedroom

to make a phone call and the phone just rings unanswered until on the third call.

“Why you’re not answering my call Bandla?”

“I’m sorry mphefumulo wami. I’m busy with something here. Is everything okay, niright lapho?” Why he is using plural? Maybe he is referring to my family too. “I downloaded that app thing that delivers food for you if you need anything. What’s wrong?”

“A lot. . .” I sit on the edge of the bed. “I am accused of being pregnant and I told my uncle that I’m a virgin”

“Haibo uhamba umhlanga?” He teases me whether I attend the virgin testing. When he hears my silence he laughs. “I’m joking so what do you think about the accusations? Have you taken any tests?” He is very nonchalant about it.

“I’m not pregnant Bandla and I cannot take a test right now but rather have to wait five or six days after my periods has been missed but I know for a fact I am going on my periods this coming week” Yabona nje, my suspicions are also eliciting and making me choke with anxiety. I’d throw that baby on the bin. I’m joking but a part of me is not scared of being a mother, I think a nurture side to me is ready for that but I am afraid of not being a great one.

I still stick to the fact that I’m not pregnant!

“Ngizozwa ngawe mina—I will hear from you”

“Uzozwani Bandla?”

“Hawu” he chuckles “I’ll hear from you what happens makhosazana. If you are on your periods then you should let me know so I can take care of you” I am getting piqued about how he seems too calm about this. Very relaxed for my liking.

“I told my grandmother everything and she wants to kill you”

“Before you can go on your periods she must wait at least”

“Who is this woman that lied to you and said you were funny Sengwayo?”

He crackles on the other side of the phone. “No one but on a serious note what did she say? Am I in trouble?”

“It seems like it but we are going down to Durban right now and can I please have the keys to my house?”

“I will be waiting for you once you get here and hopefully you like the interior design. I’ll handle your grandmother don’t worry about it so I won’t be sleeping in your arms tonight?”

“No but I will see you when you are giving me the house keys. I miss you”

“Ngiyakhumbula nami. I’m about to drive to the mall right now do you want anything?”

“No. I’m fine, I love you”

“Uyalifuna ikhekhe?” He asks me whether I want cake. Why am I smiling? “There is this one from Woolworth you might like it”

“Okay please buy it for me”

“Ngiyakuthanda”

“I love you too”

“Even now you don’t want me sending this letter?”

“You can do a much better proposal than this Bandlalabo please!”

“I’ll get into it then Makroathazana and please don’t drive rather let someone else do it. I am going to the mall now”

“Okay bye”

“Ngiyakuthanda”

“You’ve said it”

“Say it back”

I smile, “I love you too”

59.

heir

/ɛ:/

one who inherits or is entitled to succeed to a hereditary rank, title, or office heir to the throne.

As we park outside the gate waiting for the security who was instructed to give me the keys I already know that an interrogation is about to erupt from my grandmother because how did I get this house? Even after “winning money” randomly after gambling he he he I couldn’t afford this house. Well the first question would be why I never thought of building something like this at home. I cannot really scream or dance in exuberance at this moment as I am mind blown at this beauty but I need to be composed.

“Sanibona. . .” A man in black uniform and cap greets with a gigantic bouquet of flowers, he is squeezing them that the petals are falling down. This where you commit murder. Why is he holding them like that? I’m really trying to compose myself but I cannot and my tears threaten at the corners of my eyes that I choose to look on the other side and avoid seeing how the tulips that my man bought for me are brutally squeezed

between his arms. “. . .I was told to give you this” He hands the flowers to my uncle and also a plastic as well which I am assuming has the cake that I was promised. I glimpse at them once as he starts creating conversation with my uncles including the disappearing one who was called last minutes and I am glad that he left his loud speaking girlfriend who fights with him over nothing.

Already my grandmother is irked and she saves the day by ending this conversation because they were now talking about engines and soccer, men have such a strange way of connecting but women also converse over hair and texture, make up and all that. “I think these are yours mancane” Mkhonto turns around handing me what belongs to me as he presses the key to the gate that slowly starts to open, this is heaven.

“Mancane! Mancane!!” Malibongwe drags his voice upon seeing the house and shaking his head totally impressed at the affluent exterior designer. “Krothiza this is you!” I’m just wondering how many names do I really have, he is whistling and murmuring, stealing glances at me from time to time. I cannot really look at his mother right now, she has been spitting venom and fire from the time we got into the car driving here, deep in her thoughts as the car maneuvers on the road and I cannot help but feel that there is something much deeper into this to be peeled off since she decided that her

sons should both come down to this trip. But she seems to be directing the incense emotions on my father's side of the family. It has nothing to do with ooZungu because in all honesty they have done nothing. The promise was made and needs to fulfilled.

I am praying that the one that disappears didn't come with that gun he hides under the bed, apparently years ago he used to do heists but my grandmother never accepted that money because he got it through being a "sinner" hence their relationship is not of a novelistic one but more of a haiku.

As we get off the car a smile is sewn on my face making me appear as a perfect garment at the boutique store as my eyes take in the sophistication of this house. This man actually knows me, the house stands out from the rest with the column windows with a fascinating glow that filters through perforated window shades that lights up at night and there is a polished sphere sculpture that offers a modern alternative to the garden traditional garden statue then there's a brand new black gleaming car with a gigantic ribbon as well. I really need an applaud because I haven't lost my marbles from the ebullient boiling inside me but rather I keep swallowing it back upon seeing my grandmother's gazes.

The one who thinks I'm a virgin is admiring the beauty of the car and singing some maskandi song with his brother as they

walk all around it clapping hands congratulating me on my success. They think something happened while I was in Rwanda with my business. Well a lot happened there because I even got my virginity back.

We walk inside the house as my uncles are dragging the bags and I instantly gasp at the beauty of the interior design at the lounge end of a spacious multifunctional living room layout. The modern sofa offers a double sided sectional arrangement, to establish connection with the adjacent kitchen diner. And most of the sofa seating is focussed toward a television which is simply mounted on a solitary television stand with a seamless microcement floor that increases the sense of space and forms a material mirror with the ceiling expanse. Then down the hallway, the floor becomes raised into the entryway of the second reception room. The kitchen pulls around the back of the open layout in an L-shaped installation with a dining island set at its centre and a globe pendant light trio descends over the cooking hob and casual eating spot. Upon seeing the wine storage shelves cut a horizontal line with an integrated oven and coffee machine I internally dance because while everyone is sleeping I'd be having celebrating, I just wish that I could rather fall asleep in his arms and wake up to him sucking on my dark buttons with a rubbery texture.

The window wall of the living room has been zoned as a separate relaxation space with warm wooden ceiling panels and a raised floor clearly define the change in function and a day bed is fashioned into the window platform, snuggled up close to the modern fireplace. And a comfortable hammock is strung across the remainder of the window space, those black window frames contrast darkly against the creamy light interior materials and the black wood store threads between the panes and creates a brief divide between the raised platform and lounge. There's a built-in planter grows an indoor garden around the dreamy hammock, creating soft screening to filter out the bustling capital.

The soft lighting scheme creates an atmospheric interior, a calming cocoon and the modern fire place flickers along the surface of an understated cement hearth, allowing the twinkling city panorama to retain due focus.

I can see Mam' Ziqubu with a ravishing simper on her face and mirth shimmering in those beautiful brown eyes with a shade of strange blue. I cannot explain it but she has such compelling eyes. "We won't even look around the house because we have to drive to the night vigil. It wouldn't look right not going there after what we've heard and what Krotoa has decided" I want to wrap my legs around her waist already and although she is talking to us but her eyes are mainly focused on wandering

around the beautiful house. “Why you never bought me this one hmm?” Finally I get to see her smiling and showing her short teeth. Also throughout the trip she was telling my uncles that their father has a gigantic nose with wide nostrils, my grandfather might’ve awakened the medusa or maybe she is pretending to be drowned in vexation when the truth is she wants to run back in his arms. “I’m moving back here with you” I hope she is being comical because I cannot take that. Not when I already have plans of where I am going to have sex with the man who bought me this. “And you bought a car? You are doing great Krotoa” I can see her gently massaging my insides and inviting my tears to fall down the valley of my slippery cheeks.

I throw myself in her arms and she welcomes me warmly with tender kisses on my forehead before she gives an instruction that I should go change and make sure that I look beautiful for the night vigil and she go as far as saying, “I should press necks” I don’t understand where she heard that from but in the name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit that is exactly what I am going to do.

I excuse myself in the room and the risers and glass balustrades give the staircase design a lightweight effect. The LED stair lights illuminate the wooden treads, the ribbons of light stream onto a seating area below the staircase ascent and the glass

balustrade crosses the landing at the top of the staircase, which leads to the bedrooms and bathrooms.

Yes! Yes! Yes! After looking for this bedroom I walk in with my gelatin knees rubbing against each other. The slatted wood ceiling beats a rhythm into the vast bedroom design is what catches my attention first as I swirl around. The distressed concrete bedroom accent wall brings depth, texture and freeform pattern to the airy bedroom scheme with an unusual floor lamp adds a dense black accent to the scheme's light palette. And the ensuite bathroom takes on an L-shaped arrangement around the master bedroom, starting with two pedestal sinks by the side of the bed with 3D tiles connect the double sink bathroom vanity, creating tactile layers behind two full length mirrors. And the second arm of the ensuite bathroom crosses the window wall, where it has been raised on a platform floor below the slatted ceiling feature where a load bearing wall interrupts the flow, the cut off area has been transformed into a cosy nook with a view and a shelving unit fits into the back of the supporting wall, providing toiletries storage by the bathtub.

The glass wall draws closed between the bedroom and the WC which is an en-suite and can be accessed directly from the landing area.

I have no idea what makes me want to throw up because I haven't eaten anything and you know what? I am going for blood tests rather

they say when there's smoke there's fire. Although I want to shove aside the changes that I am feeling in my body but the new truth stands that there could be some weird creature making itself comfortable in my stomach. God I hope it's not there because have that sperm and egg seen my body? Why would it want to take that away from me? Unplanned.

I managed to take a quick shower and change, I am not painting my face but I know that a lip gloss will enhance everything the way it supposed to and the way I draped my head with this garment makes me seem as though I am about to burn an incense then start singing about how my vagina surely smells like cream and strawberry, also how my chakras are aligned. And this dress was made for me.

A knock interrupts me, I shout that whoever it is should just walk in and it's my grandmother, she has changed and wearing something different from what she was wearing earlier on looking much more sublime with her ethereal and not wrinkled face. I hope she doesn't ask for her quantum back in front of the congregation because I would have to drag myself on the neck. "This is what I was talking about, lomfana omnyama needs to know that he chose well" One thing about her

though? She will step on my mood and turn it into nothing but pieces. What is this? “And he is such a charmer” Jesus I hope she is not referring to that other one who didn’t bother showing up at our negotiations day and wanted me to be his second wife. I am wondering what his polygamy would be like. I hope I get to witness this because it smells, taste and feel like drama to me. You see my sister there? She would bury the new woman in the picture. That was dark humor. “He loves you manane. . .” And how does she knows? Is it the house and car? I hope she hasn’t figured it out. I sharpen my gaze as she sits down on the edge of the bed and patting the empty space there, immediately my feet propels me. Did she see the time? I am eager to leave already because I cannot wait to see that man’s face since he is not expecting me. “You know something just doesn’t make sense here” I witness a frown on her face.

“Is this about the promise that my grandfather made?”

She shakes her head quickly in total disagreement with her eyes transfixed on one position and none other, deep in her thoughts that has consumed her and turning her aloof. “About your sister, I want to know how old is she?”

“We are the same age, I know that one of us is one month older. I have no idea what kind of sex was my father having. He has no respect for himself or whatsoever” Isn’t that what they say about women too? Mxm. My grandmother looks at me, I

thought she'll hear the humor laced in my voice but rather she tenses with her eyes with glasses that wants to shatter.

"No or maybe she was told that she was a month younger when the truth is both of you were born at the same time, same day and by the same woman" What in the world of Blood and Water is she talking about? Is this some sort of series that I have to subscribe too because my life suddenly seems interesting. I wouldn't mind watching it from season to another. "And this is the reason I hate your father. Leave the fact that he had to go on and marry another woman leaving your mother alone but there were two of you, that day he disappeared also your sister was not found" No, this doesn't make sense.

"What are you saying exactly?"

"I need to see your sister. I know how I was able to differentiate the both of you when you were born"

"Zenokuhle doesn't look like me or anyone in this family" I am pretty much sure of this unless I haven't spent that much time studying her features and face. Mam'Ziqubu just smirks and takes out a picture on a purse handing it to me. This is my mother when she was young, wearing a pink off shoulder dress that makes appear as a black Marilyn Monroe with a red lipstick on her face, I am so sure that this was way before she thought of having sex and children. She looks happy with a beam and

bottle of beer in her hand. I cannot believe she was once an alcohol consuming woman because that changed.

“Look closely at her” my grandmother says and bringing the picture to my eyes. “You never looked like your mother. Uyintombi-kayise. He was beautiful as you are that you could easily mistaken him as a woman. This is him. . .” Then she hands me another picture of them together with my father wearing high waisted pants with a brown shirt that shows his taut muscles. They seem to be at the beach his hands wrapped around her waist as my mother is touching her hair. They look in love and vibrant with care free spirit oozing from this sepia image. I do, I really do look like my father but my eyes focuses on this image of my mother and like a revelation I can see it. Not that I want to accept. “Now tell me does she look like this? Your mother was not only killed by being a victim of rape, already she had lost herself but staying strong for you. That was just a nail in coffin. After your sister was not found and the man she loved she lost herself” I can see the difference from the images, she is not the version of my mother that I know. Although she always laughed and watched movies with characters who speaks in weird accent and their deep dark hair and emollient skin but this is a total different picture that I know of my mother. “Now tell me does your sister look like this Krotoa? Her name wasn’t Zeno” And then she smiles with so much warmth “You mother always obsessed over strange

things, she was in love with the Khoisan culture that's how she gave birth to Krotoa and Katrina" I am glad I got the other name because the other one sounds like apartheid name to me honestly. "We have no idea what happened. I cannot help but blame your father about how we lost her, we have no idea who took her"

"I don't think it would make sense blaming Makhetha because she was not so far away from here. Inanda is not that far from here gogo maybe she was taken at the hospital or worse stolen. This was famous back in the days but I'm going to try and find a way to this matter. All I care about right now is that is she found"

She inhaled sharply. "Hmmm" Then she murmurs. I wish I can make myself comfortable in her mind to explore and see what is on the inside. "We should leave"

Wait should I drive this car with a ribbon or maybe take it off? A Porsche Cayman is exactly going to give me the much needed attention that my grandmother also wants, she is such a dramatic queen even though I can tell she is not her humorous usual self. Well my uncles are following right behind us because they are business partners with this family and it only makes sense for them to attend, my mother in law cannot stop smiling to herself at the backseat that is until we actually arrive at Zungu homestead. They're cars everywhere that I cannot find a

space—expensive and gleaming ones—I can hear the singing from the tent and keyboard loudly being played. It sounds like an usual day at the service and not too sombre.

As we get off the car I see him talking to someone from the gate wearing gumboots and blue dungaree with two knives in his hands, the conversation seems intense too. There is a truck that just delivered a cow. I heard that anyone who happens to die with a weapon there is a ceremony that should be done before their coffin can actually enter the house. When our eyes interlock he pauses talking all at once and gazes at me with wildfire. I want to run to his arms already but my grandmother here is waiting for that move so she can drag me back by my arm reminding me that I am not a wife as yet.

As we reach them and the elderly man he is talking too he hides the knives behind his back with one hand and the other one handshaking as he greets. What should I do? Do I wave too or hug him? Well it seems that a handshake is what we are both going for at the moment and he holds my hand much longer than he should before he let go.

“Wena!” I expected my grandmother to do this, pointing at him with her short fingers and with a threatening gaze. “I want you in my house on Monday so we can talk” Then she says after greeting and sending condolences before she walks pass with my mother in law making their way to the tent while my uncles

leaving with that other man he was standing with making their way to where all men are doing the slaughtering and drinking sorghum beer.

In this moment I do not even want a kiss but rather an embrace. Just his arms embroidered around my body and him nuzzling on my neck and that is exactly what I get from him, as he grabs my buttocks and almost lifting me up before he darts his eyes between mine. “Waze wamuhle bo! Sawubona mphefumulo wami” First he exclaims my beauty as a man who is witnessing it for the first time. You see this need for me to cry? What a pique.

“Bandlalethu”

“Who is that?”

“Bandlalami” I smile.

“I’m listening makhosazana”

“There is a pregnancy test that tells you exactly how long you are with the pregnancy”

That caught him off guard and it pretty much did the same with me. I have no idea where is that coming from but these are the words from my mouth formed by brain and spat by voice. “And thank you for the house and car. I really love it” I am trying to calm that sudden catastrophe because this is what it is. No matter how old you are but somehow pregnancy has a way of

evoking unnecessary anxiety especially an unplanned one. “I’m scared” Well he is too silence and hasn’t said a word.

“You don’t have to be, I am here” his fingers are trailing patterns on my waist, then he looks around before his eyes are met with my face again. Well he cannot see my new hair because of the head wrap and I can tell that’s what he wanted to see. “I woke up with a toothache today” Jesus Christ this a confirmation. I blink rapidly and he smirks. “We are not sure” But already you sound ecstatic mxm.

“If I am pregnant I want you to be fully aware that I am going to fucking kill you”

“Language—

I raise my hand at him, “don’t dare tell me about language! You did this on purpose didn’t you? You already know that I am pregnant. Why Bandla?”

He seems bewildered and stupefied as I remove his hands around me, pushing away. “Haibo Krotoa!” He is seriously lost and has no idea what to do. I click my tongue and attempting to walk pass him when he holds me by my hand. “Look don’t go inside as yet the women are still doing the chopping and stuff and I know they’ll ask you to do that as well. I don’t want you standing on your feet for long hours so can we please go to my car”

“I’m not lazy I can chop!” I seethe and he creases his eyebrow not believing my words. What? He seriously thinks I am not capable of chopping butternut and cabbage not forgetting beetroot. “I can chop” I repeat again seeing my mother in law walking pass with MaMsweli already wearing an apron. That was fast. “Fine lets go then Bandlalabo”

“Did you two eat the cakes?”

“Who is two?”

“I meant did you eat the cakes that I bought you?”

I actually want sex right now!

“Can we do it in the car?” That was so random that he widen his eyes out. “Zenokuhle could be my twin sister” I just realize that I have tendencies of having two conversations at once, he maneuvers with that all the time. “And I missed you”

“We will talk all about this in the car. You said ufuna ngiyifake kancane?” I should’ve dated a snob from somewhere around the province that doesn’t speak vernacular with no filter as this man in front of me. “You’re not mad at me anymore at the possibility of being pregnant?” Oh he is still perplexed about that part. “If we are pregnant mphefumulo wami then I want you to know that you and Buzabazi are going to be just fine” You got to be joking. What kind of a name is that? I would rather drink coke and disprin right now.

“You are not naming my child Buzabazi”

“I already did. It’s a beautiful name”

“I hate it dude”

I shouldn’t have said that. No seriously what is wrong with my mouth and speaking my thoughts. “That was the last time you say something like that. Woza ngiyokunika lento oyifunayo— come let me give you want you want”

Ubaba ka Buzabazi!

60.

yes

/jɛs/

used to give an affirmative response.

We are about to turn around this gleaming red car towards his when someone shout out for my name and no one has to say it that is my grandmother, this woman should've stayed home not only has she been calling my man names now she wants to take away that one chance of me having sex that I seriously need right now.

“Both of you come back right now!” I knew that this woman hates me, I just don't understand why she has been tolerating me all these years. “Your cousin is busy doing the chopping as if she the one dating in this family” But she is dating my father in law. We are painted in abash approaching towards where she is standing with her hands pressed against her waist and she is also meeting us half away. “Where did you two think you are going? Who do you think is slaughtering the cow wena? Hmmm?” I knew that my grandmother being here means she'll be in charge that's just her nature, she always finds a way even

in a room full of men. I think that is one thing that I took from her, the dominating aura and fierce attitude.

I'm walking way pass Bandlaethu who is walking behind me with his head hanging low until eventually I am standing in front of my grandmother who gives me an apron and sharp knife. Trust this man who was to eager to sex me, to stand distance apart. "Yobe ma. . ." he apologizes to my grandmother in such a respectful mannerism and rubbing his hands together. I glimpse at him and how much of a charmer he is in these boots. "I am the one who was taking her away she had nothing to do with this, I didn't want her to stand for long hours chopping" I quickly turn around to look at him again. This is the moment I realize that I wouldn't mind serving him food on my knees, I will never do that though unless I want them to change pigmentation and look darker but somehow this man has been able to stand up fo me when I needed him to, with no doubt. I can see even my grandmother is impressed by that baritone voice that just spoke even the muscles around her face pretty much seems serene, "I don't want her doing any hard work ma but if she really has to go and give a hand then please make her sit down rather"

Jesus I should be screaming his name in a car now.

