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Isigodi by Minenhle Nkosi

Chapter 1

“Aww mina ngeshelwa wutsotsi wathi uyangithanda kanti udlala ngami utsotsi wendawo.” I sing as I rinse my laundry in the river.

I love doing laundry in the river. It gives me that sense of belonging and some pride. My mother always ask why I don't wash using the water in the tank. Well apart from the sense of belonging, this time also gives me the opportunity to catch up with my friends and talk about everything, including suitors.

“I just love your voice chomi. I wish I can just hear you sing every time. One day I wish to be Ursula and just steal it.” Velisani Jiki who is my friend says. I just laugh. She also has a beautiful voice but she is obsessed with my voice.

I am the first person who befriended her when she moved to our village. People thought she and her family were weird. Xhosa people moving to a Zulu dominated village seemed weird to almost everyone except to my family and I. I taught her most rules on how to survive village life. Her father lost his job and was evicted from where they were staying. Luckily her mother had bought a plot of land in our village. So she built a 5 roomed house and they moved in. they have been staying here for close to 6 years now. Well her father recovered from the financial loss and started a farm business. He sells livestock. Her mother is a sister at the local clinic. She works together with my mom who is a doctor there.

“Here comes your man.” Veli says while loading her laundry in the basket. I look behind us and I sigh when I see Nkululeko. He is the son of induna. His brothers think they are entitled to all the maidens in our village. He is the normal one. Meaning he is a bit humble and isn't ruled by toxic masculinity like his brothers. He has been asking me out for a long time but I always reject him. He doesn't give up though.

“Sanibonani makhosazane.” He greets respectfully. He is a young handsome looking man who is any maiden's ideal future husband but unfortunately that doesn't include me.

“Molo Nkululeko.” Veli greets back. One of the many things I admire about my friend is that she isn’t afraid to stand out and be different. She isn’t ashamed of her culture, her language or her background. She has never, not for once, tried to change her accent or spoke the Zulu language. She has stayed true to herself and her culture.

“Uyaphila MaShenge?” he asks looking at me. I just nod and load the clothes in the basket. “Let me carry that for you.” he offers. I just collect the items I was using to wash the laundry and load them in the small bucket. He takes the basket.

“See you during the day my friend.” Veli says and then walks away with her basket.

“Did I do something to offend you? Ever since I arrived here you haven’t said anything? Am I that annoying?” he asks and I huff.

“You are not annoying Nkululeko. I just don’t understand why you keep coming back when I have told you numerous times that I don’t want a relationship with you. Don’t you get the picture?” I start walking and he follows me.

“Well my father once said ‘you don’t give up on something on someone you love.’ so this is me not giving up on my love for you and on you.” I roll my eyes. It’s been a year with him singing this ‘don’t give up’ song. It is irritating really. It’s just that I don’t have the guts to tell him off like that. I am not one who enjoys breaking other people’s feelings and hearts. He walks me home and we both aren’t saying anything. I enjoy silence at times so this is good. We arrive at my home and he places the basket down. “I will see you soon Nkosazane.” He hugs me and then walks away.

“You guys have elevated to hugs. Mmm. Shall MaNene expect cows soon?” my nosy sister Nkanyezi asks as she appears from the backyard.

“Stop being nosy and come help me carry this basket in.” she comes and we carry it to the backyard. She goes inside the house and comes back with pegs. We start hanging the laundry.

“So what did you guys talk about today?” she is never going to let this slide. Is there any place where one can ship off nosy siblings? “Don’t ignore me sis. I wanna know. You know

everyone will start thinking you guys are dating because of that hug, so it's better if you tell me what really went down so that I can defend you while knowing all the facts."

"You are just looking for gossip where there isn't any Nyezi. But if you must know, there will never be anything between me and Nkululeko. He is not my type. Sure he seems nice but I don't like him. No amount of courting can make me change my mind." She pouts and folds her arms. For a sixteen year old, she can be very childish. "And let's stop talking about this. You are too young for me to be discussing love related issues with you."

"You are being unfair right now. I am old enough to know what being in a relationship means."

"Let's talk about something else. Did you give mom my list and the money?" she nods.

"Yeah. I also gave her extra so that she can buy electricity and meat." I nod. When we are done hanging the laundry, we head inside the house. I bath and then prepare for the day ahead.

Life in the rural areas isn't as terrible as people make it out to be. I am one of those few young people who still love staying in the village and don't dream of moving to the city. Who don't

see the village as a setback in life or a downfall. We own a small business where we do beading crocheting, hair braiding and baking. It is not something huge but it brings food to the table and helps us maintain our lives. We sell our products at the market. Sometimes we go sell them in Johannesburg and Durban every once in a while. Many people always ask me why we don't relocate to the big cities because our products sell more there but we just dismiss them by saying we love it here. We truly do, I don't see myself living elsewhere besides here.

"Before I forget, sis Zamile ordered 30 grass mats. She is getting married in a month. So she needs 30 grass mats. She said she will come later on to pay the deposit, which is 80% and then she will pay the remaining when we give her the mats." Nyezi says as she is cleaning up. I am cooking supper. We always cook early because we get really busy during the day.

"Okay. That's good business. Aren't you supposed to be attending?"

"Our math teacher is sick, so we are not attending." I nod. She is doing grade 11.

I am 21 years old. I finished grade 12 and decided to just stay at the village and continue with what I was already doing before I even finished school. Which is beading, crocheting, hair braiding, grass weaving and all other skills. I teach other females who are keen on joining our small business and I am

also a virgin who attends umhlanga. I am my mother's pride and joy. She even did umemulo for me a few months back which my father and some of my brothers attended but they are a non-factor in my life. I am not the obedient 'I told you so' type of girl but I respect my mother and people who deserve my respect.

"I heard Nomzamo and her friends is going to Jo'burg next week." I roll my eyes.

"I don't care about what she does. She is not my friend, so what she does isn't any of my concern." I respond.

"You are boring. Let me quickly finish up here so that I can go gossip with my friends."

"You should be using that time to practice math. The fact that your teacher isn't present doesn't mean you should neglect your studies." "But sisi..."

"Are we having a discussion right now?"

"No." I am very close with my sister. In fact I can even call her my best friend. But sometimes you gotta remind kids that you are an adult and not their mate. We finish hanging the clothes and she drags her feet inside the house.

"What did ma say about a lady who drags her feet?" she turns to roll her eyes at me and rush inside the house kids.

“I saw MaGasa today at the clinic. She was just passing by and she came to say hi. She also asked I send her regards to you.” my mother says as she takes a sit in the lounge. I put her tea and sandwich in the tray and so serve her. This is her routine. Every time she comes back from work, she wants tea and sandwich, just to snack before dinner. I place the tray on the coffee table and pull the table closer to her. I then take off her shoes and socks. “Stop entertaining her mama. She has this crazy idea of me being her daughter in law in the future which is never going to happen. I don’t like Nkululeko mama and I never will. Don’t befriend her and try to set me up.” “Kodwa when have I ever did something like that? He is not for you. I know that and I would never force him down your throat.” she takes a sip of her tea and closes her eyes. “Just the way I like it.” She then opens her eyes and looks at me. “When are you going to Jo’burg?” I sigh. “In two weeks’ time. Sis Zamile ordered 30 grass mats. I wanna make sure that we at least have made half of them before I leave.” I am going to learn advanced skills on what I can already do and I am also applying for tenders for our business. We are a registered company which qualifies for funding. So getting tenders will mean building a bigger space where we are going to operate in because we just work under a tree. “You will take my car so that travelling will be easy.” I shake my head. “No mama. You use that car to

travel to work. What are you going to travel with when I take your car? Plus I will probably get lost or even crash your car. No mama. I can't. What if I get hijacked? You know how Jo'burg thugs are." she rolls her eyes and takes another sip. "There is a first time for everything Azanda and you are bound to get lost at least 5 times before you can master Jo'burg roads. And you can never really master them unless you are a taxi driver who travels at least 3 times a day." I pout and look at the TV. "You will be fine. I will ask your father for petrol money." I look at her with my eyebrows raised. "Mama I have enough money to last me for a year in another city. I don't need him. Especially not now." "Azanda this anger you have for him isn't good. Anger makes you a bitter person and you will end up hating innocent people." "I don't hate innocent people. I only hate him because of the things he has and hasn't done for us. I don't need a cent from him mama. Enjoy your tea. Dinner will be served soon." I stand up and head out. My father already had 2 wives when he approached my mother. I don't know why she agreed to go out with him knowing very well that he was married and had a dozen of kids. He paid lobola for her after the birth of Nkanyezi but things didn't work out because he had impregnated another woman. He was or is a really shitty man who thinks with his dick. He has money, a lot of it but I want nothing to do with it because he left mother when Nkanyezi was a few months old. He didn't care but only started

supporting us a few years later. He still sends money every month but Nkanyezi is the only one that uses it. He is into logistics. He owns taxis, trucks, buses and cabs. "You look like someone burned your grass mats. What's up?" Veli asks as soon as I step out of the house. She is with 3 other girls we work with. Sisanda, Nomthandazo and Nombuyiselo. Those are their names. I give her a weak smile and she frowns. "We will talk." I say brushing her arm. She rolls her eyes and sits down. I go take my seat and continue with the neck piece I was doing. "So when are you going to Jo'burg? Next week?" Nomthi asks. I sigh and look at her. "The week after the following one. I will be driving there, so you guys can accompany me but you will have to cover your own accommodation fee and meals." "I am definitely going chomi. Maybe we can even visit a club or two. My brother has a house there, remember? I will ask if he can accommodate us." Veli says excitedly. She is just a ball of great energy and great vibes. "I will talk to my father. Maybe I will join you." Sisanda says. The other two also say they will ask their parents for permission. We finish working and I walk Veli to her home. It's 5 minutes away from mine. "So are you going to tell me what is eating you?" she says after a minute of us walking silently. "Mom wants ask ubaba for money which will help me in Jo'burg for accommodation and stuff." "And you don't want that?" "You know I want nothing from that man. If he wants to maintain someone, sure he can maintain Nyezi but

I am my own responsibility. I make my own money. I don't need his." "But a few thousands injected to your account will make this trip even better. We could go to Konka for starters." I laugh and roll my eyes. "Me asking or accepting his money would mean I am accepting what he is giving us. Only money and not his time, attention and affection. He is an absent father. Let his money be absent in my life too." She sighs. "You are so stubborn chomi. I swear if we were to bump into him and he offers you money, I would take it on your behalf." I chuckle and she laughs. "I am going to talk to my parents about the Jozi thing. They will be the ones to talk to my brother. I know there will be a high possibility of Nombuyiselo not joining us because of her over strict parents. So I will ask for him to accommodate four people." "Okay. See you tomorrow mngani." we hug and then she goes inside her home. I turn around and head back home. While walking, I hear a sound of a car approaching from behind. I move out of the way, walking on the sideline so that it can pass. The car stops beside me. I frown and look at it. I have a thing for cars, so I know what type it is. A metallic blue Volvo XC90. I stop and look at the window which lowers

revealing a very beautiful dark skinned woman. She steps out of the car. Damn she is tall. She is wearing a red pencil skirt, a black shirt and black sandals. She smiles, a very warm and welcoming smile. She is just mesmerizing and so charming. How can a woman charm me this much without even saying a word?

“Hello.” She says politely. I am taken. I exhale and return the smile. “Hi.” “I am Roxanne Maphumulo. I am originally from KwaMaphumulo in Stanger but due to my work, I stay in Gauteng. I work for the Department of Arts and Culture and my family also runs a Skills Development Organization called Yakhanathi. We have heard about the talent your village possesses. We just wanna help the people acquire more advanced skills and better their lives.” I have heard of the Yakhanathi Organization. They take skilled people under their wing, groom them for the better, employ them to use the same skills acquired and pay them so much. Of course you are allowed to do some orders on the side but you are not allowed to poach clients of their company. I would really love to be part of them one day but if only I didn’t have to move to the big city. “I am Azanda Buthelezi. I do beadwork, crocheting, grass weaving, hair braiding and other skills. My friends and I have a small business where we do these things collectively. We take in big orders and some small ones. We usually go sell in big cities when there are huge events that will bring us lots of money. I also know another group of maidens who do the same work as ours. You can come to our meeting place tomorrow and see the work we do.” she smiles. “I would love to come. By the way, I am staying at the Buxedene Lodge. I am going to be here at the village for a few months.” “A few months? Won’t that be costly?” “No. the department will be covering my

expenses. Plus my siblings will be joining me soon. We have another project which we wanna do for the community. I don't wanna jinx it because it still needs approval from the finance department but from there on, they will come." "You are such an over sharer." She laughs. "I am serious. You just met me a minute ago. How are you this open to me?" "I am new to the area. So I was driving around, scouting for a friend and I think I have found one." I laugh and shake my head. "One day you will befriend a witch, I am telling you." "Well good thing, today isn't that day." I laugh again and look at her. "My home is that one." I point at it. "You can come tomorrow around 12pm. My friends will be here." "Okay. Can you give me your number?" I call it out and she types it on her phone. "See you tomorrow. I will bring you guys some lunch." She hugs me and then goes back to her car. She hoots and then drives off. What a friendly soul. I hope she won't meet people who will corrupt her or even Nkululeko's brothers who will bewitch her into falling head over heels for them. Bewitching women is a thing here in the village. If she is good in almost everything, you bewitch her so that she can stay with you and not even get tempted when men from cities come around. .

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“A dark beauty? I really have to see her. I won’t go to school tomorrow. I wanna see her.” Nyezi says excitedly after I have told her about my encounter with a friendly Roxanne. It’s like I told her I met a white person. She seems so excited. She even wants to skip school. But I know mom won’t let her. She will have to meet Roxanne after school.

“Skipping school for what?” mom asks entering the kitchen. We always eat supper in the kitchen at the dining table which contains 4 chairs. She sits down on one of the chairs. I sit opposite her while Nyezi dishes up.

“I met this other lady earlier on. She is here for work and will be staying at the lodge for a few months. She works for the Yakhanathi Organization and the Department of Arts and Culture. She is recruiting skilled workers to join the organization.” I say while looking at my mother. “I was telling Nyezi about her and she is very excited to meet her.”

“If she is going to be in the village for months, then you have plenty of time to meet her. There is no need for you to be dramatic and skip school.” mom says and then starts humming

which basically means end of discussion. I chuckle and look at Nyezi who is pouting. She serves us food and juice. She also sits down. I say grace and we dig in.

“I might be going with my friends to Jo’burg. Also Veli said she will speak to her brother about accommodation. So I won’t be staying at a lodge. That means less costs for me.” I tell mother and she smiles.

“That’s good to know. I was really worried about you staying at a lodge. I know they are safe and all but one can never be too careful.”

“How I wish I can go with you.” Nyezi sulks and we just laugh at her.

We finish eating and mom offers to do the dishes. We just let her. We move to the lounge and tune in to Mzansi Magic just in time for Diep City. Dinner time at home is half seven to eight. So we don’t watch programmes during that time. We just gather in the kitchen, eat and catch up on the events of the day. It’s a family tradition and we are very used to it.

“I wanna be a production sound mixer.” Nyezi says out of the blue. She is looking at the TV. It’s like she is thinking out loud. “I want to pursue a career in that. I know I have the potential to make it in the industry. I also wanna go and study abroad. I know many opportunities will come my way if I am up there.” she turns to look at us with a nervous smile and turns her attention back to the television.

“Are you serious?” mom enquires. Nyezi just nods. I can tell she is nervous and she doesn’t wanna dwell on this topic because she is afraid of mother’s reaction. “Well I will call your father over for lunch or dinner when I am off and we can discuss this. I just wanna be sure if it is really what you want. You are my daughter and I want nothing but the best for you.” she jumps from her couch and snuggles with mom in the one seater couch she is sitting at. I know I would have to make myself scarce on that lunch meeting. I am a very calm and calculated person but all sense of respect flies out the window when I see him.

“I am so happy for you sis. You should definitely do research about this so that we can know which university or college you plan on going to, where you are going to stay and how long is your degree or diploma.” She smiles at me and goes back to her seat.

The rest of the evening is spent with her telling us more about what being a production sound mixer really is. She even mention big movie production companies that she would love to work with. My advice to her is that the sky is not the limit, it is only the beginning. She needs to be her own cheerleader and role model. Her own motivation. She also needs to be selfish if she wants to succeed. Meaning she has to look out for herself, especially in a foreign country.

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“So guys this is Roxanne Maphumulo from Yakhanathi Organization. Roxanne these are my friends and partners Nombuyiselo, Sisanda, Nomthandazo and my best friend Velisani.” They all exchange hugs and greetings. Roxanne today is looking drop dead gorgeous in a blush padded shoulder high-leg cut bodysuit

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a black split hem crocodile skirt and white Versace ilus sneakers. We all sit down.

“I am just going to ask you guys some questions which you can answer while doing your work.” She says and we all agree to that. “So firstly, what is the name of your business or company?”

“Izimbali Zomhlaba. That is also the name of our dance group. Siyagida. Siyawushaya no shiyameni.” Sisanda says proudly.

“Wow. I would love to see you guys dance. Do you guys enter dance competitions or be hired to perform at events?” Roxy asks.

“We do participate in some competitions. We also get hired or invited to perform at some occasions. Some ladies hire us to dance with them when they are having events like umemulo, umkhehlo, umgcagco. Especially ladies from townships.” Nombuyiselo highlights.

“How much do you guys make in your business a year?”

“It depends, but maybe R100k upwards. We sell our stuff and lend people some.” Nomthandazo answers.

“How many of you guys are there in the business and how many in the dance group?”

“There is 8 of us in the business. My younger sister Nkanyezi and two others, Langelihle and Simunye. They are still at school.” I say and she nods.

“So what is next for you guys?”

“We are headed to Jo’burg in two weeks. Azanda is actually going to do some training which will last for a week. Maybe we will join her. We will come back after two weeks.” Veli says.

“Where will you be doing this training?”

“At Masakhane.”

“I can hook you up with my siblings and you can do your training at Yakhanathi. You won’t even have to pay for it. Only if you join our organization. We will even provide accommodation for you.”

“Sounds tempting but we still have to establish whether we want to join Yakhanathi or not. Even if we do, we already have accommodation. We will just come for the training, should we agree to work with you guys. And we will also come with our own terms and conditions. You will also have to train the others

who are still in school but during school holidays.” Veli says and Roxy nods.

“I hear you guys. Seems like you have a lot to discuss. I will leave you to it then.” She says taking her phone and car keys.

“You don’t have to leave. We always discuss business related things when we are together. Sit. Maybe we can teach you how to weave grass mats.” I say and she laughs.

“With these long nails? I should’ve just removed them before coming here.” we just laugh at her.

We spend the rest of the evening getting to know each other better. She is a really open person. Apparently her boyfriend dumped her when she told her about coming to the rurals for a few months. He said he couldn’t do the long distance thing. Men. While we are saying our goodbyes, Nyezi walks in the gate and comes straight to us. She is with Langelihle and Simunye.

“I am so glad we caught you.” she says coming to hug Roxy who just smiles but stares at me with a confused look. I chuckle.

“This is my little sister Nkanyezi and Langelihle and Simunye. That completes our business members. Guys this is Roxanne Maphumulo from Yakhanathi.”

“Ow we already know who she is. Nyezi has been talking about her all day long.” Simunye says eyeing Nyezi and we all laugh.

“Leave me alone wena. Anyways nice to meet you Miss Maphumulo. You look just as beautiful as my sister said.” Nyezi says and Roxy smiles.

“You can call me Roxy. Anyways I was just leaving. I had a business proposal for you guys but your sister will brief you. I hope to hear from you guys soon. I can actually see us working together.” She hands me her business card. I walk her to her car and then go back to where everyone is at.

“We are definitely going to work with her but we first have to indicate our conditions and they have to mend the contracts. They also have to know that we are very skilled in what we do. We are not amateurs.” Nombuyiselo says and we all agree. We settle down and talk business while weaving grass mats.

“Your father called. He said he will come here tomorrow for dinner so that we can discuss Nkanyezi’s future.” Mom says as soon Nyezi finishes washing the dishes.

“Great. I will also tell him about the upcoming trip we have at school.” Nyezi says excitedly.

“You’re going to a trip? When? To where?” I ask. This is the first time I am hearing of this.

“We are going to Richards Bay for some open day thing and then we will go watch a movie at the cinema and then have late lunch at McDonalds and then come back.” She answers excitedly. “Of course the formal letters will be coming out Monday for parents.”

“This means you will come back very late.” she nods. “Your father will have to organize transport that will fetch you from school to here.” mom says and I roll my eyes.

“Or I can fetch her mom.”

“You know how I hate you driving at night around here. You may never know what you will come across.” I huff.

“Mom you are just slowly inviting dad back into our lives. We don’t need him. Like I don’t need to hear of him in everything that is done here at home.” I stand up and head to my room.

I know walking out on my mom is wrong but I just can’t stand them talking about dad. I hate the man for being a shitty father, so I don’t have to tolerate hearing about him. I mean it’s bad enough that people always say I look like him. even in town at the taxi rank, his drivers always let me ride for free because their ‘boss’ would surely kill them for making me pay. I go to the WhatsApp group of Izimbali Zomhlaba that is only for business and write that we should have a meeting to discuss Roxy’s offer and outline our own conditions for going into business with them. We all agree that tomorrow 12pm is okay since its Saturday and the kids are not going to school. A message comes in from Zithulele, my older brother and my father’s first born.

‘I am inviting you to my engagement party which will be held in Durban Pavilion Hotel in a month. I will send money for you and Nyezi to buy dresses to wear.’

There goes my brother for you. He doesn't ask. He is always demanding just because he is the oldest. His mother is the first wife. I have no beef with my siblings and I am always there when they need me or when they invite me to their things in time. I mean this one time I even went to support my sister who is two years older than me, in her umemulo. I was even umkhaphi omkhulu. I really don't have beef with my siblings. I only despise their father. That man. Gosh.

Zithulele is getting engaged. The Buthelezi player is finally settling down. Many of the maidens are going to be disappointed. I just hope he doesn't turn to a younger version of his father. I send a message asking him when he paid lobola, and he responds with next week. We chat for a few minutes and then I drift into deep slumber.

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“So we are going to tell Roxy that we are going into business with them as a group. We also don't want them taking our clients from here.” Nombuyiselo says.

“They also need to build a centre for us. Maybe one around here and one in town so that we can operate in a good place.” Nkanyezi says and we all nod in agreement.

We talk about our many conditions and come to an agreement. We then jot everything down and call Roxy. While waiting for her, the other members of Izimbali Zomhlaba who are dancers, come and we start dancing. Ukugida kwethu always attract people, even passersby and they stop just to stare at us. Some even take videos. After we are done ukugida, I spot Roxy in the small crowd around us with a phone in her hand. She also looks like she was taking a video. She walks to where we are.

“Wow you guys. That was so beautiful. I was even tempted to join in but I was probably going to ruin the whole thing.” She says and we just laugh at her. We go sit down and share our conditions with her. “This is really good. I am going to forward everything to one of my brothers so that he can compile a contract and then send it back so that you can sign it.”

“I actually thought you were going to shut down some of the conditions.” I say and she chuckles.

“You guys are very business wise, so there is no way to rob you or try to blindside you. I am actually proud of you, considering where you come from. I am even tempted to move down here for good.” She says and we all laugh.

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“I don’t think you will survive here.” Veli says.

“But you did.” I say and she rolls her eyes.

“I was young when I moved here. It was very easy to adapt.” While sitting and chatting, we hear whistles and I immediately know that it’s Nkululeko and his brothers.

“Zimbali Zomhlaba, makhosazane. Naze nabahle emini yantambama bakithi.” Mcebisi, who is a bit older than Nkululeko shouts. Good thing, they can’t enter the yard as that would be very disrespectful to my brothers and would be the start of the third world war. The Nyandeni brothers and Buthelezi brothers have always had beef since like the beginning of time. I stand up and go near the gate with the ladies following me.

“Go. You know what will happen if my brothers were to find out that you were here.” I say and look at Nkululeko. He isn’t

even looking at me. I follow his eyes and find that he is directly staring at Roxy who isn't even looking at anyone but busy typing on her phone.

"Don't worry. We are leaving anyways. We just wanted to greet." Vumisa, the second eldest says. "Sthandwa sami aselule izinyawo." He says looking at Nombuyiselo. They have always been together. Just on and off because she doesn't let him eat the cookie.

"I will see you soon guys." She says as she goes to take her bag and heads out the gate. Together with Vumisa they walk away.

"Ngiwu Nkululeko mina nkosazane." Nkululeko announces looking at Roxy who raises her head with a smile on her face. I really hope she is attracted to him. That would be a good way to get him off my back.

"I am Roxanne Maphumulo." She says politely.

"Mashimane, Mgobode, Dubandlela. Waze wamuhle nkosazane. Can you please step outside the gate so that we can talk freely?" Nkululeko says. Roxy looks at me frowning.

"They are not allowed to enter the gate. Long story. You can however go and talk to him. Will see you tomorrow." I say to her. She comes to hug me.

“Tomorrow we are going to town. You owe me a trip.” She says and I laugh. “See you tomorrow then.”

“Be ready by 9 am.” She smiles once again and heads out. She walks away and Nkululeko follows him. The other ladies also head out and the Nyandeni brothers follow them. Only Veli and Nyezi left.

“There goes your future husband.” Veli says making me laugh. I roll my eyes.

“He was never mine. Don’t worry too much. Mine is coming.”

“Yeah right.” She also rolls her eyes and I chuckle. Nyezi and I both walk Veli home and then come back to find mom busy cooking.

“Mom what are you doing? It’s Nyezi’s turn to cook.” I say half shouting. She should be resting. She just knocked off. Mom only cooks when she is on leave or on her day off. She waves her hand dismissing me.

“I don’t mind. Besides your father is coming. I want him to eat food prepared by me.” I roll my eyes and prepare some bathing water so that I can bath before supper. Besides besigida, so I am probably stinking.

After bathing, I change into my long silk pajamas, night gown and sleepers. I head to the lounge and sit on the couch. I go through my phone and while browsing, I come across Roxy's text. She is asking me about Nkululeko and what kind of a guy he is. I tell her everything including the fact that he has been asking me out for ages. But I also tell her that he is a good guy and that she should give him a chance if she wants to.

"Dad's here." Nyezi says shaking me. She is wearing a night dress and her kitty sleepers. I chuckle and sit up.

"I am starving. Are we going to eat now?" I ask groaning and she laughs.

"Mama, when are we eating?" she asks shouting.

"When you finally open the gate for your father." Mom shouts back. Nyezi laughs as she goes to open the gate. Few minutes later she comes back with Sokalisa. He is carrying a few pick n pay plastics. Looks like he was in Richard's Bay.

"Sanibonani ekhaya." He greets as he places his small bag on the coffee table.

“Hello.” I stand up and take the plastics from him. I go and place them in the kitchen. Nyezi will do the offloading. “Your husband is here. Go greet him.” I say to mom who rolls her eyes.

“Help me dish up.” she says. I put my phone in my gown pocket and help her dish up. I place the plates neatly at the table and then sit down. Nyezi goes to call Sokalisa and together they join me in the table. Mom also settles down. “How are you Buthelezi?”

“I am fine mkami. How are you all doing?” he asks looking at Nyezi and me. I just nod and start digging in. This is going to be a long night.

“I'm fine dad.” Nyezi answers with so much excitement in her voice. I can feel dad's eyes on me. I just pretend not to notice and eat as fast as I can. The sooner I finish my food, the sooner I will be excused from this table.