"Hmmm. Asambe wena!" Wasn't she supposed to ululate and tell him how much of a great man he is and that she

appreciates him? Shame she doesn't cease to amaze me. I am being given an apron and walking right behind her when I turn around and he blows me a kiss while he stands under the streetlight that illuminates him, I am blooming with zeal at this moment. When we walk to the backyard we find other women who are singing along to the song being sang by the worship team inside the tent.

A sack of butternut is placed right in front of me then my grandmother sends a child that was just passing to go get two chairs. I did my manicure just this morning and this thing has the ability to even break a knife. I should've ran to that car and hide.

After sometime the child returns back and the other chair has been given to me then the other to Lerato, she then leaves making her way to the tent, all I am saying is being with a man whose next to the throne has a privilege. The rest of these women now wants chairs excluding that one who is busy drinking from the grey jug of traditional sorghum beer, she is busy taking out all the dirty laundry of each and every family member. "OoMzobanzi!" I know whenever she says something like this with that tone she is about to say something, she claps once and then wipes her mouth before she takes a sip. "I am wondering what kind of marriage was this when they busy galavanting and making children outside their marriage.

Qhamukiyane ke ingane namhlanje and she said this was her father, she was found by uMsebeyelanga. We don't even know how and where. It doesn't end there maMkhize was sleeping with Mkhululi!" Then she throws the knife on the table. I glimpse towards my dearest cousin and this must be a hard pill to swallow for her because she is murdering those carrots with that knife. "In this family wonders shall never end. They shall never end. What's next? Nqabayezulu sleeping with his brother's wife or the new one? And today we should pretend to be a united family when there's been fights over throne? The witchcraft in this family. I can see some wives sitting there acting all holy when their children are cousins and brothers, ooZungu ke labo" We are indirectly attacked here even me. Now she guzzling from that jug then she clicks her tongue and leaves to get a refill leaving laughter erupting from other women who starts to gossip.

"Ngigeza izandla!" One woman speaks out and throwing her hands in the air as she speaks about her defeat. "That woman is a whore. How can you sleep with your husband's brother? Phuuuuuu!!" Then she spits her saliva. This woman just evoked my anger and the incense is burning me from my vagina to my armpits, oozing from all my pores along the beads of sweat embroidered in my body.

“I am so sure that we are not here to gossip but to give a hand to this family. You want to have a cup of tea and scones about other people’s business when you should be minding your own what for?” I direct to the elderly women with grey strands whom are calling my mother in law a harlot but not her husband. A woman should be called names while men walk away with bullshit, they get away with everything? It has been said that he has a child outside marriage then what the fuck is this? “All of you please don’t bother about the chopping and cooking anymore you can leave, attend the service at the tent” I seethe at them because clearly from the attitude that they just gave me they think we need them.

“Krotoa!” That sounded more like a warning from MaMsweli that I should apologize. I don’t know whether she thinks I am scared of her or what but she has been giving me this hard sharpened face as though I had a gun pointing at her husband to sleep with me. “These women are helping us here. You cannot speak to elders with disrespect” Excuse me? It seems she is pretty much okay with how they talking about our family member, or maybe she is pleased about how my name was mentioned but in a concealed mannerism?

“We don’t need them. I can handle this on my own is it okay for them to speak about someone from this family like that, it’s not disrespectful to you? And I should fold my hands or clap for

them!” I am seriously about to throw all these pieces of butternut at everyone who dares defend them or speak out. “Bomama please go back to the tent and leave that to me!”

They all throw the knives on the table and mumbling underneath their breath about how disrespectful I am, some wondering who I am. They think I could be a child from outside marriage or sleeping with someone in this family. They got that one right. “What was that about? Now how are going to finish up here because this will take time? Are you even thinking?” She shouts at me and I can tell she has been impatiently waiting for this moment, grabbing it with both hands to show how much of a super woman she is.

“You also don’t have to bother about it. I will have a catering team to take care of it”

She chuckles dryly and clapping her hands once. “With the money you took from my husband for me and my children to starve? Where are you going to take the catering team from? Stop with the drama”

I smile and wink at her before getting up from the chair that I was seated on in attempts of walking away when she grabs me by arm pulling me back. I turn to glimpse at her hand holding onto me. “I don’t want to fight with you” I say so politely and she pushes me by my shoulders. “Quqi ngizokushaya!” I warn her pointing my index finger on her forehead that I am going to

beat her black and blue. Again she pushes me when I am about to fight her my dearest sweet cousin stands between the both of us when MaMsweli starts to scream and shout calling me names. I seriously want to murder her, I charge towards her throwing a hard slap across her face when she yelps. All her attempts of slapping me back are thrown outside the door because I slap her continuously, a double slap. I was raised by a boxer mina, she shouldn't dare me.

A fight is about to erupt, wrestling actually when a manly hands holds me by my waist and her husband is now blocking me from making her way towards her direction. I'm just glad this is not full blown drama and surrounded by people but rather it's the family and the uncles. Unexpectedly she starts crying and falling on to her knees, guttural crying from the depth of her belly button while her man holds her closely to his chest. I'm sure they have unresolved issues about what happened but let's not pretend as though I was the only woman that he slept with. Why she wants to paint me with that color? She can cry and form a bubble with her mucus and saliva.

"Makhosazana!" I don't understand why his voice is sonorous honestly. I did not start that fight nor called anyone names.

"What happened?" I wonder who went on to call my grandmother. It must be my uncles, the that actually disappears, he's a good storyteller and narrating to his mother

what happened like he was there and saw everything. It's the effect in between about the slaps that I threw and how I took it from Jongimpi as he chuckles. My grandmother give me a disapproval look while I am taken by my man who I know is about to give me lecture. They are preaching at the tent now and the aunt who was taking out the furry laundry is apparently crying her eyeballs out inside the house right now. While everyone is wondering about what happened to the vegetables that were being chopped.

“Can you get me a catering team right now? Even if they can come here in the morning that's fine. I will make the payment” I say to him as I am following behind. He is covered in blood from the slaughtering that he was doing. Well we cannot really go outside the yard as my grandmother's instruction but he is taking me to his room. Everyone is walking up and down in this house, no cares about what happened outside.

I am standing right behind him as he unlocks the door to his bedroom when some other man calls out for him and he says that they should give him few minutes he is coming. You wouldn't have to ask whose room is this because the simple bedroom design offers a spot for peaceful slumber with a wooden platform bed features an upholstered headboard for comfort whilst reading then there's a striped rug and bed throw add in warming accents of dark ochre.

The rattan pendant light illuminates one side of the bed, whilst a floor lamp arches at the other and the bedside table is a small rustic stool, just wide enough to hold a cup of coffee and a book without room to attract excessive clutter. There's also a floor lamp arches in front of a large freeform mirror, which creates a bright and spacious effect.

The illuminated shelves add a cosy glow by the wardrobe, he just made his way there looking for something to wear and leaves me on sitting on the edge of the bed. No words have been exchanged.

"I'm going to take a shower quickly then we are going to talk"
Oh great. After that he walks out of the door leaving me. I can hear arguments about food and who was not supposed to touch whose cakes. I feeling nauseated with my stomach growling. He might come back hours later. But also this gives me a chance to look for a catering team and I am so glad I found someone, at this moment I don't really care how the food taste as long as they come here at dawn so that everyone gets to eat something in the morning all is well.

I get hold of this calm woman shame, she has a sweet tone and I could tell she was deep in her sleep but I promised to double the amount. What should I do now? I think I should just pretend to be sleeping. Also I want to find out how my sister is

doing because we are planning on seeing her tomorrow after the funeral.

I cannot believe I didn't attend the night vigil because usually there is drama. I unwrap the scarf on my head as I am about to take off my dress the door opens, he walks in and he has changed into jeans and a vest. I don't know why but he seems enraged about something and he is carrying a plate in his hand and glass of juice. It feels like visiting a man at his backroom and having him hide you.

He helps me taking off the dress kissing both my shoulders and risqué sensations evokes from my body causing me to close my eyes, inhaling deeply into my lungs. As he turns me around to meet with his face, he smells fresh and delicate. This time his fingers are massaging the sides of my stomach. Well that somehow reminds me that we have a matter at hand—we can actually make exotic children. I have mixed emotions about this. “I want to eat you out. . .” I want throw myself on the bed immediately and separate my legs for his head to enter, tongue moving in shamanism “But we cannot really do it at my father's house when we will bury him tomorrow that would be disrespectful. I want you so bad” I can tell that he is fighting off his deep desires. “I love this hair on you. Umuhle” Then he compliments tugging the strands of what was called spaghetti on my head.

“I missed you”

“I missed you so much. I don’t think I will survive again staying that long away from you” He manoeuvres me to bed and I get under in only my underwear with my bralette that has been taken off. We make ourselves comfortable when he grabs the plate he placed on the side table. “Open your mouth” Suddenly I cannot use my hands to eat. I slightly open my mouth as he starts to feed me, double spoons at once and I am not even given a chance to swallow. “I heard you stood up for my mother. . .” I chew then swallow opening my mouth, making it sensual and he seductively chuckles at me shaking his head before shoving the food inside my mouth. “Did you get the cooking people?” I incline my head in agreement. Yes, I’m saving money. “Give me the invoice and I’ll take care of it” He mixes the rice and beef curry. This has turned into a biryani. “What happened MaKrotoathazana?” Now he is mocking.

I shrug my shoulders because I don’t even know where to begin with the narration of what happened. “Well she said the money I’m going to use to pay the catering team is the money that I took from her husband” I can tell that just threw off his mood outside the window, with his thin eyes starting to blaze with dangerous and wildfire

the muscles on his face tightens “You have nothing to be mad about. A part of me understands her, she is angry and looking

for someone to blame” Its the propaganda that always has been pushed for years from generations before us, women to hate each other.

“What did she say exactly?”

“It doesn’t matter”

He shoves a spoon inside my mouth so gently that you could deny to anyone that he is burning with vexation and venom. “I don’t want you fighting. I don’t want anyone bullshitting you either. I had my own reasons from the start why I didn’t want you there makhosazana”

“If I am really pregnant I need you to keep it in mind that I am not disabled”

He smiles gloriously the plate is now empty and I cannot believe that I ate that much food. After he has leaned back on the headboard he takes my head placing on his shoulder while his hand is playing with my breast, pinching my nipples. I’m sure he has no idea the amount of necromancy that this has on me. “This would be my first child” Oh that’s where the euphoria is coming from. I look up at him and seeing a leer that cannot be easily erased from him. “I really do want to have a child with you even if it’s not now”

“I have such a nice body” I am sure he’ll get my point. It seems he did because now his shoulders are moving up and down from laughing then he kisses the top of my head.

“You know some women actually don’t gain weight at all when they’re pregnant? I feel like you are one of those women but even if they’re some changes that would be because you are accommodating someone here. Your body will change. I will not love you any less mphefumulo wami” Then he changes becoming grave. “They want me on a throne as soon as possible”

“Isn’t that what you want?” I look up at him with our eyes moving as one, they’re so in sync as though they communicate which direction they should take next.

“You know what this means? Taking over the throne means you’ll be there with me on my side. I asked whether I can send a letter and uyathililiza (you are beating around the bush) I really want to marry you Makhosazana” I cannot believe that this has become my name officially.

“Before we can even have this conversation I need to know how are you emotionally. You lost your mother with gruesome and of course a man who was your father. We are burying them tomorrow, the fact that you are so impassive about your emotions somehow scares me Msebeyelanga”

“Mawuse duze kwami konke okomhlaba akuyilutho kumina, akuthi ndingi. Ngisho nezinhlungu angizizwa mphefumulo wami (Whenever you are with me the things of this world do not really matter, I feel nothing. Even the pain)” The he says with an infectious tone. I touch his face with one finger as though I want to feel whether the water is warm enough in the basin before my hand engulfs his face, deeply sharing a magnetic eye contact. “And to answer you, I am fine really. I accepted that they are gone now I just need to find a way forward with what is now my reality”

“And the cleansing? When are we having that ceremony? It would be inappropriate to have it without having to find out my father’s side of the family and also waiting for my sister to gain her consciousness. There is a possibility that she could be my twin”

“How is that possible?”

“One of us was stolen after my mother gave birth and they thought at some point that my father took her but that wouldn’t make sense at all maybe what she thought was her mother did that. I have no idea honestly but we will find out”

Someone shouts for him outside because he needs to attend something. The service has ended I can hear that since some people are asking about what time does the service start through the hallway, another person sounds elated about not

having to chop anymore because that has been sorted out and also the cooking, and serving part tomorrow since she'll be wearing her best outfit from that too husky tone, I can tell it's the aunt from earlier.

Bandlalethu checks the time then grunts. Any minute from now it will be dawn, these people will be here and I am the one who has to attend them. I still have to drive back to my house before the funeral.

"I am sure they want some of the church members driven home. When I leave lock the door so no one bothers you, I need to rest and we will have this conversation later. I'll check the stores if they have that test so we can do it together. Ngiyakuthanda" He waits for me to snuggle on the bed before he captures my lips that hums with sultry, our tongues dueling then he gently bites before letting go. "Sleep now. We will figure out about your changing clothes tomorrow"

He wears his shoes and has he is about to walk out of the door, I call out for him. "Whenever you want the letter sent home. You can send it, I'll be waiting for you" He wants to start chanting some traditional song but holding back as he gigantically smiles at me and returns back to hover me, separating my legs to get in between. He get on the bed with his shoes and everything just to kiss me with his mouth clinging into me and pouring the euphoric words that he cannot really

say at this moment with tender and fully aroused with my hands now around his neck. "You have to go" I smile in between the kiss and so does he as he anoints my forehead with his warm lips then gets off the bed leaving.

•

I don't think taking this pregnancy test is that much of a great idea before the funeral because now I'll be afloat in my thoughts and start crying then people will assume it's about the deceased, I cannot wait yet another minute without knowing. I place the blue and white stick on a sink basin washing my hands before taking a glimpse at myself in the mirror. Oh damn. Oh Jesus it makes sense why I tend to make men's world go around without even bothering to try. I am so gorgeous. I loop the earrings that hangs from ears sealing the sophisticated look. I had to drape a scarf around my shoulders because the tattoo on my back is showing and the one on my feet is simply hidden but the length of this dress.

I start to pace up and down with a silent prayer that if there is really a Buzabazi here, they should return back where they are coming from because their father already has a ridiculous name for them, is that what they want? I guess not they shouldn't bother choosing a father like him, they can pretty much do

better than that. And I am using “they and them” because it’s gender fluid.

In the morning we drove back home so we can just take a shower and change. We have no idea where the ice cream eater went, because at some point we seriously thought he was exhausted and drove back but he is not here either.

“Krotoa!” I hear my grandmother shouting from outside the door of my room. This one who was spitting fire about the hate she has towards umfana omnyama’s family was in charge of everything because no one wanted to. At dawn we were already serving breakfast to everyone with tea, that raised suspicions about my “mother in law” because she saw how she was so enthusiastic, her demeanor screamed being someone’s fiancé or wife in the family. “Krotoa hurry up we need to leave already!” She knocks on my door—she is always on time.

“I’m coming”

“You better!” Then she walks away.

I inhale sharply to my lungs right in that moment the timer starts to buzz. I grab the tests and seeing the results. I remain here stationary and not knowing what I am supposed to do next, I mean it sounded farfetched when I was being comical about this but now the reality is staring back at me, I’m two

weeks pregnant. You got to be fucking kidding me honestly. What in the world of Buzabazi is this? I'm stuck between loudly laughing because why did I not use condom? Or actually crying because why did I not take the pill? It's just the two and now I'll be hysterically throughout the whole funeral and not even bothering to talk to Bandlalabo.

And then? Where did my uncles get the suits? They cleaned up really nice more especially the cheap ice cream eater who did not bother about the tie but the last two buttons are left opened, with that Then the ghosts that always disappears has a tie worn on and I am praying that after seeing how much of a charmer he is he might leave that girlfriend of his and come back home, maybe become part of the taxi business and be a force at the rank. As long as we don't dodge bullets then I am applauding them.

"Mancane? Lele? Are you two okay?" Malibongwe asks both my mother in law and I, we nod our heads in agreement before we start to walk with him behind us, I take Lerato's hand to mine as they intertwine, she knows what I was up to in my room and the squeeze is enough to tell her what result I got because she quickly gazes at me with her eyes almost falling out but she receives a hard straight face from me.

We get in the Range Rover with Mkhonto who has already made himself comfortable on the driver's seater almost

immediately he drivers off and we leave with gospel music playing in the background softly.

“Did you think about what we once spoke about Krotoa? About umemulo?” Why he doesn’t just let it go? I am exhausted from all the fabrication that I have been doing sitting on my chest already.

“Just plan a baby shower instead” I mumble under my breath and I know for a fact he did not hear him but only that sly old woman who just grinned and clapped once because that only means she was right all along. Right after that she increased the volume and start to sing along loudly to the song. Good because I do not have to answer any questions anymore.

As the funeral proceed I have been crying more than any family member here and including this one who just gave me a bottle of water and making me lean on his shoulder. The perplexity on his face is marvelous, just wondering what on earth is wrong with me. I can rave on about how gorgeous he looking with that aura that invites all the attention draped around him.

Nqabayezulu can barely even sit on his chair, he seems lost more than anything even though he wants to run away from the guilt it manages to churn him in small particles. Throughout he just has his head hanging low averting from seeing the picture of his father with that smile that surely dropped under-wears on floor back then. I must say he was good looking

compared to his attitude and aloof he was. Their mother was absolutely gorgeous, I still think that we would've been partners in crime at some point. Surely gossip and laugh about how we slept with brothers. Regardless of the relationship that he might've had with her son but I know that when he was going to be crowned as the chieftaincy she would've been sublime with that proud smile and made sure that the ceremony was the one to talk about. I saw by the interior design of this house that she had great palettes.

I am glad that the old man is buried not so far away from their homestead. It's that smirk that he had after he shot my sister that evokes the rage and menace from me. We are going to see her today, apparently there hasn't been any changes so far and she could not wake up.

A song starts we are going to the cemetery now and Bandlalethu has to go carry the coffins as we are walking out. Their sister who was introduced to me as Bungcwele doesn't want to leave my side, they are so many wives and sister in laws she couldn't chose from but me. I take that as a bad omen that I am really pregnant because why would a teenager love me? I mean look at MaMsweli there afraid to even look at me, she is absolutely beautiful she should've went to her or maybe my mother in law because she is the closest thing to Bonang around here. Why me? Why me? Why me? I take her hand to

mine anyways holding her because she is crying hysterically about how she is now an orphan and never got a chance to meet her father.

I know for a fact her being the only girl child means everyone is going to be overly protective over her. I witnessed that with Bandlalethu around her they call her a miracle because from one generation to another there hasn't been a woman into this family for a long period of time. It's mostly just wives but not the children.

We are following right behind and yes, it's totally sombre. I can hear the loud crying that sounds so guttural as we walk out of the church and this young woman here is clinging onto me until we are outside. I open the backseat of her brother's car for her and she gets in right after I have given her a bottle of water. The scorching sun is making me melt in these black garments so I am going to await for Bandlalabo outside the car. There he is talking to someone about something and he has that spear in his hand today. I don't know whether it's me or not but that title fits him like a glove. I cannot help but smile upon seeing how even elderly men show him the respect that he also gives out.

"So what are you going to do now? Take my brother's money as well and leave him dry?" I turn around and Melikhaya is standing behind me like a thief in the night. Oh please fuck you.

I have so much bigger problems than to entertain you and being petty seriously. I am pregnant. Do you know how stressful that is for any woman? Even when you can afford being a mother but this is a permanent thing. I cannot throw away the child whenever needed to or bored. Get the fuck out please.