“So how is school?” Sokalisa asks. I am trying so hard to pretend that all is well. Even the sound of his voice irritates me.

“School is going great, dad. We have an upcoming all day trip to Richards Bay. The official letters to parents will be coming next week. So I will take a picture of it and send it to you.”

“No need for that ndodakazi. I will just send money to your account and I hope it will be enough to cover all your expenses.” He answers smoothly like the world's best dad. It takes all the self-control in me not to chuckle and roll my eyes. “How about you Azanda?”

“I am fine.” I murmur and swallow the food in my mouth.

“Your mom tells me you will be heading to Jozi soon.”

“Is there anything she doesn't share with you? You seem like besties?” I blurt out before I can even stop myself.

“Azanda.” MaNene says in a stern reprimanding tone and I quickly apologize to her.

Dinner drags for me because I honestly don't wanna be in one room with Sokalisa pretending that everything is okay. He keeps on stealing glances at me and not saying anything. Finally dinner comes to an end. It's not even my turn to wash dishes but I volunteer because I would do anything to not be in a room

with this sperm donor of mine. I wash the dishes as slow as I can. When I am done, I head to the lounge and find them sitting and laughing. I know MaNene would have my head for desert if I were to leave them here and go to my room. Instead I slide into the couch next to Nyezi and just get busy with my phone.

“So which school do you want to go to?” Sokalisa asks Nyezi.

“The Los Angeles Film School. It’s in America

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California and receiving funding as an international student will be hard. So I will have to pay cash.” Nyezi answers while playing with her hair. Some women may do this when flirting but Nyezi always does this when she is nervous. Dad looks at mom and then looks at her.

“Everything you want, you will get ndodakazi. This is one of the reasons I work hard, so that you get to have everything you need in life and don’t have to put your dreams on hold just because you cannot afford them.”

“Anything but a present father.” I mumble and he quickly looks at me.

“What was that Azanda?” I shrug.

“Nothing.” I look at him clenching my jaws and then turn back my attention to my phone.

“Do you have something you want to say to me Azanda?”

“How much time have you got?” I challenge him.

“That’s enough Azanda. Respect him. He is still your father.”
MaNene gives me a look and I roll my eyes.

“Only when it suits him.”

“Don’t you ever disrespect me like that or I will...”

“You will what? Beat me up? Where will you get that privilege from? You don’t even know what size I wear, my favourite colour, my dream car or dream job and yet you have the nerve to demand respect from me. Respect is earned Sokalisa.” I stand up and mom also stands up.

“SIT DOWN AZANDA!” she shouts. I look at her and slowly descend to my seat. She also sits down. “Now can we talk like normal people? We were still talking about Nyezi’s school. What else would you like to tell your father Nyezi?”

“Nothing mama. I am just happy that he is going to cover my fees for the rest of my degree.”

“What is the name of your degree again?” Sokalisa asks.

“Sound Engineer.”

“So you can be a DJ?” he asks and Nyezi giggles.

“A DJ that went overseas.” They all laugh while I chuckle.

“Your mom tells me that you are going to Jozi next week.” he says turning to me. I just look at him and look ahead. “So you are not going to talk to me?”

“I don’t wanna come off as rude or disrespectful, so I am just going to keep my thoughts to myself. But yes I am going to Jozi but don’t bother throwing your money at me because I have everything covered. I have worked for my own money, so I don’t need yours.”

“You will be staying at one of my houses in Rooderport. A driver will be allocated to cater to all your travelling needs. He will drive you to Jozi and bring you back here. No girl child of mine

will drive alone in the streets of Jozi. What if thieves decide to hijack her?”

“Ow wow. So you suddenly care about me? It’s a little too late for that. Don’t you think?” I ask him with a hard face.

“Azanda I don’t care what your thoughts are about me but you will do as I say. I will also give you a card with your allowance. You are free to spend all that money in Jo’burg and if you ever run out of it, just send me a text and I will transfer more.”

“NO!” He frowns. “I DON’T WANT YOUR MONEY OR ANYTHING THAT COMES FROM YOU!”

“AZANDE IZINTOMBI ZAMASHENGE!” he shouts standing up and I look at him while trying to contain my own anger.

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“You will listen to me and you will do as I say. You are the child here and I am the adult. I will not have you back chatting or disrespecting me Azanda.” I grunt and sit back.

“Calm down Shenge.” Mama says politely while looking at me, shaking her head. Sokalisa sits down and breathes out.

“What do you want from me? I am here now

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aren't I? What more do you want? My organs?” he asks.

“If you want us to have this conversation, we better have it alone without someone's feelings getting hurt or someone reprimanding me.” I answer looking at mom and Nyezi. He takes his car keys from the table. He heads out and I follow him.

“Don't kill each other.” Nyezi says in a small voice and I chuckle while Sokalisa laughs.

We climb inside his car and he drives out. It's weird to see him without izinkabi or his bodyguards as he would like to call them. He drives to the playground and parks his car. He steps out and I also step out. He opens the boot to retrieve two camp chairs and set them up. He sits down and I also sit.

"So let's hear out your grievances." I chuckle and shake my head.

"Grievances you say? Grievances are complains from your workers. I don't have grievances. You are just a shitty father who doesn't wanna take responsibility. You think showering your kids with money will make up for being an absent father but it won't. You are just a failure with all your money." I say and look ahead. I know he is angry. I can literally feel his anger from where I am seated.

"What do you want me to do? My attention won't feed you. I have to go out there and hustle for you guys even though you in particular don't want any of my money."

“Don’t you have enough money? I mean do you even know when my birthday is? My favourites? My age?” I ask turning to look at him. He sighs and scratch his bald head. “I am waiting.” He grunts and shakes his head.

“Fine but I give you a monthly allowance.”

“Do you keep check of my account? I have never used any of that money that you sent to me. I don’t care about it. I just want you to be there when I need you not your wallet when I don’t need it.”

“Azanda I don’t know how to do this thing. This is how our father showed us love. He would just give us money and that’s all. Where am I supposed to learn how to love when I don’t know how to?”

“Nobody teaches people this. You need to teach yourself this. You can’t be spreading you seed all over the world and not carrying about it but keep on showering everyone with your money like a fuckin blesser.”

“That’s enough MaShenge.” I roll my eyes. “I would like you to teach me how to love.” my eyes pop out. I look at him and find him looking down.

“Are you humbling yourself right now?”

“Two bulls can’t rule one kraal. I figured that humbling myself is the first step to fixing our problems.” I chuckle.

“Who are you and what have you done to the Buthelezi head of the family because the Sokalisa I know wouldn’t have humbled himself?” he giggles.

“I am stubborn Azanda and I love it when things are done my way.”

“I can relate.” He laughs and I also laugh.

“So how do I go about correcting my wrongs?” I look at him and look ahead. I sigh and fiddle with my fingers. “I am just as nervous as you are.” I look at his hands and he is also fiddling with his fingers. I giggle.

“it won't be solved in one night. Firstly my birthday is in June 25 2000. My favourite colour is sky blue and I like heels but I don't

usually wear them because where can I wear them?" he chuckles. "I a also a virgin as you know." He chokes on his saliva and I chuckle. "but I intend on losing it whenever I want."

"Ayy you are oversharing right now. I am okay." I laugh. My phone rings.

"your wife is calling." He laughs.

"she is my wife because I paid full lobola for her. She also brought umbondo. What was left was umkhehlo and umgcagco."

"now can I please answer the call?" he laughs again. I have hardly heard him laugh. I answer the call. "MaNene."

"You are both still alive?" I look at Sokalisa.

"Something like that."

"please ask your father if he is sleeping over so that I can prepare for him."

"Mom is asking if you are sleeping over so that she can wear lingerie for you."

"AZANDA!" Mom shouts while Sokalisa laughs.

“I will be sleeping over. So she can wear lingerie for me.” He says a little louder. I put my phone on speaker.

“FUCK YOU TWO!” mom shouts and hangs up. Both Sokalisa and I laugh.

“We should go back.” Sokalisa says. We both stand up. He packs up the chairs and put them in the boot. He drives to Manzolwandle.

“and then?”

“I need Redbull to keep up with your mother's sex drive.” I gag and he laughs.

He parks and climbs off. He walks in and I follow him. People greet him and they greet me. He purchases a bottle of Johnnie Walker and a 6 pack of Redbull. I also add a six pack of Bernini. His eyes pop out.

“This is also one of my hobbies and I am of age to drink Sokalisa.” He swallows hard and pays for our alcohol.

“I have a lot of work to do with you.” He says as I carry my six pack outside.

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When we get home, I go straight to my room and put my 6 pack in my wardrobe. I will share it with Veli tomorrow. I go inside the covers and tell Veli just how much of an interesting evening I had. She is laughing at me and telling me that we definitely should go shopping at Richards Bay with all the money Sokalisa has been depositing on my account. I just roll my eyes at her. She tells me that her mother is going there on Monday for some workshop and we should go with her. We talk about other things and then I drift into deep slumber.

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“You’re not going to church today?” I ask my mother as I put on my heels. We always go to church on Sundays if she is not working. She is still wearing a night gown and a doek. She sits on the chair around the kitchen table and looks at me.

“No I am not going. Please pass by the garage and fill up my tank.” She says handing me her bank card. She is not my best friend but my mother, so I have no business in asking what went down last night but from the way she is, I can tell that it was intense.

“Okay. Is Nyezi ready?” I ask.

“Yes. We can go now.” Nyezi says coming in to the kitchen already dressed up. “Are we going to eat now or we will eat at town?”

“Buy something at town. I will prepare a nice Sunday lunch for when you get back.” Mom hands me her car keys. We take our bags and then head out. We climb into the car and I drive out.

“So how was the talk last night?” Nyezi asks as soon as I join the main road. I chuckle. My sister is very nosy. She just can’t help it.

“Not bad. He promised to be a better present father. I don’t wanna count my chickens before they hatch. So let’s just hope he will stick to his word.”

“Trust him sisi.” I sigh and focus on the road.

When we get to town

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we start by buying 2 shwarmas with drink and eating them before we proceed to church. After church I fill up the tank and buy a few things at Shoprite. We then drive home. I frown

when I see Sokalisa's car still parked in the garage. I thought he would be gone by now. Anyways, I park behind his car and we climb off. We take the things we bought inside the house. I scream a little when I see u MaMkhize chatting with Sokalisa. I drop everything on the floor and rush to hug her. She just giggles.

"Gogo why didn't you tell me you were coming? I would've left church early. Heck I wouldn't even have gone there." I say snuggling next to her and she laughs.

"Hello to you too MaShenge. How are you? How was your day?" she says and I laugh.

"I am sorry gogo. I am just so happy to see you here and I wasn't expecting you." MaMkhize is my mother's mother. She lives at eMahlabathini. We usually visit her during the December holidays because mom usually takes her annual leave during that period. "How are you salukazi sami?" she smiles.

"I am well mzungu. How are you MaShenge omncane?" she asks Nyezi who just comes to squeeze herself on the other side of the couch and wrap her arms around gogo.

“I am super awesome now that I have seen you. You look so beautiful Khizo.” Nyezi says and gogo chuckles.

“Ow wow. MaMkhize has made my kids abandon me. I feel so unloved right now.” Sokalisa says and in that moment we actually remember that he is in the room together with mom. We just laugh at them.

“Hello baba.” Nyezi says in her sweet voice.

“My wife and I will take a walk. See you later.” He stands up and extends his hand to mom. She also stands up and they both head out.

“Are they back together?” I ask gogo and she just laughs.

“I just got here Azoh. I should be asking you that since you live here.”

“Nyezi go and make tea for gogo.” I can see that she wants to say no but MaMkhize is not her friend. So she collects the things we came with and heads to the kitchen. “Spill gogo. I know you know something.”

“Ngifelani?” I laugh and roll my eyes at her dramatic self. “Okay fine. Your father called me and told me he wanted to see me. So I said he should come to me. He really came to eMahlabathini. He told me that he wants his family back. His family being you guys and your mother. I told him that he needed to appease to the ancestors for the way he treated your mother after Nyezi’s birth. Since you are going to Goli soon, we are going to have that ceremony after you come back and then since things are good between him and your mother, they will continue where they left off. Meaning he will do umkhehlo and umembeso for her and umgcagco will follow. But she will be treated as the third wife because she came before the last one.”

“Mom has no problem with that?”

“Yes Azoh. Your mother really loves that man and there is nothing no one can do about it. When I came here I found them giggling like teenage lovers. They are good for each other. But what we agreed upon is that your father will extend this house. Your mother won’t go and stay in the Buthelezi household but he will build a house for her there which she will stay in when there are ceremonies in the household.” I nod.

“Here is your tea gogo.” Nyezi says coming in with a tray containing a cup of tea and muffins which I baked. Gogo thanks her. “So will they be doing a white wedding?” I knew that she was eavesdropping. I just laugh and shake my head.

“They are too old for that. But they will do a traditional wedding.”

“Anyways did mom cook?” I ask taking off my heels.

“Yeah she did. Usu with ujeqe and uphuthu.” Nyezi says.

I go change into comfortable clothes and we continue catching up with gogo. I should definitely visit her. Even if it’s for a week. Then it hits me that I was supposed to go to town with Roxy. I call her to apologize and then promise to take her out on Wednesday which will be my treat. She is sulking big time but she understands. Mom and Sokalisa come back from their walk and she dishes up for everyone. We sit around the kitchen table. Well Nyezi fetches a chair for herself.

“I am going to Richards Bay tomorrow with Veli and her mother. I wanna buy some clothes for myself.” I announce to everyone.

“I will transfer money into your account after dinner.” Sokalisa says and I frown.

“I wasn’t asking for money I was just informing you guys.”

“And I also wasn’t requesting transferring you the money Azanda.” He responds. I huff and continue stuffing my face with food. “Mawami have you told them the good news?” he asks gogo who smiles.

“Of course. Nyezi asked if there will be a white wedding.” Gogo responds.

“I am too old for that.” mom says in a chilled voice. I chuckle.

“But what if I want one?” Sokalisa asks. Mom looks at him in disbelief.

“You really wanna squeeze that big belly of yours in a suit?” I choke in laughter while Nyezi giggles.

“I will join the gym but I really want a white wedding with you MaNene wami.” He says in a deep voice and you can see mom melting like butter in a microwave. I cough and gogo passes me a glass of water.

“Thank you Mumbo.” She smiles.

“So we are having a white wedding?” Nyezi asks excitedly.

“They are having one. Not you baby girl.” I say imitating her voice and she just rolls her eyes. Gogo, mom and Sokalisa just laugh at us.

“Chomie we are definitely going to Antiqua Lounge and you will be rocking this.” Veli says raising shorts and a crop top to my face. We are at Cotton On. Sokalisa did transfer a large amount of money to my bank account. I think he just has so much money lying around, he doesn’t know what to do with it. Veli said I should ask him to buy me a new phone but I don’t wanna milk him. I just want us to work on our relationship without prioritizing money.

“I want the burgundy shorts mngani and the black crop top.” I say picking those items. I also pick beautiful burgundy sandals that will match with my outfit. I am not one who likes showing too much skin. In fact the Nongoma sun is too much, so I know if I were to normalize wearing short things, I would be a charcoal within a month, lapho vele I am dark in complexion.

“Then I am taking these.” I laugh as she hugs them so close to her chest.

We take a few t-shirt with shorts and summer dresses and then go pay up. I made sure to increase my limit last night so that I don’t have a problem with my card being declined today. We go to three other stores for clothes and shoes and then we go

to Panarottis for lunch. Veli's phone rings while we are waiting for our order. She glances at the screen and then mutes it. I raise my eyebrows looking at her.

"And then? Who is that?"

"Zithulele. He can be such a nuisance sometimes." I don't think I heard that right. She can't be communicating to my soon to be wedded brother who is a womanizer like Sokalisa.

"Zithulele who?" she looks at me and gives me a nervous smile.

"It's not that deep Chomie. We are just friends and what we talk about most of the time is you. So..." she shrugs.

"Veli you know every man from my family is just full of lust and all they ever want is sex. Even Bayanda is a womanizer at the age of 15." She sighs.

"I am not dating him chomie. Yena he has been asking me out for quite some time now but I am not interested. Right now he was asking how we are and making sure that we don't need extra cash."

"How do you know that since you didn't answer the call?"

“He sent me a message while we were at Zapatos.” Our food is brought to our table. We start digging in. her phone rings once again.

“Answer it and put it on loud speaker.” She rolls her eyes and then answers it.

“Yebo Phungashe.” Zithulele laughs on the other side of the line. Phungashe huh? Ayy things seem to be serious here.

“What have I done now?”

“You are not letting me spend quality time with your sister.”

“I have sent a couple of thousand rands on your account. Put it to good use MaJiki and I need to see you when you’re back.” Veli rolls her eyes.

“You forget that we are not dating Zithulele and we will never date because you are someone’s fiancé. Just reverse you money nje so I don’t feel indebted to you.”

“Are you done? Anyways I will be by your hood tomorrow during the day. If you don’t come to see me, I will come in during supper and introduce myself to your parents.”

“You wouldn’t dare.”

“Try me, my love.” she huffs. “Anyways you are mine MaRhadebe and nothing or no one can stop me from making you mine officially. I don’t even mind making you my second wife. In fact that is exactly what I plan on doing.” I look at Veli with my head tilted to the side.

“Whatever.” She hangs up. “You see what I have to deal with every day?” I chuckle.

“Seems like he has feelings for you. Do you have feelings for him?”

“I don’t know chomie. Sometimes you end up liking a person who is being a nuisance to you like Zithulele. I mean this isn’t the first time he has sent money to my account. I don’t even know how he got my account number. He is such a mystery and a headache sometimes.” She buries her hands in her face.

“But liking someone like Zithulele will bring you nothing but pain at the end. He is a hoe who cannot be trusted.”

“As if I don’t know that Azanda. I do know it and it hurts because I really like him. It’s not even about the money. It’s his personality, his mystery persona, his dignity

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his voice, his body, a bit of his looks and just him liking to dominate in every situation. Also in the way he says ‘MaRhadebe’ in that deep lazy voice of his.” She looks at me. My eyes are all out. “OMG! I am in love with him.”

“I was about to say the same thing. Girl you got it bad. We have to buy inyama yengwenya for you to get rid of that idliso.” She laughs and I also laugh. My phone rings, it’s Roxy. I answer it. “Hey Rox.”

“Hey babe, you’re still in Richards Bay right?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Okay I want you to buy some stuff for me. I will send you a list. There is also a parcel of mine which I want you to bring. Someone will come and give it to you. Where are you at right now?”

“Panarottis.”

“Okay. I will send you the list and the money. Please text me what you’re wearing so that it can be easy for the person to spot you.”

“Okay Rox.” I hang up. Veli looks at me with a questioning look. “She wants me to buy some things for her. That also reminds me. I need a bar one cake from Checkers or even two.”

“I also need to buy a new phone with the money Zithulele sent but I will start using it properly once we get back from Jozi and just say I got it at a low price because how am I going to explain an iPhone 12 to my parents?”

“You should get a router.”

“Or your brother can get me one.” I laugh and she also laughs. She is going to get hurt real bad but I am glad she knows the type of man Zithulele is.

Roxy sends me the list and the money. After a few minutes, her parcel gets delivered by some old woman. After that we settle our bill and head out. We go buy some goodies along with the things Roxy want. We also buy a lot of fast food like pizza, burgers and grilled chicken because we know we won’t get

those at Nongoma. Veli's mom comes and after a bit of her shopping, we embark on our journey back home.

"So Sokalisa said we can use one of his houses which is situated in Rooderport for our stay in Jozi. I also think that would be good. I mean we don't wanna make Veli's brother uncomfortable and crowded in his own space." I say as soon as the car exits the Game Reserve. It's already late at night. Around 7 pm to be exact.

"As long the place you are going to live in is safe, then I have no problem with it." Mrs. Jiki responds.

"It is very safe and I don't think Sokalisa would let me go to Jozi without no security detail."

"Umntwana wesityebi. (Rich man's child)" Veli says and we all just laugh.

"Leave me alone." I say pouting and she laughs harder. My phone rings and I frown when I see who is calling me. Nonetheless I answer it. "Sokalisa."

"Azanda where are you now?"

“We are approaching Hlabisa. What’s up?”

“Nothing. I just wanted to make sure you are still okay and I wanted to know how far you are.”

“Ohh okay. See you soon I guess.”

“I will be waiting for you.” he hangs up and leaves me staring at my phone in confusion. This is the first time he has ever called just to check up on me. It feels so weird.

“Everything okay?” Veli asks. We are both sitting at the back seat and her mom is sitting alone in the front seat. That’s how close we are.

“Yeah. It’s just weird receiving a call from Sokalisa just checking on me.”

“Ncoaw. He is trying. Meet him halfway chomie.” I shrug.

We are sitting under the tree and writing all the stuff we will buy in Jozi since we won't be paying for the training. We are also planning a way forward. Luckily there is only 4 amacansi left to weave for Sis Zamilé's order. Roxy came to get her parcel and stuff early in the morning and promised to come back during the day just to be with us and she said she had some good news for us.

"So guys, change of plans. We are no longer going to sleep at my brother's house but at Azanda's father's house in Rooderport. It is very spacious. So everyone will get their own room. Some privacy in case you wanna get your freak on while in Jozi." Veli says and the ladies scream. I just chuckle and roll my eyes.

"When are you seeing isoka lakho?" I whisper to Veli who just roll her eyes. I laugh at her. "You are denying him right now?"

"I am not denying him nor agreeing with whatever theory that is in your mind. I regret even telling you about him." she says groaning and I continue to laugh at her.

"Girl I am your best friend. If you don't confide in me, who are you going to confide in?"

“Are you guys going to umvalelo Kwa Mdletshe?” Nombuyiselo asks and we turn our attention to her. “I heard your brothers will be there along with the Nyandeni brothers.”

“That is just a disaster waiting to happen. My brothers and the Nyandeni brothers in one yard. What is so important about lo memulo vele?”

“Phindile is friends with people in high places and all her friends are slay queens. So I guess they are going there to scout girls.” Sisanda says shrugging.

“They are going to be busy acting like single men for the weekend and then come back to their girlfriends on Monday. Yoh. Thank God I am single. This is one of the reasons. Sorry to say this, but your men are hoes.” I say with a little pout and they giggle. They have no come back because they know dating one of the Nyandeni brothers or the Buthelezi brothers is just asking for a heartbreak.

“Stop rubbing salt in our wounds.” Veli says placing her hand on her chest.

“Wena ke nje...” she quickly places her hand on my mouth to stop me from saying anything. I laugh. “Fine. I won’t say anything.” I murmur and she removes her hand on my mouth.

“HEY LADIES!” Roxy shouts as she enters the gate. She is looking very casual today. With orange shorts, a white crop top and white sneakers. She comes to sit next to me.

“Where is your car?” I ask her and she blushes.

“So Nkululeko came to see me and said we should take a walk. I must leave the car behind. It was so refreshing just to stretch my legs. I am definitely going to walk more often.” My eyes pop out.

“But Buxedene is too far. Didn’t you get tired on the way?” Nomthandazo asks with her eyes popped out.

“When you’re walking with a man, you don’t feel the distance.” Sisanda says and we all laugh.

“I don’t mean to make you uncomfortable Azanda but why didn’t you agree to be Nkululeko’s girlfriend? I mean that guy is just goals. I swear I am never letting him go.” Roxy says looking at me with a smile.

“I guess it wasn’t meant to be and God knew you needed him more than I do.”

“Girl that’s deep.” She says and we just laugh. “Anyways guys I have some really good news. As you know, I also work for the Department of Arts and Culture and I was actually sent here to prepare for an event which will, in way of craft, give back to the community. Recruiting you to join Yakhanathi was just a side job. So I have sat down with the office of the Mayor and presented my proposal on the day I arrived here. I am happy to say that my proposal was granted.”

“Are you going to finally tell us about this project?” Veli says getting impatient by the minute. I am also getting impatient but I don’t wanna show it.

“Okay. So in 4 weeks’ time we are going to have a very huge competition. We have been notified of small competitions which are usually held around here. We just wanna group all of them and create one big competition. There are going to be many categories like ukugida, ukucula, best beads weaver, best crotchetier, most beautiful maiden, best poet and many other categories. Now that I have seen you guys, Izimbali Zomhlaba, I

would like you to be the first one to sign up even before we can publish the posters.” We all scream the minute she stops talking. Wow this is very good news.

I stand up and start walking around proudly with my head held up high. “Mina Ngiwu Sondiya, uMnandingamondi, owadliwa zindlovukazi zamlobolela. Thina zinyawo ezimahhele, esaganisa izintombi nanganye nangambili.”

“MUSHO!” the other ladies say as they stand up and start reciting their own clan names.

Nombuyiselo smiles proudly as she looks around. “Yimi nje lona. U Njezi ka Xhoko. U Mvundlane wasoKhabeni, uMbeng’osinda abosi. U Ndabezitha.” Her surname is Biyela.

Roxy also stands up. We ululate as she starts cat walking. “Okay I don’t know what I am doing.” We all laugh and she giggles. “Mina ngingu Mashimane njena. U Doncabe, u Zikode, u Zukuzela, U Dubandlela. Ngidabuka lena ezintabeni zakwa Maphumulo. Ngiyindoni yamanzi, ethi uma ingena kuzamazame umhlaba

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kuhlanye izinsizwa, zikhale ubumaye maye. Leyo naleyo ifuna ukubeka amabili namathathu.” By the time she is done, we are all ululating loudly and she is just giggling.

Veli winks at me as she starts walking proudly with her head held up high. “Ndiyintombi yakwa Xhosa kwaye ndiyazigca ngobuXhosa bam. NdinguMabhanqo, utshilibe udumane. Ndizalwa nguMamfene, u Lisa, baza ngomva elilweni. Abantu abamnandi kodwa ndikhulela kwikhaya lo Gaba, ootikoloshe, otitiba, omeyezwa, abantu bolambo.” This time around we don’t even ululate, we scream. When Veli goes on full Xhosa, it always get to us.

“WAZISHO KAMNANDI NKOSAZANE!” a voice bursts our bubble and we turn to the gate to see Zithulele leaning by the gate. How did we not hear his car because it roars like a beast? I look at Veli who is blushing like crazy. “A moment nje Mabhanqo.” Veli looks at me and I nod. She quickly walks to the gate with her cellphone, which means she will be back soon.

“Who is that and is he dating Veli?” Roxy asks whispering to me. I chuckle.

“That’s my big brother Zithulele and no, they are still in courtship but it seems like they both love each other.”

“You have a big brother?”

“And many other siblings. My father is a polygamist. So maybe you will meet them all one day.”

“I hope so. I also hope that you meet all of my family members one day.”

“Now what was in that parcel you wanted me to bring you yesterday?” she looks around and lowers her voice even softer than before.

“Sex toys.” My eyes pop out. “Mmm-hm.”

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NARRATED

They both climbed inside the car and he drove off. On the way, he kept on stealing glances at her. She was a real beauty. With that fresh-always-glowing-rich-in-melanin skin, her gorgeous smile, her fierce attitude. Almost everything about her fascinated him. He was really taken by her and he wasn’t even afraid to admit it. With his current fiancé, it was her looks that

attracted him the most. With this lady sitting next to him, everything just attracted him. She caught him looking at her and she scoffed.

“Please watch the road. I don’t wanna die young.” She said and her voice was so smooth.

“I can’t help it MaRhadebe. You are so beautiful and having you this close is surreal.” She frowned when she saw that he was driving past Esiphambanweni. She turned to look at him.