I smile, "I wish but I can afford doing what I want now so I won't need money from anyone. I'm just going to love the fuck out of him until he wonders what he has done to deserve such bliss" I pull down the scarf around my shoulders. "And also you're not the only man I took money from. You're not one of the kind Melikhaya"

He chuckles and runs his hand over the beard on his chin then sniffs. "Is that the reason you sent him to give me my money back? Triple the amount even so I can get off your neck"

"I never really wanted you to get off my neck because you were never there from the start. I am sure he saw a need to triple the amount because you might've needed it now that you've sent your wife to fight me when she wasn't there when you told me about all the shit she has been doing"

"Get her name out of your mouth"

"You are giving the wrong person that advice, you should be telling her that because your existence or hers doesn't really

matter to me. I apologized to you because I acknowledge what happened, I'm not going to do that to her because I owe her nothing so for you to come here and question me about Bandla is stupid. I thought we were all adults here. You lost your mother. You just discovered about your family, why can't you focus on that and not some girl who beat you at your own game"

"I need you to know that I am going to kill you. It may not be now but one day"

"And I need you to know that a second after that you'll die too and we'll meet in the afterlife. I'm afraid of what I'll do to you because you'll die even in your death" I smile and him turning away upon seeing my man approaching towards our direction.

I don't know what made him think I'll run around in fear, death doesn't scare me, only pregnancy.

61.

seraphic

[adj]

- beautiful and pure, having a sweet nature befitting an angel or cherub; of relating or relating to an angel of first order

BANDLALETHU

We grab the shovels in our hands under the scorching sun and my forehead is covered in salty beads while a woman with contralto leads a song that was apparently my parent's favorite and everyone back her up with their voices blending so perfectly together. This is the finality to everything that I cannot make amends with them, I cannot sit down and hold my mother's hand rubbing her knuckles and letting her know that I can never be angry at her for what has happened or be mad. That regardless of what happened between us but she has always been that woman that I worship for carrying and nurturing me.

I glimpse towards the woman who makes me feel wholeness with my blazer in her hand and she rather seems emotional

about what is happening here, I shouldn't be secretly smiling as the brown and gold cross stands on top of the mountain of soil. The people are now making their way back to the buses and cars, sharing their own sepia nostalgic times they shared with my parents. No one is hysterical anymore but rather laughter erupts and smiles. But that is not the reason why mine is sewed on my face. I am seeing a woman that was tailored made for me by uMveliqangi and was chosen by my ancestors. The sun seems to adore her, as though she is the owner of it on her skin. The plumpness of her lips so glossy with those gold earrings hanging on her ears making her appear as a piece of art on the white wall. I think I love seeing her in dresses she makes them look like they were only invented to be worn by her, more especially this one that holds her around her waist reminding me how she was glorifying her beautifully sculptured body and how the possibility of pregnancy can ruin that for her; she has no idea that this temple would be mind blowing in whatever shape and size that she possesses.

I look towards my brother who pretty much seems like an empty vessel walking around without showing any sense of emotions or remaining impassive dusting his hands before he leaves and making his way to the car parking, averting creating any sort of conversation with anyone. I know that he is going straight to the hospital to sit next to that bed, hold her hand until eventually he falls asleep and he awoken by sun rays. Sigh.

There is so much going on at once that I have no idea what to grip and not grab in my hands at the moment. At this ratio my mind is drowned in a thunderstorm of thoughts but as her hands are wrapped around me a sense of serenity washes over me with her hands on my face, I don't think she has an idea how this makes me feel. They are so soft and smell so divine. I could eat from them, she always has a way of teasing my nostrils with her exotic scent.

"We should go" I announce and she nods her head with our hands now intertwining. I look towards the two graves next to each other with my heart twisting and turning. I am perplexed about whether to cry over their death or remain just numb as I am. As we are walking she complains about the pain around her womb, almost like period pains. "Are you on your periods?" We are close to the car now and she is talking about a lot at once. It's the back pains and how much she wants the beef curry with dumpling. I'm not sure whether that has been cooked but I am praying they did.

She just looks at me at that question I have plagued her with seemingly with her mood that has changed. What did I do? This woman throws me in a bus of bewilderment these days. I thought we were doing just fine and now she just painfully squeezed my hand with her nails digging into my skin before clicking her tongue and walking faster leaving me behind.

Ngenzeni? I don't know what I did seriously. I follow right behind her when out of nowhere a madman wearing so many things at once in dark brown and black stands in front of her, he is carrying bags with his bare feet looking dark.

"Bazokubulala! Your life is in danger!" He points at makhosazana who just immediately froze not knowing what to do as this man is hovering over her. Everyone is watching as I walk up to them pushing him with gentleness. "You will be there! You will be there and you may die too. That day the rain will pour and the thunder will rumble, blood will be shed. The soil will turn red in color. It's too late" Then he grins in between showing his dark teeth with his one shoulders, moving up down almost as though he is having a seizure.

"Ngicela uhambe!" I plead him to leave, I am holding makhosazana into my arms who pretty much seems shaken about this and holding onto me with her head on my chest.

He looks at me with great sadness as he repeatedly shakes his head pointing at me "Bayosala bodwana! Bayosala bekhala!" Then he starts to sing with his feet moving to the rhythm of the song as his shoulders move along to the cadence while he continues to sing with a deep tone laced with many emotions, in his spiritual realm element.

When people attempt on roughly holding him I give a simple instruction that they should leave him alone as he continues to sing, grunting and groaning in between.

“What’s going on here?” That’s her uncle who just approached towards us alongside my father with frowned faces. I don’t use words but much rather communicate with them using my eyes for him to take mphefumulo wami from my arms to the car. At his attempts she shakes her head and clinging onto me. I understand what she just heard might’ve shaken her to the core, even me. “I am going to handle this, take mancane with you”

“And don’t hurt him please rather just take him along. He had a message” I tell them and I know for a fact they don’t not agree with what I am saying. They have no choice either way but following my instructions. “Asambeni mama” I whisper to her ear and taking her hand, she can barely walk with her knees suddenly have become vibrating vessels so I sweep her off her feet literally and hold her into my arms with her head on my chest

Advertisement

I look down to her beautiful face and radiant skin. The tears in her eyes look like diamonds meeting on her chin.

I fasten her seatbelt after she got into the car before closing the door. I need to smoke, I lean against the car and lightening up the cigarette in between my lips after grabbing it out of the packet. I keep stealing glimpse inside the car and she has leaned back with her eyes closed. I asked that they take uBungcwele and drive with her home. I need to get to the bottom of this.

“Bandlaletu. . .” Oh I did not see him approaching towards my direction. It’s my father who has taken off his blazer with his white shirt stained around the arms as he folds the sleeves all the way up. “What happened?” Then he looks inside the car to see makhosazana asleep. “Is she okay?”

I shake my head and inhaling smoke. “I don’t want to kill your son” I tell him and deeply gazes at me to read me first then invade my thoughts before he could see where my state of mind is at. “I chose not to take haste decisions with what he has been doing because one he is your son and you are pretty much elated about that discovery. I wouldn’t want to take that away from you Mkhululi and secondly because I want to make things right. We won’t blame anything on the urge to kill that has been reported to be roaming around our family but you see that woman in this car. . .” I point towards her sleeping “I am not going to lose her even if it means breaking our relationship, I am fine”

“I don’t know what happened but that is your brother. We cannot afford to do anything that could cost an interruption to the cleansing we are going to have—

“And Krotoa is my wife!” I pester almost immediately and throwing away the cancer stick in my hand. I need another smoke to calm the turbulent. “He has been throwing threats at her from the time he came here and Melikhaya doesn’t consider himself as part of this family so why should I bother about him being my brother? All I am saying is find a way to talk to him before I handle it the way I see fit because if anything has to happen to Krotoa, I don’t think I’ll want to be part of this family as well” I see his face changing before I walk pass him to get into the car.

I slide behind the wheel and starting the car with my feet pressing hard on the clutch, then I change gears before pulling down the handbrake as my feet are on a accelerator. I reverse as we start to move and I manoeuvre on the road. She is peacefully sleeping with her tear stained face and her mouth slightly opened. I flare my nostrils as the words of that man echoes in my head. Maybe he is just crazy? But I cannot take anything like that so slight in assumptions that he is a lunatic. A message could be sent to you by anyone, more especially the people who seem not to deserve respect.

Upon getting home the yard is full, everyone is carrying white takeaways in their hands and glasses of juice and she is deep in her sleep. I don't know whether to wake her up or maybe take her into my arms. Well that sounds like a much better option, I get off the car to her side as I am about to take she flap her eye lashes opened making them look like wings against her lids.

"We are home. . ." I announce and she wanders her eyes around and then look at me ". . .mphefumulo wami"

"I'm pregnant" Then she quickly says with tears threatening to shatter in her eyes, but rather they are drowning her eyeballs.

"I want dumpling" she pushes her lower lip sullen and her hands pressed against her chest. "And beef" This woman will be the death of me. I cannot celebrate the good news about us being pregnant right now because of the circumstance and the mood but the smile on my face is enough. I help her get off the car and locking the doors as we make our way inside the full house. Listening to my family members talking about how beautiful was the ceremony and some thanking the woman who has my hand for the catering team outside, those who hasn't seen her exclaiming her beauty with questions thrown my way about when are we getting married because she'll be perfect with me next to the throne. And my grandmother just kissed her cheeks and lips, her wrinkled hands on her face with her fingers trailing her skin.

“Ntombi how far are you?” I wonder how these women manage to see these things yet they cannot even make a phone call. “Awusemhle. You are glowing mntanami” When she sees mphefumulo wami stuttering she chuckles and kisses her cheeks once again. “No don’t tell me, have you eaten? Zungu has she eaten?” Then she turns to look towards me. She has forced my woman to sit next to her, she keeps gazing at her as though she is a precious creature. “You must eat!”

“We are on our way there, she wants dumpling and beef”

“Oh no they only have steam bread and please make sure you are the one who makes food for her, no one else but you. Take her to your room now. It was nice seeing you, I’m still going to see you hmm?” Makhosazana rapidly nods her head, shame she just wants to eat. Another wet kiss then I take her hand as we make our way to my bedroom. I leave her there and to get her something to eat, ignoring everyone who wants my attention. I’ll see them after making sure that my woman has eaten and totally fine.

I return back to the room and she is curled on the bed. I close the door striding to sit next to her when she gets up to sit up straight. “Can I feed you?” This is a plead and she glares at me, taking the plate then she eats, “ngiyaxolisa mphefumulo wami” I have no idea why am I apologizing but it sounds like a right

thing to do at this moment and time. “Krotoa I am going to make sure that nothing happens to you”

“Your brother threatened me and now that message. If ever he kills me make sure that he dies right after me because I will kill him again. I don’t care about dying mina. We are all going to die anyways” Then she shrugs her shoulders with nonchalant. “I’m pregnant” I look at her frown, she doesn’t remember that she has told me. “Uyangicasula mina Bandlalabo!” Then she tells me that I make her mad. “Now what? You’ll want me to be a housewife or maybe follow you around?”

“Chabo”

“Then what? What do you want?” She grabs the pillow and throws it at me. Haibo. I look at her with a straight face. “You don’t scare me, stop that” she says and continues to eat from her plate ignoring me.

“I hope that will be the first and last time anything like that happens maKrotoathazana”

She hit me on the face!

She pauses eating and push away the plate to start crying. I need to be saved. “What if something really happens to me? What then Bandla? I’m going to die because I love and chose you? When people are making plans to kill me what is God doing? Just sitting and watching not doing nothing?” I try to pull

her into my arms but she pushes me away. “No don’t touch me! I don’t want you to touch me!” I think this has just sunk deeply into her mind about what she has been told. She wipes her tears and sniffles.

“Nothing will happen to you” I assure.

Again she wipes her tears and grab the plate to start eating again. “You giving him that money bruised his ego. You shouldn’t have done that and secondly we cannot assume that he is the one who has bad intentions just because he made a threat. It could be anyone. You once told me there has been fights about the throne it could be that”

“He has been making threats so obviously he’s the first person I am going to accuse”

“That day gogo said I should protect what I am carrying it only make sense now. This is too much Bandla” I understand. I really do understand where she is coming from. “You want some?” She looks down on her food and I smile with a nod. “You should’ve said no but anyways here you go” Why did she offer then? Haibo.

A knock comes from the door. I groan getting up to get it when I wrench it open Nqabayezulu is standing here. I thought he might’ve went to the hospital already. “That man we found at the cemetery” Wait he was still there? “He got off the moving

car and by the time we reversed he was gone as in nowhere to be found”

“He was only sent to give out the message and since he has done that there was no reason for us to bring him here”

Makhosazana says from behind us.

“What exactly did he say? I need to leave now. I got a call that Zenokuhle is awake. Mam’Ziqubu just went to the hospital to see her so I thought I should give them space. What did he say about Ka Makhetha because he said something to me too when I was making my way to the car parking?”

“What did he say?”

He runs his hand behind the back of his head then looks ahead to see whether makhosazana is listening. “We will talk later about this yezwa. I have to go” Hmm.

“We are coming with you”

“Eish” And then? “Okay we should go”

62.

amphetamine

/am'fetəmi:n,am'fetəmi:n/

- a synthetic, addictive, mood-altering drug, used illegally as a stimulant.

I am shaken about what has been said to me that I decided to be driven back to my man's house and not the hospital.

I know for a fact that I cannot drag out a fake smile somewhere on my shelves and wear it, pretending to be elated in that moment when the truth is I want to rip off my stomach and throw it at somewhere else now that I can actually feel that there is something inside me. A human being, growing and in nine months I'll have to hold it in my arms and stare at it with adoration. The house is filled with deafening silence and I was planning on cooking spicy livers and pap because I am in mood for them but my back is throbbing and including my abdomen, the internet said something about my womb accommodating the new invader inside me, stretching and finding comfort. I do not want to visit gynaecologist as yet this will sound so real that I had sex with a man three times and that was enough for me to actually get pregnant.

I have been switching positions all my life and this had to happen to me. Why me? I keep asking these questions and they run through my mind. It could've been maybe the dearest cousin of mine or anyone.

I make myself comfortable on the bed after taking a shower and I am totally naked with my fingers trailing around my stomach. I wasn't paying attention until now, I am actually communicating with them. I shouldn't be feeling like this and so drawn to something as tiny as a seed.

All so suddenly a dark cloud of sombreness washes over and I miss my mother so much. I never actually thought of her deeply after her death. I mean sit down with smiles in between at the thought of her and the conversation I had with my grandmother about how she never found her own healing at the loss of her child makes me feel uneasy. I have high hopes that "my sister" could be Katrina. Whether we work on our relationship since she has woken up or not but just knowing that this could bring my mother peace even in her death is what will make me accept this pregnancy. Okay maybe not that because it sounded dramatic. I close my eyes taking slow breaths and starting a conversation with a man that I swore meant nothing to me—uNkulunkulu.

It's not a prayer but a conversation or maybe that. I want to make amends. I need him to know that I forgive him for all he

has taken away from me and that this time he really has to show me the miracles people always exclaim and talk about. I need guidance and protection more than anything else with this journey ahead of me. I don't know being someone's wife? Jesus Christ I actually agreed to be a wife, a strange proposal without a ring or anyone around us to witness much more different than that first one that I had. Isn't that funny? It was the first time meeting someone who showed me something completely different with what I thought love actually means. A month is about to end now. I feel like those couples on social media whom always talk about how they got married in a short space of time because it felt right doing so. I can stand at the pulpit and pretty much say the same about that and how this is something that I cannot change but would repeat, rewind and replay again.

From that moment I walked into him as I was walking around with my breasts to asking my grandmother to pray for me, these are the moment I wouldn't dare change. I can feel the drowsiness about to defeat my eyes at the war and my mind is also slowly blacking out when I hear footsteps down the hallway before the door opens, I turn around to see him paused and leaning on the door frame just admiring me.

“Uneziqa ezinhle” Even the fact that this man is Zulu to the core that is one thing that I cannot change. It true as you grow the

type of men you go for changes. I thought someday I will marry someone who speaks in a suburban accent and always adorned in a suit, with his friends who thinks they shit sunshine and rainbows. You always find them at clubs, surrounded by expensive alcohol and finds pleasure in being the glorified and praised about how much wealthy they are. Never have I imagined being deeply in love with a man who'll randomly compliment my ass. I mean he should've spoke about my waxed legs and the curve on my back. "Uyazi umuhle kanjani?" Oh yes, drop dead gorgeous and should've been a muse for an artist or photographer but hearing those compliments rolling out of his mouth always feels like the first time.

I incline my head at him nodding and he walks into the room unbuttoning his shirt yet still admiring me on the bed. "I'm going to take a shower. I was sweating all day. I brought some food but it seems kumele kudle mina kuqala—I have to eat first" Who said I want to have sex with him? He made me pregnant for the love of Christ.

"No, you want to make me pregnant again"

He narrows his eyes and unbuttoning his pants then chuckles at the realization that what I am saying is impossible. "I am coming mphefumulo wami" Before he makes his way to the bathroom he comes to kiss me on the forehead pinching my

nipples fully aware the effect that has on me before he darts his eyes between mines. “Ngiyakuthanda Ka Makhetha”

“Hmmm” An indication that I am mad at him and I also have plans of murdering him actually is sent across and he indecently smirks. Isn't he going to take a shower? He drags me by my ankles to the corner of the bed and hovers on top of me. And now he is only left with his brief. “What are you doing?” I ask him already bubbling up with ecstasy as he takes my hand

I can see his eyes darkening and glossy with lust, “I said I love you and what was your response?” I am opened as a wet book that was left in a rain and drenched, his voice is low, deep and somehow raspy making my walls clench at the mere sight of him bare chested and when he hears my breath becoming ragged he gives me a complacent smirk. “I haven't touched you and I am not planning on doing so but you will do that for me as I watch you”

Is this a game he wants to play? Okay.

I can feel the seas moving on the shells of my slits with our eyes interlocked when he leans down for our breathes to sync, “Msebe is that how you want to suffer? You want to watch me giving myself pleasure?” I crease my eyebrow and being sassy at him when he shakes his head.

“I’m not sure about the pleasure part makhosazana you may not get there since I will be telling you what to do and what not to do” The sweet and sour burn in my stomach attempts to explode as my chest now starts to move to its own brand new rhythm as he draws patterns on my thigh so agonizingly slow. Then he starts to kiss my inner thighs with his lips with a warm sensation, cold and plump against my burning skin and risqué enlivens.

I make him pause by getting up on the bed kneeling in front of him. What would he do if I actually turn the tables and give him the pleasure? Hmmm. Two can play the game and I always tend to win. Sometimes I can walk away with money or just with a human growing inside me—on that part he actually won. I give him that one.

“Usuqalile!” When he said that with an exotic tone I swear my own vagina started to dance and chanting his clan names. I realized that he finds bliss when his phallic is in my hand or inside the warmth of my mouth.

“Let’s see who is giving who pleasure”

“Just so you know I’m going to fuck you senselessly for ruining my game”

“Isn’t that what I want?”

“I cannot wait to see that face”

“What face?”

“That one you make when you. . .” I look at him dragging breath in his lungs as I grab out his manhood from the crispy white briefs that he is wearing and running my thumb over the top of his phallus before palming, the silky skin feeling warmth under my hand and his mouth falls open.

“What face Sengwayo? I’m about to make you pregnant here”

He grins and shaking his head at me, seeing this is some sort of pay back. “Khona lobuso bakho obenzayo mase mgikhubhebha ngempela—there is this face you make when I am really fucking you” I chose this one. I really chose him. They were plenty of men standing in line waiting for me to throw myself in their arms but I just went for this one.

He grunts as my hand keeps working with him, his breath comes out quick and mixed with quiet whimpers. This sight is captivating, seeing him under my mercy with his eyes half-mast and looking beautiful. “Haibo Krotoa!” Yes

yes, yes. I haven’t even put him in my mouth and already his mind is running around in riot. His head rolls back as he thrusts his hips forward for me to wrap him around with my warmth but finding pleasure in what my hands are doing.

“Baba ka Buzabazi”

“Hmmmm” He murmurs. Do you have any idea how it feels giving your man pleasure? Seeing him like this? A best piece of art that Picasso has ever made? You have no idea. “Ngifake phela ngiyakucela” And now he is pleading that I put him inside my mouth. I smile victoriously stopping my movements with my hand work and now he is rock hard, with stars shooting through his veins and pre-cum oozing from him I take the liquid in my finger and sucking it. “You are really trying to get me pregnant ain’t you?”

“No, I am beating you at your own game for making me suffer, how does it feel Sengwayo?” I’ve learnt that he savors in our dirty talks in between or just us being complete idiots and making everything comical but he’ll fuck me hard right after that. I keep my eyes on him and taking him inside my mouth. In once and pulling out to look up at him and the pleasure embroidered on his face. He looks down at me with my favorite pair of orbs with sheer lust and I suck him once again into my mouth and my hand playing with his balls, a groan escapes his mouth and dear Jesus now that I have hair he has something to grab on this is even better feeling his hands fisting on my butterfly locs while I worship the manhood in my mouth, sucking, nibbling, slurping and deep throating like a master that I am and he is my favorite instrument as he sings. But when I do not give it to him at the pace that he once he moves his hips and start fucking my mouth. Gracious Jesus although this tastes

like death and feels like it but the sounds that he is making are so precious. I can endure the urge to throw up his baby.

When he feels he is about to come he pulls out and turn me around with a hard spank that meets with my skin. What the fuck? The sensation is a mixture of pleasure and pain that I push my very own buttocks for yet another one and he gives me that exactly before his hands grip into my hips while my vagina is flooding with heat. In a nanosecond his face is in between my plump posterior as he grabs onto them and paging them through, unexpectedly his tongue starts to dance. Oh God. Jesus. He latches his mouth on my seed of pomegranate so juicy and flooding making my vision blurry, as my hands gathers the sheets while I start to cry.

“Are you making that face?” I don’t know what face but I can feel than see his smile as he continues the sorcery with his tongue and fingers. When they talk about a man eating the fuck out of you until you lose your senses, this is it. They are talking about this. His fingers then reach my heat and teasing me before he thrusts inside me with his movement hard and fast just the way I want him inside me, slamming into deep and I scream out the word god as though he standing right in front of me.

I start to move my hips following the rhythm of his fingers and begging, pleading him to give it to me. A wave of pleasure marathons all over my body. I look over my shoulders to gaze at him, the puzzle that we are creating with our bodies is almost biblical and I manage to hold onto his head with my long arms then he pauses with the movements but keeps his fingers inside me and my walls are clenching around them. “You wouldn’t dare me. . .” I know exactly what he is doing. Jesus of Nazareth. I repent for all my sins now make sure I get the pleasure. “. . .Zungu” I am pleading as he was doing earlier. “I love you too” I remember.

“Ain’t you too late for that?”

“I’m going to give you another child after I’ve given birth now please”

He smirks knowing very well that is nothing but a fabrication before he glides his fingers out of me. “Ngempela?” Can he just give me what I want? This man. I rapidly nod my head and signing my own death wish and immediately starts thrusting his fingers inside me with his thumb on my clit. I am wet. I am dry heaving. I am about to come. I cannot stop the loud moan escaping my mouth and he is savoring the moment. I can tell by that smirk on his face—he won again.

He pause and stands on his feet, his fingers digging deep around my waist. I could scream and shout right now. A loud

clap echoes and I yelp with my mouth falling open. He caresses my buttocks where it stings then he do it again. “Did you see what I bought for you?” No, no. I haven’t seen it. His fingers are running up and down my wet folds as a strangled moan comes from me.

“No! No! No!”

He runs his tip through my wetness and then presses it at my opening, pushing his hip forward and thrusting into me. I chew on my lip and feeling him stretching me. A rasping moan leaving his mouth with one hand on my back and the other on my hip. He pushes back in and this time harder, making a breath catch on my throat. “God damn you feel so good” he bends leaving kisses on my spine and his hips slamming hard into me, rearranging and dislocating my womb, that means his child will stay on my lungs from tonight.

His hand tangles my hair and holding back, my head moves back showing the veins on my neck, as he plagues hard. I push my plump posterior to feel him deeper inside me with his movements becoming quicker and I feel him twitch, another children are about to swim all the way to womb only to find out there is someone already comfortable there, shame.

“Harder please, please!”

Abruptly he turns me around and throwing my legs over his shoulders, his mouth meets mine and his tongue immediately tangles my own in a feverish kiss before he pulls away to continue with the shamanism. My stomach twists and my vision goes blank around me in a state of euphoria screaming and this means I am making that face he likes now because he just winked as he thrusts harder. Fuck. Fuck yes. Yes! Yes! Jesus Christ. I explode and my back arching almost my body flying to the roof but he doesn't stop, thrusting and kissing my feet while at it until he reaches his own climax eventually and falls onto me. He kisses my forehead then leaves the room I to get the towel surely but he disappears to his walk in closet and not the bathroom.

I lay here like a full chicken and regaining my senses when he comes back to lay next to me. "Look what I bought you. It was after your grandmother gave me her blessings" Then he shows me an elegant diamond engagement ring in white gold features micropavé-set diamonds to frame the pear shape diamond.

"And since you are marrying me then this is for you. I hope it fits mphefumulo wami" Here goes my proposal not even at the rank at least "Just wear this one for now after the negotiations I'll propose kahle"

I chose him!

63.

ill-fated

/,ɪl'feɪtɪd/

destined to fail or have bad luck

Z E N O K U H L E

I have regained my consciousness, the web in my eyes made it hard for me to flutter them opened for a second and eventually when I did there was a woman who was staring at me with a dazzling beam and her wig had curls with her lips painted in color purple. I was perplexed about seeing some sort of resemblance between us then I wandered my eyes around the room seeing the two men who pretty much seemed afloat in different mixed emotions and one of them with a goat beard that has grey strands seems scary and dangerous while the other one had red rimmed eyes gazing at me in his total ecstasy and showing all his teeth even the sharp silver canines while leaning back on a chair before they all made a fuss over me. For a moment I thought I lost my memory because I didn't remember these people.

And that when I made a discovery about who I am really. I couldn't process their words but rather watching their mouths making movements and seeing adoration glistening in their eyes as the woman who happens to be my grandmother had a hand covering mine and gently rubbing my knuckles with so much warmth and smoothness evoking emotions I cannot yet put words to because they were pretty much alienated.

In that moment I came into realization that some people are talismanic and were born to have grace adorned and draped around them. I am not one of them because I have never not once tasted "grace" in my life. Well they say that life has balance and that is why we have darkness and light, which comes to this part that maybe I am the dark while the person I shared the womb with happened to be the light because blessings keep raining on her and all I have that I have is nothing but her crumbs. That alone makes me wonder how it could have been like if we actually grew up together? And why I was the one stolen and not her. Why she happens to be the chosen one on the throne and I just happen to breed and expand the family? Why I happened to be the one to get shot and not her. It seems that the ancestors protect her and not me.

What about me?

Where were they when another woman took me from the cot?
They really just stood aside and watched me every day doing
this life thing without any clue or whatsoever?

These are the questions that have been suffocating me that
from nowhere I started crying with the waves in the shell of my
eyes moving into the shore down the smooth brown sea rock of
my cheeks as my grandmother held me into her arms, all the
thoughts, past visual images playing through my mind with
eccentric aesthetic and the emotions that have been shoved at
the back of my brain crawl out as ants in a summer. And maybe
I am bitter and I might as well make myself comfortable in that
room with a glass of cocktail decorated with flowers and
eloquent music playing in the background.

The warmth of this woman's arms are like an antidote to all my
diseases as I keep crying and clinging onto her until eventually
there is a fog around my head with my eyes being dragged by
heaviness. "Oh that's enough now, you need to rest. What
matters is that we have found each other and we are going to
make everything right. You look just like your mother. . ." I can
tell she cannot conceal the euphoria that keeps escaping from
her—the smile and eyes bouncing with mirth are the evidence
enough for that, "And I heard you may be discharge we will
take you home" Isn't that just too much? I am overwhelmed.

I want to know all about my mother mostly but the woman who raised me will always remain the deepest part of my life with whatever that happened or may have happened she loved me.

I cannot help but rather smile at the word “home” and how it made me feel, somehow those words rolling out of her mouth felt enough for my ears to bloom with sunflowers and the back of my throat with tulips that grows and escapes my mouth. But this moment is interrupted upon the door opening and hearing footsteps as turn our heads seeing him with all the colors on his face that were drained out being enlivened elicit my very own secret simper and an urge to run out of this bed to his arms burns me, changing my pigmentation to crimson and when he winks with his hands holding flowers in I am instantly drenched.

We make an eye contact and I cannot help but see that something is churning his soul but rather than that he wants to come here and wrap me around his arms while he thanks The Most High and his ancestors surely for waking me up from death after having the taste of it. These emotions I am seeing from him I immediately pushed aside by the fact that he can never be mine alone, ever. No matter how many bullets can go through my stomach and how much I pray but eventually another woman is going to walk into our lives and turn my world upside down while she spins his around and that is my

sad reality that knocks on my door with sombreness that washes over me.

I peel off my eyes from him avoiding that he may see through my transparency of what exactly I am war with at this very moment, "I hope I wasn't interrupting. . ." he says with a respectful mannerism and placing the flowers he had in his hands on the table, they're already in a vase looking vibrant and with my sharpened gaze I watch his movements but right in that moment my sister walks into the room with her man who is cautiously behind her as though she is a fragile egg.

"You're awake now I have someone to bury a body with in a backyard and then start a garden. We will start with maMsweli" the dark humour invites intensity in the room and everyone eyeballs her but instead she shrugs her shoulders and smirk at me, is she making that joke because she knows my past or she was genuinely just being comical, "Oh I was just kidding" And then she says when her grandmother, I mean our, diabolically gazes at her, she comes and embrace me in her arms before she kisses my cheek, her scent tantalizing my nostrils and she is looking absolutely gorgeous in this hairstyle and the dress that shows the perkiness of her nipples, "you should've woken up before the funeral so we can beat up MaMsweli" she sits on the bed by my feet and massaging them slightly now I am wondering what happened.

The uncle has been standing in silence with silver canines is laughing and holding his mouth while repeatedly saying, “hawe mancane!” while shaking his head.

“Sawubona” I cast my eyes towards Bandlalethu who just cleared his throat then greet me while his hands are shoved in his pockets.

I am still wondering whether or not at some point I was seeing a curve line and received signals in a total different manner. I nod my head greeting him back with the metallic taste of my saliva attempting to choke me but I quickly look away and my eyes appreciating the flowers on the side table.

“We are going to give you space since we have been here and I am so sure that you’ll want to catch up. I’ll see you again tomorrow” Mam’Ziqubu says and getting up to come kiss me then she points her index finger at her granddaughter as a warning who chuckles and throwing her head back, they seem to have a beautiful relationship as they share an embrace seemingly different from what I had received with much more adoration and passion before she kisses her on the mouth

there is a name the uncles used on her—mancane—as they asked her to take care of me. The other one has a hard honed facial expression plastered on his face while the other has the same smile he had from the moment he walked through this door then they bid farewell and leave.

And finally my man gets to come and sit next to me without being afloat in trepidation of being around adults, he takes my hand and kisses my knuckles. “Unguthusile Ka Mazibuko. . .” Then he says with strained tone that I scared him and darting his eyes between mines, “. . .how are you feeling now? Are you in any pain?”

“No” I smile at him as an assurance, I mean the doctor came and did all check ups before a a bandage was changed around my abdomen. I don’t know what is bothering him but whatever it is pretty much seems painted with not so enchanting colours. “I missed you”

“We are going to give you two some space, I am glad to see you awake. Sengwayo asambeni, I want chicken feet” she squeezes my feet yet again and smiles at me. As she stands up he takes her hand as her anchor then he waves at me. You see? She has a man to herself, she was not stolen, she was not shot. And she wanted to tell me about how she has never had a perfect life? Excuse me. Although some parts of my brain cells almost ran with that but waking up in this bed, learning about how my mother was not my real mother just made me realize that I am ill-fated.

After they have disappeared from the door Nqabayezulu takes off his shoes and I move from the bed creating a space for him and places my head on his chest, kissing the top of my head and

drawing patterns on my shoulder, “I thought I lost you” his tone pierce through the silence “I may lose you and that’s. . .” What is he talking about? “I don’t know what to do”

“What do you mean?” I look up at him with a frown on my face and narrowing my eyes—his gaze is totally different from the one I am used but rather he seems to shallow and empty, with molten dark brown orbs. “What do you mean you may lose me Yezulu?”

“Ngiyakuthanda” And all so randomly he tells me and kisses my forehead. “I’m not going to allow anything to happen to you. At whatever cost and that’s a promise”

“That means you were told that something is going to happen to me? Why everything is always happening to me and not her? I just woke up after having a taste of death and now what? I need to go through another hardship. It feels like I always need to keep proving myself that I am worthy of life, love or anything for that matter”

“I shouldn’t have brought up this conversation and I am sorry but you don’t have to prove yourself about your worth because you are worthy of everything. I understand that you and Ka Makhetha met under different circumstances. I never got to say this to you but ngiyaxolisa Zenokuhle for the pain that I put you through and making you question yourself in anyway but your

sister cares about you regardless of how we all started this on a wrong foot but she does” Oh please!

I place my hand on his face and massaging the beard there, in all attempts of changing the atmosphere and what is afloat in it drowning and dragging the both of us. “And how are you? How was the funeral?”

“Guilty” he shrugs his shoulders “I killed my father and this sounds surreal”

“You didn’t just kill him but you were protecting your brother who would’ve done the same for you, there is nothing to be guilty about there. While I was gone did you find my sister wife?” I tease him and a frown grows on his forehead making me laugh slightly at him. “What eventually you will have to find her Yezulu”

“I don’t care about that right now. I have you that all that matters, when she comes around then she will”

“Are you uninterested now because she won’t be my sister?” I elevate my eyebrow.

The warmth of his mouth covers my finger, one after another in a most sensuous manner that makes me hastily drag oxygen into my lungs and my breathing now ragged. I am shivering from sheer lust, “you just regained your consciousness can we not talk about all of this or about any sister wife because they

won't be any—anytime soon, my brother is in love with Krotoa and she happens to care for him as much. I don't see her in that way anymore because I respect what they have and can we not talk about this anymore?"

"Hmmm" I murmur with his breath now fanning my face and well we cannot be intimate at the hospital now can we? Therefore he should stop torturing me. "And you are not going to lose me" I assure and these are the words that I needed to pour in his ears.

"A man that we met at the cemetery said something that Krotoa is going to die"

"What is that supposed to mean?" I am stupefied with my eyes out of their volition and my heart starts drumming abruptly.

"We don't know but if she dies then you will too because she is the reason you have a life. You should've died long ago when you threw yourself from the building so losing her from the throne means ooZungu won't have anything that abides us—all four of us" I wonder if she knows I am the reason I am alive, surely she'll be pompous and float about it.

"And what about the fact that we love each other? Are we only there to fulfill some stupid agreement they made?"

“I don’t know sbusiso sami but. . .you were brought into our lives together for a reason and if one of you leaves then pretty much the other will leave”

“What can we do?”

“We will figure it out once you’re out here, don’t worry about it yezwa. I told you that nothing is going to happen to you”

“Does this mean that if I leave you then she may also leave Bandlalethu?”

“I don’t know. But I guess it will depend on how deep is the love they share and could fight those obstacles. You think I’ll let you leave me?” He smirks and I shake my head in disagreement with a smile.

64.

faith

/feɪθ/

- complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

I want to throw away my ears outside the window already as Bandlalabo is frying my eardrums listening to Ihashi Elimhlophe and even singing along to this “Inkiya-nkiya” song while drumming his fingers on the steering wheel but what can I do? I can only steal glances towards him and shake my head while eating these spicy chicken feet and even the claws are not so horrific as they usually appear to be.

I have no idea where we’re going but the en-route is not back to his house, as I steal a glimpse at him I catch him staring then he smirks before casting his eyes on the road and changing his gears.

“Msebeyelanga where we are going?” I ask him as we are now driving through an affluent neighborhood and it’s turning dusk already. The stars are slowly approaching to sashay in the sky and the summer breeze is pretty much warm.

“I need some air from home there is so much going on. We are here to see my friend, he couldn’t make to the funeral for some understandable reasons and we haven’t spent time together since he got married. In Rwanda he was on business and we didn’t really chat” What? I cannot meet his friend today. I am exhausted. I want him to suck on my breast already as we both fall asleep because it has been a long day. Also I had no idea that he had friends because he hardly speak of any, I remember him talking about this one but I have forgotten his name but I am worn out.

Worse we just returned back from the hospital and you know what they say about reading the room, regardless of what mask you wear and how you appear to be but your energy cannot fabricate.

There’s a total different buzz that I received from “my sister”, I don’t know whether she thinks I was fucking her man while she was unconscious or maybe having an orgy with all of the brothers which is totally comical by the way but somehow it seems I am still a nemesis and she was gazing at indoda yami with sheer lust, ngeke ayithole.

I’m not going to do is force a relationship with her just because we share blood whereas she is not willing to make the same effort. I would rather chew a bag of cement and swallow mud.

“Which friend is this? You don’t ever speak about any of them”

After he has changed his gear he places his hand in between my thighs. I savor at these moment regardless of him not shoving his hands inside my vagina and making me lose my senses but a mere touch is enough for me to find glory or eye contact. Even listening to him listening to some irksome songs of elderly men with a high pitch voice.

“I don’t have that much friends. I only have two just Mabutho and Mafu Mthabela we all went to school together. We somehow had so much in common and then about two months ago one of them got married, it was arranged” people still do that? That’s so surprising but I don’t blame them, that custom should be brought back because umjolo is really clapping some of you.

“I had no idea that people are still about arranged marriage unless of course he is homosexual and his family wanted to conceal that “shame” as they call it” Are we gossiping? I think we are. It makes sense why women always brag about these moment. The atmosphere is light and not so tense—we are not even talking about the fact that I was told I am going to die, shame. They have no idea that I’m a cat and I have nine lives. I’m just being comical about serious reality so that I don’t deeply think about it. The truth is, I do have a fear that will surely churn me at some point maybe when I am alone. Right

now I am drowning in a fact that I am someone's ingodusu and pregnant.

“Makhosazana he's not homosexual but he is the one who asked his family to go on with planning the wedding because they would nag him about a wife. You see Mabutho hardly has time to go out and meet women. What do you call this konje? But he overly works and all his attention is on that, he has no time to rest because he wants to build something for himself”

I transfix my eyes at him, he seems to adore this friend. It's from the way he actually just talks about him. This just made me realize that I have no friends or whatsoever.

I mean I am forming relationship with my cousin that is a good sign right? I think I should work harder especially since she is technically my mother in law.

What world I have been living under? But even so I am comfortable being in my own space without having to prove to someone that I am worthy enough of being their so called friend. I think I should befriend that one who I was fighting last night huh?

“I actually never had friends and I came into that realization now even when I was young the people I was always around with I cannot consider them friends, I should make them” I am more talking to myself than him now, a conversation with my

inner Krotwa. We see a Bentley GT following right behind us and man you can tell that in this neighborhood they're eating luxury with golden cutlery decorated with gemstones and it quickly drives passes us with a surname on a number plate when another sport car; Ferrari Roma follows behind it hooting at us and this man of mine pretty much hoots back.

"That is Mabutho and it seems the wives are driving the car that drove pass first" Wait he has polygamy? I am now perplexed. Is this a friend? I am so sure that they both sell people's organs. Actually black excellence is absolutely amazing to witness more than anything. "I completely forgotten that today is Sabbath they might be coming from church" Then he says as we are turning to the left and there is another luxurious two cars following behind us. Nazareth? It's very strange how these people are mostly portrayed in a different mannerism and how some people make it comical being umNazareth, actually people in general somehow have something negative to say whether you believe in Christ or Idlozi.

What were other parents doing while ours were busy with the riots? It seems they were looking for creature as white people were mainly focused on the apartheid.

The gate is already opened as we drive through and invited by a sophisticated home that uses different materials in one area that highlights space, enfolding steel, concrete and glass and

the stunning horizontal line wooden panel marks a clear path to the front door.

A part of me has sudden interest of meeting these people and drowning into a total different world. “Did I tell you that you look beautiful mphefumulo wami?”

The moment the engine sound fades he turns to me and say. I know for a fact the thought of me dying has been wandering through his mind when he has absolutely nothing to worry about because even when I am dead I will come back to him as a stunning and gorgeous ghost so he could suck on my nipples until he turns pale and the cheekbones shows. We will fuck until he runs to a sangoma and ask for help but no one will be able to help him. What I know is that even when I do happen to actually die but at least he'll have something that abide us, our child. And one day he will look at them with no tears in his eyes but a dazzling beam and think of all the times we shared gales of laughter, how I threw tantrums and how I hold him when I am sleeping because of fear of losing him. I wouldn't want him to die too as they said he may as well, no child of mine is going to be an orphan. When he attempts to die for me, because I have no idea what will take my life. I am going to fight. I am going to fight for him to stay alive. “Uyakhala makhosazana” I haven't realized that I was. It must be the thought and fears that I have been attempting on pushing back, shame they won

they've managed to drape me in funereal, "sondela. . ." I don't know how are we doing this but I actually have my head on his chest right now and crying while he is tightly holding onto me and kissing my forehead, "do you want us to go home? I am sure my friend will understand?" I quickly shake my head. "Okay. . ." I think he is getting frustrated mostly because he has no idea on what to do "You are going to tell me when we go home?" Then he plagues again and I can hear the sound of his heart beat against his chest thump-thumping hard.