“Where are you taking me?”

“I wanna have some alone time with you. So I am taking you to Nongoma Inn.” Her eyes popped out. “Relax, I am going to bring you back home before you parents come back from work.”

She pouted and looked outside the window. “Just so you know, I am not going to open my legs for you.” he laughed and even banged the steering wheel.

“Oww you wound me, my love. With you, not everything is about sex. I just want to spend some quality time with you. I

really wanna get to know you better baby. Is that so wrong to ask?" she rolled her eyes at how low his voice was now.

"Just focus on the road Phungashe." He just chuckled looking at her and turned up the volume. Luckily his favourite artist, Mnqobi Yazo, was playing and his song Into Engihluphayo was on. He started singing along and Veli smiled because his voice was so beautiful but she didn't wanna admit that to him because she knew it would make him brag or boast. They listened to the rest of Mnqobi Yazo's album until they reached their destination.

NARRATED

They got to the hotel and Zithulele checked them in. they walked to their room and the moment Zithulele closed the door after them, he brought her closer to him and smashed his lips against hers. It was their first time kissing. He grabbed her, bringing her closer to him because he couldn't survive her being an inch away from him. Veli was enjoying the kiss so much but she feared that it would escalate to other things. So she broke it which make Zithulele groan in frustration.

“Baby, this is my first time tasting your lips. Please let me taste and devour them in peace.” He said looking at her while biting his lip.

“But you will get hard and then become grumpy. I don't want a grumpy Zithulele in my presence.” She said looking straight in his eyes showing that she wasn't intimidated by him and that turned Zithulele on so bad.

“Do you mind if I take my time and admire you?” he asked singing and Veli laughed as she detached herself from him and

went to open the curtains. She also opened the windows and just admired the view. She closed her eyes to take it all in. Zithulele came and pressed himself against her body. He wrapped his arms around her waist and she placed her hands on his arms. "So you are mine now, right?" he whispered that in her ear as he planted soft kisses on her neck.

She laughed a bit and opened her eyes. "I don't know if I should agree to be yours. I mean I am too young to share a man. I don't have that much patience and level of understanding."

"But it won't even feel like it. Sithandile said she won't come to stay in the rurals. So you will stay here with me and I will only see her when I am in Durban."

Veli chuckled and removed his arms around her. She went to sit on the bed. "And that is a healthy marriage according to you? Not staying together? Clearly we have different perspectives of marriage."

"Can we just enjoy this we have and worry about other things later?"

“No. we can’t. I don’t wanna get ahead of myself. Promise myself things that I know won’t happen. Give my all to you only for you to leave me dry and hanging.”

He sighed and removed his shoes. He also removed her sandals. He climbed onto the bed, laid down and brought her to lie on his chest. He wrapped his arms around her. “I am not going to give you empty promises. If you want, I can even pay lobola for you next month just to prove how much I love you and how much you mean to me. And I promise you will never be subjected to drama and silly fights because of me. I know how to put my affairs in order.”

She raised her head and starred at him. He couldn’t help but smile because she was looking so cute right now. He perked her lips and she giggled. “Stop charming me.”

He chuckled. “I am not. I am just admiring your beauty. You are so beautiful Velisani Jiki.” That made her shy

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so she buried her head in his chest and that made him laugh. He cleared his throat and started singing.

“Sthandwa sami umuhle

Baby wam umuhle

Kimi uyathandeka buyangichaza ubuhle bakho

Sthandwa sami umuhle.”

Veli raised her head to look at him with a smile. “Who composed that song?”

“I did. I just came up with it now just from looking at you.”

“Please stop being so charming.” He laughed. “And I am hungry.” She said getting up. He picked up the phone and ordered room service.

“I have ordered. Now come back to my arms.” She shook her head and went to sit in front of the mirror. She checked herself out. “You look beautiful. Here, take pictures.” He said handing her his phone which was a Huawei Mate 40. She took it and took numerous photos. He ended up joining her because you could see that she was far from finishing. “We should get you an advanced phone also.”

“I bought a Huawei Nova 8 with the money you gave me but I am going to start using it once I am in Jozi and I am going to tell my parents that I bought it from amaphara at a cheap price. I mean how else am I going to explain an 11k phone?”

“But that money was for you to spoil yourself and not for buying a phone. I was going to buy you one.”

“Well you can refund me then.” She said with an innocent smile and he just laughed. Food arrived, so they sat down and started eating. Well Veli was eating. Zithulele was just staring at her. “Lele stop staring at me like that you are going to make me choke on my food.” He chuckled and started eating his food.

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AZANDA BUTHELEZI

After Veli left, Roxy received a call from the lodge she booked for the competition. She was told that the only available date is in 2 months. Of course we were a bit disappointed but it was cool because we were the only ones who knew about it and we hadn't told anyone.

“So do you wanna meet my grandma? She is inside the house. Pretty sure she will invite you for supper though.” I say to Roxy as I walk her out.

“Just tell me which time you guys eat supper. I will come and maybe I will also get to officially meet your mom.”

“We usually eat at 7:30pm.”

“Okay. See you them.” she hugs me and walks out of the gate.

Nkululeko appears out of nowhere and walks beside her. I watch them disappear around the corner and then head back to the ladies. Only two grass mats left until we finish Sisi Zamile’s order. We finish the grass mats and we go place them at the garage along with the 28 we already weaved.

“Finally. We can now move on to another project.” Sisanda says with her hands on her waist. I frown turning to her.

“We have another project?” they all look at me like I’ve grown horns on my head.

“The AFDA project Azanda. They have asked us to make them African beaded costumes for their upcoming carnival or annual festival. They even sent some suggestions. Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten.” Nombuyiselo says in a disappointed tone. I sigh, placing my hand in my forehead.

“Honestly I had forgotten but that’s what I love about working together because we remind each other of things like these.”

“Yeah and before I forget like you,” Sisanda says making us all laugh. “We should buy more beads since they are cheaper in Jozi.”

“Yeah, you’re right. Now that we are all going, I am so excited. We are going to party.” Nomthandazo says dancing a little. “Ohh where is Veli when I need someone to hype me?” we laugh at her. “Are we going to umvalelo ka Phindile? I heard Nomzamo and her crew are going to be there.”

“When did she come back to wherever she way?” I ask as we make our way out of the garage.

“Few days ago. I am sure they will compete in Roxy’s competition with hopes to beat us.” Nombuyiselo says with a laugh.

“If only they focused on making themselves better instead of always wanting to compete with us. They are so childish.” Sisanda says shaking her head and laughing a little.

“You’re being dramatic.” I say and we all laugh.

Roxy won my grandma's heart within a matter of seconds. She just gave her a nice fluffy throw which made grandma so happy. She also gave my mother a custom made scarf which made her smile so much. They even gave her leftovers. Mom even had the audacity to invite her in Zithulele's engagement party. I don't think you can just invite people. There is a guest list for a reason and I am sure Zithulele's fiancé won't like unannounced plus ones but rural families are always known to come in high numbers in every event, so his fiancé will deal. I am a bit worried about Veli though who seems really taken by the Buthelezi charm.

Anyways I owe Roxy a stroll around town, so in the morning, I get up and prepare bathing water while cleaning around. When I am done, I take a bath and then get dressed in teal contrast lace cami top with black stretchy pencil skirt and black sandals. I pack my things in my handbag and when I hear a hoot, I lock the house and head outside. I climb inside her car and we exchange greetings.

“Babe do you have a man in town because you looking superfly right now.” Roxy asks as soon as we join the main road. I just laugh and look outside.

“Ro you have to understand. I am as single as they come. I have a presidential suite in the ‘know your worth’ hotel.” She laughs so hard.

“But I heard it gets lonely there. Very lonely. Sometimes you just want to lay your head in a hard chest and just relax your body. Sometimes you just wanna be with that somebody who makes you feel good about yourself. But ke...” she shrugs and I chuckle.

We talk about a lot of things and I show her some places which are near the road. I point at I Mona and she drives inside. She parks her car and we climb out. She is so interested in everything in here. She laughs when she hears about the different types of umuthi that are sold here, even izulu lika R10 nomuthi womshado. We buy a few fruits and then we continue with our journey.

When we get to town, we do some strolling and she buys a few things for herself. She also buys stuff for me. We then drive to

Rockafella where we order braaied meat and chill while waiting for the meat. I go and buy us some drinks. Luckily she likes Bernini, so I just buy a 12 pack and then go back to our table.

“This is a really cool place. I can just picture it on a weekend and its vibe.” Roxy says opening her bottle and taking a sip. I follow suit.

“Well the vibe is always there. We usually steal mom’s car at least once a month and go there especially if there is going to be a big event.”

“You have never been caught?” she asks laughing and I also laugh.

“By my parents, no. But my brothers have caught us so many times and most of those times they have forced us to sit with them so that we won’t be approached by boys. Drama I tell you.” I say rolling my eyes and she giggles.

“Sounds exactly like my brothers even though most of them are younger than me but you would swear they are older because of their heights and their broad voices. One who is not dramatic is my almost twin and I think it’s because he is gay.” I chuckle.

Our meat is brought to our table. “Let me take a few snaps and post on my Instagram story. I have come to realize that the network here in town works overtime.” I chuckle. When she is using Cell C and that network doesn’t work in most rural places.

“You better switch to MTN or Vodacom so that you won’t have any connection problems.” She nods. We start eating our met which is very delicious. While eating, a very nosey person joins us with a bucket full of Heineken and ice. It’s my brother Ayabongwa who is the 5th child and the third child of the first wife.

“What do we have here?” he asks as he tosses pieces of meat in his mouth. He is one of the brothers who are always at the rank guarding the taxis.

“How rude of you bhuti? I am sitting with a very beautiful lady here and you are embarrassing yourself.” That makes him stop chewing and he raises his eyes to look at Roxy who is looking at me with questioning eyes.

“Dudlu ntokazi. You are very beautiful and your skin looks so soft. Those eyes ntokazi, those hands. My God. I doubt this one is from around here.” he whispers the last part in my ear. I

laugh and shake my head because he is very audible. But I know that even if he desires Roxy, he wouldn't go for her because he has a really crazy baby mama who has made herself his fiancé to everyone.

“Bhuti this is my friend Roxanne Maphumulo from Kwa Maphumulo and Ro this is my brother Ayabongwa Buthelezi.” They shake hands.

“So what brings you here ntokazi?”

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serif">“Work. I have a few projects which I am about to initiate and most of them will start Kwa Mahede.”

“Lucky us then.” He says he continues eating the meat like it's nobody's business. “You are bringing her tomorrow right?” he asks looking at me.

Roxy frowns and looks at me. “What's happening tomorrow?”

“Umfundelo wakwa Mdletshe. We are all going there. My brothers will be there and Nkululeko will also be there with his brothers.”

“What will those hooligans be doing there? Are you in contact with them? Have you finally agreed to be that loser’s girlfriend?” Ayabongwa asks with his temper rising slowly. I frown.

“How do you know about Nkululeko courting me?” his eyes pop out. Looks like he just said something he wasn’t supposed to say.

“Nkosazana are you going to be there?” he asks Roxy who smiles.

“If Azanda informs me about it then I am going to come.” I am still looking at my brother for answers when Roxy shakes me. I smile and look at her.

“We are definitely going to go and riding with you will mean that mom won’t have to worry about me driving at night.”

“You have a car?” Ayabongwa asks with his eyes popped out. Aybo kant aren’t women supposed to have cars? “Baba should definitely buy you a car. Our drivers are tired of having to drive you around.” I tilt my head to the side with my eyebrows raised. “Just kidding. But I will definitely suggest it.” He stands up with his bucket. “Let me buy your more meat. Take care

little one and see you tomorrow.” He squeezes my shoulder and then heads out.

“That was so not affectionate.” Roxy says and we both just laugh. I mean what type of affection can you expect from a brother from Nongoma who lives at the rank day in day out? Ibhinca bhi. There is no ‘I love you sis’ here. They just show their love in a unique way. We continue drinking and chatting. Later on they bring us another braaied meat which was ordered by Ayabongwa. They pack it in a takeaway and then we head out.

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Umvalelo is supposed to start at 9pm but Roxy is parked at the gate by 7pm. Mom doesn't even care what time we will come back in. she really trusts Rox, plus Sokalisa is here to keep her busy. Gogo went back home this morning but she said she will come back when it's time for umembeso and umkhehlo kamama. Anyways we climb into Roxy's car, we fetch Veli and then Roxy joins the main road.

“Where are you headed?” I ask.

“To buy alcohol. We can’t go there empty handed and I really wanna get sloshed.” We laugh. “Nkululeko said we can find anything we need at Thandanani tavern so you will direct me there.”

“Okay.” Veli’s phone rings.

“Zithulele is calling.” She says. She is so lucky she gets to call him by his name. He is the first born, so calling him by his name is like committing treason.

“Send him a message. I don’t wanna hear you being all lovey dovey with my brother on the phone.” I say gagging and she giggles.

“You are dating Bhutomdala?” Nyezi asks and the noise inside the car dies down. “But he is...”

“I can’t wait for you guys to meet my brothers, even though you will meet them in my absence.” Roxy says while winking at me and I mouth a thank you. Yoh, sure Veli is my best friend but will I be able to harbor this secret love affair of hers?

We get to Thandanani and we head inside the tavern. Even in this part of Nongoma, people recognize izingane zika Shenge

and no one dares to be naughty with us. Veli stays with Nyezi in the car while Roxy and I head inside the tavern. We buy a 24 pack of Bernini and 24 pack of Brutal fruit. We also buy 4 packs of ice. She also buys a bottle of Russian Bear for herself and cigarette. The guys inside the tavern offers to help us carry the booze to the car. After packing everything nicely in the 2 cooler boxes in the boot and placing a 6 pack in the back seat, we drive out.

We get to the Mdletshe household which is at Empuqwini and there is already chaos and singing from outside. It's really a walking distance to home for most of us who grew up here but for others the distance might be too much. I instruct Roxy to park next to Zithulele's car and she does so. I only see two of my brothers' cars here which means they decided to squeeze themselves into two cars. We climb out of the car and go to where they are standing, which is behind Ayabongwa's car. I go hug all of them and they just laugh after greeting me back because they aren't much huggers.

"Hey everyone." Roxy says and they look at her without even blinking. Please don't let them be attracted to her because that would cause World War III.

"MaZikode. Uyaphila kodwa?" Ayabongwa asks already stepping forward to shake her hand. The others follow suit.

"Your friend is really beautiful sisi." Sethulo, who is almost my age, says. Yeah. That's how much dad loves sex. Roxy just blushes and out of nowhere Nkululeko appears and wraps his

arms around Roxy's waist. Before any of my brothers can utter a word, he pulls Roxy away from us.

"Azanda care to explain?" Ayabongwa asks with his hands on his waist like a dramatic mamgobhozi.

"Care to explain about how you heard of Nkululeko courting me?" his eyes pop out. I turn to look at my other brothers who look like they just want to run away.

"MaRhadebe wami." Zithulele says as he picks up Veli who has been standing not far away from us like a loner. He picks her up bridal style and showers her with kisses all over her face. This makes everyone turn their attention to the couple being all lovey dovey in public.

"Stop it Lele, people are watching." Veli says giggling.

"Lele?" Zikhethela asks in an amused tone. He is the second child. Zithulele places Veli down but doesn't let go of her.

"Nobody is going to steal her." he says laughing and my brothers all laugh. They are all wearing Brentwood with Carvela and Buthelezi customized golf t-shirts. Like always, they are

carrying guns. I think they even carry them when they are going to the toilet just because they are used to them.

“Muhlezi kababa.” Sethulo says as he pulls Nyezi to where we are. She smiles and they share a hug. She also hugs the other brothers and then she goes to stand in front of Veli and Zithulele. Zithulele quickly lets go of Veli and hugs her. We all laugh at that because nobody can say no to Nyezi in our family.

“So are you and sis Veli dating?” Nyezi asks.

“What do you know about dating?” Zithulele challenges with his eyebrows raised. Well I wouldn’t wish to be Nyezi right now.

“Yeah, why are you asking your brother about dating? Is there something you wanna tell us Nkanyezi?” Zikhethela also challenges and Nyezi just blushes and goes to hide behind Sethulo. Veli and I just laugh at her.

“I like your friend though.” Somnyama says pointing at Roxy with his head who is being all lovey dovey with Nkululeko by the gate. Somnyama is the quietest brother but he has that phuma silwe beast inside him. He is always looking for fights

which he always win but men nowadays avoid any arguments with him because of how violent he is. His mother is from Manzimtoti and she was just a fling, as my mother used to define it.

“Bafo vele umfazi akakhiwa esihlahleni.” Mnyamane, his twin. Well he is not his twin, it’s just that their mother had them the same year. She fell pregnant with Mnyamane while Somnyama was 2 months old.

I have so many siblings. It is not some kind of a wonder. People from the rural areas know this. Some men in our neighbourhood have up to 40 kids. Well Sokalisa has 7 sons and 8 daughters that we know of. Somnyama is called that because he is very dark, like navy dark. Well most of us are dark but his darkness is just too dark.

“Have they done Umfundelo?” I ask my brothers hoping to shift them from the Roxy talk. My friends and I would’ve came for it the whole week, it’s just that Nunns and Empuqwini, that’s where Nomzamo and her crew live in and we sort of have a beef with them.

“Yah. Ntokozo came to tell us that.” Sethulo says. “We were just waiting for you guys because bafo said you were coming.” Ntokozo is Nomzamo’s best friend.

“Let’s go in then.” I say and pull Nyezi.

When we get to the gate, I also pull Roxy and we walk inside the Mdletshe household. There is so much chaos and noise in the yard. We go to the rondavel where kuvunywa khona ingoma. Luckily Veli is just behind us. The minute we make our way inside the rondavel, my friends scream at us. I guess they came here early with their boyfriends. We go sit next to them. I make eye contact with Nomzamo who is sitting near umgonqi nabakhaphi bakhe. I just smirk and then turn my attention to my friend.

“Your brother is such an attention seeker.” Veli whispers and I laugh. There is tons of alcohol here in this rondavel and knowing abantu bendawo, they are going to finish it before 3 am.

After a few minutes, my brothers make their way in

causing the ladies to scream so much and they sit on the other side where the other men are seated. You can already see the Nyandeni brothers starting to be uncomfortable. One thing their father and Sokalisa agreed upon is that if the boys wanna fight, they should always use their fists not weapons because the Nyandeni brothers don't carry guns. Senzeni, who is Nomzamo's cousin, stands up and starts singing or uvumisa ingoma.

'Ngithi noma ngabe izindlu zodaka

NOMA NGABE IZINDLU ZODAKA

Ngithi noma ngabe izindlu zodaka

NOMA NGABE IZINDLU ZODAKA

Ekhaya kusekhaya la

KUSEKHAYA LA

Kusekhaya la

KUSEKHAYA LANA NOMA NGABE IZINDLU ZODAKA'

Everyone goes wild. Senzeni is the only person from Nomzamo's group ovumisa ingoma to my level and I respect her. You may think you know ukumisa but that thing is a skill. You have to have that aura that can commend everyone in the

room to shut up and listen to your song and actually sing it. You also have to start with the correct key that accommodates everyone.

'Ngiyekeleni ngiyekeleni

NGIMBAMBE NGIMFOQOZE'

The minutes she starts that song, ivele ihlangane nehlonbe eliphilayo. Uyagida and most people follow after her, even u Nomzamo and umgonqi. Mcebisi starts a song and the Nyandeni brothers go crazy. Nabo bayagida babuyele nganeno. I stand up and the noise is too much, I chuckle and start singing.

'Weeh bengizomtshela kanjani?

BENGIZOMTSHELA KANJANI?

Bengizomtshelani?

BENGIZOMTSHELELANI?

Eyy ngoba vele wena

VELE WENA ULIXOKI BENGIZOMTSHELELANI'

I walk to the centre and take a sip at ukhamba just to show some respect and then go back to my spot.

'Ngoba izandla ziyagezana

*MTANAMI KUYABONGWA, KUBONGWA OKUNCANE
KUBONGWA OKUKHULU'.*

Ihlombe lakhona lingenza ngigide ushameni wezintombi and Nyezi and Nombuyiselo join me to the stage. After we are done, most of my friends also go to the stage, even my brothers. After that whole ukugida session, I go outside just to cool down and Roxy follows me.

“Dude that was intense. I wish I had the guts to stand up and also go to the centre but you can see that it’s just professionals only.” She says the minute we get to her car and I just laugh. We open the boot and take out a cider each. She also takes out a cigarette and smokes. Somnyama makes his way to where we are standing and frowns when he sees Roxy smoking.

“Smoking is the same as ukushutheka u qo bhuti.” I say rolling my eyes, I would’ve added ‘like their girlfriends’ but I don’t want him to kill me for cock-blocking him. He chuckles and indicates with his head that I should give them some privacy. I turn to Roxy. “Ro this is my brother Somnyama and no I am not trying to set you up, ukuth I am really scared of him.” she laughs.

“I hope he knows that I am dating Nkululeko.” Roxy says.

“Well he knows. I think everybody else knows.” My brother gives me that ‘you’re not helping’ look. I chuckle and finish the bottle I was holding. I then open another one and go stand a bit further from them.

“Oseyishayile akakayosi ntokazi.” Somnyama says causing Roxy to giggle. They continue talking and Mnyamane comes to me. He seems really drunk. He wraps his arm on my shoulder.

“She is better off with bafo. I mean that loser of her boyfriend is really pathetic. Can you believe that he even sent his representatives this one time just to ask for your hand in marriage? Well Lusanele told us that you were not dating him but dad was going to turn them away either way.” He says to

me in his slow drunk voice. I remove his arm from my shoulder and look at him.

“Repeat what you just said to me Mnyamane.”

“Eish.” He scratches his head. “Bafo.” I don’t even hear what his bafo’s response is because I am furiously walking to where Nkululeko and his brothers are at. When I get there, I ask no questions. I just throw a mean punch at Nkululeko whose eyes pop out.

“What are you doing, Azanda? Are you out of your mind?” Mondli asks. He is one of the Nyandeni brothers.

“You really think I wouldn’t find out, heh? What were you hoping to achieve? You go my father’s house and ask for my hand in marriage knowing very well that you and I are not in any kind of relationship? What was next? Were you going to Thwala me?”

“Calm down Azanda.” Gasela tries to touch my shoulders and I push him away.

“Don’t fuckin lay your hands on me.” I turn to Nkululeko.

“Answer me wena. What was your plan?”

“What’s going on here?” Zithulele asks making his way to us with my brothers. He comes to stand in front of me and examines my face. “Who has done what to anger you?”

“Why didn’t you tell me about this asshole coming to ask for my hand in marriage?” his eyes pop out.

Mcebisi steps up and shields his brother. “Listen, we understand your anger but that’s no way to speak to bafo. Show some respect.”

“Or what?” I challenge him with my hands on my waist.

“Mfazi watch the way you speak.” He says looking at me.

“Zithulele khuza lesisfebe sakini.” It’s like my brothers were just waiting for that because they just launch to the Nyandeni brothers and punches are exchanged. I get in between them and try to break up a fight between Mcebisi and Zikhethele but I end up getting a mean punch from Mcebisi which sends me straight to the floor. These people wear amabhande to protect themselves, so I feel the effects of the punch early and I feel myself getting dizzy while in the floor.

“Dade.” Sethulo says picking me up and I just faint in his arms.

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“WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED?” Sokalisa high voice scarred each and every one of them and no one dared to answer because as much as they could feel his anger, they were also angry that they didn’t get their sister away from the fight in time for her not to get injured and they were also angry at Mcebisi for punching Azanda. His punch caused more harm. They were now at the Buthelezi household which was situated at Egudu. The minute they got home, they told MaMhlongo, the first wife, about what had happened and she immediately attended to Azanda. She was a healer, so she kept many types of traditional antidotes and venoms. MaNene had been contacted and she was on her way here.

“Mcebisi punched her.” Sethulo answered and his brothers gave him the ‘what the fuck’ look because they knew their father could call a hit on Mcebisi even now and he wouldn’t live to see sunrise tomorrow morning.

“WHERE THE FUCK WERE YOU WHEN SHE WAS PUNCHED?” Sokalisa continued roaring like an angry lion. He felt like their

presence meant his daughters would never be harmed or even be bitten by mosquitos because they would protect them and each other.

“The thing is baba, I accidentally told dade that Nkululeko came and asked for her hand in marriage. That angered her and she went to punch him. Then words were exchanged and a fight broke out between everyone. She was trying to stop it when she got punched.” Mnyamane said. Sokalisa moved so fast from where he was to get to where Mnyamane was and nearly strangled him but Zithulele held him back with the help of Zikhethele.

“What type of alcohol made you wanna spew that nonsense? We made a vow that she would never find out about that. Why the fuck did you tell her?” Sokalisa was like a raging bull. Anyone in the yard could hear him shouting.

Upon arrival, MaNene parked her car and left the engine running as she jogged to the main house. She found the wives with Nyezi, Lusanele and Makabongwe, Sokalisa’s daughter.

“Where is my daughter?” she couldn’t talk properly because she was panting.

“Get her water Nkanyezi.” MaMhlongo said. “Come this way.” She held hand and led her to the bedroom which Nyezi and Azanda used whenever they came to the Buthelezi household. Azanda was lying in the bed fast asleep. MaNene moved closer and saw how swollen her cheek was. She had even developed a rash. She turned to MaMhlongo. “I made her lick isibiba (snake venom). She is going to be fine and the swelling will go down eventually.”

MaNene sighed and sat at the edge of the bed. She caressed Azanda’s cheek and Azanda flinched a bit in her sleep. Nyezi walked in and handed her mother a glass of water. “Can you please go and turn off the engine?” she downed the water on one go.

“Sis Lusanele already did.” Nyezi replied and MaNene nodded.

“Where is your father by the way?” MaNene asked.

“Can’t you hear him shouting? I am pretty sure they are planning to go on war or something.” MaMhlongo said as she walked out. MaNene also stood up and went outside. She could hear Sokalisa shouting from one of the rondavels in the yard. She followed his voice until she got to the door where the men were at. She opened the door and walked in. Sokalisa stopped shouting the minute his eyes landed on her.

“Mkami.” He said softly. MaNene gave him a stern look.

“Your shouting is giving me a headache. I am so tired and I need to sleep.” with that, she headed out and Sokalisa quickly followed behind. Just as she was about to reach the main house

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Sokalisa grabbed her from behind and turned her to look at him. He stared down at her as he scratched his head with his other hand.

“I am sorry for the shouting mkami. I am just upset that my princess got hurt in the presence of her brothers. They were supposed to be keeping her safe and not involving her in boy fights.” MaNene rolled her eyes and yawned. “I will tell Makabongwe to set up the guest room for you.”

“No. I am okay. I will sleep with my daughters.”

“No. you will sleep with me in the guest bedroom.

MAKABONGWE!” he shouted as he entered the main house.

Makabongwe quickly emerged from the lounge.

“Baba.”

“Prepare the guest bedroom near Nyezi’s room for your mother.” She nodded and then went to do as he asked. He turned to look at MaNene. “Are you hungry?”

“A little. I am just tired. I just wanna bath and then go to sleep.” they sat down in the lounge where Lusanele and Nyezi were watching TV.

“Nyezi tell one of your brothers to take you home so that you can fetch toiletries and changing clothes for yourself, your mother and Azanda.”

“Okay baba. Let’s go sisi Lusa. I am sure you don’t wanna be subjected to live Bold and the Beautiful.” She said playfully and Lusanele laughed.