I pull away from him and he wipes the tears from my face after I have inclined my head in agreement has to what he asked. I want to be in a total different atmosphere than people who're mourning and my grandmother who is demented about her once upon time husband and my paternal family, with my great grandfather who had an enormous nose. "Whenever you are uncomfortable just let me know and we will leave makhosazana" I can tell that he is really concerned and he cannot even hide it.

"I promise" I smile at him before he kisses my eyes and nose then we get off the car at the same.

As we are getting of the car they are three women whom are also getting off from that Bentley GT looking absolutely ethereal the other one in a red dress with beads around her waist and isidwaba. On her head she has ischolo and umqhele

with iziqhaza hanging on her ears, and a white beaded necklace around her neck. The other two are adorned in a white dress with earrings that seems to be made of pearls or gemstones from where I am standing and they have a blue shawl known as inatsuka around their shoulders with a necklace matching their earrings and they have reed mat underneath their armpits walking barefooted with such impeccable feet.

I have never been fascinated by women in this manner in my entire. I know I am gorgeous but these women are absolutely beguiling with their bare faces and the other one seems to have lip gloss glistening, I noticed the diamond rings on their fingers and it must be the wives.

While I am paying attention to that from nowhere a man comes out of that other sport car already with a gigantic beam also in his bare feet and wearing ibheshu, a white top that almost looks like a shirt some other animal skin on his feet and another on top of what he is wearing at the top with umqhele anointed on his head. I must say that he is absolutely charming with that clean afro and gauges ears with just a mustache and a beard on his chin.

“I must thank uKa Makhetha for bringing you here. Mfo ka Zungu” Now I am standing aside seeing two grown men so delighted to see each other and embracing each other with love that is not concealed, squeezing and gripping on each

other with a grunts in between. God you can see the exuberance from their body language while in each other's arms. After they have pulled away from each other he turns his focus to me, "sawubona nkosazana. Igama uMabutho Mthabela" Oh now I remember him

we are shaking hands as we greet each other. I see the other woman waving her hand at me meaning I should come to them. I excuse myself and turning to my man with a smile who winks at me. I approach towards them and the other one who was waving at me has such a great smile anyways without any introduction or even greeting she takes my hand to hers, waving at Bandlami as a sign than she is taking me.

The other woman in a red dress just quickly went inside the house after she blew me a kiss and I can guarantee that her bladder was full and she needed release.

"Mthabela" And then she shouts at a man who just got off the car carrying a young adorable boy in his arms wearing the same white top as him but with black pants and umqhele while a young girl who is a duplicate of her mother is holding onto his hand, her head braided in cornrows.

"Nana" He responds. They are giving me marriage fever with beautiful children. You should see how he is gazing at her.

"What? Ntombazane needs me?" she looks at us first then back

at her man with her eyes out of the volition then she indecently smirks at him shaking her head.

“No. I wanted to know if I should take your children?”

“They are fine with me we are coming in now. Sawubona MaMakhetha” It seems everyone knows about me and I have no clue about them, there is something about him that needs you to give him respect. I wave my hand at him as we are making our way inside the house and the woman who was asked about “ntombazane” is pretty much still holding me and she smells absolutely divine well the other seems rather shy with such beauty? I wouldn’t know how to behave.

“Ndlunkulu you will find us in the kitchen!” The ntombazane screams as we walk through the door and as we enter the house we arrive at a luxurious living room setting with grand double doors that are topped with deeply decorative moulding.

Traditional wainscoting trims the perimeter of the room, along with fabulously ornate crown moulding. In the centre of the space, the style pendulum swings into the more contemporary realm of modern furniture and a fashionable live-edge rustic coffee table. I am madly in love with anything extravagant and I think I am going to be one of those women who are buys houses for a living after this because this is absolutely just enchanting.

We move and passing by the dining room, a large and impressive wood dining table is teamed with the easy chair; making our way to the kitchen that stands entirely separate from the living areas.

A modern kitchen island curves an en vogue racetrack-shaped silhouette at the core of the space, which also serves as a casual dining spot or coffee bar with natural stone countertop melds smoothly with the warm tone of light wood kitchen cabinets.

“Oh sorry I am Nomzamo Mbatha uMamMthabela by the way. . .” The woman who waved at me finally introduced herself and there is this way that she has been looking at me, so deep as though she can see beyond my soul and bones, introspecting but there is also something just so pure about her. You’d swear she is a not having sex when she is already a mother of two, “And this is Buqaqawuli Nobakada, she is the new wife in our family and still shy. Well the others went back to their houses and we came here to visit her” Oh the arranged marriage one, makes so much sense, she has luscious plump lips and triangular shapes face. Her edges are natural and not made of gel or whatsoever as they show from ischolo. “The one who ran off is undlukulu Yolokazi Mkhungo” The way she is introducing them with a polite tone. Wait is it the church they’re attending that makes them appear so calm but also there is something

just powerful about them. If you know me I don't dare pay attention to another women that much because they have this way of "feeling better" or making you appear as a fan upon throwing compliments at them. It's so strange but staring at these women is a reminder of how beautiful black women are.

"You said what have I did?" This is Yolokazi returning back with a smirk seemingly more revealed now. "Oh hey you! Awusemhle oe. I heard you'll be sitting on that throne soon and choking people, uwena? Who'll be giving old men sleepless because you have blonde hair?" I am absolutely in love with her maybe she can help me with burying a body since. . . I was about to say something really dark.

I laugh loudly and nodding. "I am Krotoa Makhetha"

"We already know" They all say in unison, I have an urge of wanting to wear this uniform as well. "One thing about royalty? Indaba ayihlali phansi yemuka namazolo—news travel fast" Okay Buqaqawuli has such a soothing tone and strong vernacular accent that is just charming unlike mine with a pixie dust of twanging.

We hear the men entering the house already loudly laughing at something. I have noticed how men laugh together. It's different from when they are with us more sonorous and

carefree when they are just laughing at a joke that was made by one of them ten years ago. This gender!

“When you are crowned with your men please make sure your hair and eyebrows are blonde. I want to see something” Not Yolokazi wanting my in laws to hate me before I can taste the privilege of being married to a chief. “I will be there phela!”

“You just want drama!”

“Actually. Why are we in the kitchen? Can we go outside I need some air and please get something to drink for our guest” Then she turns to me “What are you drinking? You better say wine so I can tell Mongameli you needed moral support” then she smiles “Mongameli!” Guys this is how I’m going to scream at my man now when we are around people. They make being wife seems nice.

“Ndlunkulu!” He screams back.

“I am drinking wine” She is smiling as though they can see each other.

“Haibo! Haibo! Haibo!” I haven’t seen her husband but the way he just said that, so funny. I can only imagine the face.

“I’m joking” Then she rolls her eyes.

“I will have juice” I grin and attentively she gazes at me then ravishingly smile when Nomzamo asks to speak to me as we are

all about to leave. What is it? I genuinely don't want her man I have mines.

"I am sensing fear from you Krotoa. . ." Then she smiles and clasping her hand on the kitchen counter to make this comfortable for me, "This may be uncomfortable for you but nginesthunywa and my husband as well. From the moment I set my eyes on you I've been seeing fear" I am shaking, my hands, literally. I have no absolutely idea what is the reason. "That's your fear showing itself to me. I can help you but you'll need to tell me what's wrong?"

"I was told I am going to die"

Why do I trust her?

"I see that but I needed to know whether you're aware. They should've told you a solution to this. When they said it's too late that was not true. Your ancestors from your mother's side of the family seems to be protecting you but they don't have that much power over you as you are a Makhetha and therefore you need to go home, be introduced to your people and do what you were instructed to do from the start because right now they cannot recognize you and therefore can't do anything to protect you. . ." And then she speaks "I was told I cannot have children, uMthabela believed we were going to get our greatest gift regardless of whatever the case maybe. He was optimistic about it when I had my doubts and now I have

two of them, Uyatholwa who came as a prophecy and Busizwe whom I didn't plan. Now this comes to this, you need to believe in something and have strong faith in it that will help you overcome anything and everything even your greatest fears. Whether it's God, ancestors or whatever that you feel strongly rooted in. It's up to you whether you die or not. You were told to protect what is inside you, but how are you going to do that when you have no weapon?" I can get a gun. "I was introduced to prayer, Muzi being umNazareth introduced me into a whole different world and space now it has become my home, uShembe uNyazi Lwezulu really showed me what grace is"

"Am I going to die?"

"Just don't delay all the things that are needed to be done with you paternal family, do the cleansing and be protective of your energy and have strong faith. No parent could sit aside and watch their child suffer. Your father is guiding you and your sisters. If ever you need guidance I am here anytime now let's go outside"

Her daughter runs into the room with opened arms and she welcomes her kissing her all over the face. "Greet aunt Krotoa and tell her what is your name?" she says as her daughter hides on her mother's neck, she has her mother's skin tone with such beautiful natural hair. I am trying to sink in these words that have been said to me. Am I dying? Am I not? God save me.

“I am nkosazana Uyatholwa. . .” she tells me her name after greeting. What a beautiful name and my child was named Buzabazi? Haike. “Nana, ubaba said I must ask you if ntombazane doesn’t need him?”

“Go tell him I said later” she seems elated to be a post office as she runs out and her mother shouting after her. “Ntombazane is the name of. . .” she looks down.

What? My vagina doesn’t have a name.

65.

toxicity

/tɒk' sɪsɪti/

- the quality of being toxic or poisonous

ZENOKUHLE

I am impatiently waiting for what is my uncle to return back since he went to sign my discharged papers and after few minutes he returns back with a honed face, I think I am pretty much afraid of him. I have never heard him speaking more than three sentences and everyone decided it was okay to send him to fetch me back home, I thought that my man would be here but rather he sent a gigantic bouquet of flowers.

It pretty much seems my grandmother is one of those strict women since she made is crystal clear that I would be going home and not staying with a man who hasn't sent any cows at home or shout our clan names for that matter. Nqabayezulu complained until his mouth was dry.

“Mshana are you ready to leave?” I can only nod my head as he takes my back and hand helping me get up from the bed since I am limping. I am thankful that I do not have to return back to the wheelchair this time but using the crutches. “Let’s go, your grandmother is waiting for you. You know your sister has bought a new house and it has become uMam’Ziqubu’s house. I doubt she’ll want to return back emakhaya, that woman loves everything extravagant” And this is the first time I have ever heard him saying these much words. We are taking slow steps since I cannot move faster. I got a chance to study his features and the goat beard with grey strands, adorned in just shirt and jeans.

“When did she buy a house?” I ask the moment he opens the door to the passenger seat for me into a taxi and making myself comfortable. Then he moves to his side pushing the seatbelt back instead of wearing it and turning the key whistle his feet are pressed hard on the clutch then he changes the gear. I had expected him to answer my question but rather the call he receives interrupts us as he grabs out his phone, irked but that emotion is quickly removed with a subtle facial expression and secret smile as we start to move. I cannot help but keep my ears fixated on the conversation but pretending to be watching outside the window.

“Qhawekazi” Then he greets with a soft tone weaving through the road, in so much speed as though he has a tender and not so afraid of tickets as he overtakes every car that we come across with no fucks given or whatsoever. “You said you don’t want anything to do with me. Those were your words. Are you saying something is wrong with my ears? Oh oh oh” It seems whoever he is talking must be massaging his insides the way he needed them too. “Have you eaten? Why? Umsangano loyo. What diet? I’ll come by during your lunch my mother cooked idombolo. Uyangiqoma? Usungiqomile? He he he” And then he chuckles in between. I have no any other choice but stealing glances at him seeing his cheeks almost touching his cheeks. “Look there are something that I need to sort out at home and if I am not the one who drops off something you’re going to eat then I’ll send someone but after work I will fetch you. Hmmm and stop being stubborn, open your heart mntanami. Ngiyakuthanda ke yezwa” I swear men has a way through your vagina and heart. Why am I blushing on behalf of that woman by the way?

Right after that phone call he still has a smile plastered on his face and tossing his phone aside as he drums the fingers against his steering wheel humming a song that surely is playing in his head, this means we won’t be talking anymore not that expected any sort of flowing conversation between us.

After sometime we are driving through the taxi rank when he stops by an elderly woman who is selling ice cream and the buckets are inside a cooler box. What is happening? Mkhonto gets off the taxi already creating a conversation with a woman wearing an orange “phinifa” with a floral doek in her head and her face smeared with red soil, eating sugar cane and throwing a deep insult at a man who is buying a plate of food from her. She ignores all her customers who were here before my uncle and gives him the attention then she hands him two vanilla ice cream and he returns back to the car and handing me one. The last time I had cheap ice cream was when I was in primary when I would save my coins and run to the tuck shop during break, it always tasted more like ice than cream.

I thank him anyways at the kind gesture and he starts driving and licking at the same time. I cannot believe such an old man with grey strands is savoring in this with his tongue out and seeing no problem. This actually tastes really good than I expected it to be. He keeps stealing glimpse at me to see whether or not I am enjoying this.

“This is so nice, I did not expect it” I confess out loud and he all he does is he smirking.

It seems he said enough to me for a day and not planning on saying anything else until we arrive at the affluent neighbourhood of Essenwood and my jaw is dragging itself on

the floor upon the gate that opens as we drive through. Is this house she bought or the house he bought for her? Whatever the case may be this is the meaning of luxurious. There are cars parked outside including what seems to be a brand new one, gleaming and shiny. As we get off the car my grandmother steps out of the house with what is my cousin now but I happened to had an affair with her husband at some point. I have noticed that she has such ladylike mannerism and personality more like that famous lady with a champagne brand. They have smiles on their faces pretty much elated to see me but my sister is nowhere in sight.

“You look so much better. . .” my grandmother opens her arms and embracing me while she kisses my cheeks and squeezing me into a hug. I am feeling pains but choose to hold back from grunting or groaning because she may fuss over me “I am sure your uncle bought you ice cream” I have her hands engulfing my face deeply gazing into my eyes as though she saw something she then kisses me again.

“Welcome home!” Then the sophisticated cousin embraces me as well. God she smells so good, why didn’t she fall when a man left her? The world hasn’t swallowed her. I thought she would be down bad and despondent upon finding out who was spreading legs for her husband all those nights while she was curled in bed wondering where he is but rather she seems

radiant with her skin so flawless, no under bags and dark eyes. “You are looking so much better” Well I can’t help but point fingers at her about my attempt to suicide maybe if she wasn’t leaving that man things would’ve turned out differently.

We would’ve continued with our sneaky links behind her back and never would I have found myself in that sort of scrutinizing pain but it was a blessing and a curse at the same time because I wouldn’t have found out about my true identity and a man that truly loved me, chooses me time and time again even when I feel I am not so deserving of that.

They hold my hand with great exuberance and leading me inside the house when I am welcome by great aroma hanging in the air, swirling through the atmosphere and Hugh Masikela playing in the background of this beautiful home. This house is what dreams and desires are made of. It’s so gorgeous and there is my sister who just appeared from somewhere around the house in a beautiful dress with matching earrings looped in her ears.

I kind of expected her to be part of the people who ran outside to see me as they heard the sound of the engine at my arrival, I guess everything has been an act from the way she was crying when she found me in a pool of blood and that speech, the visitation at the hospital and all round just pretending to care about me.

“You are finally here!” Then she says in a high pitch voice and striding towards me to embrace me into a warm embrace, I think I am such an antagonist and need to seek help because I am always ready to sink my fangs into people who I somehow tend to see as a threat or perfect, ready to see them bleed and asking for my help to be saved. I guess for once I also would love to be a protagonist in a story. “It’s great seeing you back and alive Zeno” Then Krotoa says observing and learning my plastic facial expression before she turns around. “Gogo is happy to have you here” Then she glimpse at our grandmother who cannot conceal how she is bubbling with emotions.

“Can we have talk quickly all of us in the living room? Before we start celebrating uniting as the family?” The uncle who had red rimmed eyes the other day requests. It pretty much seems serious because immediately we make our way to the living room, my bags has been dragged to what is going to be my room and we make ourselves comfortable on the couches with my grandmother who has her hand covering mine. I am not used to this kind of affection and warmth although it’s foreign but I feel like I belong for the first time ever. From the way their eyes shines at me with an indescribable glow to their smiles at my direction. Everything. I have been looking for that one thing that will make feel uncomfortable and there is nothing.

We had to open up with a prayer as my grandmother was more than thankful to God for bringing me back home and that her daughter would finally be at peace, she repeatedly said that with her tone starting to tremble until I saw crystal beads falling down her cheeks touching the bottom of her cheek, the atmosphere was more cherubic and I can taste the grace. She goes on and shows gratitude for everything that The Most High has anointed her with and her granddaughter who is pregnant and asked for protection towards her, I have no idea who between Krotoa and Lerato and closes of the prayer with announcing that the letter has been sent and therefore she asked for no hiccups and we all say “amen” at once returning to our seats. And my sister is now chewing on a packet of dried fruits on the couch seemingly in a much better space as the the first time I ever met her, she looks genuinely happy.

“Thank you for listening to me when I asked that we have this chat but I just wanted to address few things most importantly having Amzoli’s daughter back home I think we should let her know that we have found her. We cannot burn the incense in this house since our ancestors have not been told about this house so we need that ceremony as well but we need to return back home and do what is needed. Introduce this one. . .” he points at me with his head “. . .and prepare going to Lesotho before we run out of time and lose both of them” Speaking of that I have questions about one of us dying and the other

following the footsteps as well. I felt my very own fear thumping on my throat after that discovery so I would want to know the meaning of that. “After that the Makhetha we’ll do what is needed to be done and therefore we cannot work around the date ooZungu have given us but rather we must come up with another date when all is sorted out and we know that both of our children are out of danger before marrying off Krotoa. Then the cleansing can also take place as it was said they need to do that. As we know in three days uKhisimusi (Christmas) so we should be heading back home, slaughter a cow and celebrate that we are all here. Ma, your husband called”

“What husband wena? Is your father my husband?” It seems there might be unresolved issues. I don’t think she is deranged because he was called “her husband” but in fact she loved the sound of that and the sepia nostalgia. Even when she is attempting on concealing it.

Oh so Bandlalethu asked to marry her? Great.

I clear my throat to speak out and all eyes are now focused on me

“I heard that Krotoa could die. . .and when that happen I may die too”

“I am not dying and so are you” she is the one who responds sounding rather confident and fearless about that with dried mango in her hands—she is pregnant and getting married? Hmm.

After that she casts her eyes towards the uncle who has been talking and not me. Is it me or she has become completely indifferent about me? The enthusiasm of forming some sort of relationship between us seemed to have disappeared. She is not looking at me with a beam and elation anymore, I don't know why that bothers me in a sense. Ha ha ha what a diva.

“We are going to inform the ancestors about this house before we do it the proper way so they can be aware and that is it. We are glad to have you home Zenokuhle” Okay he has recharged into speaking now. The uncle who bought me ice cream. After that the men both get up I am guessing preparing the informing of ancestors about the house and my grandmother announced she was calling the father of her children who should be home as we also leave tomorrow since he needs to be part of everything because regardless of divorcing culturally and by tradition they are together abide by “inyongo”—a bile from the goat that the wife licks on the day before the wedding, another one is poured on their head, hands, arms and feet then they'll pin it somewhere on you.

I am left with my sister and my cousin who are ebullient about the letter that was received in the morning. "Ahem so did you find solution to what that has to be done so that we don't die?" I ask with a smile in between. Maybe a part of me didn't mind actually dying because what exactly do I have beside a new founded family that I'm forming connection and bond with now. I cannot deny that they've made me feel at home but if I happen to die. What is that I got to lose beside a man whom we'll surely find the love of his life or soulmate after me? I have no career. No house, I had an offer placed on the table so I could get my life back and what did I do? I have been dragging my feet finding someone and something to blame for how my life turned out. Hating on a woman who happened to be my sister because I thought she was fucking a man I love behind my back. Having day dreams of being intimate with his brother and the scent of nicotine with his cologne voyaging my nostrils, watching him from the top view as he fucks me senselessly. Sleeping with people's husbands and hating on them that their lives are not wayward as I assumed to be. Burying people at the backyard. Who exactly to blame for how my story was written? I'm often wondering how my life would've been like if I wasn't stolen? Would my life maybe turned out like hers? Will my name would've been hers? How my mother would've looked down at me as she held me in her arms while I suck the milk from her nipples.

I can feel a cloud of sadness overhanging on top of my head and wetness on my cheeks when I abruptly leave the room, needing fresh air. I walk out of bifold doors that open the reception room onto a large, decked roof terrace after getting lost, making my way to one room after another. There is a string lights that makes a magical glow at dusk, creating an inviting place to hang out with outdoor beanbags providing comfy seating. An outdoor dining set gives the family a place for al fresco meals and a unique wall mural depicts a tightrope walker along the length of the building, bringing a splash of welcome colour to the grey concrete exterior.