“What did you say Nkanyezi?” Sokalisa asked with a frown and Nyezi ran out laughing with Lusanele behind her. After a few minutes, they heard a car drive out. MaNene sat back and placed her bare feet on Sokalisa’s lap. He started massaging them.

“Don’t start war with the Nyandeni boys because it will lead to a lot of bloodshed and innocent people are going to get hurt. I am begging you Sondiya. Just wait for them to come apologize and then call it truce.”

“But they hurt my daughter.”

“It was a mistake. Please. Just let it go.” He huffed and stopped massaging her feet. She did a little cute pout. “Why did you stop?” he chuckled looking at her and then began massaging her again.

“Here is your food pensioners.” Makabongwe said setting the plates in the coffee table in front of them. She came back with a bowl and helped them wash their hands. “Your room is ready ma.”

“Thank you MaShenge.” Makabongwe headed out because she wasn’t about to sit with two lovers and watch them feeding each other.

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Roxy paced up and down at her room in the lodge. Nkululeko was here with her. Instead of going home to face the heat, he saw it best to come here and make sure everything was okay between him and Roxy. He could see that she was angry and he knew he had a lot of explaining to do. He grabbed her wrist to stop her from moving too much and she just yanked her hand away from his grab.

“You are unbelievable. Do you now that?” Roxy finally opened her mouth to speak. She was feeling so many different emotions but anger was the most dominating emotion. She shook her head as she remembered what Veli once said to her when they were alone.

‘It’s quite shocking that a guy who has been courting Azanda for the past few years suddenly gets attracted to a new girl. I am not disputing his love for you but don’t you find it odd? He is a Nyandeni. He can have any girl he wants. New girls had come

and gone and he didn't even spare them a glance. You are such a true beauty Roxy, you really are. But it's shocking that he just switched off his feelings for Azanda that fast the moment his eyes landed on you. But don't mind me.'

Roxy thought Veli was trying to look out for her friend but in fact she was trying to look out for her. Nkululeko loved Azanda. So much that he even went to ask for her hand in marriage without her permission. That angered Roxy because when they had the 'Azanda talk', he failed to disclose such information. Meaning he knew what he did was wrong and he knew that disclosing this would change Roxy's whole perspective about him.

"Can you please just let me explain baby?" he pleaded with her as he once again held her arms and pulled her to the bed. He made them both sit down. "I did love Azanda, a lot and I actually saw a future with her. That's why I did what I did but all that changed when I saw you. I really love you and I wanna spend the rest of my life with you. I know we are in the early ages of our relationship but believe me when I say I have fallen deeply in love with you."

“Are you sure that it’s not some infatuation? Maybe you are just using me to get to Azanda who doesn’t even care about you. Why do I always involve myself with the terrible ones?”

“Baby listen.”

“No. you listen. I was a fool for dating you. Clearly you are still hung up on Azanda and there is no place in your heart for the both of us. I am going to make things easy for you so that you don’t have to choose. It’s over between us. You are a great guy and you deserve someone who will love you. In your next relationship please try to forget about Azanda and actually love your woman whole heartedly.”

“Please listen to me Roxanne.”

“Just go Nkululeko.” She said defeated. He sighed and stood up.

“I really love you and only Roxanne. I just hope by the time you realize that, it won’t be too late.” he took his things and headed out.

She went to look up and curled herself in the bed. She genuinely loved him and hoped that their relationship could

turn to a serious one. Her mind travelled to her new best friend, Azanda. She was glad to have found a true friend because most of her friends from Jozi were just fake. She realized that affiliating with Azanda's left overs was wrong and she intended on apologizing. She took her phone and dialed Azanda's number. After a couple of rings, the phone was answered.

"Azanda's phone, hello." Nyezi answered.

"Hey Nyezi. It's me Roxy. I just wanted to know how Azanda was doing."

"Ohh. She is going to be okay. Mamdala fed her some cure so she is going to be okay."

"Can I come see her?"

"No. you can't come now. Dad hates it when females drive at night. I will direct you tomorrow morning because we are at ekhaya elikhulu."

"Okay. I will see you tomorrow then." She hung up and sighed. She took off her clothes and went under the covers.

Waking up is such a hard task. My whole body is aching like I just ran a marathon. I look around and realize that I am in the Buthelezi household. I am expecting Nyezi to be beside me but she is not here. Anyways I get up from the bed and head to the small bathroom in the room. I am glad to find hot water in a bucket waiting for me. My toiletries are also here. I bath, brush my teeth and then change into a green fit and flare dress with sleepers. I steal a glance at the mirror and my cheek looks awful. Sighing, I head to the main dining room and find everyone having breakfast.

“Sanibonani.” They all greet back and I make myself comfortable near my mother. “Aren’t you supposed to be at work mama?”

“No. I asked for a day off.” I nod and dig in on the appetizing food in front of me. Everyone is looking at me. I frown and stop eating.

“What’s up?”

“We thought you were going to die last night. Heck we didn’t even expect to see you up and active this morning.” Sethulo says and I chuckle.

“I am a Shenge brother. We don’t succumb to pain. We rise above all. We are strong and we are conquerors.” I answer and Sokalisa smiles. “But that doesn’t mean you should go to war with the Nyandeni brothers. I am the one who got injured but I really don’t see the reason why you should go out there and fight them. We should just carry on with life.”

“But that would be showing weakness.” Sokalisa says and mom gives him a mean look.

“I thought we talked about this last night Shenge, or you are going to break your promise?” she asks with a pained voice. You can see that this is no longer about me. She is referring to something else. Sokalisa scratches his beard and shakes his head.

“No, I am not going to break my promises. All those I have made to you. I won’t break them.” he responds in a calm voice.

“Did we miss something?” MaVezi, the third, rather the fourth wife asks.

“We will talk later Mgabadeli.” Sokalisa says and before MaVezi can respond, he raises his hand as a sign to reprimand her. She keeps quiet but not without giving mom a mean glance. I roll my eyes. If she wants drama, then she is going to get it. But she will deal with me because I don’t want nobody messing with my mom. Nyezi’s phone rings and she quickly excuses herself from the table, leaving all my brothers including Sokalisa, with frowns. When she comes back after a few moments, they are all over her with questions.

“Who was that?” Zithulele.

“Are you dating Nkanyezi?” Mnyamane.

“Who should I kill?” Sethulo.

“You have private calls now?” Zikhethele. Most females in the table just laugh while Nyezi’s eyes pop out. I am sure she is super confused by all the fuss.

“That was Roxy. She was asking for directions because she wants to see Azanda. She is a few minutes away. Let me just dish up for her.” she stands up and starts dishing out a plate. She fetches a chair and places it next to mine.

“Roxy as in MaZikode?” Somnyama asks and my brothers laugh at him.

“Did you shower?” Zithulele asks and they continue laughing. Even Sokalisa has stopped eating and just looking at them laugh. You have to understand that meals take long in the Buthelezi household because there is a lot of talking in between, so you have to pause and engage in conversations. After a few minutes, Nyezi heads out once again and comes back with Ro. I stand up and go hug her. She is carrying a plastic.

“And here I thought I would find you in bed cuddling with a teddy bear.” Roxy says and I laugh.

“I am a Shenge princess. We get stronger with every punch.” I say and she giggles. I lead her to the table. “Everyone this is my new friend

Roxanne Maphumulo, originally from Kwa Maphumulo but stays in Jo’burg. Ro, this is my family.” I do the introductions. She smiles and shakes hands with Sokalisa.

“It’s nice to finally meet you all.” she says and I gesture that she can start eating.

“Who is your father?” Sokalisa asks.

“Mazwi Maphumulo, sir.”

“The one who owns malls?” Sethulo asks and Roxy nods.

“Wow. Small world.” well I didn’t even know they knew her father. I see Sokalisa and Zithulele exchanging glances. There is unspoken words there. Maybe they know Roxy’s father on some deeper level.

“Brother don’t you have anything to say to MaZikode?”

Mnyamane asks with a smirk and Somnyama gives him a mean look which leads to all my brothers laughing like crazy.

“Are you guys going to umemulo wakwa Mdletshe? We wanna go. So we are asking if you are going to be there to stop us from bringing husbands home.” Lusanele says and there is so much chaos after that statement. Even Sokalisa is entertaining it. She just laughs and shakes her head. “You guys are so predictable. But are you going though?”

“To guard you? Yes.” Somnyama says and Lusanele pouts.

“Pout all you want, I don’t care. Nobody is going to take advantage of my sister while I am still alive.”

“She is 23 years old. She is bound to find a boyfriend. I mean I was much younger than that when your father took advantage of me and nobody stopped him.” mom says and we all look at her with our eyes popped out. Sokalisa clears his throat and we all just burst out laughing because of his face right now.

“Is makoti going to come here after the engagement thing just so we can see her?” MaMhlongo asks looking at Zithulele. I think she is referring to his fiancé. Zithulele clears his throat and looks at me.

“I might not be continuing with the wedding.”

“WHAT!” almost everyone around the table exclaims.

“What do you mean you might not be continuing with the wedding? Are you crazy? Did something happen between you two?” MaMhlongo asks with a confused face. I am afraid that my brother’s disinterest in his fiancé might be because of Veli. God, this is a disaster.

“Nothing is final yet. We will talk after breakfast son.” Sokalisa says and that basically means ‘end of discussion’. We finish breakfast and the little siblings are the ones responsible for cleaning up. I lead Roxy to our room and we sit on the bed.

“What did you bring?” she laughs and places the plastic on my lap.

“I went to Mvulazi and just bought those few things.” I open the plastic to find chocolate, chips, biscuits and juice.

“Aww thank you friend.” I side hug her and she giggles. “Now, what’s up? Your eyes look puffy. It’s like you cried all night?” She sighs.

“I broke up with Nkululeko last night.” I frown.

“Why?”

“What do you mean why?” she asks with a confused look. “This nigga fuckin went to ask for your hand in marriage while you weren’t even interested. If your family was narrow-minded and backwards, you would’ve been a Nyandeni makoti right now living your terrible life. It’s like he is a narcissist and that’s a toxic trait. I don’t think I can continue with someone like that. I

am seeing red flags all over.” I sigh and open the pocket of biscuits she brought. I eat one and then offer her some. She takes one and then chews on it roughly.

“Do you love him?” she looks at me like I have grown horns.

“Excuse me? Azanda you have seen what the guy has done and what he is capable of. Why are you asking me that?”

“It’s a simple question, Ro. Do you love Nkululeko? Put aside the fact that I am green on the face because of his brothers or what he has done in the past. Do you love him?” she huffs and shoves the whole biscuit in her mouth. “I will wait. I have all the time in the world.”

“I do love him Azanda. I have known him for a short period but mf2 he completes me. He makes me feel so good about myself. He is gentle with me. He always put my pleasure above his. He is just wonderful and maybe the best boyfriend I have ever had.” Her eyes even light up when she is talking about him. You can actually see and feel her love for him without even her having to utter a single word.

“Then why did you dump him?” she rolls her eyes. “What happened to me can’t be the reason why you broke up with him. He did nothing to you. I have seen how you guys are with each other and I would love to have that with my significant other. Don’t break up with him because of what he did to me in the past. Break up with him for something he has done to you. Something bad.” She starts sniffing and I bring her closer to me.

“I messed up something real and good, didn’t I?”

“You are human and you are bound to make mistakes. Let’s just hope you will be afforded the opportunity to correct this one.” She sighs and wipes her tears. “Now go clean up yourself and go get your man back.” She laughs.

“As if he is going to want me back.”

“Girl please. If you have seen the way that man looks at you, you will know that one dumping session won’t make him give up on your love.” she smiles.

“There is still alcohol from last night in my boot. When are we going to finish it?” I laugh and shake my head.

“Tomorrow. I think I will be out of this quarantine by then.” She also laughs.

“So we are not going to umemulo?”

“I don’t think I am allowed to go out of these gates.”

“Well then, I guess we have a date with your bed.” she says taking off her shoes and laying on the bed. I laugh and follow suit.

NOMZAMO

She has always been in competition with Azanda. Even from a young age. They attended the same schools up until grade 12. She was the brighter one when it came to academics, always had the highest marks but it infuriated her that Azanda, the girl with the average marks, always got more attention than her. One thing Nomzamo didn't understand was that Azanda was a people's person. She was not that kind but you could actually go and talk to her when you had a problem. She would listen to you and advice you. She would help you with some of the problems, if she could. Her arms were just warm and you could even fall asleep in them.

Nomzamo wanted to be better than Azanda in everything. She was a bit light skinned, so she used that as an advantage and got the most handsome boys at school to go out with her. That's one of the things she couldn't understand about Azanda. Her ability not to date or be attracted to handsome boys. At one time, she spread a rumour about Azanda being a lesbian but Azanda proved it wrong by kissing Nomzamo's then boyfriend in front of almost the whole school.

That led to a huge fight which left both of them injured and suspended from school. After their suspension, they both came back but Azanda made sure to stay out of Nomzamo's way. There were certain places where they would meet and compete but there were no fights after that. Both of them attended the annual reed dance but Nomzamo was no longer a virgin. Of course that didn't matter because her mother was the one who checked the girls every month and she didn't check her daughters.

When Nomzamo heard that one of the handsome Induna sons was after Azanda, she got jealous. It got to a point where she went and seduced Nkululeko. Well they did sleep together numerous times but Nkululeko never labelled what they were doing because he didn't have feelings for her, only for Azanda. That hurt Nomzamo very much and she went on to publicize their entanglement and announced to everyone that she was Nkululeko's girlfriend. When he tried to deny it, she just threatened to release inappropriate pictures of him. She had fallen in love with him but his actions and his ways of continuing to pursue Azanda made her fall out of love.

She was with her cousin, Senzeni and her best friend, Ntokozo. They were attending the famous umemulo of the Mdletshe girl. Well they didn't wanna dance with the other maidens because they lived a bit far from Empuqwini.

"That girl Azanda was with last night looked so fake." Senzeni said and they all laughed.

"When she received that punch

I nearly screamed out of joy. Damn it was so nice to watch her being manhandled like that." Nomzamo said and they laughed once again.

"I saw that girl being all lovey dovey with Nkululeko. It seemed like they are dating." Ntokozo said and they turned to her.

"Or maybe he is just using her. Nkululeko will never stop loving Azanda. He has been pursuing her for what? 6 years? I honestly would've given up a long time ago if I were him. Azanda is a nun." Nomzamo said and they all died of laughter. Ntokozo's phone beeped and she stared at it.

“Thulo says he will come but stay for a while because his sister is not well. Arg now we won’t have transport that will take us back home late.” she sulked and they looked at her.

“Girl use what you have to make him stay here. Azanda is not dying. There is no emergency at his home. So make him stop being dramatic and stay here with you.” Nomzamo said and Ntokozo giggled.

“Well let’s wait and see.”

Umemulo carried on and it was a very beautiful occasion. The Nyandeni brothers had arrived earlier and now the Buthelezi brothers, well not all of them, arrived when the isigcawu session was coming to an end. Ladies went crazy because they were wearing umbhlaselo with imqhele and izimbadada. They were looking super yummy. After they went to gift the Mdletshe girl with money, Sethulo came to where Ntokozo and her friends were standing.

“Zintokazi.” Sethulo said and Ntokozo instantly blushed. He held her hand and they walked away. Both Senzeni and Nomzamo stared at them with envy.

“I really wish I had someone as rich and handsome like that fussing over me.” Senzeni said and Nomzamo chuckled.

“Well Mcebisi is a great suitor.” Nomzamo said and Senzeni chuckled.

“All he wants is to chow my pussy, so no. he is not an option.” Nomzamo rolled her eyes. The eyes then travelled to Nkululeko who seemed to be talking to someone on the phone and then walked to his car. Nomzamo quickly followed him and luckily she found him still standing outside talking to the phone. He raised his eyes to see her and he wrapped up the call.

“Zamoh, what can I help you with?”

“So you are seriously dating that fake new girl?”

“Why does it matter who I date and who I don’t date? I don’t owe you any explanations Zamoh. Just because we fucked once upon a time, doesn’t mean we became friends who owe each other the truth or something.” Nomzamo frowned and swallowed hard. This was the first time Nkululeko was rude to her or anyone else for that matter.

“I wasn’t fighting you. I am just asking a question.” She said with a sad tone.

“Which I don’t owe you answers to. And please refrain from calling my girlfriend fake because she is the realist girl I have ever been with.” Nomzamo laughed bitterly.

“Really now? Maybe you’re the one who is fake because anyone knows you are obsessed with Azanda. You are just passing time with this girl because you need a new pussy to release in.” Nkululeko chuckled and climbed inside his car.

“Whatever that makes you sleep at night.” He then drove away leaving Nomzamo frustrated. Senzeni rushed to her.

“What was that all about?”

“Nothing which concerns you.” Nomzamo responded harshly and went inside the Mdletshe yard following most of the guests who were walking in.

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NARRATED

“Now care to tell me what has gotten into you.” Sokalisa said as Zithulele settled opposite him at his home office. Zithulele sighed and rubbed his head furiously.

“I am in love.”

“Well that’s a good thing. Are you having cold feet? Because that is really normal.” Sokalisa said with a smile and Zithulele huffed.

“I am in love with another woman who is much younger than me and very pure. She makes me feel things I have never felt before. I am very tamed and gentle when I am with her. She is just amazing baba. I honestly don’t know what to do.” Sokalisa closed his eyes for a few moments and then opened them.

“That’s why there is polygamy son. You have already paid lobola for your fiancé. Just get married and then take the love of your life as your second wife.” Zithulele huffed.

“I wish it was that easy but no it isn’t. First of all she is young. She is against polygamy and she is Xhosa and you have no idea how stubborn Xhosa women are. Once their minds have been made up, there is no way you can persuade her to change it.”

“That’s where sex comes in son. It makes them weak. Just dick her strong and she will have no choice but to listen to you and do as you say.” Zithulele groaned and stood up.

“Baba you don’t understand. She is young. She attends the annual reed dance. Meaning she is a virgin who knows her worth. I think we should just pause on the whole engagement party thing. Well at least until I know exactly what I am going to do.” Sokalisa sighed looking at his son.

“Vele when is umakoti coming here? Are you telling me that she will only come in with a veil over her head and not even once visit us?”

“Baba that woman despises rural areas and I don’t think she would survive even a day. So yah.”

“Then why the hell did you propose to her?”

“Because her pussy game is on fire and I am at an age where I am ready to settle down and the first step is to get married.”

“If you really wanted to settle down, you should’ve went for Dumsani’s mother.” Dumsani was Zithulele’s first son who was 12 years old and studying at a boarding school. He had two

kids. His last born, a very hyper active girl Asante who was 8 years old, was staying with her mother in Jozini. He didn't wanna stay with his kids in case of danger because when you are in the transport business, danger is always lurking in the shadows and waiting for a chance to strike.

“Baba can you please just be a father to me right now? Listen to your son and stop suggesting things that might make me lose my soulmate. I am not like you. I am never going to let mine go and watch her grow old while I am a few miles away from her.”

Sokalisa got angry and stood up. “Don't talk to me like that. I am your father. You don't get to say nonsense like that to me.”

“But I am telling the truth. Or is MaNene no longer your soulmate?” Sokalisa huffed and took his hat. He placed it in his head.

“Let's see who is going to help you sold this web that you've weaved because it ain't Me.” he walked out and Zithulele sat down, defeated.

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ROXANNE

She continued to pacing up and down in an attempt to calm her anxieties, but it was ineffective. She repeated their conversation from the night before, describing how she had disrespected him, and tears streamed down her face. Azanda's comments kept running in her head as she drove to the resort. She had recognized she had overreacted to the whole Nkululeko situation and was now apologetic. She was, of course, a cry baby. So she was bawling like nobody's business right now. She hadn't even heard Nkululeko enter, so when she felt arms wrap around her body, she was taken aback. She sniffed as she turned to face Nkululeko.

“Has anybody told you how ugly you look when you cry?” she pouted and he chuckled while wiping her tears. “Crying this much is not good for you. You will get a headache. Hush now. I am here.” he brought her to his chest and she inhaled his cologne. That seemed to calm her down. She exhaled loudly and Nkululeko knew she had stopped crying. He went to sit on the bed and brought her to sit on top of him. “Now tell me, why are you crying?”

She cleared her throat. "I didn't think you would show up. After everything I said last night, I didn't think you would want to see me again, let alone talk to me."

"I know you were being crazy. I have about 3 sisters, so I know when a woman is overreacting and still about to change her mind." Roxy rolled her eyes and Nkululeko laughed. "I haven't cancelled our plans to go to Durban seeing that we are somehow back together."

"Do you want to get back together with me?" she asked in a little adorable tone. He just turned her face and perked her lips.

"You are going to be my wife and that's a promise. Sure we will have problems from time to time but that doesn't mean we have to throw away what we have. Soon you will be carrying a little Khukhuza in this beautiful flat belly of yours." He said brushing her flat stomach and she cringed. "What part makes you cringe sthandwa Sami? The wife part of the baby part?" she sighed and tried to move from him but he held her tight.

“Lekoh we haven’t known each other that long and now you are talking about marriage. Don’t you think you are moving a bit too fast? You don’t even know me that well.”

“Well I do know you are a cry baby, so.” He shrugged and Roxy rolled her eyes.

“I am being serious.”

“Well you are a cry baby, aren’t you?” she stomped her feet and he laughed. He loved teasing her. “Okay, I hear you. How about we revisit this talk after you are done with the project you are working on? For now let’s just enjoy our time together and allow me to shower you with love and take you places.” He placed her on the bed and towered over her. “Do you agree with that?” she nodded.

“Yes. It seems doable.”

“Now what made you change your mind about us?”

“I talked to Azanda and she made me realize I was just being crazy and gave me a sound advice. She is such a great friend.”

“That she is.” he said as he started kissing her neck and unbuttoning her shirt.

They helped each other undress in between their kisses. He did lift one of her full tits and gave the nipple a good suck while finger fucking her. Roxy's hole as dripping and she was now taking more than two fingers so he laid her back onto the bed. She opened her legs and he began stretching her love hole, gradually inserting more fingers, and this thick lady's pussy was opening up. Next she got onto all fours and he really worked his fingers into her hole to the point where Roxy was taking hand his hand inside her. She was panting hard muttering "oh my God

oh please, oh yes."

He laid her back onto her back raised and parted her legs then guided his shaft into her well stretched hole. His shaft was fully wedged in her pussy, he took one of her tits into his mouth and sucked it so hard, she let out an 'ouch'. He wasn't deterred and carried on sucking her tit as well as sliding his hard shaft in and out of her wet hole pussy which took her mind off the pain he was causing by sucking her tit.

Her moans began to grow louder and their breathing deeper. Roxy kept on having one orgasm after another. Nkululeko knew

he wasn't far from cuming, so he pulled out just as Roxy was about to experience another orgasm. She grunted and as she was about to raise her complaint, he slammed back inside her, hard and fast.

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SOKALISA

He walked inside MaVezi's house to find her reading a magazine. She was a young girl who fancied nice things in life but all that changed when she met this charming dark and tall Buthelezi man who swept her off her feet just by smiling at her. She was taken and it didn't take long for her to give him her virginity and that led to her pregnancy which led to the famous break up of Sokalisa and MaNene.

Of course he missed MaNene and times she resented MaVezi for making him lose the love of his life. But as time went by, he grew to love and appreciate her. There were a few instances where he uttered MaNene's name in the bedroom. That would leave MaVezi shattered because she couldn't understand what is it that she lacked. She was younger, more beautiful and fully figured. She was a true definition of a trophy wife and she thought she was enough. Well she didn't see the other first two

wives as threats because they were just too rural, plain and boring. Why else would he marry someone younger than them?

But with the Nene doctor, it was a tough competition. The woman was in her early forties but she looked like she was still in her twenties. She didn't age very fast. Even after she left the Buthelezi household, she was still a threat because MaVezi knew MaNene would always have a big spot in Sokalisa's heart. So news of her possible return to the family didn't sit well with MaVezi. She knew that she was going to lose her husband because where MaNene is concerned, he just loses all morals and starts behaving like a love sick teenager. She remember how heartbroken he was when MaNene called off the wedding. He was like a zombie for a whole two weeks and even drank like a fish, well until MaMhlongo talked some sense into him.

"Nkosikazi." He said and she raised her head to look at him. She placed her magazine on the coffee table in front of her and turned all her attention to him. This name is one of the things that ticked her off. Sure being called nkosikazi was nice but the way he said 'mkami' to MaNene just felt like he was proclaiming his love for her in front of the whole world.

"Sthandwa sami." He said as he settled on the coffee table in

front of her, facing her and took her hands into his. "Please look at me." she raised her eyes and looked at him. They were glossy and he knew she was this close to crying. "She is coming back but nothing is going to change my love. Things are going to be the same?" she swallowed hard as she saw her marriage failing right before her eyes.

"Is she the one you have been spending all these past nights with?" she asked in a shaky tone. He couldn't handle her stare right now, so he nodded as he looked at their joined hands. "How is it that nothing is going to change when things have already started changing? You didn't bother to come home for a whole weekend just because you were with her. Is this how things are going to be from now on? You ghosting us just to spend quality time with your beloved Fundiswa?" he shook his head.

"I am sorry about the way I behaved the past weekend. What you must know is that I love all of you equally and I am going to die proving that. MaNene's return doesn't mean I will abandon anyone. I have had a conversation about abandonment issues with Azanda and trust me I have learnt my lesson the hard way by having a 21 year old reprimand me like I am a toddler. So trust me when I say I won't abandon you. I just wanna spend time with MaNene catching up because we have lost so many

years apart.” Tears just fell from her eyes and she didn’t bother wiping them.

“This is exactly what I am talking about.” His heart broke when he saw his wife crying because of his actions. He didn’t say anything. He just brought her into his chest and she wept. Finally she calmed down and kept on sniffing.

“I am sorry for making you cry sthandwa Sami. I am going to make it up to you. You can plan one of those trip of yours and we can go together but after Zithulele’s engagement party of course.” He said removing her from his chest and wiping her tears. She rolled her eyes but she couldn’t hide the silly smile on her face. Sokalisa was charming like that. “Now do you want pizza?” she laughed and nodded. “Well let me contact those Lalela Foods people to bring it for you.”

“Thank you Mnyamane wami.” He blushed a little and she laughed.

He was happy to hear her laugh because he couldn’t have one of his wife sad or unhappy about the return of MaNene. A part of him knew that many things were going to change once MaNene is back but he tried to convince themselves that he would give all his wives quality love and time because, according to him, he loved them all equally.

I am healed. Well not fully but I am fine now and the swelling has gone down. It's just that I have a blue eye but I know it will disappear before the Friday of our departure. I sit next to the window and watch as Sokalisa walks out of MaVezi's house with a smile on his face. I don't think I will ever understand polygamy. On Saturday she was being cheeky about mom's return to the Buthelezi household but now she is a bit better, or whatever state she is in. Or maybe she is just pretending. That can be the only explanation. Mom is at work and she will be fetching me in the afternoon so that we can go back home.

I walk to the lounge and wait behind the door for Sokalisa. When he walks in, I scare him. "HELLO!" he jumps up.

"FUCK AZANDA!" he places his hand on his chest with his eyes popped out. He is already breathing heavily.

"Old man you need to hit the gym."

"Are you trying to kill me?" I shrug.

"Depends on how much I am going to gain from your death."

"All you need to do is ask. How much do you want? Or what do you want?"

“A car. No, a house. No, a shelter for our business. No. I don’t need your money. I am just kidding. Anyways why are you this unfit? I mean you are always giving it to them every day, or you let them do all the work?”

“Aybo Azanda.” He says with a warning tone. He walks to the couches and settles down.

“Let me fetch some water for you. I don’t want you fainting on me and people saying I only came back here to kill you.” he rolls his eyes and I laugh. I go to the kitchen and come back with 1l bottled water and a glass. I pour the water in the glass and hand it to him. I sit across him. “So like how do you do it? Four women? Should be a lot of work.”

“What did they feed you this morning because you are too much for me?” I laugh and shake my head.

“No, I am just curious and I am bored. So I have to converse with you because you are here.”

“So I am a cure for your boredom?” I shrug.

“You could be, if you let me in on your polygamy secret. How do you keep it together?” he chuckles.

“I don’t have a secret to keeping it together. If I did, your mother wouldn’t have left in the first place. I am probably one of the few men around who don’t bewitch their wives to get along. I am just glad that we are in a better place now. Hee when your mother found out about MaVezi, she was breathing fire. They actually got involved in a fist fight, mind you they were both pregnant but your mother was so close to giving birth.”

“Aybo, why didn’t people stop them? And who started the fight?”

“I don’t know who. When I arrived at the scene, they ganged up on me and beat me up. I think that’s one of the factors that made your mother go into early labour. I was just stressing her too much and when she was gone, I realized my mistake.”

“What did your mother do about them fighting or any other beef for that matter?”

“My father died while in the process of paying for ilobolo to his supposed third wife. My mother was the first wife and hated polygamy with her whole heart but couldn’t comment on it because women had no say in what happened back then. She

hardly said anything to her sister wife and my father. When my father died, she just dedicated her life to alcohol because she believed she had raised and her job was done. So when I told her about wanting to be a polygamist, she was like 'okay, but don't include me in your bullshit'."

"She was an alcoholic?"

"In her last days, yes."

"That means I am following in her footsteps." He gives me a mean stare and I just chuckle. "So your father wasn't bothered by the fact that his wives didn't get along?"

"He didn't care. As long as thy fulfilled their purpose in the household, which was producing kids and making sure that he had a warm meal every evening. He was not a good man but they loved him. His second wife died of heart attack a year after his death."

"Maybe he used a love potion on them." he laughs.

"Well he got the wrong person to advise him on polygamy because he should've gotten a portion to make sure that his

wives get along and make sure that the whole yard is warm and welcoming to anyone.”

“He was a shitty dad but at least you have a chance to correct your wrongs, unlike him.” he sighs and nods.

“Yah.”

“So how would you feel if one of your daughters would go and get into a polygamous marriage? Maybe me for example.” He frowns and sits up straight.

“Azanda I love my wives, dearly. All of them have a special place in my heart and I know that all of them don’t like sharing me. Let me let you in on a few secrets of a polygamous marriage. These women come from different families, different backgrounds and they have different personalities. They also have different qualities of being good wives. It might not show

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but their lives are all about competition day in day out. They are always finding ways to impress their husband so that he can love them better than the other.

“They have so many insecurities. God they have so many of them. Even though they agreed to share their man, it always hurt them to see him being all lovey dovey with another woman in their presence. If it were up to them, the husband would definitely show affection for them in private, just so they cannot be jealous. So Azanda, as much as I am in a polygamous marriage, it can be very toxic because of those things I have mentioned.” I sigh. I would call him out for double standards but I am a bit happy about his transparency right now. I am starting to respect him.

“So you wouldn’t marry off any of your children to polygamy?”

“Yes and I also wouldn’t advise or put pressure on my sons to be in polygamous marriages just because I am in one. So nkosazane yami, if you find someone who is interested in you, in your late forties,” I laugh out loud and he frowns. “What’s so funny?”

“You thinking I will get married at 40. Sokalisa I am going to get married anytime a young man comes and sweeps me off my feet.”

“Let’s settle for 30 then.” I continue laughing.

“Don’t you want grandchildren?”

“From you, not yet.”

“But Sokalisa you guys have already done umemulo for me. That is like giving me permission to go out there and explore.” He stands up and takes his bottled water.

“See you around MaShenge.” He walks out and I laugh. I now know what to say when I want him to get all awkward and uncomfortable.

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Everyone was sad to see us leave, and as much as I was also sad, I missed my mother’s house. That peace, comfort and freedom to do whatever you want. Not that there is no freedom at the Buthelezi household, but you gotta be careful or who gets offended by that freedom. Too much drama if you ask me.

Mom took a day off and took me to Empangeni for some shopping. We bought almost everything, from luggage to clothes, shoes, cosmetics, you name them. Except for food. She said we will buy food when we arrive in Jozi. I assumed Sokalisa gave her the money because she didn’t even look at the prices,

she just took what she wanted and most of the things she bought for me were high quality. Even the luggage was made from leather.

Building material has started being delivered here at home. I guess Sokalisa wants to do this wedding fast so that he can have access to his wife anytime he wants it. She is going to be the first wife to live outside the Buthelezi household but what MaNene wants MaNene gets. Also she is the only wife who is working. The others are just housewives. MaMsomi, the second wife, used to be a teacher but she quit a few years into the marriage. MaMhlongo has never worked for anyone her entire life. When she was of age, she just started helping people traditionally. Well MaVezi is just a certified slay wife who sits around all day and read magazine while sipping on champagne using a coffee mug.

VELISANI JIKI

Dating a guy like Zithulele is very challenging. Although I know my worth and know how to stand my ground, it can be difficult when I am faced with a charmer like him. We haven't talked about the fiancé thing since that day at Nongoma Inn and whenever I try to raise it, he just shuts me up with a kiss or change the subject by talking about something more fun or interesting. I have learnt to understand that he doesn't wanna talk about his fiancé at all and I have decided to let it go, for now. He is not off the hook that easily.

We have upgraded to seeing each other almost every day when he is not busy. I really love him and I know that he loves me too. He shows it to me every day. And he has started showing me off to people. Many rumours have been going around about him and I but I learnt to never listen to them from a young age.

Well he has some serious Veli withdrawal symptoms and he has been sulking about me going to Jozi for a few days now. At some point he even suggested that I don't go, and then I had to remind him how important this thing is to me and Izimbali

Zomhlaba. After sometime, he accepted that I am leaving but he asked to spend the full day and night with me, away from home 2 days before our departure. When mom asked, I just told her I will be sleeping over at Azanda's home because we had some serious things to take care of before we leave. I think she suspects that I am dating but doesn't know how to address this issue, or even ask me.

So being the extra guy that my boyfriend is, he booked us into BON Hotel Waterfront which is in Richards Bay. He also said he had some few activities planned out for us to do during the day. At exactly 5 am, he comes to fetch me. I am not an early riser, but I made an exception for him. He hugs and kisses me before opening the passenger door for me. I thank him as I slide in. he also climbs in and drives off.

“So how are you this morning swidi lami?” I smile and look outside the window. The first time he called me ‘swidi lami’ I was confused. I was like ‘why would you call me a sweet?’ and then he made me listen to some song by an old singer, Mbongeni Ngema called Stimela. It is a really great song and I love it so much. so every time he calls me ‘swidi lam’ I just blush and he knows it.

“I am good sambulela Sami selanga.” He laughs out loud and I join him. He makes this weird think of squinting his eyes when he is laughing. You would think he is feeling pain or forcing it, but in fact that’s how he is naturally. And I have come to notice a lot of things that he does which I am sure people don’t know. I know that when he blinks a lot while interrogating him, it means he is clueless as to what you are asking him of. When he clears his throat, that means he is guilty.

“You should call me that all the time.” I chuckle and shake my head.

“Too much work. I prefer Lele.”

“But that’s the name of that hip hop artist related to the Zulu princess.”

“He is their Lele and you are my Lele because I am the only one who gets to call you that.” he smiles and rolls his eyes while turning his whole focus on the road. “Anyways wake me up when we get to our destination. I am so sleepy.” I say as I yawn.

“No. no. no baby. You are not going to sleep and let me drive alone.” He opens the car center console and retrieves a Red Bull can. He hands it to me. “Here drink.” I give him puppy eyes as I take it. “Those eyes won’t work on me this time around. This day is all about you and me. I will watch you sleep at night. Not now.” I pout as I open the car and drink half of it. I hand it back to him. He downs the rest on one go and places the can back on the console.

On the way, we talk about anything and everything. He also tells me that he recently had a fight with his dad where he even told him about me but doesn’t specify the main reason behind the fight because I know it isn’t me. He also mentions that his father is lighter nowadays and happier. Well I think his mood has everything to do with him getting back together with Azanda’s mother and him fixing his relationship with his daughter.

When we get to the hotel

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he checks us in and we go take a nap in our beautiful suite before going on today’s adventures, which include boat riding, sushi tasting and some chilled afternoon at a bar. By the time

we head back to our suite, we are kak tired. We just take separate showers and then cuddle all night.

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AZANDA

“I want you to call me the minute you get settled in. call me Azanda, or even send me a call back, I will call immediately.” Mom says for the hundredth time. I smile and hug her once more, hoping it will take away her anxiety.

“Mom this is not my first trip to Jozi. Please relax. Plus we will be safe at all times. Your husband made sure of that.” Sokalisa did not only organize a driver to drive us to Jozi and anywhere we want to go, but also organized a few of his men to make sure we are safe at all times. I only found out about that because I eavesdropped on their conversation and when I confronted them, he gave me that ‘it’s done’ tone and I didn’t have the energy to carry on.

I give Sokalisa a hug which makes him tense for a bit but then he returns it after a few moments. “I am going to miss you.” I say with a smile. He chuckles.

“Not as much as I am going to miss you and your smart mouth.” He says kissing my head and I giggle. I catch mom at the corner of my eye tearing up. She then comes and joins in on the hug making me and Sokalisa laugh.

“I am so happy that you guys have reconciled.” She says with tears rolling down her cheeks. I wipe them but it’s futile because they keep falling.

“Well take care of your onion Sokalisa.” They both laugh.

All our bags have been loaded in the Fortuner we are going to be travelling in. only the 5 of us are leaving. Nombuyiselo, Nomthandazo, Sisanda, Veli and I. we hug our parents one more time and then climb into the car. By the way, Sokalisa bought me enough data to last me for 3 months and mom bought me R200 airtime just to call her on the duration of our stay in Jozi. I then bought all net voice bundles so that I can talk to her for as long as I want.

Nomthandazo and Sisanda settle in the seat near the boot, Veli and I in the middle seat while Nombuyiselo settles in the front seat. She said she doesn’t mind chilling with the driver and chatting to him all the way to Jozi. Well Mbuyi can talk, a lot, so

I know they won't run out of things to talk about. We do the final wave at our parents before the car takes a corner and joins the main road.

"Finally!" Sisanda says raising her hands in the air. "Driver please pass by the tavern so that we can get something to quench our thirst." We all laugh.

"Seconded friend." Mbuyi says and the driver just chuckles. Veli's phone rings and she giggles but doesn't answer it. Instead she sends a message.

"And then?" I give her a quizzical look.

"Hhay wethu," she waves her hand around. "I will talk to him when you're all asleep." I roll my eyes and she laughs.

Well Jozi here we come. I wonder what you have in store for us and how will working with the Yakhanathi Organization be like.

Getting to Jozi, we are driven to Rooderport. We are amazed by the house Skaqa, the driver, drives into. This is not what I was expecting, not that I expected rondavels or what, but definitely not this. It's a big double story house with a long driveway and even a fountain in the middle. If I didn't know better, I would say he has a city side chick because there is no way he would've bought a house like this. It just spells 'rich housewife of Johannesburg'. The car comes to a halt at the end of the driveway and we climb off.

"Welcome home makhosazane. Anything you want, don't be shy to ask. We are all here to cater to your needs." Skaqa says as he carries some of our luggage inside. Two other guys appear from the house and come to take the rest of the luggage.

We follow them inside. The house is even more beautiful inside. It carries class and elegance. Skaqa gives us a tour, he seems to be well acquainted with the house. He leaves us to pick our rooms and tells us to meet him downstairs when we are done getting settled. I take one of the biggest rooms. It's decorated in grey and red. It seems like a guy's room. I place my bags on the bed and look at the picture on the picture

frame. I smile when I see that it's a selfie of Zithulele, Nyezi, Sethulo and I. I don't know whose room this belongs to, but it's officially mine.

I check out the bathroom, closet and even the balcony. The view of the city from the balcony is so beautiful. I go take a quick shower and get dressed in a short summer dress and sleepers. I take my bags and put them in the closet. I will sort them out later. I head to the lounge and find almost everyone there except for Sisanda. Well she is very slow in nature, except when she is working. She comes down after a few minutes wearing a t-shirt dress and sleepers. She sits down near me and lays her head on my shoulder. We are all tired. Sitting a whole 8 hours isn't a joke. We drove all night and only arrived here this morning.

"Ladies this is Nsezi," he points at the guy with a few scars on his face. "And that is Gadla. They are going to be guarding you for the duration of your stay. They are the house guards, so don't get frightened when you see them inside the house any time of the day. But worry not because they won't go to your rooms. They are paid to protect you and not invade your privacy. And guys this is Nombuyiselo, Sisanda, Velisani, Nomthandazo and Azanda, the boss's daughter."

“Thank you. Now hunks can you please get us food which we will munch on when we get up because I am pretty sure all of us wanna go sleep right now?” Veli says and the men chuckle.

“Worry not Miss Jiki. You will find anything you want waiting for you when you wake up. Except for groceries. You are going to do that yourselves.” Skaqa responds.

We found out that he is a really cool guy and he is funny when he wants to. Well he tried being professional and keeping quiet for the first 30 minutes but he couldn't resist not joining in on our conversations. We talked about anything and everything. Nomthandazo even told us that she gave her virginity to some guy who she is dating. A high school teacher. She is head over heels in love with him. I just hope he doesn't disappoint her.

Skaqa said there is nothing she can do to keep a man who doesn't wanna be kept. If he wants to leave, he will leave. If he wants to stay, he will stay. She mustn't do something she doesn't like or isn't comfortable with just because she thinks that will keep a man. He gave us many relationship advices on the way. We even found out that he is engaged and his fiancé is from Ocilwane. He is one of Sokalisa's drivers and he met her

when Sokalisa had some meeting with some taxi bosses from Empangeni.

“You don’t even have to point her out. We can see a Buthelezi child from a mile away. You look exactly like the boss. Even that rubbing forehead thing he does when he is frustrated or tired.” Nsezi says. I quickly drop my hand to my lap when I realize that I am doing exactly what he is saying and they all laugh at me.

“Like father like daughter I guess.” I shrug.

“So Gadla and Nsezi are you real names?” Mbuyi asks with a smirk.

“Gadla sounds like you are always attacking your enemies. Not even giving them a chance to explain and breathe. They appear and you just attack.” Nomthi says and laugh.

“I am always ready for anything nkosazane. In our line of work, war can brew at any time. So when the enemy comes, I don’t ask questions. I always attack. That’s just me defending myself. That’s why I am called Gadla. But I won’t tell you my real name because it’s too personal.” Mbuyi pouts and he just laughs.

“Well I am called Nsezi because my mother had contractions while they were passing the Nsezi River in Nseleni. She was in a taxi. The taxi driver was startled by the scream and stopped in the middle of the bridge. Everything happened so fast and she actually gave birth on a taxi, in a bridge above Nsezi River.” Nsezi narrates his story.

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“Wow it’s such an interesting story. If I was a journalist, I would’ve definitely wrote it and had published, it deserves front page.” Sisanda says and Nsezi just laughs.

I stand up and stretch my arms. “Well folks, as much as this getting to know each other session is great, I gotta head to bed. I am so tired, I can literally feel my mind drifting to la-la-land.”

“Don’t trip and fall on those stairs.” Veli says as I ascend the stairs. I show her the middle finger and she laughs.

When I get to my bedroom, I take out my phone and call my mother. She is so excited to hear from me, she even calls Sokalisa and Nyezi. We talk about a lot of things. Mostly me doing the talking and narrating to them how my journey was

like. Nyezi screams when I tell her about the house. Sokalisa laughs when I tell him about taking over the room I am in. he tells me that it's actually Sethulo's room. Well his loss then. His last words before hanging up leaves me utterly shocked.

“Behave yourself there princess and I love you.”

I wasn't expecting to hear that from him. I know black parents don't believe in 'I love you's' which is why I am stunned to hear him say it. Wow, an improvement. 5 points for Azanda, 0 points for toxic fathers association.

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NARRATED

He decided to give her a surprise visit and buy her a few of her favourite things which include expensive chocolate, champagne, flowers and lingerie. He knew that she was a lover of fine things, so buying her this was definitely going to make her day. He was in town, so he decided to pop by just to say hi and maybe spend a few hours with her before heading back. Walking inside her block, he was greeted by the guard who already knew him and had seen him a number of times coming here. He humbly greeted back as he headed to the elevator that took him to the 5th floor.

Honestly living in these apartments was very expensive. You had to at least earn a six figure salary to maintain a living in this side of town. But he didn't mind paying 28k rent because he loved her and he wanted her to live comfortably. He got to her apartment and opened the door using his own key. Inside, soft jazz was playing which automatically made him smile because he was the one who introduced her to jazz. At first she hated it but learnt to tolerate it. In the end, she started to like it and actually listen to it in his absence.

He placed his keys and phone in the coffee table as he headed to the bedroom where the jazz music was coming from. She was expecting to find her dancing by herself or doing some improvised vocals which he always laughed at because she was a terrible singer, but what he found next, was not what he was expecting. She was butt-naked on top of the dresser, clinging so hard to the stranger who was busy shoving his dick in and out of her. Her long artificial nails were digging deep into his back. He was so shocked that he dropped the champagne on the ground. That caused the two rabbits to stop what they were doing and she pushed the man away from her so fast. He was disgusted when he saw that the man wasn't even wearing a condom.

“It’s over.” He said as he dropped everything he bought for her on the floor, taking his car keys and heading out.

She cried as she ran after him, begging him for a chance to explain. She didn’t even care about walking down the corridor naked. He just looked down at her, clicked his tongue and used the stairs to run down because he felt like the elevator was taking too long. She cried as she slid down to the floor, pleading that he comes back, but he was gone and he was going to cut her off his life for good. Even if that meant she was going to stay on the streets, he didn’t care. He was just done with her.

“I already know where we are going tonight.” This best friend of mine says barging in my room. I am still in bed, wide awake. But I am tired. “Ow come on. We are seriously not going to spend our first night in Jozi in bed. We are going out.” she jumps into my bed and comes to sleep next to me. “Who knows? Maybe you will finally be interested in at least one guy at the club.”

“Why does it have to be at a club?” she rolls her eyes.

“Because we have been to malls, weddings, funerals, ceremonies and you haven’t found your Mr. Right. The club is where he is.” I laugh and shake my head.

“What an insane logic. Hanging out with Zithulele is making you crazy.” She smiles and rolls her eyes. “Damn girl. You have it bad.” She laughs.

“Get up friend.” I grunt and stretch my arms sitting up. “Yay. Let me go tell the others and then get dressed. Can you please hurry?” I roll my eyes. “I will take that as a yes.” She gets up from my bed and rushes out.

I also get up and make the bed. I take a quick shower and then get dressed in Black Cotton shorts, blue tank top and black block heels. I know you can never go wrong with block heels when going to the club because you can literally dance all night in them. I style my braids and leave them falling but tied. I pack my lipstick, wallet and phone in my bag and then head to the kitchen. I smile when I see different paper bags from different restaurants. I settle down and wait for the others.

They descend the stairs one by one looking like those sexy singles from Temptation Island. We eat almost everything in the table and pack the leftovers in the fridge. Nsezi and Skaqa are the ones accompanying us to the club. They are only going to drop us out and make themselves scarce around the club. They are not going to hang with us in our table. As soon as we get settled on a general table, we order our drinks and hubbly. It's our first free night. We are going to let loose.

“Any celebrities coming here tonight?” Sisanda asks after taking multiple selfies. She is the one who loves taking photos the most among us, followed by Veli, whose wallpaper is a picture of her and Zithulele and it looks like they were on a boat or something. I wanna ask but I don't wanna come off as too nosy.

“A few will be coming in and some socialites. It's going to get lit chomie. You can bet on that.” Veli says with a smile. A waiter comes to our table empty handed. Okay, was expecting her to bring drinks.

“Evening once again ladies, please follow me to the VIP section. Orders from a Mr. Skaqa.” She says smiling weirdly.

“Lead the way my dear.” Nomthi says already on her feet. We laugh as we also stand up and follow the waitress.

When we get to the VIP section, we find our drinks already on the table. We get seated and the ladies start taking pictures of the alcohol. I laugh as I take one bottle of Bernini, opening it and pouring it on a glass. Maybe I will drink by the bottle when I am really drunk. The ladies also start drinking. There are a few people in this section, also a few celebrities but not those really famous ones. Like those who are still trying. Abasafufusa ngolwa Mageba.

“I have been trying to call your brother since I woke this afternoon and he hasn't been answering my calls.” Veli says downing the alcohol straight from the bottle.

“Maybe he has found himself a new sncanakazana to fuck while you're away.” She gives me a mean look.

“Don't joke like that. I am really worried about him.”

“Well if something was wrong, Sokalisa or Sethulo would've told me. Now stop stressing about an old man and enjoy this night. You are the one who dragged us out of bed. You can't be miserable. Not now.” A song comes on and I pull her to the dance floor. “Now shake that behind like nobody's watching.” She giggles as we dance to the song. Soon other people join us and it's a whole vibe.

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While dancing, someone places their hands on my hips. I turn to find this really cute guy looking at me with a smile, or is it a smirk? He is a bit taller than me. Light skinned. Iswidi nje leli. Nonetheless I continue dancing with him because a dance is just a dance. It's not like he has other intentions or something. When I get tired of dancing I remove his hands from my hips with a smile and head back to the table.

“That guy was really cute. Why did you run away from him?” Veli asks. I don’t know when she left the dance floor. I roll my eyes and take the hubbly pipe from her. I inhale and exhale the smoke and give her back the pipe.

“Cute yes, but not my type.” Her eyes pop out.

“You have a type?”

“Fuck you.” She breaks into laughter.

“No please. Do tell me. What's your type? And since when do you have a type?”

“I am warning you Veli.” She hasn't stopped laughing. “Idiot.” I stand up and head to the restroom. I do my business and then wash my hands. As I am heading out, someone walks in. I raise my head to see the guy from the dancefloor. “And then? I think you're in the wrong restroom.” He smiles as he walks closer to me.

“Ow honey, I am at the right place.” He quickly brings me closer to him and kisses me. What the fuck? I push him away and give him a very mean punch.

“Don't take me for a cheap slut. Dancing with you didn't mean I am into you. Try that shit again and you will regret it.” I walk out to find Nsezi at the door.

“What's going on? I saw a guy walking in after you.” He says looking behind him.

“He wanted to try something but I dealt with him.”

“Okay. Go back to the table. We will take it from here.” I try to protest but he gives me a warning look. Well I know these guys are hitmen so I will not be stubborn with them. I drag my ass back to the table and find the ladies sitting with 4 guys and a lesbian. I join in and greet them.

“What was that drama all about? I saw Nsezi talking to you.” Veli says as soon as I sit down next to her. My friend is so nosy, she can't even hide it.

“The guy from the dancefloor tried to make a move on me but I punched him.” She laughs.

“Serves him right. You should've called me so that we can finish him.” I laugh and shake my head.

“You're crazy.”

“Let me open that for you.” The guy sitting on left side say as I retrieve a bottle from the ice bucket. I wanna say no, but I don't wanna seem rude. He opens it and pours its content in my glass. I thank him and take a sip.

“So what do you guys do?” One of the guys asks. His name is Lindo.

“No business talk tonight. Let's just share our hobbies and some relationship advices and what not.” Mbuyi says and everyone agrees with her.

“that's a bit personal for someone in this table.” Msebe says looking at the guy sitting next to me who just chuckles and shakes his head. His name is Siza.

“Then we have to start with you.” I say and he laughs.

“My ex girlfriend dumped me because of my family and work. She said she couldn't deal with a workaholic and dumped me just like that. I am not going to mention the things I have done for her because that would deem me a failure but,” he shrugs. “It is what it is.”

“That's why I stay away from relationships. I would like to see myself as self employed. From Monday to Sunday. What's more fun is that I am in business with these ladies, which are my friends, so I don't get bored or find myself lonely and searching for love.”

“Don't you get horny though?” Culo, the lesbian asks and everyone laughs.

“Well we have ways of coping with that.” Sisanda says and we laugh.

The night carries on and it's so much fun with Siza and his friends. We get cozy and share kisses here and there which Veli approves very much. After 3am, we all leave with me leaving with Siza. We drive to his house. He wants to chat but I have other things in mind which includes me with my back on his bed and him hovering over me. He takes his time worshiping my body and makes slow love to me afterwards. Just like that, virginity gone, but I would definitely give it to him over and over because it felt so good after a moment of slight pain.

Waking up, I have a very mean headache and my mouth is so dry. There is something so slightly heavy on my belly. I open my eyes to see a hand. A human hand. I frown and look beside me. If I wasn't this tired, I would've probably jumped up from this bed. There is a familiar guy next to me. Memories of last night and this morning come back crashing fast. I wasn't thinking when I give my virginity to him but I don't regret it. I need to get out of here. I don't want the awkwardness that will come once he wakes up. I carefully take his arm and place it on the bed. I climb off the bed and take everything that belongs to me. When I get to the lounge, I get dressed after requesting an Uber. Getting home, I quickly rush to my room and ignore the stares from the guards. I shower and then go to sleep in my oversized t-shirt.

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VELISANI

I am woken up by my body heating up. I open my eyes to see Lele beside me, cuddling me. When the fuck did he get here? Is it me or does he smell like a brewery? I try moving and he releases a protesting grunt.

“Don't leave me.” Well he has been drinking, heavily. I wonder what made him drink this much.

“I am not leaving you. Why would I leave you?” he doesn't answer. “When did you get here?” he ignores me. I am starting to get furious. I want answers. He couldn't just drive 7 hours just because he missed me.

I get from the bed despite his disapproval and head to the bathroom. I brush my teeth and then take a long hot shower. I am hoping it will keep me awake, I am also avoiding the man in my room. When I am done, I go raid his closet and take out his oversized T shirt. This is his room by the way. There are many of his clothes in the wardrobe and the décor screams Lele. I put on my sleepers and as I am heading out, he speaks up.

“Where are you going?” he asks and I chuckle.

“You want me to answer you while you didn't answer any of my questions? Poor you Zithulele. Poor you.” I walk out and head to Azanda's room. I don't even remember most things that happened at the club but I remember Azanda and Siza kissing, multiple times. She is still sleeping. I shake her and she groans turning to the other side. I laugh and continue shaking her.

“Leave me alone. My head hurts and my pussy is on fire.” I continue laughing but abruptly stop processing her statement.

“Wait what?” she sighs and sits up. “Your pussy is on fire?”

“Yes. I slept with Siza this morning.”

“Aybo Azanda. Are you joking?”

“Does it look like I have time for jokes?”

“Don't give me that attitude.” She pouts and look away. “Tell me what happened. Explain it to me because I am so lost right now.”

“Siza and I had chemistry

so we went to his house together and when we got there we had sex. Or maybe we made love because it was really gentle. He showered me with kisses and made me feel really special.” I smile as I scoot closer to her.

“So does that mean you are dating now?” she shakes her head.