A pain on my chest comes out as guttural sob with the scorching sun of the early afternoon dancing on my face and blinding me, burning my eyes. The pain is almost similar to what I am feeling right now. The thumping sound of my heartbeat makes me feel almost breathless that I can feel yet another pain on my wound where I had been shot. I have no idea what to hold and touch at this moment, my stomach, head, chest or my entire body.

All the flashbacks of my young self with a strict mother who never allowed us to go outside the gate replays in my mind. I see myself seeking freedom and seeing other children of her age playing “igqathu” and “ugcwala bhondlela” on the side of the road, screaming at each other about how painful is the

plastic ball is against skin and the sound it will make. The older men under the tree drinking one beer and smoking one cigarette already seeing twelve year olds as sex objects. From the wide hips, thick thighs and protruding growing breasts. There was a girl on our neighborhood who was “big bone” with thunder thighs, wide hips and gigantic breasts, her hair was long and silk. Already men would masturbate just thinking about her, whenever she walked down the street they would whistle and screaming they would wait for her to grow. It made her uncomfortable and disgusted, sometimes cry. I was young so I thought she was crazy. I mean she was being admired by men who wouldn't want that attention? Now I understand. I understand.

I can see my younger self standing behind the bars impatiently waiting for children to run towards our gate announcing that dad was back home, that made my mom happy. She would cook cabbage, beef and pap. That was my father's favorite. We would drink from that clear bottle of Coca-cola and I would later burp on the table gaining a back head slap from my mother because I had no manners. Never, not once have I felt as though I wasn't hers.

I am interrupted by footsteps and I thought it was my sister but instead it's Lerato who already has a smile on her face before she takes me into her arms and embrace me. “Stop crying come

here” she squeezes me and suffocates me with her sweet scent. “What happened?”

“A thought just ran through my mind. I seem to constantly battle with how my life turned out and comparing myself to other people and their struggles. It seems I always have a much bitter past than everyone”

“Your trauma is not an excuse to be manipulative, narcissistic and nonchalant towards good people. Everyone in this house and in that room are not your nemesis we are family. We have different backgrounds. We all have been through so much but we cannot let our past define us. You tend to always want people to feel sorry for you Zenokuhle”

I chuckle dryly “You wouldn’t understand”

“Trust me I do. Here I am today comforting a woman who used to sleep with my husband and she happens to be my cousin so of course I understand. Everyone had their fair share of lemons. I’m sorry you went through all that you went through. I’m genuinely sorry from the bottom of my heart now you owe yourself healing, peace more than anything and a new start. Take this as your own restart. Erase the anger and hurt and questions. You almost died twice that should tell you it’s grace and gift from God to make something out of yourself. Have you seen how beautiful you are? You are absolutely gorgeous even Justin Skye is nothing compared to you. Now please you don’t

want to lose people that really want to be there for you because you are caging your past and afraid to step into the future? I guess not”

“Justin Skye?” I laugh.

“Girlllllllll you’re gorgeous. We just need to go out, get that makeover done. Do your hair because umubi for now. Get your hair done and wax. Don’t look like your problems. We are family Zenokuhle last thing you can do is hating on your own”

“Does Krotoa maybe hate me? You know I tend to be envious and jealous of her” For some strange I feel safe having this conversation maybe it’s because of her pure aura of the innocence on her face.

“More worried about you than hating, she feels you hate her for some reasons now go talk to her, you guys shared a womb I’m sure this can be fixed. Tomorrow before we leave we are going out shopping and go to a spa. My man will take care of it”

“Mkhululi?”

“Shhhh you want your grandmother to be on my neck? Now come and let’s go eat dried fruits with that pregnant one and just have a genuine conversation with her. Tell her how you really feel and where all these emotions comes from trust me she’ll understand and you’ll work it work. Woza”

I am the problem.

66.

religion

|rɪˈlɪdʒ(ə)n|

* the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods

BANDLALETHU

I have been concealing and not being transparent about where exactly are my emotions taking a certain direction and thoughts that is something I've managed to lace perfectly over the past years. Just knowing that there's a possibility of losing umphefumulo wami and walking around with that fear thumping on my throat hasn't been a gentle slope as I thought it would be seeing the same emotions shimmering in her eyes but just hiding it from me with smile and laughter showed me of how brave she is—that fierce personality is not just for pretense but that is her the real her, not afraid and unapologetic.

There is nothing else that has been running through mind beside the fact trying to find out what could harm her? What can I do prevent and protect her from that.

I make my way through the hallway leading me to the home office there has been a family meeting called by Mkhululi, only the three of his sons but I have decided to come here first to talk to him and set something straight.

As I thought I find him dipping his cigars on a cognac while striking it alight as the jazzy music plays from the vinyl in the corner of the room pretty much looking stylish as always but I can tell he is drowning in his emotions from his facial expression and eyes. "I thought we were meeting in thirty minutes. . ." I make myself comfortable on the chair opposite as he inhales the smoke to his lungs swirling through his chest then he exhales leaning backwards on his chair. "I'm sure I know I'm not getting old" Even from the way he chuckles it's not usual much more funereal. I know how to read him as the lines in my palm.

"I just needed us to talk before anyone can get here and you say whatever is that you want to say"

He frowns, "About what?"

"Your new founded son"

"Your brother"

“Ngeke ngisho kanjalo since he doesn’t consider himself family”

“I thought you of all people you will understand where he is coming from”

“I thought so too until of course he threatens to kill. . .” I pause and wince at a mere thought of this, while running my hands on my beard “. . .someone who gave me life”

“What do you mean?”

He has no idea of course!

“I mean I am going to kill him and if I don’t then sibonge ophansi nongaphezulu”

The atmosphere changes and if it had a taste then it would’ve been mint. He gazes at me with impassive eyes and switching off the cigars in his hand while his chest moves up and down.

“Are you sure this is something we cannot sit down and talk about?”

“I am sure that is not something you would’ve done if someone threatened to kill Lerato and right after that a prophecy about her dying erupts. Who would be your number one suspect and what you would’ve done?”

He inhales sharply, both of us sharing deep eye contact, “I understand where you’re coming from and your emotions”

“I’m sure you do”

He points at me and say, “You are being sarcastic”

“No, no I’m not but I’m genuinely saying I’m sure you do understand and you know why I would do what I want to do”

“Killing him? Bandlalethu sizobe sizivulala amanzi ngomsele (we will stirring more trouble) and not just that I just met him. As much as you’re my son he is my own blood too. He was hidden from me for years and connecting has been hard”

“I just need you to know that if ever anything happens to makhosazana. . .” A lump threatens to choke me at the words formed by my brain and ready to be spat by my mouth “If anything happens to her after having this conversation with you I won’t be part of this family” It’s terribly embarrassing how my tone is starting to tremble and bared with my raw emotions. “I will let go of everything. The throne, everything and I’ll go far away where I’ll wait to take my last breath but that will be after the walls of ooZungu will be painted in red with blood. Everyone will witness that happening. I won’t have nothing to lose then and trust me even yours will be on those walls”

“You don’t mean that Bandlalethu”

My emotions starts to flare and explode that the tears I never knew existed shimmers on my eyeballs and he witness my vulnerability while I am seeing his too mostly he’s staggered and stupefied at the same time, with his hands shaking at my

words and what I just said. "I do. As much as it hard for me to say this but I mean every word"

"The last thing I want for you is sitting like this smoking and drinking drowning in your emotions and wishing you never allowed your ego and pride to get in a way of forming a relationship with your brother. Just deep diving in despondency and regrets, with hopes to cry but they're no tears in your eyes and all you can do is feel, continuously just feeling emotions you cannot put words too. Wishing to go on their graves and start digging then wake them up and apologize. Apologize for things you didn't do and say, words that were left unsaid. I'm not saying him threatening Ka Makhetha is right but understand where he is coming from"

"Understand that he cheated on his wife and therefore there was a price to pay or that he is acting like a high school boy for being beaten at his own game? I gave him his money back and that was more than enough to bring back his business to where it was and further. Now let's say it was wrong for makhosazana to steal money from him but is it her fault that he chose to cheat?"

"Wasn't it wrong of her to steal the money?"

"Wasn't it wrong of him to use her as his escapades? Both of them were wrong in this case but why the threats? And now he wants to use Nqabayezulu to take part in all of this? Was he

there holding a candle? Look I understand that you're ecstatic upon finding out that you have a son, you want to prove to be a great father after all those years of being absent but do you understand that I could lose someone I love here?"

"I understand that and we cannot be sure that he is the one behind all of that instead we should have a conversation with him and if we both sense something then. . ." I can see how much this pains him. A part of me really feels for him, the exuberance of finding out about your son and then having to lose them, "Ngiyanithanda Bandlaethu nonke and even your soon to be wife, she is my daughter. I would hate for you to lose her and watch you losing yourself at the end. I'm going to handle this the best way that I can as a father"

"I'm going to take a step back with making any moves before I know exactly that there is a possibility of him doing anything like that. Nami ngikwenzekenjalo" I tell him that I love him as much and he looks at me with a weary smile while shaking his head. "I am sorry about losing your brother and I can see that you may have had your own differences but you loved him"

"I did" He admits and heaves a sigh "We were just two egoistical men who never wanted to admit that truth you know? I was wrong for sleeping with your mother, maybe the first time is forgivable but the second time? Even if I was in his shoes it would've been hard for me to swallow that pill and

worse there was another child as consequences of our debauchery” then he shrugs and scowl “I mean the best I can do right now is being a father to you and your brothers, do right by MaZiqubu and be a best version of what I could be” The drink that has been on the table he passes it to me as an offer, I shake my head turning down the offer then he guzzles from it and places the glass down. “I never promised anyone to be perfect”

“I never expected you to be”

“And how has it been for you accepting that I am your father?”

“Mkhululi you’ve always been my father so this wasn’t hard to adjust at all. Last thing I want from you is beating yourself up for your past mistakes when you took accountability of what you’ve done and working on that. That what makes you a better person”

He looks at me for a while and smirk clearly impressed of the words that came out from me but this moment is interrupted upon hearing a knock from the door then my brother appears seemingly in a much better space than he was before everything that happened, no shadows in his eyes or the bags as heavy as the ones that were on his shoulders.

“Sengwayo uphumaphi wamuhle bo!” That should be a man who is our father. Whether to him he could be an uncle but it’s

much more than that it always been. Nqabayezulu is now covered in a rosy hue and shaking his head making himself comfortable on a chair next to me after we shared a hug. The muscles around his face are more tranquil and he has shaved his head, trimmed his beard and looking like a decent human being.

“Hayi baba, sanibona” He goes on to greet after he had settled and pouring himself a glass from the bottle on the table—doing what we were taught as to how to drink cognac. First you take in the scent deeply for it to dance in your lungs before taking a sip so it could travel all over your body. “Am I late or early” He looks at the watch on his wrist with a gigantic smile. Did he have sex? What happened to him?

“Not exactly your brother came here so we could talk and you how are you? And where is your other brother?” First Nqabayezulu looks at me with the corners of my eyes to see my facial expression upon being asked about our brother and a “nemeses” at some parts before he lean backwards on the chair relaxing while taking a sip from his glass.

“I don’t know

Advertisement

maybe on his way and I am good now. At first it was hard and surreal but now I have come to understand that one way or the

other there was going to be a body bag leaving that roundavel but I did what also my brother could've done to save me regardless of not being in a much better space at that moment, he always protected me. I did the same pretty much what he had done too sadly it had to be my father who somehow shared his narcissistic traits with me. I hope I don't turn out that like. After some introspection I realized I could've been another him"

"We are sitting here with all our imperfections and no one will judge you Nqabayezulu. No one unless of course they have no flaws of which I doubt. We also have some callings that needs to be fulfilled so that our next generation cannot find themselves in the same situation we have been pretty much drowned in" Mkhululi says darting his eyes between the both of us when another knock follows.

He gives me a warning look to hold myself. Maybe a drink is not that much of a bad idea? I guess maybe some cigarette could help. I'm not so sure. After he has shouted that whoever it is can come in I just grab the bottle and quickly guzzle from it for all this menace to calm down groaning and chewing my teeth when the door is wrenched opened, he walks in with a smile that no one between the three of us expected.

He greets and then our father points a chair, there were already three of them set up on this table opposite him. I haven't

realized that I am actually in between them. He makes himself comfortable after clearing his throat and his hand embroidered on his chin before he glanced at me once the return his eyes to cast towards his father. “Wamuhle uphumaphi Melikhaya?” so I am the only one who wasn’t complimented here? Hawu ngiyadlala. He is now smiling and soaking in the compliment taking the drink that has been poured for him in the glass.

“Why you didn’t say ngimuhle?” I jokingly ask and we laugh.

“Umuhle ke. Melikhaya uphumaphi?” He compliments and then asks his son where he was.

“I had a business meeting, the things are pretty much looking better than they were before” I’m not going to say anything about how I also had a hand in talking to some people, that would cause a conflict and bruise his already fragile man ego.

“That’s good. I’m proud of you but before we can start having any conversation I need to find out something from you” The face has changed becoming the dangerous version of himself. The one that walks into a room and men shake causing their knees to be gelatin. Even the way he is now holding his glass those eyes plants fear at the roots of your soul, “The last thing I want to do is calling you here considering you are my son and wanting to make things right when that is not what you desire and don’t even consider yourself just that. I heard about the threats you have been making as well and that may not end up

well for you as much as that part saddens me but I need to know one thing from you. Also you need to understand that just as much as you didn't know about me, I also had no idea about you but the best I can do is being a father to you right now and find a much better way to work this out now tell me about you wanting to kill MaMakhetha before you let me know whether or not you want to be part of this family and we all find a forward"

"I was clouded with anger and I'm sorry for making those threats. I would never kill her more especially someone I once cared about" It's surprising how my composure has been kept in a bag actually. "I would also apologize personally to Krotoa about that but I won't do anything to her more especially when I am fully aware about the wrath of ooZungu, I have been having dreams about how my life could turn out considering turning back from the family. It wasn't sweet ones. We may have started on a wrong foot but I am willing to make things right" I cannot say this may be genuine. It will take time for me to trust him for that matter but also this is dragging me back, now I have no absolute idea of who may want to kill umphefumulo wami or where to even look for that matter. I have to keep my eyes closed on her even if it means she must have people guarding her or cameras so be it. I bow my head, on my knees, ngibiza uMveliqangi and I swear that nothing will happen to her.

“Ngiyakuzwa—

A phone vibrating disturbs and it's mine. I was ignoring but as I take it out and seeing her name I quickly get up from the chair excusing myself from the meeting. They can give me updates and power points about what was spoken about.

“Bandlalami” Oh she sounds perfectly fine. Thank God. It feels like I was in a corner of a room and unable to breathe, just smothered by something. She fine. “Where are you? Are you okay?” It should be the other way around but I have come to realize that my tongue fell out from worry.

“Ngiyakhumbula” I confess.

“Nathi” Trust me this woman has a way of making me soft more than I thought I was. I can hear from her tone that she is not completely fine. “I’m suffocating. You know there has been a lot going on lately and then you bought me this house, I haven’t had time to be on my own and admire it or be with you. And now it pretty much doesn’t feel like my own anymore. Not that I have a problem but I wish I can just catch a break for once. Just breathe and not think about dying or losing my child or forming a relationship with my sister or pleading with ancestors. I want to get to that part where we are successful with an unshakable empire, married with our child as a blessing and be happy. I cannot wait for that bab’ wakhe”

“Do you want me to book you at a hotel for tonight so you can catch a breather? As tempting as this may be but I’ll also give you your space and have your sanctuary time. Order your favorite food, soak in a bathtub and relax. Maybe you’ll feel so much better” I suggest.

“We are going back home in the morning tomorrow”

“You’ll leave the hotel in the morning. You don’t have to drive yourself there but you’ll have a driver taking you there or wherever you want to go. Get yourself a massage, do some retail therapy”

“I want to shave my head again”

Haike!

“Is that your copying mechanism?”

“I have no idea”

“Whether your hair is shaved or long mina ngiyakuthanda, you can dye your eyebrows again, I really love that look. Last thing I want you to do is changing your appearance because of me. I fell in love with a woman with bleached hair and eyebrows, why would I change you now? Take this time ngiyakucela. This has been hard on you”

“For the very first time I have another heartbeat beating inside my body other than mine. I get so overwhelmed sometimes

with love and fear. Just knowing that I'm not living for myself anymore is scary but also brings me joy. I spent years angry at God for the loss of my mother that it was even hard for me to thank him for bringing me you, for being alive, for having a successful business and now a child. As human beings we tend to spend so much time angry than healing. I don't want that anymore. I want to have faith in something and that is Him, my life hasn't had a sort of direction but after the conversation I had with Nomzamo I feel whole again. I know that God can co-exist with ancestors. Just as much as he guide us and protect us abantu abadala also pretty much work hand in hand with him"

"If we go to church will that make you feel better? I don't remember the last time I've been there but anything to make you feel better"

"I just want to know where exactly do I feel mostly home first then we'll decide and yes I'll take the offer of going to the hotel"

"And I won't be there, so you can think maybe you can get your head back about your skin care products as well"

"Ngiyabonga Bandlalabo"

"Okay maKrotoathazana. I'll email everything to you when I'm done booking. Ngiyanithanda yezwa"

"I love you too, always"

67.

“Love between us is speech and breath.

Loving you is a long river running”

BANDLALETHU

I am awakened by the buzzing of my phone from the side table when I instantly switch on the lamp to illuminate the darkness in the room while rubbing off the web of sleep from my eyes.

A number I cannot recognize at this time?

I look at the watch that just blinked three in the morning, I grunt swiping my fingers on the left as I press the green button answering the call while pressing my phone against my ear.

“Bandlalethu. . .” I cannot recognize the feminine tone that is laced with perturbation and sniffing in between. “We just received a call from a hotel and malume alongside gogo are already making their way there” Upon hearing the sound of her voice my fear etch and my mouth instantly becomes dry. I can feel the salty beads forming on my forehead while my migraines painfully start throbbing. In a nanosecond my nose

could start bleeding. I cannot find words to pour into her ears— whoever this is but rather I have become stationary and pale on this bed while gathering the duvet on my palms. I never thought one could pray silently but here I am mumbling words. “They called an hour ago and Krotoa has lost her mind. I don’t know what happened but they are going there to find out” I am actually talking to my step mother, in law whatever that she is and I cannot make out some words that she is saying because she is crying and sobbing.

“What do you mean she has lost her mind?”

Abruptly I get off the bed searching for something to wear; maybe they were talking about her hormones and exaggerated what happened. “I mean she has literally lost her mind, she was found walking on the hallway naked but by luck it was a woman who is a cleaner and she told us that there is a certain song that she kept singing as she is not herself, but she is very aggressive and violent, after fighting, she then starts singing” then she tells me. I can feel the spasming of my heart against my chest in attempts of understanding what is being said to me.

I spoke to umphefumulo wami just hours ago announcing that she was going to bed. What is the meaning of this? I mean they could be mistaken already, a sane person just going fruitcake. It doesn’t make sense at all to me, “Is there anyone else whom saw her naked?” I can taste the bitterness on my tongue. I have

managed to wear sweatpants and a hoodie with sneakers, running out of the house and almost banging my head against these walls with car keys on my hand.

“No, no, no” Then she winces and inhales sharply through her nose. “Just that woman who also made the call before informing the manager at the hotel. Right now I have no updates whether they have found her or not”

“None of this makes sense, how can someone just lose their minds? They must be mistaken or something” I can feel my very own sanity crawling out of my body at a mere thought of this.

What even led into her losing her mind, is it the suffocation she has been feeling or everything that has been happening?

“They just arrived right now. I can hear a car outside so you can drive straight here” I just hang up. I don’t remember when was the last time I felt tears meeting at the tip of my lips and tasting the angry ocean. It’s a miracle that I am still able to drive while my entire body is suffering from the shock and shivering at this very moment.

I cannot even hold the urge to smoke cigarette but much rather strike the cancer stick alight and inhaling the nicotine. Usually it calms me but not today. Instead I am here with my thoughts spiralling out of control and into different directions. Not knowing what to do with myself. What will I do without her?

It's not that I'm losing her but she'll be in her whole world clearly forgotten about who I am and pregnant.

Give me a much better explanation to this?