“No we are not dating and I am never going to see him again. I snuck out before he woke up. I don't wanna get attached to this guy and have a Jozi romance which probably end as soon as I am back at KwaNongoma and I don't want these city guys. They

think they will persuade girls to move to the city just for them. I don't think so." I huff and look at her in disbelief.

"You are literally the dumbest person I have ever met."

"I don't care." She limps to the bathroom and comes out after a few moments. "Lets go have breakfast and then go do groceries." I get up and we walk to the kitchen.

"By the way, your brother is here. You might wanna do away with that limping."

"Which one?"

"The one I am dating." She places a takeaway in the counter and looks at me.

"What the fuck is he doing here?"

"What the hell am I supposed to know? I was shocked to find him next to me smelling like a brewery when I woke up."

"Drinking? That doesn't sound like Zithulele. Sure he drinks, but not to that point. He must be going through something." She puts all the leftover meat on 2 plates and take turns warning it. Sisanda, Nomthi and Mbuyi eventually join us. Azanda dishes

up for her brother and then hands his plate to me. “Go give it to him.”

“Who?” Mbuyi asks.

“Her boyfriend.” She responds also handing me a glass of cold water. I roll my eyes and head to his room. I find him seating on the edge of the neatly made bed. He is wearing only black pants. He looks clean, so I figured he has taken a shower. He raises his head and looks at me as I walk in and place the food on the dressing table. I am about to head out when he speaks up. “Can we talk?”

“Eat first. Your food will get cold.”

“I don’t care about it. I wanna talk. Please.” I sigh and go sit next to him.

“You can talk while you eat.” He chuckles a bit and goes to take his plate. He first down the water in one go and then start digging in.

“So the night you left, I went to see my fiancée. I wanted to surprise her and also tell her about you. I got the shock of my life when I found her fucking another man.” I gasp with my eyes popped out. What in the actual fuck? Her nerve. Lord give me her audacity. He places the plate on the floor. He is not done eating but I guess he wants to give me his undivided attention.

“So after cutting all ties with her, I drove here. But I first went to a bar around the corner and drowned my sorrows when I didn’t find you guys. I switched off my phone because she was calling nonstop with different numbers. I am sorry if you think I was ignoring you.” I sigh and wrap my arms around his shoulders.

“I am sorry that you are going through something like that. Don't worry. You are going to be okay.”

“I am already okay because I have you in my arms.” He brings me to his lap and wraps his arms around my waist. “I am just a bit down. I mean it's expected when someone you once loved disappoints you.”

“I am going to give you a chance to grieve your engagement but if you dare shed a tear, it's over between us.” He breaks into laughter and I also laugh.

“Phela I didn’t love her like I love you, so the heartbreak is not that deep.” I chuckle.

“Stop trying to be charming. Anyways finish eating so that I can go wash your dishes then change. We are going grocery shopping.”

“Don’t worry, I will take my dishes downstairs and you look really cute in my t-shirt. Don’t change it, rather add shorts and sneakers.” I smile.

“Thank you.” I go and get dressed in my white jeans shorts and white sneakers. His t-shirt is black by the way. I walk back to the room to find him putting on his shoes. “Where are you going?”

“To the mall with you but I am going there to do my own things and then head to the rank.” I nod and then take my bag. I head to the lounge to find everyone waiting for me.

“Even Sisanda got here first.” They all laugh. “Lele is coming with us but won't stay for long.”

“Is he heading back today?” Azanda asks as they all stand up.

“No.” he says from behind as he places his hands on my hips. I immediately feel some electricity running all over my body. “I think I will go on Tuesday.”

“Are you okay though?” his sister asks with a concerned face.

“Let's go wait for them outside guys.” I say and he kisses my neck before letting me go. Is he trying to get me horny? Because it's working. After gaining some composure, I swallow hard and walk out.

I feel like some kind of a princess, always being driven around. I know all this will stop once we go back to Kwa Nongoma, so I am just going to enjoy this luxury treatment while it lasts. I am wearing a navy pencil skirt with an orange shirt and orange heeled sandals. I also have my beaded earrings and bracelet on which I made myself. Veli is wearing a crochet crop top which she also made and high waist pants. The driver drops us off at the front door of the Yakhanathi Building and he goes to park on the visitors' parking space. He said he is not going to go anywhere. He is just going to wait for us until we are done with what we are here for.

Walking inside, the view is just spectacular. There is a huge glass display shelf where many traditional pieces are at display. After admiring contents of that glass shelf, we move to the reception area and we greet the receptionist. He tells us to wait for someone in the couches by the lobby. We go and wait for that person there. In the mean time, Veli and Sisanda are taking numerous selfies. I am just laughing at them because they look so comfortable. You'd swear they are at home.

“Morning ladies. You must be Izimbali Zomhlaba. Well you all are really beautiful so you are indeed flowers of the world.” A guy says walking over to where we are seated. We quickly stand up. “I am Smilesihle Maphumulo by the way and I would like to officially welcome you to the Yakhanathi Organization. Honestly you deserve a party or a celebration because you guys joining us is such a huge honour. So we can get to know each other for a few minutes before I can give you a tour around the building.” He talks a lot but I am used to people like that.

“I am Azanda Buthelezi.”

“You are Roxy's new best friend. She is obsessed with you. Like every time we talk, a conversation doesn't end without her mentioning you.” I chuckle and look away.

“I am Velisani Jiki.”

“I am Nombuyiselo Magwazi.”

“I am Nomthandazo Msibi.”

“The name is Sisanda Mkhabela.” She says energetically and we all laugh.

Smilesihle then takes us on a tour around their huge building. There is this huge open space in the basement where all the magic happens but I wouldn't work well there. I need sunlight or natural light to excel in my work. He also shows us classrooms where skills like business management, entrepreneurial and time management amongst many others are made. He tells us that his mother is the owner of Yakhanathi but she is hardly here. So it's up to him and his siblings to keep the organization growing stronger and stronger everyday.

“You are going to meet most of my siblings during your training because they are also trainers in most academic skills. There is 8 of us including Roxy and we are all directly involved in this organization. In fact they should be here by now but they are running late as usual.”

“Are you really painting us bad to new people?” a hoarse woman voice says from behind us. We turn to see this woman who could be easily mistaken for Roxy except their dressing styles and voices are too different. The family genes are too strong.

“Sis these are the ladies from Izimbali Zomhlaba.” Smilesihle says.

“Ohh and you must be the famous Azanda my sister always posts.” She smiles looking at me. She is very pretty, like Roxy. “I am Sinothando by the way but they call me Snothy.” She shakes all out hands. Our backs are facing the entrance.

“Dude I was down the whole day. I didn’t even go out to the Sunday chillaz.” A familiar voice says from behind and the other person laughs.

“Why is that?” the other person asks still laughing.

“I got this chick from Antiqua and we went to my house and made love all night. And when I woke up

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she was gone. It wasn't even a Cinderella thing because she didn't leave no clue behind. I was so pissed and then just became sad the entire day.”

“Serves you right. Maybe you will start treating these girls well.” Smilesihle includes himself in the conversation and Snothy laughs.

“Oww you wound me brother. You wish heartbreak upon your own brother?”

“From what I heard, there were no strings. You just got a taste of your medicine and it seems to have left a bitter taste.” They laugh once again. The two men then finally come to stand in front of us and my eyes pop out when I see Siza and his almost twin Nzelwe. Siza is busy typing something on his phone.

“Mnandingamunye.” Nzelwe says with a smile which makes me blush a little. Mnandingamunye is my favourite clan name.

“You guys have been introduced?” Smilesihle asks.

“I saw her and her friend yesterday at the mall.”

“Siza, can you please pay attention to us for a few moments? You can go back to stalking those thots on Instagram after we are done with introductions.” Snothy says and Siza grunts before shoving his phone in his pocket. He raises his head to look at my friends and then his eyes land on me.

“This is Velisani, Nombuyiselo, Nomthandazo, Sisanda and Azanda from Izimbali Zomhlaba and ladies these are my brothers Siwenzelwe and Sizabantu.” Smilesihle says.

“Why didn’t Roxy get an ‘S’ word?” Veli asks and I chuckle.

“She has one but she hates it. It's Sibongile. She says it's too ancient for her.” I wouldn't wanna be called Sibongile even if they paid me. We laugh. Siza is still looking me. “Hey Siza, don’t eye rape Roxy's best friend. She made it clear that she doesn’t want you fucking her or any of these ladies.”

“A little too late for that.” Veli whispers in my ear and I laugh internally.

“You guys have been to the basement?” Nzelwe asks and we nod. “How did you find it? Is it a good space for you to work in?”

“We work with natural light every time. So I don’t think we will be able to work in the basement. The lights are too bright and too blinding. Bead work itself can cause eye problems. So imagine it plus working in those hospital lights, that’s a recipe

for disaster.” I say and they all turn their attention to me.

“Maybe you can turn one of your offices into our working space because they have natural light coming from the floor to ceiling glass windows.”

“So you're the boss?” Siza says after regaining composure. He is really handsome and now that he is with his siblings, I can see some similar facial features. He does look like Roxy in a way.

“There is no boss. I am just not afraid to voice out my concerns.” I say giving him a challenging look.

“Am I missing something?” Smilesihle asks.

“Azanda is the who sneaked out.” Siza says giving me a look.

“Why did you leave?” suddenly everyone walks away leaving me and Siza standing. “Are you going to give me an answer?” he asks in an intimidating look.

I honestly don't know how to answer him. I could lie or make up a reason why I decided to ghost or disappear on him but I ain't going to do any of that. Instead I am just going to keep quiet until someone calls us. I can't help myself. I look at him from head to toe. He is looking very handsome in dress pants, a golf t shirt and sneakers. I really wanna keep quiet but things are going to be weird but I don't want them to be. I also don't wanna allow his gaze to penetrate me just like his dick did hours ago. I clear my throat and give him a fake smile.

“So what is it that you do around here?” he frowns. He definitely wasn't expecting that question. I am pretty sure he was expecting something like ‘I am sorry for running away. I didn't wanna catch feelings. So that's why I left.’ Poor him because that's not the response he is going to get. “I am interested in knowing your role here so that we won't cross paths in the future.” He shakes his head. Probably thinking ‘this chick is crazy or delusional.’

“Unfortunately for you Miss, I will be teaching you a 5-day General Management Course. So it's safe to say you will see me

each day you are here. Now back to my question, and I am not going to drop this until you answer me. Why did you leave?"

"Are you really that interested in knowing the reason behind my early departure? Or you are just pissed that someone did what you usually do to women? Stomped on your ego?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Your reputation precedes you, Sizabantu. Your sister was kind enough to tell me a lot about you. Unfortunately she calls you Bantu. That's why I somehow fell into your web, but luckily I got out so early before anything could happen. I mean I wasn't expecting to lose my virginity to a one night stand but it happened. And now, can we move on from this? It happened, you took my virginity and fucked me from dusk till dawn. Can we move on now?" his eyes pop out.

"You were a virgin? Why didn't you tell me?" he is raising his voice and I don't feel comfortable having this conversation in a lobby.

“Don't tell me you didn't feel it. I thought guys always know and can tell on the first penetration ukuthi no mann, no other bull has been inside here. Even the blood can vouch for me.”

“I thought you got on your periods and it got super weird and embarrassing for you. That's one of the reasons why I thought you left. I did feel that you were super tight, like really tight.” He sighs and holds my hand. “Can we just talk about it?”

“No. I didn't come here to talk about what happened between us. Can we just build a bridge and get over it? Thank you.” I walk away to join the others. Veli is looking at me with that 'spill' look. I just chuckle and shake my head. Siza just walks past everyone to the elevator.

“Awkward.” Smilesihle says and his siblings laugh. “Moving on,” I burst out laughing. I mean their brother seems upset but they are moving on like nothing happened.

“He will get over it. Siza always throw tantrums when things don't go his way. Whatever happened between you guys must have humbled him. Please stay longer here.” Sinothando says and her siblings laugh again.

“Anyways familiarize yourself with the place and you are going to have your first class or lesson at 10 am which will last for an hour, another from 11 am to 12 pm and after that you will go for lunch which is 45 minutes. After lunch, you will have practicals. You will always do the heavy learning at the morning and practicals during the day. You will get your correct schedules for the two weeks tomorrow morning or late today before you leave. Your certificates will be sent to you via post after a month. Okay, that's all for now.” Smilesihle says and walks away.

“You saw where the lessons take place, so you won't have any problems getting there. On Saturdays from 10 am to 3pm. You will have to come and do your craft which might be featured In the glass wall at the entrance with your name on it.” Sinothando winks and then walks away.

“Watch out for her. She is lesbian.” Nzelwe says wjth a smirk and also walks away.

“So we are like stranded until our first class?” Sisanda asks and I chuckle.

serif;mso-bidi-font-family:"Times New Roman">“Seems like it.” Mbuyi says. “Let's just sit at the lobby and enjoy free Wi-Fi.” They have already given us the password. We all agree and then go sit back to the couches. “Le good life.” We laugh.

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The second class is Siza's. I thought it would be only the five of us but there are also 3 other ladies and 5 guys with us. Siza is very intelligent. He is teaching with so much ease and don't even get annoyed when someone stops him to ask a question of find some clarity. Our eyes keep meeting every now and then but that's expected because he has to look at all of us while teaching.

“We are at the end of our first lesson but just to test if you guys were with me and not admiring each other or me,” Siza says and we laugh. “I am going to ask you a few questions. Okay, I am going to start with Zinhle, right?” the lady at the front nods. “Name four fundamental management functions.”

“Planning, organizing, leading and controlling.” The lady answers with confidence.

“Correct. Now Menzi, mention the categories in which managers are classified into.”

“Two categories, according to their level in their organization and function or specialist area of management for which they are responsible.”

“I am really glad to see that you guys were listening. Now Nomthandazo, name three management skills managers need to perform effectively in different levels.”

“Conceptual skills, interpersonal skills and technical skills.”

“Azanda, what are conceptual skills?”

“They are the mental ability to view the operation of the organization and its part holistically. Thinking and planning abilities.”

“And that concludes today's class. Thank you so much for your participation. I hope that you will carry on being this attentive throughout the whole week. Have a good day.” We all stand up and pack our things. My phone rings as we are heading out. I laugh and answer it when I see that it's Roxy.

“Did you wait for my lunch break just so you can call?” she chuckles.

“Bitch you weren't even updating me. Are those morons treating you well? If Bantu has said something offensive, tell me, I will deal with him.” I laugh. If only she knew what he has done. It's more than saying something offensive, he entered my father's kraal and ate his cow.

“I am super hungry. We will chat after I have eaten.”

“Sounds like you're avoiding me but I am also meeting up with the mayor's secretary. Bye babes.”

“Bye love.” I hang up.

“Does your love know that you have given your virginity to me?” I turn to find Siza staring at me with his arms folded on his chest. Dear God. Help me now.

“Who I talk to is none of your business. And don't ever eavesdrop on my conversations with other people.” He raises his hand in surrender but there is some sarcasm in the way he is looking at me.

“Sorry Miss Buthelezi.” He chuckles and walks away.

The whole week I have been trying to avoid Siza hoping that he will just forget about what happened between us. It's Friday. I think he has moved on. I mean you can't be sulking about someone leaving you in bed for a whole week. That just makes you look pathetic. After our last practical classes, we all meet at the lobby and then as we are about to head out, someone calls my name. I turn to see Siza walking towards me with Nzelwe. They stop when they reach me.

“I came with back up just in case you turn me away.” I roll my eyes. “I know what I did was wrong according to our tradition and I am willing to make things right by coming to pay inkomo kamama to your family. I hope whatever beef between us will be squashed.” Well he is right about the inkomo kamama part. When my family finds out that I am skipping the annual reed dance this year, they will want to know the reason behind my absence. If they find out I slept with someone, they will want him to pay inkomo kamama to appease to them and to make things right with my parents. I smirk.

“Do you know Nqengelele, the founder of Sondiya Logistics?” I ask and they frown.

“Yeah, why?” they both respond at the same time.

“That's my father. So good luck with everything. I am the apple of his eye, so he just might shoot you for entering his kraal without permission. I am surprised that you didn't see the resemblance or you were just too ignorant. Anyways see you tomorrow or on Monday.” I smile and walk out.

“Are we going clubbing again tonight?” Sisanda asks as soon as I climb inside the car.

“We have to be here at 10 am remember? How about we go to the club tomorrow night?” I suggest.

“Good thinking. I honestly forgot about tomorrow.” Sisanda says. “Maybe we can go to a restaurant or a shisanyama after our practical before going to the club. We should like explore.”

“What were you discussing with Siza?” Veli whispers in my ear.

“You are such a nosy sister in law.” She laughs.

“I don't care.” I also laugh.

Getting to the house, we change into our bikinis and go swim. The pool here is super big and you don't have to worry about

most kids from the rural areas drowning because we are used to swimming in rivers and dams that have not been rumoured to harbor snakes. We take pictures and post them on our social media accounts. The pieces we are wearing are crochet bikinis made by Veli, Nomthi and Nyezi. So we are also advertising our craft. Within a few minutes we are trending. Ow wow, people love seeing girls with exposed body parts.

“Just hope we won't end up getting insulted about this.” Mbuyi says in a worried tone. I just hope they don't get into trouble with their men. I know how possessive Zulu men can be. They will think the ladies are doing as they please in Jozi and are liking the attention they are getting from the social media. You know how jealous guys are.

“Smilesihle is loving this attention.” Sisanda says with a smile. We did tag Yakhanathi on our posts.

“Siza has posted us on his story and wall.” Nomthi says and I quickly go check out my Instagram. I chuckle. I hope this is him advertising our work and not him trying to get my attention because it's not going to work.

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NARRATED

Zithulele drove inside the Buthelezi household and parked right in front of his flat. He frowned when he saw unfamiliar cars parked on the yard. Maybe it was his father's guests

he thought as he walked to his flat. A few moments later, one of the guards were sent to call him. He followed the guard and he nearly fainted when he saw his ex fiancé with her parents and sister seated in the lounge. His mother, MaMhlongo, MaWanda, MaVezi, his father and Zikhethele were seated on the other side of the lounge while the Khoza family occupied the other part.

“Son these people came here to tell us that you broke the engagement with their daughter, our daughter in law, then you humiliated her and she got kicked out of the apartment she was staying in under your orders. Is that true? What do you say about this?” Sokalisa asked looking at Zithulele. He sighed and sat down next to Zikhethele.

“Firstly I would like to greet everyone here and I am sorry for coming in late. It seems like this started a while ago. If I had been informed about the meeting, I would’ve came home early. Now without wasting anyone's time, I would like to get straight

to the point. I did cut off Zimasa from my life and she knows exactly why I did that. Would you like to tell the whole family what led to me cutting you off?" he asked looking at Zimasa who was looking at him with a begging look.

"You didn't have to humiliate her like that. No matter what she did. Yoh should've sat down and discussed the way forward instead of treating her like a dog. Is that how you treat your women in this family?" Zimasa's sister asked with pure disgust looking at every member of the Buthelezi family. Zithulele laughed.

"Did you or did you not tell your family about the events that led to me calling off the engagement?" he asked once again and Zimasa nodded. "You did? Okay. Please share those events with everyone so that it can correspond with mine." Zimasa swallowed hard and looked down.

"You, umm, you." She kept on clearing her throat.

"Let me just make things easy for you. So family, there I was, driving to Durban on a Friday night to surprise my fiancé with flowers and her favourite things. But I am the one who got the surprise of my life. My ex fiancé was riding another man's dick

in the same apartment that I was paying for. They were vibing to jazz which I introduced to her. Long story short, I caught her cheating and decided to cut her off. I don't want anything from her. She can keep the lobola money but it's really over for us. You can even keep the refundable deposits from the bookings you had made for the engagement party. It's really over between us. I don't understand why you brought your family here when you know that you were the one at fault.”

Zimasa's mother just stood up and headed out, clicking her tongue on the way. She was super angry she didn't even wanna talk. Her daughter had made them look like fools in front of a powerful and Influential family. She wished to just strangle her and toss her at the Hluhluwe Game Reserve in their way back to Durban.

“We are very sorry for such a disappointment and for wasting your time. Hope you can forgive us. Thank you for your hospitality.” Zimasa's father made her stand up and dragged her outside. Her sister also followed them but not without giving Zithulele a mean stare. Both Zithulele and Zikhethela just laughed.

“Why didn’t you tell us about this?” Sokalisa asked.

“I was still going to call a meeting and tell you guys properly. Anyways now that this is out of the way, I am paying lobola to a maiden from this village next month, and no she is not a rebound. I fell in love with her before Zimasa did what she did to me. I just wanted you guys to know.” He said and then headed out. Zikhethele followed him and they continued laughing as they walked to Zithulele's flat.

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“I don’t see the reason for entering this competition knowing very well that your sister is going to win. She is, after all, connected. She is friends with the organizer.” Ntokozo said spitefully and Sethulo just huffed. They were having lunch at KFC in town.

“Are we going to spend our whole time talking about my sister? If so, then tell me so I can leave.” Sethulo said as he took his wallet and car keys. As he was standing up, Ntokozo held his arm.

“Please don’t go. I promise I will stop talking about her.” She begged him and he huffed.

“Azanda is my sister, my blood sister. What makes you think I enjoy sitting and listening to you complain and whine about her all day? Would you be happy if I talked shit about any of your siblings in front of you? With you?” she shook her head. “Now why are you doing that to me?”

“I am sorry. I won't do it again.” He sighed.

“Let's go.”

“Please buy me a shake first.” She gave him puppy eyes. He retrieved R200 from his wallet and gave her. “Should I buy one for you?” he nodded. She stood up and walked to the till point. His phone rang and he smiled when he saw that it was his sister.

“Mtakababa, how are you?” he answered the call.

“I am in deep shit bafo and I don't think I can tell you this over the phone. How fast can you get to Joburg?” she asked. Her voice was unsettled. She sounded a bit nervous and terrified. He quickly stood up and took Ntokozo's bag from the table.

“What's wrong? You're scaring me.” He signaled to Ntokozo that he was heading to the car and she nodded.

“I can't discuss this over the phone and you're the only one I know who can help me out. Please come here as soon as you can.” He climbed in his car and placed Ntokozo's bag on the passenger seat.

“Can I talk to MaJiki at least?” he thought maybe someone near her might be able to explain to him what's going on.

“She is busy. Please come bhuti. I need you.” She hung up. He looked at his phone and threw it on his lap. Ntokozo came out of KFC a few minutes later. She first handed the shakes to him and then climbed inside the car.

“Is everything okay? Is there an emergency which you must attend to?” she asked curiously as she placed the change in her wallet.

“Not an emergency. Just some family drama. I have to go to Jozi in a few hours. You can come with me if you want.” He drove out of the parking lot. She frowned looking at him.

“Come with you? On such short notice?”

“I also didn't know about this trip, well until a few moments ago.”

“Are you going to tell me what's going on?” he shook his head.

“But you can buy those sneakers you have been sbwling. We will come back a day after tomorrow or even earlier. As soon as

the problem is solved.” She sighed and looked outside the window. Out of all the Buthelezi brothers, he was the most friendly one but somehow the most closed off. He didn’t like talking about his feelings but loved to hear about other people's feelings. Azanda had a way to make him talk but sometimes she also failed.

“Are you, by any chance, going to Azanda?” he nodded.

“She needs my help.” She scoffed and continued to look outside the window. That was the thing with Azanda. If ever she called for her brothers, they would always come to her rescue. Leaving whatever they were busy with just to attend to her.

When the car parked a few meters away from her home. She turned to look at Sethulo. “You can fetch me after 2 hours. I will be ready.” She then climbed off the car and walked home.

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Arriving at home, he went to his flat to pack an overnight bag. Then he went to his mother's house. MaWanda was busy kneading a dough. She wanted to make idombolo with boiled

chicken. She stopped what she was doing and turned all her attention to his son.

“Sethu, what's going on? You seem anxious.”

“Nothing ma. I just have to rush to Joburg for an emergency. I will be back later this week.” She looked at him, squinting her eyes.

“Did you tell your father?”

“You will tell him for me.”

“No. You will tell him yourself. He is at mamkhulu's house. Come back to fetch some leftovers before you leave.” She went back to what she was doing. Sethulo walked to MaMhlongo's house and he found his father and both MaMhlongo talking and laughing.

“Knock-Knock.” He said and walked inside. He sat next to MaMhlongo.

“Why does it look like you're on your way out?” MaMhlongo asked.

“That’s because I am. I am rushing to Joburg, so I wanted to say goodbye. I will be back on Saturday.”

“Is there something I should know?” Sokalisa asked.

“No and you should relax, I will keep a close eye on Azanda.”

“Don’t overdo it. She might just cut me off again.” Sokalisa said and they laughed.

“Well see you when you come back son.” MaMhlongo said.

“Don’t forget to tell your brothers. They are in Khethelo's room.”

“Okay. See you soon pensioners.” He walked out. He went to bid MaVezi and his sisters farewell. He then went to Zikhethele's flat and found almost all his brothers there. “Who is watching the taxis at the rank while you're here?” he asked looking at Mnyamane.

“It's Skhwili's turn bafo.” Mnyamane defended himself with a little pout at the end and they laughed.

“Anyways good I found you all here. I am off to Joburg. Azanda needs me.”

“Why? What happened?” Zithulele was quick to ask.

“It's something that has to do with her personally and you know why she came to me. All you monkeys are hard to talk to.”

“But whatever it is, it's serious. Otherwise she wouldn't asked you to drive all the way to Joburg in a hurry. What aren't you telling us?” Ayabongwa asked.

“She didn't tell me over the phone. I will let you know as soon as we sit down and talk.” Sethulo said standing up.

“You seem to be in a hurry. Do you have a special somebody accompanying you?” Somnyama asked and Sethulo showed him his middle fingers. His brothers laughed.

“Is it the Ntokozo chick or you have moved on to greater conquests?” Zikhethele asked wiggling his eyebrows. His brothers laughed once more.

“Who knows? Maybe I might just snatch the Maphumulo girl which bafo has been playing hide and seek with.” Sethulo said laughing as he ran out. As predicted, Somnyama chased after him. Their brothers followed behind them laughed.

“I will kill you wena.” Somnyama said chuckling. They were in the middle of the yard.

“And then I will haunt you and make sure you die single.” Sethulo responded and they continued laughing. MaNene drove in and she smiled seeing the boys playing in the yard. She walked to them.

“You look clean. Where are you off to?” she asked looking at Sethulo.

“Ma are you trying to say that we are dirty?” Ayabongwa asked.

“Your words, not mine.” Everyone laughed as she made her way to the main house.

“Well let me leave you dirty people alone before you make me look like you.” Sethulo teased his brothers and ran into his mothers house.

'Send me your home address or location so that I can go and pay for inkomo kamama wakho.'

That's the text Siza sent which made me panic, sweat and stress out. Sure it is expected that a guy should pay for breaking a girl's virginity plus I was itshitshi lomhlanga. So Siza had to pay. But I didn't think he would take my words seriously. I thought he would run for the hills and never speak to me again but I was wrong. Out of all my brothers, I knew Sethulo was my best bet. He sure is overprotective like the others but he is not irrational and doesn't like resorting to violence anytime things don't go his way. He is what we call 'the mediator' in our family.

Zithulele is tough, Zikhethele is just an older version of Somnyama with a loud mouth and a laugh that can annoy the fuck out of you. Ayabongwa is like Mnyamane, mischievous and also violent. He is what you call iqaba and he is always ready for war. So people can understand why I chose to turn to Sethulo in a time of need. I could've gone to my sisters, but Sethulo is a sweet talker, he can calm any fire with his words.