Upon arriving at Essenwood I have smoked the entire twenty pack of cigarettes and I am clawing on my very own sanity that has threatened to walk away. I can see the cars were parked hurriedly as I get off and my knees starts vibrating like empty vessels. I don't know whether to walk into that house and see her in that state and vulnerability I have never witnessed before or just fall onto this ground and die.

I cannot fight my feet that propel me towards the door before I can knock the door opens and Zenokuhle is the one who appears, "Where is she?" I immediately ask as she was about to throw herself in my arms. I don't know for consolation or maybe because she must be drowning in melancholy? I don't want comfort from anyone. I cannot stand those arms around me and whispers that everything is going to be okay. This is a song, hymn and mantra that I have heard almost my entire life and existence for that matter and I don't want to hear it now.

"Come this way, we are waiting for umthandazi that gogo has called" then she tells me stepping aside so that I can walk in. The cloud of sombreness starts overhanging on top of my head. I deeply inhale into my lungs and making my way inside to find her uncles on their feet and on the phones shouting and

screaming at whomever, a confirmation that this situation is not just her having hormones and wanting spicy chicken feet or maybe Kentucky at this time of the night but it's worse. A nightmare I am already praying to be awakened from.

"We are in a mess Bandlaethu" The moment the one who was punched me into almost losing my eyesight and teeth says upon seeing me. "Mancane has lost her mind. Right now her grandmother is with her but she keeps saying she's seeing an old man and singing some songs. Also she is very aggressive the punch she gave me. . ." that was pretty much a payback for punching me "and she's not talking at all or responding to what you are saying. The woman from the hotel said izinto zezintu (traditional things) I don't know anymore" I can hear the defeat from his tone. I blink rapidly and ignoring all the pains from my hair follicle to my very last toe, just seeing his face and muscles symbolizing what exactly he must be feeling scatters my brain and shatters my heart, making my soul shiver.

"Can I see her? Have you spoken to isangoma that can quickly come here so we can find solutions? I mean I have an acquaintance that could possibly help"

"Bafonele ngiyakucela

Advertisement

fonela wonke umuntu that could help us right now” he pleads that I call anyone who could be great help at the moment.

“Can I see her first please”

We don't exchange words instead he turns on his heels and leading the way while I follow right behind him until he opens the door to a room where the smell of sage odyssey my nostrils and there she is asleep so peacefully on her grandmother's lap who's covered with tears and mucus upon seeing me her fresh and sublime face forms a smile while she waves that I should come in and be silent. I guess the sight of makhosazana awake is a gut wrenching one.

I walk into the room as her grandmother carefully gets up from the bed and she comes to embrace me, her arms are like an antidote to all my brand new diseases, the cold tears dampens what I am wearing as I comfort her, “she was in a bad state when we found her. . .” then she looks behind to her granddaughter who is now wearing a dress and head wrap on her head “we were just planning on going home today and tell her mother we have found her sister before going to her father's side of the family and now this. You know she wasn't okay when she left here. I shouldn't have allowed her to leave” I cannot find words actually to say and comfort her but my eyes are transfixed on how beautiful my baby looks, her face on her hand with her eyelashes resting on her head. It seems she really

shaved her head and dyed her eyebrows. What a beaut. “I am going to leave you with her until umthandazi gets here. Let us know when she wakes up” she inhales sharply after kissing my cheek and walking out of room.

As the door closes I finally let out a sound of sob seeing her hand that just went straight to covering her stomach. Wherever she is—she is protecting our blessing. I stride on the bed taking off my shoes and getting on while placing her head on my lap, kissing her forehead and my fingers dancing on her skin with featherlike patterns when unexpectedly she wakes up as though she heard a sound somewhere jumping off the bed and starting to sing and grunt.

“Bathi ngiyagula, bathi nginamanga bo!

Oh banesono laba bantu!” This is the song that she is singing moving her legs in total trance. I don’t know what should be my reaction. It is as though the room is filled with loud drums as from the way she is singing and moving her shoulders up and down. Literally that wasn’t even a minute when she almost lands on the floor but I quickly run to catch her and she is gone, sleeping peacefully like she was never awake.

I haven’t wrapped my head has to what just happened that every part of my being is frigid. The doors open as everyone walk in surely they heard the singing. I assure them all is well as I am making her comfortable on the bed again.

I make her inhale the sage rather as they watch me, she starts speaking in riddles but in her sleep then stop. It's like she is fighting wherever she is to regain herself because she seems as her usual self for a second then gone. I continue making her inhale until she is fully awake sitting up on the bed, not saying a word, not moving her eyes just focused on a same position.

“Makhosazana. . .” I call her with no response and not even turning her head at least to look at me but her hands not once peeling off from her stomach. She was told to protect what she is carrying and that's exactly what she is doing, that makes me bloom with a kaleidoscopic colours. I turn to look at everyone and they simply understand that all I am asking for is space; I mumble to them that we are going to be okay and they acknowledge that.

I hold her hand expecting a response but she pushes me back returning it to her stomach as a shield and now tears falling down her cheeks, not making any sort of eye contact with me so I can at least look into those orbs and she remains gazing at the walls of her room. “Ka Makhetha—The lump is painful at the back of my throat. “When I called you umphefumulo wami I wasn't just saying it because I wanted to see that smile on your face but because I meant it. You gave me life and reasons to wake up every single morning and be grateful because you showed me that you don't have to go out of your way to

convince someone to love you or that you are worthy of love. But wena you showed me in some many occasions that I am your choice when I thought I wasn't one. You continue to choose me time and time again. Losing you will most definitely means I'm losing myself too. I have no idea what is going on nor have I experienced this before but all I am asking for is that wherever you are because I know you can hear me is that you fight. You fight so we can both get out of this. You fight not only for yourself but the person you are protecting right now because more than anything I need you. We need you. Your family needs you. I am going to do anything and everything to make sure that you return back" I may be talking to something close to a magnificent sculpture but I know she can hear me. I wipe my tears with chuckles in between after wiping hers thinking about how we would've made this situation comical in between then listen to her poetic words coming from her mouth. I kiss her forehead and taking out my phone to make a call. Well she is still not doing much or even flinching for that matter.

I walk out of the room and her grandmother asks me what happened, I assure that she is fine and she tells me that she hasn't been this rational and calm since they returned but rather she has fighting and doing the singing. She seemed surprised upon finding her in her room just sitting on the bed and not doing anything than the trance and aggressiveness.

It doesn't take more than three hours after making the phone for the Mabutho to arrive here alongside his brother who came with his wife, who didn't even need us to explain anything to her but rather asked to be taken to a room where makhosazana is and they attend her, with her husband who seems to be working hand in hand with her but the grandmother was asked to the bedroom of course.

It has been hours already of them being there and the sun is outstretching in the sky and as I am smoking I don't know what number of cigarette is this. Not knowing what is happening there is making me lose my marbles. I keep pacing up and down then sit down and having a difficult time to catch a breather.

"Bandlaethu. . ." someone calls me from behind as the cigarette was already burning my fingertips and turning already is Ka Mazibuko approaching towards me with a cup in her hand while the other she is using it for her crutching stick, "I was making tea for everyone and since you're outside I thought I should bring it to you"

"Ngiyabonga but I don't want tea right now" I politely say and then throw the stick in my hand away shoving my hands in my pockets as she rapidly nods her head that she is hanging low.

She turns around and then pauses before she returns back, "When he showed up at my ward the first that we met I thought it was you" then she tells me unexpectedly. I guess she

is talking about my brother? “I don’t know maybe at some point I got the wrong impression that you may have had interest in me especially after that incident at the restaurant and you said something”

“I’m sorry if ever I gave you that impression and right now is not really the right time to have this conversation, makhosazana is at war in her own head trying to fight and regain her sanity this is the last thing I want to converse about”

“I understand and I’m sorry. I also need you to know that I don’t regret your brother walking into the room because that has been the best thing that happened to me”

“Sho” I don’t know what else am I supposed to say seriously, I have so much on my plate right now than this, her uncle also appears from the door calling me to come inside. I return back to find Nomzamo and Muzi Mthabela comfortable on the couches. Well umphefumulo wami is nowhere in sight so she could be sleeping right now or it could be a worst case scenario.

“At this point no one from her maternal family can do anything. We can burn incense and pray but we need the paternal side of her family to get us out of the situation and as soon as possible or we are losing her for good then her sister” Nomzamo announces to us darting her eyes in everyone with pity in the room.

“Can we get hold of them right now? Even if it means getting a private jet to get them here so be it but by today afternoon they should be here” I say.

There is no way I am losing here!

68.

By touch by smell,
I would know her blind,
I would know her in death.

BANDLALETHU

She doesn't want to bath!

I cannot wait for her to come back to me so that we can turn this into humour since she has a dark one. I know for a fact whenever I bring this up she'll push her lower lip and rapidly flutter her lashes that looks like the angels' wings before she shows me her gemstones of teeth.

I mean her not wanting to bath? And even fighting about it? Could never be umuntu wami shame. That woman loves herself and uses those unnecessary oils with scents and that thing you throw in the water and instantly the color changes but today she is not bothered about bathing.

And the punches she has been throwing at everyone? You'd swear they come along with some sort of super powers

because she punched her uncle again, until now he hasn't really stopped talking about it but more than anything how much he wants to see his daughter healing and coming to life. We all want the same thing. I have been smoking cigarette after another, I pretty much wish I can get something much stronger and more potent, burning my livers and making me grunts.

But I have to drown in sobriety and be here for her, us.

I am preparing myself for any sort of violence from here as I am picking her up from the bed, her hand still around her stomach while she is gently stroking and singing some song. I cannot make out the words but she sounds cherubic with that soft tone and a smile on her face. This makes me wonder what is she seeing, what washed her with those emotions. I am envious at this moment to see which world is she embarking on but more than anything I want her back, in my arms.

She doesn't fight me instead she places her head against my chest closing her eyes and deeply inhaling. A smile on my tear stained face starts to grow and bloom at the amount of tranquillity I seem to carry around her. That I maybe the only person she feels safe around and maybe protected. We have an en-suite bathroom in her bedroom so even better before she changes her mind.

When we reach the bathroom I put her down on her feet, she just stands and not doing anything. Not making any

movements. I really do miss the sound of her voice, laughter and smile. Just listening to her talking even if it's a meaningless conversation I just want to see her mouth shaping words as they roll out forever smoothly. I peel off the dress that pools on her feet and it feels like the first time I am seeing her naked body. Right now I have no idea whether to touch her or maybe call her grandmother to take over because I know she is standing outside this door impatiently since I asked her to let me try bathing makhosazana without any interruption until of course the door to this bedroom opens which means I am defeated or I managed to do it.

She gets inside the bathtub that has her own essential oils from her products with grapefruit, lemon, and bergamot scent. When she sits with her knees on her chest while bowing her head I kiss her shoulders.

"Makhosazana. . ." I have no idea why am I calling her knowing very well I am not going to get any response. I grab the sponge and start moving it with salacious movements from her neck moving down to her spinal cord, spreading her arms apart and just savouring in this moment. Even though her eyes are transfixed in a same position and I cannot really tell whether or not she likes what I am doing to her or what but at least she is not aggressive. "We are going to be okay" I assure her when I

am finally done and grabbing a towel draping it over her body as a child.

We return back to the bedroom and I moisturize her body before making her wear something much more comfortable and warm since the weather seems funereal and sombre. I put her under the duvets and kiss her forehead, gently drawing patterns in her arms until she sleeps yet again. I mean she woke up once and started singing and dancing. That went on for more than an hour without any full stop but just moving with her feet and shoulders while singing a same song. But Nomzamo managed to help her.

I don't want to leave this room but I need to find out what is her family saying about having to come here because at this moment we cannot travel with makhosazana at this state. I can do anything for them to come here and do exactly what has to be done.

Before closing the door I look at her once again and she is deep in her sleep but she cannot be left alone at the moment it's risky. I mean earlier she attempted jumping through the window and she broke a mirror wanting to hurt herself. I am questioning a lot of things right now God and ancestors that while umphefumulo wami is in this state, what are they doing? Isn't the any other way more gentle or subtle they can use to communicate so they can be heard? I mean just allowing her to

almost killing herself and losing her sanity seems okay to them? Then what? All that needs to be solved how are we going to do that when they want to take her away? From us? From me? No one can understand what I am going through, I don't either or even can put words into it.

As I predicted her grandmother is standing outside leaning against the wall all this time alongside "my step mother" with their red rimmed eyes, hiccupping and tear stained faces.

"Is she okay?" I can tell that this old woman has already had enough. I know how flowery their relationship is. Even when makhosazana speaks about this woman her face dazzle. They are friends before grandmother and granddaughter. Of course they do silly fight but the love is so, so deep that as some point I thought she was her mother since this woman doesn't want to grow and she is still just as fresh and sublime

Advertisement

getting fine like wine. They all have such great genes actually.

"And did she fight you or anything?"

I quickly shake my head in disagreement more like some sort of a brag. That while everyone received kicks, punches and slap well she didn't do anything. "Chabo ma. I managed to bath and right now she is sleeping. I was thinking that maybe she can eat

later and I can make her soup because that is easily process-able”

“I can’t allow you to cook soup Sengwayo but I will do it and since she is comfortable around you then I’ll make sure that everyone stays away from this room while you take care of her when we want to see her just open the door wide and we won’t enter. I don’t want her hurting anyone or anybody” she then forces a smile, “thank you for being here more than anything and just making sure that mancane is fine” This is the name they use on her. I have no idea whether it’s because of her tiny body or maybe something else. Maybe being the last born of this house? I have no idea.

“I promised to take care of her. Have you managed to get hold of her family?”

“No, no but Jongimpi is taking care of it. We haven’t been in contact with those people for years so we are figuring out ways to communicate with them”

“Let me also see what I can do” When the step mother gazes deeply at me, I know she already knows who is going to help about this. It seems she wanted to suggest her man anyways but held back. I wonder for how long is she planning on hiding this when my father wants the cows sent here as soon as possible.

Even worse he wanted to approach ooZiqubu before me but I told him that he was out of his mind. I want to marry umphefumulo wami as soon as yesterday.

“Ngiyabonga”

This woman has such a beautiful smile and you can tell that back in the days she made our grandfathers stand in line outside her gate and some street fighting over her. I wonder how many proposed marriage and how many were declined, she seems like she was “iqhikiza” that didn’t take any nonsense.

At least a leer can still appear on my face I approach the living room and surprisingly my father is already here with my brothers excluding the last born who might’ve disappeared with his woman, speaking of her after all this I need to have a conversation with her to set some things straight but whatever that is happening between them has nothing to do with me honestly.

I ask to speak to my father in private outside who doesn’t waste anytime but follows me until we at the terrace as if he knows he hands me a box of cigarette. “I figured you might’ve finished the one you had and needing more. Not that I blame you. . .” I don’t even hear what more he is saying because already I am inhaling the nicotine to my lungs. “I know what you want and I’ve spoken to her uncle so I am trying to figure something out. Just give me until the end of today to have everything on her

family and we will take care of everything with her uncles just focus on her. Also how is she?”

“Until the end of today?”

That is too long. I cannot take that because this means these people could be here in two days or something and we don't really have time. I cannot watch makhosazana in that state. Having no control over herself because I know how much she loves it. Being the one who presses the buttons of her lives. I wanted these people by the end of today here. “That is too long can we come up with another plan? I don't mind paying”

He squints his eyes with his hands shoved inside the pockets deeply thinking about something. “Just give me an hour but I'm not promising anything right now” I cannot hold it but instead throw myself in his arms for a gigantic hug and he welcomes me warmly while chuckling. “You've learnt to show affection and not be too afraid” Fuck this; I don't want this conversation to take that direction. As I am shooting him a look he laughs softly while I smoke yet another cigarette. “How is she?”

“She is not herself” That is all I can say. “I mean. . .” I am running out of words that even my chest is starting to clasp, “I'm scared of losing her forever. I don't want us to run out of time Mkhululi”

“I’m glad you call me by my name because people will think we are brothers” He just wants to change the intense atmosphere. And that is pretty much working because here I am with my shoulders no longer hanging low but much rather moving up and down from laughter. “A woman who was capable of bringing the business down and robbed a man then walked away like nothing happened? No man you shouldn’t worry about her, she’s strong. That is our Empress and when she comes back I am afraid she’ll be more powerful than she already is right now and that throne will be ready for you and her” Those words are enough for consolation right now “Now let me get into this” He pats my shoulder and taking out his phone. I decided to just return back inside the house. Everyone is deep in their emotions.

The Mthabela family left and coming back sometime later and I must say that since they were here there is an improvement with umphefumulo wami she looks more like a human being than a vessel.

I find her drenched in sweat in her sleep and that is strange because the weather is not that scorching. I shout for her grandmother who walks in and opens windows, peel off the duvet from her, and taking off her jersey leaving her with only the long sleeve top, “Bandlalethu get a cold towel” I rush to get the towel and returning back when she places it on her

forehead as the cold breeze enters all window. She seems to be calming, "Amzolile you better protect my grandchild, wena Letlotlo talk to yor people this is your daughter, we are not magicians they need to show us a way to do things not this" she seethes clearly had enough. You'd swear the people she is talking too are here. "Now Krotoa fight! Fight this mntanami show them how much of a fighter you are. Even when they pull you back don't give up" I can feel my tears moving in a shore but I hold them back. Her grandmother's voice is trembling with emotions, "please dampen the towel again" Again I do what I did earlier and return back. "Take care of her for some time there is something I need to take care of. I'm also going to talk to my ancestors they can't let this child suffer like this. No, no, no" Now she is no longer calm but rather she is a turbulent storm and ready to destroy everything.

I place her on my lap with a towel on her forehead. Really she did shave and bleached her hair again. I saw from the eyebrows though that she went back to this goddess look and was tapping into that fierce personality of hers.

I may have fallen asleep already because I wake up and she is not here. I am starting to panic already. What the fuck?

"Makhosazana!" I quickly get off the bed and running out of the room, "Where is Krotoa?" I ask the moment I get into the living room.

“Nomzamo was here again because she was getting worse so she took her along. They are also going to the river for something and until her paternal family get here she’ll continue to get worse more especially since this house is not protected and our ancestors have no idea on how to locate us” Malibongwe is sounding frustrated.

I turn to my father who looks at the one who punched me. I can never forget this. “We have managed to get them but they don’t want to come here or help us because they have no idea about Letlotlo’s children. I am afraid because we don’t have time and we may lose her”

“Why no one told me that makhosazana was leaving can I have the numbers so I could talk to them? Yes it may be disrespectful but all I can do at least is try”

“You were sleeping and you haven’t slept a wink I didn’t want to interrupt you. I understand that you would’ve wanted to be told but you also need a break” I don’t need any when it comes to makhosazana especially since she is not well.

Nqabayezulu just walked into the room trying to calm himself from whatever and shoving his phone in his pocket. His girlfriend gazing at him with quizzical eyes. What is happening now?

“The Makhetha will be here surely by tomorrow morning since the flight is like fifteen hours. I made sure of that. Well there is another family that is this side so they said we shouldn’t bother about booking which means whatever ceremony that needs to be done could be held this side and not Lesotho unless of course it’s compulsory but what matters right now is Krotoa being okay”

I look at him with thankful eyes.

I am going to embrace him later just not now; I am wondering how she is right now since she was getting worse after she left. Anyways the Zenokuhle just cleared her throat and walked out of the room, I don’t know what is wrong but she pretty much doesn’t look okay. I have no reason what for because her family also coming means she is saved from this and we can do what has to be done but whatever that maybe doesn’t concern me.

“Can I go see Krotoa? Or just fetch her?”

“No, we can’t she’ll be brought back” A reserved Lerato says.

Shoot me!

69.

ostranenie

(n.) encouraging people to see common things strange, wild, unfamiliar; defamiliarizing what is known in order to know it differently or more deeply.

ZENOKUHLE

I don't know what is expected of me or what am I supposed to feel or what emotion but I'm rather impassive. I hold my tongue in fear that whatever that I say may being misinterpreted or used against me. I'm at war with my thoughts and mind, just trying to make sense of everything.

I don't know how to put this in right words but a part of me feels as though I always have to fight to be "seen" or get attention, you know? I was the cynosure now after being shot and that moment was taken away from me as my sister has lost her sanity. I haven't got a chance to connect with my family in that much depth and really connect with them in a sense because of course we are all drowning in different emotions—praying and pleading uNkulunkulu namathonga but it feels as

though my ancestors don't acknowledge me at all, they make it seem as though I do not matter. Now don't get me wrong or twist my words but my point is that one chance when I was about to know my family in a much deeper level they've moved their attention from me and now my sister has to suffer. What do they want from me? To hate? To question?