“This is so interesting and funny for me to watch. A whole Buthelezi princess panicking and in distress. You really are scared of Sokalisa.” My best friend says as she continues laughing. I give her a boring look and her laughter increases.

It's Monday afternoon and we are sitting at a restaurant waiting for Siza because he said he wanted us to meet. I brought Veli with me so that there won't be any funny business. She has been sipping on wine and spewing bullshit from the moment we sat down. I am just drinking water with hopes that it will keep me hydrated and less anxious. I am seated facing the entrance so I see him as he enters with Nzelwe following him. Nzelwe is talking and Siza is laughing. He looks really handsome, especially when he is laughing and when it's a genuine laugh. I find myself drawn to it. It's pure and real.

“Stop daydreaming.” Veli shakes my hand and then looks behind her. She chuckles when her eyes land on the almost Maphumulo twins. “Over here.” She shouts waving her hand. “Siza is very cute. I would also day dream if I had been held in those arms. Dear God.” She whispers and I laugh. Where can I trade best friends? They make their way to our booth. Siza

slides in next to me while Nzelwe sits next to Veli. Siza surprises me by turning my head and perking my lips.

“Evening ladies.” He says with a smile as he pages through the menu. I clear my throat and raise my eyes to look at Veli who has this annoying smug on her face. “So what are we eating?”

“You can order a platter that serves 4 but make sure it doesn’t have any avocado in it. Azanda hates it.” Veli says.

“Lies. I don’t hate avocados. In fact I love them. I am just allergic.”

“What happens when you eat them?” Nzelwe asks.

“My face swells and my throat gets sore while I also get flue. So if you really hate me, feed me avocado without letting me know.” I say looking at Siza and he chuckles.

“On the contrary love, I like you. So you shouldn't worry about me feeding you avocados. Plus I don’t want the whole of izinkabi from KZN chasing me all over Jozi because I harmed Nqengelele’s princess.” He says with a smirk.

“Mr. Buthelezi is a really cool man but when something happens to Azanda, he turns into a beast, a predator. The week before we came here

Azanda got mixed up in a fight between her brothers and some guys from the rural areas. Let's just say Sokalisa was ready to start war because of a single punch.” Veli says and I give her a look.

“Too much information Velisani.” She chuckles.

“But you know that I am telling the truth. That man would even start war with the president or iSilo if they could ever do something to you. I am pretty sure he would blow iSilo's brains out if he were to choose you as his latest wife in the reed dance. Well that was before someone decided to take your virginity.” She says looking at Siza and we all can't help but break into laughter. Veli is normally talkative but when there is a certain alcohol percentage in her body, she gets worse.

“He reminds me of how my father is with Roxy. He once almost strangled a guy to death who slapped Roxy.” Nzelwe says.

“Cheers to overprotective fathers then.” She raises her glass but laughs when she realises that she is the only one with a drink. I long ago finished my water. “More for me then.” She gulps the remaining wine and smiles after placing the glass back on the table. The waiter comes to our table and her smile is wide as she sets her eyes on the men that have joined us.

“Are you ready to order?” her eyes stay longer on Siza's face. He looks at the menu.

“We will have the Big Bear Platter and a full chocolate brownie which I will be sharing with the dark beauty next to me and a bottle of Heineken.” He closes the menu and hands it to the waiter. “What will you be drinking?” he asks looking me.

“A cranberry Cosmo and a bar one milkshake as a takeaway.” She gives me a fake smile and turns to Veli and Nzelwe.

“I will also have Heineken and a full peppermint tart which I will also share with the Xhosa princess. You can bring a whole bottle of the wine she is drinking.” Nzelwe says. Veli is going to leave this restaurant drunk, I am telling you.

“Okay. I will bring your beverages in a short while.” She takes the menus and walks away.

“That chick was eye raping you Siza.” Veli says and Siza chuckles.

“No she was not.” I say. “She was just admiring him and being over friendly. Who knows? Maybe he might have slept with her a while back and now he doesn't remember her.” Siza turns his whole body to my direction. He leans closer to my ear.

“Listen here Miss Virgin. I can make you come right here in this restaurant filled with people and still play it cool but I don't think you would be able to keep a straight face as I finger you softly. So respect me Azanda, because I have the ability to make you scream like nobody's business and attract attention to yourself.” My eyes pop out. He smiles and goes back to his original seating position. Nzelwe and Veli seem to be talking about something else because they are laughing. “Relax. You look like you've seen a ghost.” My lady parts have moistened and I think I need to go to the restroom to cool off a bit and remove this damp panty liner. I clear my throat.

“Excuse me.” He chuckles and stands up.

He fixes his pants and steps away from the booth. I stand up and quickly rush to the restroom. Arriving at the restroom, I catch my breath and look at the mirror. I feel flushed. Did that asshole just make me horny? Funny because I was begging so hard inwardly that he fingers me in public. What the fuck is wrong with me? I am craving him. I crave the feel of his dick deep inside me. Something is definitely wrong with me.

MaMhlongo should do a ritual for me when I come back. This is not normal. I go to a vacant cubicle and remove the panty liner. I wash my hands and splash water on my face, just to cool myself down. I wipe my face with a paper cloth, do a few breathing

exercises and then head out. Siza stands up as I approach our booth.

“We need to talk, in private.” He says as he hands me the cocktail. He also takes his beer and leads me to the smoking area. “So I talked to my father about inkomo kamama. I also told him who's daughter you are. He said I should pay as soon as possible, just so I won't find myself in a conflict with your brothers. So my family will be coming on my behalf to pay next weekend. That will be your first weekend back at home, right?” I clear my throat and nod. I take a long sip at the cocktail. I no longer have the confidence I had when I first told him about this issue. “Are you listening to me?” I turn to him and sigh.

“Yes I am listening. I will notify one of my brothers, the less aggressive one so that he will tell Sokalisa about your arrival.”

“Why do you call him Sokalisa?” I frown.

“That's none of your business. Now let's go back to the booth before those two think we are doing something else out here.” I attempt to walk back inside but he has other plans because he turns me swiftly, grabs my waist and smashes his lips against mine.

Arriving at home, we find Sethulo inside the house chatting with Nsezi and Skaqa. Gadla was the one who drove us to the mall. Sethulo is not alone. Next to him is Ntokozo, Nomzamo's best friend. What is she doing here? Are they an item? If so, how serious are they? He spots me and immediately stands up. He comes to me and looks at me. It's like he is trying to read me.

“How are you doing bhuti?” he smiles a bit and hugs me.

“I am fine. I just wanna know why I was called here in such a hurry.”

“How about we eat dinner first before we talk? Aren't you tired?” he rolls his eyes.

“I want to know why you said you needed me. Tell me sisi.”

“Aren't you going to introduce your friend?” he huffs.

“You know Ntoko and she also knows you, so there is no need for introductions.”

“Fine.” I pull him outside and we sit on the pool chairs. “Have you ever broken someone's virginity?” his eyes pop out and he blinks too much.

“Why are you asking that?”

“Just answer the question. It's not about you.” He swallows hard.

“Yes, I have.”

“What did you do after that? Did you pay for inkomo kamama?” he clears his throat.

“No. I never did. She never asked for it.”

“So it's her duty to ask for it? You see nothing wrong with entering another man's kraal and eating his cow?”

“Hhay Azanda, why am I being put in a trial?” I chuckle.

“The thing is, I slept with someone. It wasn't planned. Just a spare of the moment thing. And I know questions will be asked if I don't go to the reed dance this year. So I want him to come pay before that. Maybe after 2 weeks or so.” He is clenching his jaws. He is not even looking at me but at the pool before us.

“Say something bhuti.”

“I need a drink.” He stands up and heads back inside.

I sigh and burry my head in my hands. If the mediator is the one angry at me, then who is going to help me with this? I stand up and head back inside. He is drinking beer at the kitchen. He looks at me and then back at his bottle. I sigh and head to my room. I lock it and go bath. As I am drying my body, my phone rings. I wear my sleepers and rush to it. It's a video call from Siza. His timing sucks. Anyways I answer it.

“Damn. I love my timing.” He says and I chuckle. “Please remove that towel.” I laugh and roll my eyes. He is leaning on the headboard and wearing a light vest.

“What do you want Sizabantu?”

“Don't call me that. Only my father calls me by my full name.”

“Well consider me the second person to call you that on a daily basis.” He grunts and I laugh. “Anyways, how can I help you Mr. Maphumulo?”

“Join me for dinner tomorrow night.” I sigh.

“I don't want to.” He laughs.

“You want me to charm you into agreeing to go on a date with me? Because I can do that my love. You are lucky because I have been very lenient with you. Once I use my charms, you won't be able to resist.” I laugh.

“You are so full of yourself. You must probably think that I am one of those girls from Antiqua who would do anything to be with you. Shame

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not me. I am not one of your followers. I am not phased by any of your charms.” He laughs.

“If you weren't phased, you wouldn't have ended up on my bed the first night we met at Antiqua. I still remember your moans and the way you held me as I was...”

“Shut up Siza.” He chuckles and bites his lips. “My brother is here, so I need to get dressed and then spend some time with him.” His face becomes serious instantly. I am attempted to laugh but I just hold it on.

“Which one?”

“Somnyama.” His eyes pop out. I guess Somnyama's reputation precedes him.

“We will talk tomorrow at work. Sleep tight.” He quickly hangs up and I break into laughter.

I think I am going to use Somnyama to scare Siza anytime he talks shit to me. I wear a two tone scoop neck dress and flip flops. I would wear pajamas and sleepers but it's still early. I head out with my phone and I stop at the passage when I see Ntokozo coming my way.

“Ntokozo.”

“Azanda.”

“What brings you here?”

“Your brother asked me to accompany him.”

“Are you dating?”

“Why don't you ask him?” she is giving me attitude and I don't like it. I tilt my head to the side.

“You do realize that you're outnumbered here, right? My brothers do anything I tell them to do. If I tell Sethulo to dump you because you tried to poison me or something, he wouldn't think twice. On top of dumping you, he would do something really bad to you. So try to swallow that grudge you have against me

for the duration of your stay here if you still want to be in a relationship with my brother.” Her nose is flaring. You can see that she is angry. “Good talk.” I smile and then walk to the lounge. “Where is Sethulo?” I ask as I settle on the vacant couch.

“Out. He went to buy something. I don’t know what.” Sisanda says and I nod.

“Where is Veli?” she laughs.

“She is so drunk, she immediately dozed off the minute her head hit the pillows.” I chuckle. “What did she drink?”

“A whole bottle of wine and she was talking like a radio presenter.”

“You are such a fake friend. How could you let her finish an entire bottle?” Mbuyi asks laughing. We also laugh. “I guess you will have to answer her phone just in case your brother calls, so that you can save her relationship.” A phone rings. “Speak of the devil.” She hands me Veli's phone. I compose myself and then answer it.

“My favourite brother in the whole wide world.” I say as I walk to the kitchen. He chuckles.

“You are lying. Your favourite is Sethulo. You made that abundantly clear when you called him in a time of need instead of me.”

“Is that jealousy I hear in your voice brother?” he grunts and I laugh. “Anyways Sethulo is the family mediator. Everyone knows that. I might have committed a crime here in Jozi, so I need someone like him who will solve the problem, not someone like you who will make it worse.” He laughs.

“I am not uphumasilwe mina dade.”

“Who are you trying to convince?” he laughs again and I also laugh.

“Where is my wife anyways?”

“You have a wife? When did you get married and why didn’t I get a wedding invitation? Was it one of those unholy matrimonies?” he breaks into laughter. “Answer me brother. Did you get married without my knowledge?”

“Well dade, the young lady who is the owner of that phone is already married to me in my heart. Now where is the love of my life?”

“She is coming down with a flue. Even her voice was a bit scratchy. So she drank flue medicine and she is now resting.”

“When did that flue start?”

“We were working at a cold place today. The air conditioner had problems, so I think that's when it started. She had been sneezing all evening.”

“That’s bad. Must I come up there?” I chuckle.

“Don’t worry about her. I will make sure I nurse her back to health. Anyways, we are coming back on Monday. So you will see her then.”

“Okay dade. Please kiss her for me and tell her I love her when she wakes up.”

“What type of kiss should I give her?”

“Yey wena Azanda!” he scolds at me and I laugh.

“Bye bafo. Pass my greetings to everyone at home.” I hang up.

“Sit down. We have to talk.” I freeze immediately. I take a deep breath and then turn to face Sethulo.

“Can we please go and talk in my room?” he chuckles.

“You mean my room? Because you stole it from me.” I laugh.

“Technically I didn’t steal it. I claimed it because it suited me.”

“Thatha Shekinah.” I laugh and shake my head. He leads me to an office. I think Sokalisa spends most of his time here. He closes the door and then sits on the desk. I sit on the couch and sigh. “Start talking. Tell me everything about the low life who slept with you. I need every single detail that you know about him and I need to know what led to you sleeping with him.” I swallow hard. He is so serious right now.

“His name is Sizabantu Maphumulo. He is Roxy’s brother. We met at Antiqua club on our first night here. That’s when it happened. I didn’t know who he was back then. And he didn’t deceive me or drug me. We were just both attracted to each other at that moment. So we went to his house and then got down to business. When I woke up, I sneaked out with hopes that I would never see him again, only to find out that he is a Maphumulo and I would see him every day for our training. He wanted answers and I didn’t give them to him. Then I told him about paying inkomo kamama. I was hoping that would make

him go away but it made things worse. He said he wanted to come pay for it as soon as possible.” He closes his eyes and looks down. I can literally feel the disappointment from where I am seated.

“Do you have feelings for this guy?” I shake my head. He looks at me. “I want you to be completely honest with me Azanda. You called me here because you needed my help. Now I want transparency between us. Don’t lie to me because it might backfire in the near future.” I huff and rub my hands against my thighs.

“I have never really been in a relationship. So I wouldn’t know if what I feel towards him is associated with love feelings or the fact that we had sex.” He tilts his head to the side and gives me a pity look. “Don’t give me that look. I didn’t date because I didn’t want boys to tell me that I had daddy issues if the relationships didn’t work out.” he smiles a bit.

“But now you don’t have daddy issues because you sorted out stuff between you and dad. What’s stopping you from pursuing a relationship with this Sabantu guy?”

“It’s Sizabantu bhuti.” He rolls his eyes and I laugh.

“I don’t care about his name. So he is always at the organization’s offices?” I nod. “I might be the one to drive you there tomorrow and get a chance to meet him and have a little man to man talk.”

“Not at the office bhuti. Rather I organize a meet up between you two at a restaurant.” He shakes his head.

“No. I wanna catch him off guard and don’t you dare warn him.” I raise my hands up in surrender. “I also wanna give him a few of my punches before the real fighters learn about this because I am pretty sure they will skin him alive.”

“But nobody did this to all the girls you guys have slept with.”

“Call us double standard bastards or whatever you 21st century women call us men, but we men always want what’s best for our sisters and daughters. If it were possible, we would literally create the perfect men for you just so you could never endure heartbreak, abuse or whatever men put you through. So him sleeping with you has just made him an enemy and paying for inkomo kamama won’t change anything.” I huff and throw my head back at the couch.

“You guys are impossible.” He chuckles. “So what’s the deal with you and Ntokozo or ‘Ntoko’ as you would like to call her?” he laughs.

“I can hear a lot of sarcasm from your question. I know she is the best friend or you supposed nemesis and trust me, she has made her dislike for you very clear. I may or may not marry her in the near future, but for my sake please try to at least get along or even pretend. You know how much I hate drama sisi, so can we have less of it this week? And don’t ask why I brought her here, because I won’t answer you.” I roll my eyes and stand up.

“I am sure Mbuyi has dished up for everyone.” He smiles and also stands up.

We head out and he locks the office. We settle down at the dining table and start eating. Only Veli is not at the table. I am pretty sure she will wake up with a splitting headache, but she was drinking expensive wine. So hopefully the hangover won’t be too much. After dinner, Sisanda and Gadla do the dishes. They insisted.

“Good night brother and everyone else.” I say as I stand up.

“We are everyone else now that your brother is here?” Mbuyi asks and I laugh.

I make my way to my room. I change into my nightie and climb inside the sheets. I go through my social media accounts and I stumble upon a DM from a celebrity named B-Lady. She is a superstar and have over 5 million followers on Instagram. She is requesting me to design a beaded inhloko with a matching beaded necklace

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bracelets, Ibhande lasokhalo, and anklets and then add beadwork to her designed dress. Wow this is huge. She even left her personal phone number. I can't believe this. It's been only a week and a half at Yakhanathi and already there is an opportunity like this open for me. I don't even waste any more time. I dial her number immediately. She answers after a few rings.

“Bongekile here. How can I help you?” it really is her. She sounds wide awake.

“Hey. This is Azanda Buthelezi from Izimbali Zomhlaba, currently working under Yakhanathi.”

“Oww Azoh, nice to hear from you. Let’s do a video call.” I agree and end the call. After a few minutes, she video calls me. I answer immediately. “I am glad to see that even without the filters you look like a true dark beauty, and I am pretty sure you are happy to see me without make-up.” I laugh and nod.

“A bit happy. I have nothing against make-up but you look good even without it.” She chuckles. She looks really beautiful with just a doek wrapped around her head.

“So as you read my DM, I just want you touch in my outfit. A friend of mine recommended you and she even showed me some of your work. I know you have never designed a dress before but I am pretty sure decorating it won’t be a problem. I am attending the Traditional Awards, so I need to look the part.”

“Wow. Okay. Thank you so much for this opportunity. So when do you want me to start working on your outfit?”

“We can meet up for lunch tomorrow at my house so that you can fetch the dress and also your payment. I will just pay you upfront so that you won’t be short of anything while busy with my outfit.”

“Okay then. I will await the location. Thank you for trusting me with such a huge project. I promise I won’t disappoint you.” she smiles.

“I am all about supporting local business and after all, us girls must stick together and empower each.”

“Amen to that.”

“See you tomorrow then Azoh.”

“See you.” she hangs up and I wait for a few moments before rushing down the stairs screaming like crazy. Mbuyi, Nomthi and Sisanda are already waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs. Sisanda is even laughing.

“What happened?” Mbuyi asks.

“We just bagged a celebrity client.”

“Who?”

“B-Lady.”

“Thee B-Lady? The singer, songwriter and actress, among other things?”

“Yes.” They all scream and we do some silly dance celebration. Sethulo comes to us with a smile.

“Do I have to ask?”

“All you need to know is that our access to unlimited wealth and success has been unlocked. We need to do a massive celebration on Sunday before we leave.” He gives me a hug.

“I might just stay until then so that all the drinks and meat will be on Me.” we all scream and bombard him with hugs. He just laughs.

Sethulo was right. He is really driving us to Yakhanathi. I didn't warn Siza because that would've been betrayal on my brother. When we get to the centre, we head inside. We meet the Maphumulo siblings at the lobby laughing about something. Siza is not here. I have a feeling that he is always late. Smilesihle smiles as he makes his way to us. He is always looking stylish. His sexuality confuses me all the time.

"Hello darlings. Who is this fine ass man you're with?" okay. I am no longer confused. He is gay.

"Good morning Smilesihle. This is my brother Sethulo Buthelezi. Bhuti this is Smilesihle Maphumulo, that's Siwenzelwe and Sinothando." They come and stand with us. They exchange pleasantries.

"Where is Siza?" Veli asks with an annoying smirk on her face. I updated her on the events of last night when she woke up with a little hangover. I give her a stern look and she just laughs.

"He should be here by now." Snothy says as her eyes travel to the entrance. Siza makes his way in looking as handsome as

ever. He is wearing jeans with a tight mustard short-sleeved shirt and mustard Bathu sneakers. He is carrying a laptop bag. He smiles as he makes his way to us but his smiles quickly dissolves when his eyes land on Sethulo. "Speak of the devil. Brother, this Sethulo, Azanda's brother. Sethulo, this is our brother Siza." They shake hands.

"Let us get to training." Nzelwe says. They all walk away, leaving Siza, Sethulo and I. Sethulo hugs me and then looks at Siza.

"See you later dade. Maphumulo, lead the way to your office. We need to talk." He says. Siza looks at me and then walks away with Sethulo following close.

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NARRATED

Siza was a little agitated as he led Azanda's brother into his office. He was a bit relieved that it wasn't Somnyama because he was known as the brother that doesn't talk but always resort to violence even when it's not needed. But he wasn't too relaxed because he fucked a Buthelezi princess and worse, he took her virginity. They got to Siza's office and he gestured that he can sit down.

“What can I do for you?” Siza asked as he settled across him. Sethulo placed his phone and car keys on the desk before him.

“You can drop the tough act. I know what you did with my sister. It is taking a lot of self-control not to pluck your teeth one by one right now.” Siza swallowed hard but didn’t respond, he kept his eyes on Sethulo. “Before my sister suggested that you pay inkomo kamama, what were your thoughts after breaking her virginity?” Siza cleared his throat.

“I just wanted to hear out why she left me like that. Your sister is a very beautiful lady and even though her action bruised my ego, it made me eager to learn more about her or get closer to her. I didn’t think she would ask inkomo kamama but I have no problem paying it. I think that why you’re here, so that we can talk about the way forward.”

“So you want to pay for inkomo kamama as soon as possible?”

“Yes, and if possible,” he cleared his throat before he could proceed because he knew what he was about to say would piss Sethulo off. “I would like to pursue a relationship with your sister.” Sethulo chuckled and shifted a bit in his seat. That made Siza tense.

“I will talk to my brothers and father about your family coming to pay for inkomo kamama. It would be wise for you not to come because all my brothers are unhinged. I am sure your father will tell you what you need to bring.” Siza nodded. Sethulo stoop up and extended his hand. Siza stood up and shook it. When he least expected it, Sethulo threw a mean punch at Siza that made him stumble and nearly fall back but he braced himself. “Treat her good. If not, that punch is not the only thing that you will get next time. You may even get a taste of death.” He turned around and walked out.

When he got to Roodepoort, he found Ntokozo sitting on a couch, watching some cooking show. She raised her head to look at him and then turned back her attention to the TV. He went to stand before her, making it hard for her to see the TV and extended his hand to her. She sighed placing her hand on his and stood up. He cupped her cheeks and kissed her. She wasn't expecting that but she didn't pull back. She placed her hands on his shoulders and brought him even closer. After a while, he broke the kiss and looked straight in her eyes. She became a bit shy and stared at his covered shirt.

“I am sorry if it seemed like I neglected you. Everything is back to normal right now. Well not really normal

but there is no longer an emergency. However, I would like us to stay a bit longer here in Jozi and if you don't feel comfortable staying with my sister and her friends, we can go to Midrand to one of my family's property.” She smiled and shook her head.

“We don't have to move. I know how you enjoy being around your sister. Even your face lights up when she walks in a room. I will try to bury whatever beef I have with her and I hope she can too, so that we can be civil towards each other.” his heart warmed when he heard those words. He really didn't want to go to Midrand but he didn't want to make her more uncomfortable.

“I was thinking that maybe we can go out today. Maybe go to one of those places where women touch you and you wear white gowns with sleepers.” Ntokozo frowned, confused and then she broke into laughter.

“They are called spas Sondiya and those people are called masseuses.” He laughed and shook his head. Of course he knew their names but he just wanted to hear her beautiful laughter.

“Well I have never been there before but I have always wished to go and just experience how it feels like to be massaged. Maybe I will relax a bit and become less tense.”

“So it’s a yes to the white gowns?” Sethulo asked in an amused tone and Ntokozo laughed while nodding. “And after that, I will take you shopping. You can buy anything that you want to buy.”

“Even an iPhone?” she asked testing the waters and Sethulo laughed because he could see a trap from a mile away.

“It has to be R10 000 or less.” She smiled and kissed him once again. She then broke the kiss, putting her shoes on and rushing to the door.

“What are we waiting for?” Sethulo laughed and walked to her.

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AZANDA

Siza sent a text earlier on that I should come to his office when it’s time for lunch. After our kiss, I have been wary about being alone with him but I am not going to keep running away from

him. So placing my things in my locker, I start the long walk to his office. Of course I don't miss the silly glance from Veli. She sure has something to say but she is deciding to torment me with her silly facial expressing. My hands are shaking as I wait in the ascending elevator.

Come on Azanda. Get a grip. This is Siza. He doesn't intimidate you.

When the doors open, I step out, collect myself before strutting to Siza's office. I don't knock. He is expecting me after all. So I just walk in and close the door behind me. I turn and the look he is giving me right now just makes my body freeze and I stay rooted at the door.

"I won't bite. Unless you want me to." he smirks and stands up.

My body shudder with Goosebumps. He comes in the doorway, cupping my face gently with his hands, splitting his fingers around my ear. His hot breath on the side of my face weakens me. He outlines my ear with his tongue, then moves down the side of my neck along my collarbone with long luxurious kisses. He has won.

Gripping my torso, he continues to kiss me along my nearly exposed chest, then glides his hands over the thin fabric of my dress around my breasts, and I can see that the dress is making things hard for him. I clear my throat and raise my arms up. He

smiles a bit and then quickly takes off my dress. I am only wearing panties because the dress I am wearing has no room for a bra. I slide my hands along the back of his neck and grab a fist full of hair at the nape of his neck, pulling his head back. Leaning forward, I brush my lips along his with the lightness of a feather. I can't stop myself from craving his body on mine, his long thick self in me and I don't think I want to stop.

Ripples of desire cascade through my body, I unbutton his shirt slowly and push it off his shoulders. It lands on the floor. His abs and muscles are just making it hard for me not to touch them. "Do you want to do this?" he asks as his hands travel to my back, groping my ass and pressing me hard against him.

"It's too late for that question." He chuckles and his hands move to the back of my thighs. He lifts them up and I quickly wrap my legs around him.

As I walk inside home late in the afternoon, I can hear everyone talking but I am not present in their conversation. I can't help but think about his hands all over my body. The way he fucked me against the door, on the couch and on his desk. I didn't get enough of him. Now I understand people's fascination about sex. That thing, if it was food, I would say it's delicious. I smile and shake my head. I am hooked on Siza's dick.

"Dade are you hearing me?" I snap out of my impure thoughts and look at my brother with a smile.

"No bhuty. Sorry, I wasn't paying attention. What did you say?" he stands up and pulls me to the corridor.

"Well your boyfriend is going to come next week to pay for inkomo kamama." I giggle.

"He is not my boyfriend." He gives me that scrutiny look but doesn't comment on that.

"Whatever. So he is coming. When I get home, I am going to tell everyone about it, especially your mother. And then we will tell ubaba on Friday night or Saturday morning to avoid his rage."

“Don’t you think the short notice will anger him even more?”
he shakes his head.

“I know ubaba and how he works. So relax. I am going to handle this my way.” I nod.

“Thank you bhuty. For being there for me and for leaving everything just to come to my aid. I really appreciate it.” I wrap my arms around his waist and he chuckles while wrapping his arms on my shoulders.

“You don’t have to thank me mtakababa. I will always be there for you when you need me. We are siblings. So I am also expecting you to be there for me when I need you.”

“You can count on me bhuty.” He smiles and we break the hug.
“Now let me go freshen up. How about you braai some meat for us or better yet, take us to a Shisanyama?”

“How about you cook for me mtakababa?”

“Not today.” He laughs.

“Okay. We will go to a Shisanyama then. Tell the others.” I hug him once again and then dash to the lounge.

“Guys, my brother is taking us to a Shisanyama. So nobody is cooking and you can prepare yourselves so long.” They all cheer.