And this time I am not blaming anyone but them or pointing fingers at anyone for that matter but it's strange how these people never ever punished our father for running away from Krotoa since he was pretty much aware of her and existence, he was nowhere in her life. Even when the accusations of stealing me arose this man did not see a need or feel he had to come clean about this and then do something about it? About his daughter that was stolen at the hospital? No man.

Can you imagine that we are being punished by people who had no idea what we were eating? What were we wearing and what school we went to, who was paying? And today they come here making demands, threatening our lives, making us lose sanity

making us "hate each other" in a way to cause a drift what for?

They watched my mother suffer wondering about her daughter until her death. Today we need to run around headless and responding to their demands when they ignored our prayers before? Those nights when I was being beaten up by a man

where were they? When my family was set on fire where were they? When Krotoa witnessed the death of her mother where were they? Now they're making her lose her sanity? What for? Isn't there any other way to communicate much subtler than this? Why the aggressiveness?

This pushed me in a position of questioning spirituality as a whole. I wanted to say that I am an atheist but that to me doesn't make sense. Not believing in anything? And just a big bang theory? That sounds strange to me.

We are driving to eMthwalume and the drive is so funereal because we cannot find the right words to pour in each other's ears. We got a call from my paternal family and they announced their arrival and it has been said that they'll be brought down here and that will be in the afternoon since right now it is the early hours of morning and we came here to prepare.

We had expensive cars and ones I have not seen before following each other as we drove here. Not only our family but ooZungu as well because regardless of not being yet married but they acknowledge us as omakoti and well Bandlalethu would rather go fight amabutho alone with a spear than leaving his woman by his side. That even in a car as we speak he is at the backseat with her on his lap, it seems he is the serenity that

she needs but rather than that all of us has been punched and strangled me mostly.

We are here finally!

This house is actually enormous with a kraal and the scent of dampened grass and soil dances on my nostrils. I have my head covered in a head wrap and wearing a dress. Before all of this happened we actually went out with my cousin for that makeover that she promised and trust me she knows how to do her job when it comes to styling. That one has a very warm and welcoming heart. I would never regardless of being related befriend someone who shattered my marriage, unless of course she never loved her husband and that is a conversation we did not touch. We just went out and had fun. With a flowing conversation that I found myself opening my chest and showing her all my dark corners and slight light. She sat there with no judgements and just listened to me talking until the end while taking sips of a pretty cocktail and murmuring underneath her breath.

Now that this has happened I really wish that my sister came along with us but she already had plans, she seemed very distant from everyone. I think whatever this maybe was already crawling but it felt as if she was smothered being in an environment with all of us in a room. I could tell that she

needed space. Maybe it wasn't her about to lose her sanity but she was overwhelmed and really needed to breathe. Another thing I learnt from and about her is that she will never compromise her peace. Ever. If something doesn't feel good for her energy she takes a step back and protect what is hers. The picture was clear to me why she wasn't exhilarated as I thought she'd be at my return because I feed off toxic energy. I do. I don't even need consolation on this. Like yesterday when Nqabayezulu figured ways to communicate with my family and have them come here I found myself deranged and consumed by rage and menace. I sat there wondering what is wrong with me? Why would I be burning with so much hatred that my sister was going to get helped? That was because seeing her pain brought me such joy. Doesn't sound normal huh? But knowing that she is not less of a human than I am and she is going through this struggle made me breathe with peace strangely. I don't want to be this person anymore but I want to learn, heal, grow and recharge.

I am busy in what is my room unpacking my bags when the door opens and my dearly cousin appears, as always looking gorgeous and all prim and proper. She only wears dresses that were specifically tailor made for her because her taste is rare and expensive and of course she was not lying because when we went shopping we went to stores I never knew existed with

ridiculous prices but she asked me not to bother about a price tag.

“I wanted to check whether or not you are done with unpacking because your father’s side is just two minutes away and you’re looking beautiful” Then she winks and smile before closing the door.

This affirmation so randomly really made me feel good about myself. Not coming from a man that I love or want to fuck. Here I am now with my cheeks touching my eyes stealing a glance at myself in the mirror. Let me tell you about the love she shares with her man. Just seeing someone who went through that kind of marriage and finding someone to truly love her? Beautiful.

I want love like that. Where our minds and souls and body are in total sync. Where we manage to make love in a room full of people with our eyes and just touching of hands. When we had a conversation we spoke about how much the toxicity that is draped around me could be dangerous. Not on other people but myself too. Not seeing well in yourself and always self sabotaging doesn’t really end well.

I often wondered whether antagonists sit down and think that there’s something wrong with them, in any ways. They don’t. I never did. But the more and more I want change my reflection that is not much of pretty portrait that I could hang on the walls of my house I can see my flaws.

I hate fate and destiny though because here I am my life has been written down about how it's going to pan out. Whether I chose to carry my feet and run away I know for a fact that I may end up dying. Bloody shit. I may end my own life or someone else may exactly do that. At the end of the day I am going to be in a polygamous marriage and share a man. Speaking of Nqabayezulu I really want to let my guard down and give myself to him. Allow me to love me the way I "deserve" and just accept that this is how my story was written. I am very much aware now where I stand with the other one. He was not made for me. He is not for me. Fuck me for thinking that at some point he may have had some sort of interest and we just never got a chance to explore that. I keep searching for someone to love me so I could rather feel "wanted"

I can hear the cars from the outside and the doors closing meaning that they're here. I leave whatever I am doing walking out of the room to meet with my grandmother at the hallway all worn out and she embraces me, very warmly and kisses my cheeks and forehead. "Everything is going to be okay now. We are going to be okay" Then she says taking my hand. The warmth seeps through me and I haven't stopped smiling as we our way outside. I really hope that everything is going to be okay after this.

Thank God they are here!

These people have money. Look at the cars they arrived with. They come out adorned in traditional wear and blankets over their heads calling out our clan names with a goat and sheep held by another man. I am wondering now what my man has said to them. I wander my eyes to see him standing from the distance alongside his brothers—the other one's wife did not bother coming here. Makes sense why Krotoa needed me to help her with murder. I need her to come back to her sanity so that we can laugh about this. I really want to make things work between us. I want to stop comparing myself to her. I breathe out covered in a rosy hue and looking down.

When women comes out of another car some of course in blue attire and blanket but there is one, surely around our age who is just wearing a cut out dress around the stomach that manages to show her long legs. She is extremely beautiful and looking so much more like Krotoa. And her afro resembles candy floss. She then looks around. I feel my heart at the pit of my stomach when her eyes meet with Yezulu; they make an intense eye contact that my whole body starts to shake. Not with anger. Not with sadness. I cannot explain this feeling either. I transfix my gaze at them as he pretty seems blown away then quickly look at me. I look back and nod. I don't know why the fuck am I inclining my head with a smile. Jesus am I not in control of my thoughts anymore? What if this?

He leers nervously and looks for somewhere to transfix his eyes between her and I. At this point he is darting them between the both of us before he whispers something to his brother and walk away. She watches him with sharpened gaze at his movements until he walks out of the gate. I am shaking and my heart is rapidly beating against my chest wanting to gallop.

“O kae ngwana?” A man asks where is the child referring to Krotoa. I wasn’t paying attention at them and their greeting.

Truth being told is my grandmother wants to feed these people poison or just kill them. There is an intense history here, I wonder what is it but she is composing herself for the betterment of her grandchild. After what needs to be done trust me a volcanic fight will erupt.

“Come with me” Mkhonto says leading the men and other two women as they drag a sheep making their way inside the house. They seem to know what has to be done and needs to be done because they have some sort of bag that has herbs and isangoma; maybe a family one to help them with this. All that I am praying for is that the curse or whatever this may just ends.

We remain behind as the elders go in including the women when we are instructed to lead them inside. I glimpse at her attentively looking back towards the direction my man has disappeared too.

I watched a man that I love meeting what could be his soulmate or the love of his life and I witnessed that. What is this? Karma. I could be just overly thinking and creating things in my head but I'm not going to bring up this conversation to him. Maybe they know each other somewhere. But her body language is the one that I make upon him entering the room. When I feel as though oxygen has been snatched out from me.

70.

The End, We Will Meet Again. . .

ZENOKUHLE

We are impatiently waiting outside with wonder of what is happening inside and our minds are spiralling out of control. The perturbation is overflowing in the air, strangling us and making our host shivers. Fear etched and made our throats dry. I decided to go and sit outside in the backyard. We haven't been introduced as a family since they wanted to start with this part of healing "ngwana" before everything else could take place.

I am in turmoil of emotions as I sit here holding a cup of tea watching the mountains that looks absolutely green and the cows from the distance moving in a same direction. The land is serene and so is this scene, image displayed to me. "Ka Mazibuko. . ." I tightly hold onto the cup with my heart composing melancholy song with an artist adorned in black including the nails painted in a same color. I glance at him and he smiles with so much grace in his poise before he comes and sit next to me on the bench "What are you doing here alone?"

he plagues and kisses my forehead. There is unbearable pain on my limbs that moving also is hard so rather I remain in a same position to inhale hard.

“I needed time to think about everything” I take a sip from my cup and the hot liquid burns my throat including the emotions that were starting to grow there. I sharply inhale again feeling my hands starting to tremble “We never spoke about what I told you when I killed my—

The words are too big to escape my larynx and trachea. Even when I attempt on squeezing them to roll out my tongue I am unable too.

“Why should we?”

“Because I need you to see and be aware of how much of an antagonist I have been. Life has been hard on me Yezulu I cannot seem to catch a break. I want to be better than what I am now and maybe start to mourn the death of my family then find out what exactly happened to my sister whose body was not found. The woman who became a mother to me also took her own life. I just. . .I just want to breathe for once. I haven’t been able to do so since that day I packed my bags and left home as my mother stood outside our door watching me with tears in her eyes while I got into his car and looked ahead to avert seeing her face. I thought I chose love that day” The cup in my hand shatters on the ground upon how shaking I am, he

then holds my hand as we watch the liquid being swallowed by the ground “I know that you don’t love me but you are with me because of the promises that were made. I am even questioning myself what is that I love about you. I learnt that you are very gentle with me and tender. You treat me as though I am something fragile although you’ve hurt me unknowingly but you took accountability of that and that is something and one thing I cannot do. Do we really love each other? Do we want to be together or are we doing it because we are afraid of losing our lives or things just spiralling out of control? I want to know” I feel my tears dancing on my orbs “From the bottom of my heart I am tired. I am exhausted of being here in this world. Being this person. Being in this body”

“You can’t leave me how sthandwa sami. Look I understand that the polygamy conversation might’ve been hard on you and trust me when I say from the bottom of my heart I am truly sorry. Trust me when I say that I’m not going to do it. I want you Zenokuhle and your past doesn’t really matter to me. This is not because of what we have been told but from the moment I set my eyes on you I fell for you it may sound too hard to believe but I do. I love you beyond words. After all of this let’s go far away to get time to heal”

“I wouldn’t want to be the reason you do not meet your soulmate or the love of your life Nqabayezulu because one day

you are going to hate me. You will look at me with rage and menace that is not what I want. I choose to stay from the time you told me you were polygamous and that is not your fault because you were honest with me but the love that I have for you dragged me from leaving. I am afraid of being alone. Maybe it's not just that fear. I love you yes, but this is not enough for us to make it through everything" I tell him to hurt him so he could let me go. That is not entirely the truth. I fell in love with him in a way that remains indescribable. "We need to end this so that no one gets hurts" I unravel and unveil my pain for him to see.

I can see the tears moving in his eyes, unshed as he swallows what is inside his mouth. I have no idea how it tastes like but I am wondering. I wish I could drink all of him in maybe that way we could heal each other from the endlessly bleeding wounds. "You were just teaching me how to love respectfully and eternally not forgetting naked. Yes I had my mistakes and blinded by power that I was chasing. I admit that but I can't let you go because I'd regret that for the rest of my life and I will keep chasing for happiness this time but I'll never find it because that is what you are to me. I never wanted to make you question your worth in any way in my life but I did just that and ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami. Ngiyakucela forgive me" The rawness of our emotions is so bare. From the quivering of my lips to his hands that now shows the visible veins. At last the

tear that wanted to escape my eyes pretty much does so, touching the bottom of my eye, moving solitary down my cheek as the twin follows to meet on my chin. “Zenokuhle don’t do this” His hands engulf my face and fingers start to move against my skin erupting necromancy and colourful fireworks in my body. A guttural sound comes from my mouth and tears in my eyes just pours as waterfall that managed to break through blockage.

He brings me closely and the warmth of his hands seeping through my me while my entire body shakes as though it is experiencing a seizure of some sort. We are interrupted upon hearing ululating on and singing from inside the house when we hear footsteps approaching towards where we are. I thought he would let me go obviously but instead he tightens the hold.

“Zeno! Zeno! Zeno!” That sounds like Lerato who then appears with a dazzling beam wandering on her face. “She is back! She wants to see you! She is back!” Then she announces with a high pitch tone. All the funereal emotions that were smothering me evaporate for a moment. I stand on my feet wiping my tears with the back of my hand swallowing the lump that was sitting on my throat. Breathe in. Breathe out. Here we go now let me leave. He kisses my forehead and knuckles before nodding his head as a go ahead to leave him behind surely drowning in different emotions. I cannot think of that now. There is

something growing from my solar plexus chakra all the way to my crown one. The softness of my cousin's hand hold onto mine she cannot conceal the exhalation that blooms from within. "You see now we are going to unite. We are going to be a power house. Also you have to meet your sister Kananelo I was having a conversation with her she reminds me of you and your sister who just regained her sanity and asked to take a shower. Can you believe that is the same person who choked slam gogo because she didn't want to touch water?" I do not know how to react but rather I grin. That was my sister? God said you wanted to bang the other one against the wall here is your new victim let's see what you are going to do. Karma isn't the pretty bitch she assumed to be actually. Most definitely not the girl she thinks she is trusts me. Right now all that I can do is showing my teeth in this awkward atmosphere as we walk inside the now deafening house with quietness as the elders are in the living room and well my grandmother is throwing fireballs towards their direction and spitting poison. You can tell from that body language that those men are burning and wish to take off the blankets draped around their shoulders. We walk in with silence if that is even possible while hanging our heads lows and hurriedly.

As we open the door to her room we find her being dressed up by her man they cast their eyes towards our direction. We close the door and wait for them to finish. What one has to do it

sacrifice for love like this? It's a beautiful sight to witness. We stand for couple of minutes before the door opens and Bandlalethu is laughing at something that she said as he is walking out, "Seninga ngena ngelinye langa nibo qhoqhoza—you can go in and next time just knock" Then he smiles at us.

He seems more alive with all the colors on his face enliven. The confidence that he always embodies draped around him as he walks pass us.

We make our way inside the room to find her on the bed, she doesn't look totally okay but at least much better than she was with that beautiful and charming smile. Her hair bleached with eyebrows.

"I heard I was kicking all of you and punching probably should've not gained my sanity because I got to get away with that. Where was MaMsweli did she at least get a slap? Since I was gifting everyone" Yes she is back with the dark humor. It hasn't been a minute already. "What come in?" Then she chuckles.

I am as a toddler seeing a parent coming back from work because I ran to her arms when she welcomed me. We hold onto each other until we fall onto the bed laughing sonorously from the depth of our belly buttons and she smells so good. We hear the door closing meaning our dearly cousin is giving us space. We hold onto each before we come face to face. With

her hand on my cheeks and mines around her waist as our breathing collides. “Do you think that maybe we were like this in my mother’s stomach?” I jokingly asks and she frowns a bit before we suppurate with great laughter “I am sorry” I apologize unexpected as she narrows her eyes. “You know for thinking that you always had it easy and hating you for no reason. I wish I can end it all you know. . .” Then I attempt to hang my head low when she places her finger under my chin “. . .I am toxic Krotoa”

“That you are Katrina” Always unfiltered. “But you have time to become the version of yourself you want to be. Go chase your peace. Then go back to the woman before but changed with renovations. Start your business again, be a successful interior designer and re-build your life. Just sit down and think about your life without Nqabayezulu in it or your past or the things you’ve done. How will it be like? The people surrounding you right now do you need them? Are they good for you? Your peace? The brand new start you want? If not then let go of things that don’t make you happy. Stay away from them. Even if it means going far away and moving to another province to start a serene life then do that. Make yourself happy”

“You know your father in law gave me an offer? And I haven’t got back to him. He was going to help me with business and a place to stay while I take it from there”

“Mkhululi?”

“Hmmm”

“He is your father in law too” We laugh “Then what is that you are waiting for? Go back to him and take that offer. We are going to figure things out together. I mean of course if I am one of the people you want to keep around even if you don’t we don’t have to be closed but I’ll help you”

I look at her with total wonder. The smile that she has and she is just pretending as though her sanity never crawled away from her and just the way she is wedding that brave mask, forever to radiant. How is able to do that? But still smile in this manner.

“I want you in my life. Let’s restart. I want to have you around as my sister”

“Hey I’m Krotoa

Advertisement

your sister”

“I’m Katrina, your sister” we shake hands.

I hate this name by the way!

I hear a sound. A scary one. One I am so familiar with, "Wait did you hear that?" I pick my head up to make sure I heard right, "Those are gunshots Krotoa!" I tell her the moment we sprint to stand on our feet with our eyes out of their volition. What? We have had enough. I swear cold shivers just ran through my body. I haven't healed and this, this is pretty much triggering. "Nqabayezulu!" I remember that they were outside. Before hearing yet another word I am running out of this room. I can hear footsteps behind me as she inhaled and exhales sharply. In the living room the women from my paternal family are on the floor on their stomach. Not seemingly scared. As though this is not too foreign to them. I cannot witness sheer fear on their faces but what shocked me and had me holding my vagina instead of my head is my grandmother holding a gun and clicking her tongue including my uncles as they all walk out of the house flaring their nostrils. After that a bang after another follows. The smell of bullets and fresh blood.

"Where is she?" We hear a feminine tone screaming from the outside sounding medusa like angry. What is going on? "Where is that bitch bring her here!" Hmmm that voice, I know it from somewhere.

"Krotoa where are you going?" I am running after her now that she is making her way outside. "Krotoa! Krotoa!" What the fuck

is wrong with her? She was on the verge of losing her life and it hasn't been a minute and already she wants to put herself at risk? Jesus what for? What?

“Ngwanaka please don't go outside. Both of you. Do not go outside” A woman in blue and white warns but no, no, no.

The one I shared a womb with doesn't listen but there she is on her bare feet walking out of the door and I am following behind her to find everyone with guns on their hands pointing towards MaMsweli who has men standing behind her. Others are on the floor bleeding to death. I search with my eyes to see if anyone on our side is gone. Thank God there is no body on the ground. Her husband is at the centre to calm the catastrophe with beaded sweat on his forehead and his hands raised. Begging his wife to stop this and everyone from his family to put the gun down. “Okay there she is. . .” MaMsweli says with a smirk on her face seeing the woman who once slept with her man “You are suddenly not crazy anymore huh? I am glad because I wanted you to look into my eyes before you take your last breath”

“Awuzame sfebe!”

Who is grandmother is this? Mine apparently, holding onto the gun impatiently waiting to pull a trigger.

“With great respect ma stay out of this. You were not there when she slept with my husband” Bathong and the husband is not being pointed with the gun because? I am standing right next to my sister. Her man is about to explode and you can tell that one trigger then he won’t missed. I’m in fear on behalf of MaMsweli because whatever the case may be she will leave here with a body bag. But she is brave!

Imagine all these guns pointed towards your direction, she is shaking though now with tears wandering in her eyes as she chokes in between her words. “Sleeping with him wasn’t enough and you decided to take what we worked hard for you? Where were you when we had nothing?” The tears fall down in her eyes with her chest rising up and down.

“Manakazi. . .” Her cheating husband calls her sweetly rubbing his hands together “. . .we have spoken about this and we have the money back and re-building the business please you don’t have to do this. You know exactly what will happen and losing you is not what I desire MaMsweli”

“Anginandaba Melikhaya mangifa ngifa naye (If I die, I’m dying with her)” Then she seethes with her eyes transfixed on on her prey wiping the tears with the back of her hand. What happens after that is tragic. A true nightmare not one wants to witness at the rain of bullets in the air. I had to go down on the floor and holding my ears.

A body falls onto the ground after a gunshot what follows after that is just a bang after another until the fresh bullet weaves through the air and screams. Another body touches the ground with opened eyes and bleeding from the mouth, a pool of blood flowing. I am frozen in this position not knowing what to do, I think I may urinated myself with my heart beating fast. I cannot seem to find words.

They are gone, both of them.

.....**The End**.....

For daily latest books please visit <https://novelsguru.com/>

And also visit my Facebook page, and like and share it

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3345453369055623>

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends.

Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.