I head to my room and take a long shower. The hot water hitting my body reminds me my time with Siza. God, I think I am going to go crazy. I finish showering and get dressed in a maroon short tight with a matching oversized t-shirt and black sneakers. I pack some of my things in my small backpack. I should do something about my hair before I leave Jozi. I put on my black bucket hat and head to the lounge. Everyone is waiting in the lounge except for Veli. I am pretty sure she is in a video call with her man.

“I’m here. I’m here.” she says descending the stairs in a rush.

“Was it my brother that made you late?” I ask with a smirk. She blushes and rolls her eyes.

“Not everything revolves around the Buthelezi men.”

“I beg to differ.” Sethulo says standing up and we laugh.

Climbing into the Vito, Sethulo drives us to the Shisanyama. Ntokozo is sitting at the passenger seat next to him and I am

sitting next to Veli who is giving me a suspicious look. I chuckle and shake my head. She is very nosy. I play some music from my phone connecting it to the car's Bluetooth audio. The moment the loud music makes Veli lean in to me.

"Baby girl

you gotta spill. My patience is running out." I laugh and shake my head.

"I had sex with Siza at his office today after Sethulo's departure." Her eyes pop out and she steals a glance at the front seat. Sethulo isn't paying attention to us. He is busy talking to Ntokozo.

"You naughty girl. You are seriously going to get pregnant." I chuckle.

"Siza is always very careful. But I am going to go to the pharmacy tomorrow during lunch and get myself some contraceptives." She nods.

"I should definitely get some myself. You may never know when Lele may break that virginity." She licks her lips and I just laugh. This girl is crazy.

When we get to the Shisanyama, we get a table and then order our food and drinks. While waiting, we take a couple of pictures and even videos, dancing and just being crazy. A guy approaches us while we are dancing and we stop and watch him. He smiles and comes to stand before me. Confidence.

“Hello ladies. Can I have a few minutes with this beautiful young lady?” his eyes travel all over my body. The dude is checking me out openly and he doesn’t seem to care about being caught.

“We will just give you some space.” Sisanda says with a smile and her eyes go to Sethulo who is not paying attention to us. They move a few feet away from us. I wrap my arms across my chest and look up at the guy.

“How can I help you?”

“Can I buy you a drink first?”

“No but thanks for offering. You can just get straight to the point.” He smiles a bit. He is not that bad but if I were to compare him to Siza, I would say he is point out ugly.

“You are really beautiful. I would like to know your name. I am Bonga by the way.” I nod.

“I am Azandeizintombi zamaShenge.” He takes my hand and kisses the back of it.

“You are not here to spend all your time with me. So I would like to get your number and then get out of your hair.” I chuckle and call out my number. He saves it. “I hope I will see you again soon.” He kisses my cheek and then walks away.

“We can use him to make Siza jealous.” Veli says from behind me and I laugh. I am not going to use someone I don’t know just to make Siza jealous. I don’t even know what are we, so adding jealousy in the mix is not on my cards.

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Today is our last night in Jozi and the Maphumulo siblings decided to join us for the massive celebration and some others who were in training with us. Sethulo left with Ntokozo the day after he had that talk with Siza because there was an emergency back home. But before leaving, he made sure to buy as much meat and booze as possible and he also left me with some cash which was unnecessary because I haven’t even spent a quarter of the money in the card Sokalisa gave me but it’s the thought that counts and I appreciate him.

We met up with B-Lady and signed a 5 figure deal which she paid all of its money upfront. Her level of trust in me boosted my confidence. She gave me 3 weeks to prepare her outfit. Her dress is a beautiful white princess gown with some white beads which she gave me the freedom to pluck it out. We agreed that I will fly in her outfit as soon as I am done with it because I will be back home by then.

Today for the celebration, we decided to go all out and be classy. So we are wearing mini dresses with strappy sandals. Earlier on we decided to go to the famous Zumba Hair Beauty Salon at Ghandi Square and we did our hair, nails and make-up. I went for a Tribal Beyoncé Pondo and some glam make-up. I look so beautiful and I am sure Siza will be blown away. After that office sex, we had sex again but in his house twice and in his car once. All I can say is that he is very talented under the sheets and he doesn't fail to amaze me. I don't know what we are but I know that we are not in a relationship. Just for some fun, I invited Bonga to the celebration just to spike some drama. Veli was very happy that Bonga is coming. Trust my best friend to be happy about some chaos waiting to happen.

“Beautiful house you have here. Tell me again why you chose Yakhanathi.” Smilesihle asks as they enter through the front

door. We all laugh. “Tell your dad I am free to be wife number 4.” I shake my head while laughing. Smilesihle is crazy.

“I don’t think my father would take a drama queen like you as a wife. You are too much.” He laughs as I lead them inside the house. I give them a tour of the ground floor and then lead them to the backyard. By the way we asked some ladies from Elegancy Planners for some last minute planning. They overcharged us because of the last minute but I was happy to pay them whatever amount they wanted because the results of their work was just elegant as their name.

“Ow wow. This is beautiful.” Snothy says as I lead them to the white wooden gazebo and they are served some beverages before settling down on vacant chairs.

Hands grab my waist and someone presses themselves hard against my back. “You are looking so hot today. I don’t think I will be able to keep my hands to myself this whole evening.” Siza’s voice whisper in my ear and he places a soft kiss on my neck. I clear my throat and turn to face him. “You are even more beautiful this close.” I chuckle.

“You are just happy that I look like a slay queen.” he smirks.

“With or without make-up you slay. Don’t forget that.” he kisses my cheek and goes to join his siblings on their table. This guy is going to be the death of me.

Anyways, I rush inside and find my friends done with dishing food in the casserole dishes. We move them to the dishing table outside. Gadla comes with a bowl full of meat which he prepared with Nsezi and Skaqa. They are also looking decent and I asked them to invite their women which Nsezi laughed about and asked which one he should bring because there is too many of them. The other guests arrive and we start by serving them starters. After that we serve them the main course. Veli is the one playing some music and she is quite the entertainer. She keeps on dancing like uncle waffles and everyone is cheering on her. Nzelwe comes to me and asks to speak to me aside. We walk to the poolside.

“So you are forcing my brother to pay for your virginity?” he asks and I am shocked by his question. I open my mouth to say something but he chuckles and shakes his head. “You forced him to take responsibility and I love that about you so much. He has changed ever since you came here. I think you are good for him. But I don’t know how you are going to make the long distance relationship thing work.” I look at him and swallow hard.

After a lot of heartfelt goodbyes to the Maphumulo siblings, Skaqa finally drives us back home. KwaZulu. I have a lot of great memories and I might even consider visiting Jozi very often but I am not thinking about relocating. It was a bittersweet moment saying goodbye to Siza but I would see him for a few minutes when he comes home to pay for inkomo kamama. He wanted us to talk about what is going on between us but I cut him off because there was no reason for us to officialise or put a title to whatever that was happening between us. It was a phase thing and its time lapsed.

When we arrive at our village, Skaqa starts by dropping off my friends and then he drives me to the Buthelezi household. I don't question his actions. I think his boss is the one who ordered him to do this. We left Jozi around 10 am and we finally drive into the Buthelezi household at 4:37pm. All my brothers' cars are in the yard. My mom's car is also here. They are already waiting for us and the moment the car parks, mom is the first one to run to the car. I climb off just in time to hug her. Nyezi is right behind her.

“My God, Azanda. Look at how beautiful you are. You are glowing MaShenge.” Mom says with a wide smile. “What did they feed you at Yakhanathi?” Siza’s sperms maybe. I laugh and hug her back.

“A chance please.” Nyezi says and I chuckle extending my arms to her. She hugs me. “Mom is right. You are really pretty. You are slaying like crazy. 2 weeks in Jozi and you have turned into a self-funded slay queen.” I break into laughter and shake my head.

“What’s a self-funded slay queen?”

“A rich kid sisi.” I laugh once more. Nyezi is crazy, I tell you. When did she come up with this term? My siblings come to hug me and the wives also come to hug me. Sokalisa is the last one to come my way.

“Nkosazane.” He says with a smile. I smile back.

“Ninjani Nqengelele?”

“We are well. Welcome home.” He extends his arms and I collide with his chest, wrapping my arms around his waist. There is so much warmth in his arms. He breaks the hug and

leads me to the main house. “I am sure you are tired. How about we get something to drink and then you can tell us about all the things you guys were up to eGoli.” I smile at him as we settle down in the lounge. “LUSANELE BRING US SOMETHING TO DRINK. Are you hungry?” he asks looking at me.

“Ow no. we ate a lot on the way. As you can see, I have a big belly like yours now.” I say brushing my belly and he laughs.

“You clearly don’t know what a big belly looks like.” He points at his and I laugh. Most of the family joins us.

“So should we expect a son in law from Joburg anytime soon?” mom asks and Sokalisa chokes on his saliva.

“Son in law for what?” Sethulo is the first one to laugh followed by my other siblings. “You my dearest child are going to start dating at 30 years old and you are going to get married at 40 because, as you youngsters always say, life begins at 40.”

“As if you waited for us to reach 40 Nqengelele. Just let the children be. The only person who shouldn’t be allowed to date here is Nkanyezi and her mates. Makabongwe, Lusanele and Azanda should be allowed to date.” MaWanda says and all the other wives agree with her.

“Well you can all agree with each other but I don’t care. My word stands.” Sethulo chuckles. This is going to be way harder than I thought. Lusanele comes with drinks for everyone. The lounge in the main house is very huge

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so almost the whole family can fit in. “So tell us, what happened in Jozi that made you so happy? There has to be a highlight.”

Well I lost my virginity to a very handsome guy. But I am not going to say that because I don’t wanna be beheaded. “The training went well. The Maphumulo siblings were very welcoming. We also got a huge famous client who paid upfront so much money. This project is going to be good for exposure.”

“Wow. What is the name of the client?” Makabongwe asks.

“B-Lady.” my sisters all scream while my brothers frown at the noise. I just laugh.

“So did you take pictures with her? How is she like in person?” Nyezi asks with a wide smile.

“She is going to tell you all about it when you are alone in your room. So MaShenge, just like uMa asked, is there a young man

that we are expected to kill anytime soon?" Zikhethele asks with a serious face and I quickly shake my head.

"Not really." I quickly change the subject. "So what happened to your fiancé bhuty?" I ask looking at Zithulele. Zikhethele is the first one to break into laughter followed by all my brothers.

"That chick is a hero. I salute her. She forced her family to come here and, I don't know, demand that Zithulele takes her back. I don't really know what she was hoping for because she didn't tell her family the real reason behind bafo's actions. She was really dramatic and I admire her bravery." Zikhethele says still laughing.

"Wow I missed out on a lot of drama. Bhuti you should definitely give us her address so that we can have a friendly talk with her as your sisters." I say and Zithulele laughs.

"I definitely agree with you." Makabongwe says. "We need to show her what we are made of, so that she won't dare repeat what she has done to other men." MaMhlongo groans. "Okay. We are just going to have a woman to woman talk with her. A polite one. All we need is an address." I chuckle. We continue chatting about other things. After that we disperse. I go to the

room we mainly use when we are here and my sisters follow me.

“So what went down there?” Lusanele asks. I throw a glance at Nyezi who is taking pictures with my phone. Lusanele catches my glance and clears her throat. “Nyezi, why don’t you go buy some snacks? Keep the change.” She hands her R100. Nyezi smiles, hands me my phone and then heads out. “So spill.” I sigh and look at them.

“I slept with someone. It happened so fast. The sex was really good. We did it a lot of times.” I say and look at them. It takes a few moments for them to grasp my words and they finally break into screams.

“OMG! How was it the first time? Was he gentle? Did you tell him you were a virgin? Spill dade. What happened? We want all the details.” Makabongwe says with a smile.

“Why are you excited about this?” she laughs.

“You are not the only one who has slept around. Well not around but you know what I am talking about.” She shrugs while laughing. I also laugh.

“Don’t tell me you are no longer a virgin.”

“Both of us actually. We were given freedom by our mothers on our coming of age ceremonies and no threat issued by our father or brothers is going to stop us.” Lusanele says licking her lips and I laugh.

“So you guys have boyfriends? When do you get time to see them while you are in this prison?” they laugh.

“We make a plan. We are Buthelezi girls, so we can be pretty convincing if we like. So we always get what we want and we always get away with things. Dad is not that strict but he is always hard on the boys.” Makabongwe says.

“So what is the name of your Jozi guy? And you wanna relocate to be closer to him?” Lusanele asks. I chuckle.

“I am not that hooked and life in Joburg is nice and all but not to such an extent that I might myself wanting to move there.” they both nod. “On the other news, the Jozi guy wants to come and pay inkomo kamama.”

“WHAT!” they both exclaim and I shrug.

“He is a dead man walking.” Makabongwe says holding in laughter.

Stitching on beads on vests and skirts is always easy but I sear stitching beads on a dress is really challenging and it needs all your undivided attention. Which is why I asked mom to borrow me her room just for this project. In the meantime, she occupies my room and I share a bed with Nyezi who occasionally snores. B-lady actually asked me to remake a dress which was once worn by Nelisiwe Faith, designed by Bayanda Khathini. I am a big fan of Bayanda's work but I don't think I can be able to remake the exact design. I just hope to be able to impress the client with a slight similar yet unique design.

After gathering and categorizing the beads, I realize that I should've bought white pearls and I actually saw them at the shop we usually buy beads in at Joburg. There is no way I can go to Jozi just for beads. So I send Siza a message asking him to buy the pearls for me and send him a picture of how they look like. He responds by calling. God, a simple yes or okay would've sufficed. Nonetheless, I answer the call.

"Why don't we do a video call or you are afraid I will see you with ibomvu on your face and wearing stockings in this

scorching heat?” he asks before I can even say hello. I break into laughter. He is mocking me and my fellow villagers.

“You are being very disrespectful right now Siza. That’s our way of maintaining bright and fresh skin.”

“Babe you are naturally fresh and dark. You don’t need that combo to maintain anything.” I laugh and roll my eyes. “So did you tell your family about Saturday? Dad and my uncles are ready to come there. We are going to drive down to KwaMaphumulo on Thursday and then come there early Saturday morning.” I clear my throat.

“Well I haven’t told my family but I will tell mom today. Hopefully she will tell everyone else. Except for Sokalisa. My brother is going to tell him on Friday night or Saturday morning so that I won’t feel his wrath. And do you think it’s a wise decision for you to be personally here? I know my father and older brothers are gunning for you head and they are definitely going to kill you.”

“But you are not going to let them, right?” I laugh.

“As if I would win against the Buthelezi men, unless I would fake being sick and distract them long enough for you to escape.” He laughs.

“That’s the plan I guess.”

“You are such a risk taker. Anyways, did you get my text?”

“Yes I did. I will go buy the pearls tomorrow.”

“Please send me your bank account so that I can transfer you the money to buy them.”

“Honey I can afford all the pearls in that store, so don’t insult me by sending me money.” I roll my eyes. Men’s egos are always bruised when you talk about giving them money.

“Yobe Dubandlela. Ayidle izishiyele.” He groans on the other side and I hold in my laughter. “Please don’t forget to buy the pearls for me then. Even a whole store.” He chuckles.

“Will I get to see you on Saturday or you will send your little sister to collect your package?”

“If you survive the Buthelezi men’s wrath, then maybe we will see each other. But if not, please drop the package in Roxy’s lodge.”

“That one has been complaining about you not visiting her since you came back.” I laugh and shake my head. Roxy is so dramatic. I only came back yesterday. When could I have found time to visit her?

“Being dramatic and demanding runs in the Maphumulo surname, I guess.” He laughs. “I will go see her maybe later today. I just finished categorizing all the material I am going to need for my client’s outfit. After that, I am meeting with the ladies. We should discuss the way forward, our training and also the competition your sister is planning.”

“Okay. I will video call you later. Have a beautiful day just like you. Think of me.” he hangs up, leaving me chuckling to myself. He is a sly fox, that’s what he is. I walk to the kitchen and I frown when I find my mother still sitting in one of the kitchen chairs, reading a book. “What are you still doing here Miss Unnatural Causes?” I say reading out the title of the book she is carrying. She raises her head to look at me with a smile.

“I am doing the afternoon shift, so I will leave at 11:30.”

“The last time I found you reading a book

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you were in a good mood. So did Sokalisa give it to you good?"

"Hey!" she nearly throws the book at me. I duck and laugh.

"What do you know about sex?" I sit down across her with a smile. "Ohh don't tell me you gave in to the lust while in Joburg. Your father will kill you Azanda, but right after killing the boy who dared to enter his kraal."

"Well you will do a good job by taming him." she places the book in the table and she covers her mouth with her hand.

"You really did give up your virginity. How could you do that Azanda? Do you even know the boy? His family? His home? Dear God, are you pregnant? You are going to be the death of me Azanda, I swear." She stands up and starts pacing up and down.

"Mom please calm down. It's not that bad. I do know him, not that personally but I know him. He is Roxy's brother and no, I am not pregnant. We both were careful."

"Meaning it happened more than once?" I nod in embarrassment and fiddle with my finders unable to look at my

mother. She scoffs and sits back down at her chair. “What are you going to do?”

“He wants to come and pay for inkomo yakho. This weekend to be precise. He will be coming with the elders of the family. He has already spoken to Sethulo and I don’t know what agreement they came into, but they agreed on something. Sethulo is supposed to tell the whole family before Friday.”

“Azanda your father is going to kill that boy if he dares lay his pointy legs on the Buthelezi yard.” I scowl.

“He doesn’t have pointy legs ma.” She laughs sarcastically.

“Look at you defending someone you hardly know. Are you guys in a relationship or you only slept together?” I look at mom with pleading eyes because I don’t wanna answer that question. She raises her hands up in defeat. “How sure are you that he is only going to pay for damages and not for ilobola? What if your father demands ilobola? How are you going to handle that seeing that you are not even sure about the nature of your relationship?” I sigh.

“We have the same understanding ma. He would never pay ilobola for me. At least not now. He is really afraid of the

Buthelezi men, so he won't do something stupid that might get himself killed." She stands up and takes her book.

"You defeat me MaShenge. You are exactly like your father. Daring, unhinged, and completely unstable. Let's hope he won't kill you for this." she heads to her room and I breathe out in relief. I am partly glad that mom knows. I know she will soften Sokalisa when the time is right.

I prepare breakfast for the both of us and place hers in the kitchen table, covering it with a small net. I then take mine and go sit in the lounge. I tune in to 1KZN TV and smile when Roxy's face appears. She is looking as beautiful as ever. She is announcing the competition and inviting people to come and watch. This is going to be huge, I guess. When I am done eating, I clean the kitchen and head outside. The ladies are already gathered under the tree. We exchange greetings and we sit down. We agree to set a meeting with the others tomorrow evening after school so that we can talk about everything. We then head inside the house, to mom's room. After seeing the way I categorized everything, the ladies and I sit down and start working on the independent beads that aren't part of the dress but part of the outfit.

“So what are we going to wear at the competition? It’s in 5 weeks, right?” Nomthi asks and Mbuyi nods.

“I was thinking that we go green. Green skirts with green fish net string mesh vests and maybe we can buy green izimbadada from Zulu Swag.” Sisanda suggests and we all agree.

“How much are they?” I ask.

“R300 each pair and R100 delivery.” She responds and I nod.

“We will have to hear what everyone says but I love your suggestion. Does that mean we are going to create new ubuhlalo?” she nods.

“I forgot the copy of the forms at home but there are different categories in the competition and the overall ingoma category. Only one member from each dance crew is allowed to enter a category. I will definitely bring the forms tomorrow, but amongst the categories we have the best crotchetier, best singer, best bead weaver and others.” Mbuyi says.

“We are going to decide which one of us enters for each category but we should make sure that we bring home all those awards. People must not only know us at the girls who are part of the Yakhanathi organization but they should also know that we kick ass and we don’t play when it comes to competition.” Veli says in a proud tone.

NARRATED

MaNene drove in to the Buthelezi household. After parking her car, she went to the main house and found all the three wives laughing about something. She was a bit relieved because she was dreading going house to house just to make them come to a meeting. She greeted them and they responded.

“So I need to talk to you all and I am glad I found you here.” she said with a smile as she sat down next to MaWanda.

“What’s going on?” MaMhlongo asked wiping her hands.

“So Azanda went to Joburg and got herself deflowered. But that’s not the half of it. The boy wants to come and honor the family. He is coming to pay for inkomo kamama on Saturday with his family elders.” MaNene said and the wives all went quiet. She cleared her throat. “I am hoping that you guys can soften your husband’s heart by giving him a lot of sex so that he won’t kill the boy currently sleeping with his daughter. I know it’s a lot to ask but Azanda is not only my daughter but she is yours. When the going gets tough, I need your support and I need to know that you will have my back.”

“It would’ve been better if the boy didn’t try to act all righteous with us and pay only for the damages. Nobody would’ve knew and Azanda would’ve continued attending umhlanga and bribing omama abahlolayo. Now she actually lit her own fire and she is going to get burned. No matter how much sex we give him, Sokalisa is just going to be super pissed and will be baying for the boy’s blood. What exactly do you need from us?” MaVezi asked in a more polite manner than usual. She had accepted the return of MaNene even though it was a bitter pill to swallow.

“So besides softening your husband, what else do you need from us?” MaMhlongo asked leaning on the table.

“I know they are not our in-laws but I would like the Maphumulo to feel welcomed. So I want us to cook and prepare for their arrival.” MaNene said and MaMhlongo nodded. MaWanda cleared her throat and stared at the bunch of flowers on the center of the table.

“Before you judge, hear me out. How about you contact this boy, Fundiswa, and talk him into paying everything for Azanda including lobola? Firstly, how is their relationship?” she asked.

“They don’t have a romantic relationship rather a sexual one but i saw it in her eyes. She is taken by him. Just that she is a Buthelezi through and through. She is stubborn and I think she is going to want to ignore her feelings for this boy hoping they will disappear. She sure doesn’t want to appear weak. I think she has a belief that love makes you weak.” Fundiswa responded and sat back. MaMhlongo chuckled.

“Sokalisa was just like that when I first met him. He didn’t even say I love you until on your wedding day.” She commented and they chuckled.

“I don’t want it to seem like we are controlling her life or something, but it would be less of an insult if the boy paid lobola plus inkomo kamama as a bonus instead of just coming to brag in Sokalisa’s face that he deflowered his daughter and would like to pay for it.” MaWanda said and they all went quiet. She added, “You don’t have to inform Azanda it. I know she will be pissed when she finds out but it’s better if the boy gets killed for lobola rather than getting killed for deflowering the Buthelezi princess.”

“MaWanda is right. You just have to get the phone number from Azanda and call the boy.” MaVezi added.

Fundiswa sighed and took out her phone. She texted Azanda and after a few minutes, she sent Siza's number. Fundiswa exhaled and then dialed the number. She felt bad for going behind her daughter's back but it was the only way to control the situation and Azanda would have to see it from her point of view when she explained things to her. After a few rings, Siza answered the call and Fundiswa placed the call on speaker.

"Siza Maphumulo

how can I help you?"

"Hello. This is Fundiswa Nene. I am Azanda's mother."

"Oww hello mah. How are you doing?" he asked nervously.

"I am good. My daughter informed me about your intentions to come and pay for damages on Saturday. First I wanna know about your feelings for my daughter. Are they genuine or you are only excited about the fact that you are the first one who tapped her virgin pussy? Which one is it?" Siza cleared his throat.

"I like your daughter very much mah. She is a strong willed young lady who isn't easily charmed by me. Even if she is, she

doesn't make it known by everyone including me. She doesn't care that I have a few thousands on my name. She is interested in who I am as a person not as a Maphumulo rich kid. It's just that from what I have gathered, Azanda doesn't like talking about her feelings. She always avoids that topic."

"Do you see a future with her?"

"I do honestly and that scares me because I haven't even known her for a month but I can absolutely tell you that I wouldn't mind having her as my wife and spending the rest of my life with her."

"I am sure she has informed you about the love she has for her hometown. What are your thoughts on that? Do you think you can survive a long distance relationship?"

"I have been in a long distance relationship and I have never been to Nongoma. So I think I will take everything as it comes. But we are both not poor, so traveling from time to time in order to see each other won't be a problem. Besides, distance makes the heart grow fonder." MaMhlongo chuckled with a small smile on her face.

“I hear you Siza but I don’t think coming to pay for damages will be a good idea. And before you think I am ruining your chances with my daughter, hear me out. Do you think your father would smile and accept that one cow from a man who has deflowered Roxy? Do you think that’s a sensible thing to do? I am not trying to discourage you, but inkomo kamama is so much appreciated if added as a bonus on the lobola money. I am not trying to force you to pay lobola but just think about this. Already Sokalisa is gunning for you without even knowing about your visit or your existence. How do you think he will react if you would come here and just brag to his face that you slept with his daughter and try to calm him down with one cow?” Siza kept quiet and tried to digest what Fundiswa was saying.

“I know my daughter has not told you about this, but she didn’t have a relationship with her father until recently. She is so hardheaded that she decided to cut him off because he wasn’t a present father. They recently reconciled and their relationship is so cute and adorable. I wouldn’t wanna take that from her if I were you. Please think about this damages thing and come back to me when you have made a decision. You don’t have to tell Azanda about it. We will inform her when the time is right.” Fundiswa added. Siza kept quiet for a whole minute, even the wives thought he had dropped the call. Then he spoke up.

“I don’t mind paying for everything on Saturday ma. I will just inform my father about the slight changes. I hope you talk to your husband so that he doesn’t kill me on Saturday.” Fundiswa laughed. “You can expect us on Saturday morning ma with all the eleven cows.”

“Okay then Siza, see you soon.” She hung up and placed her head on the table.

“You did good Fufu.” MaWanda said rubbing her back. Fundiswa raised her head.

“Did I? I feel like I have just ruined my relationship with Azanda for life.”

“She will understand our reasoning and will forgive us as time goes on.” MaVezi said.

“You guys better Google new sex positions so that you can soften that husband of yours. Or better yet, blurt the news during sex when he is about to cum so that it would relieve some tension.” Fundiswa said and they all broke into laughter.

“When it comes to Azanda, I am sure Sokalisa would lift me off from him and ask ‘uthini nkosikazi?’ and that would be the end of our session. I am sure he wouldn’t even care if I had had an

orgasm or not.” MaVezi said and they continued laughing very loud.

They continued talking and making plans about Saturday. They even planned to go shopping for everything they might need on Friday morning at Empangeni or Richards Bay. After everything, Fundiswa said goodbye and headed out but bumped into Sethulo. She smiled and they hugged.

“How are you doing mama?”

“I am good. So about that thing that Azanda asked you to inform your father about, please just tell him that the boy will be coming to pay for lobola?” Sethulo’s eyes popped out.

“What!”

“Keep it down. Just tell him that but on Friday night. We don’t want him going all Mnyamane on everyone. See you on Friday.” She smiled as she climbed inside her car. Sethulo watched the car drive out and he sighed. This was going to be more difficult than intended.

NARRATED

Sethulo went to his older brother's flat and found him on a call giggling like a lovesick teenager, lying on the bed with his back. Zithulele glanced at his brother and then wrapped up the call because he could see by the look on Sethulo's face that things are not okay. He then placed his phone beside his pillow, safe up and gave his undivided attention to Sethulo who was now sitting on a chair beside the bed.

"What is it bafo?" Zithulele asked anxiously.

"Your sister, Azanda, is no longer a virgin." Sethulo stated and Zithulele frowned. He stood up and went to the window. He looked outside for a few minutes before turning to Sethulo with a grave expression on his face that would make even a cobra shy away.

"Who do we need to kill?" he asked with a voice full of anger. Sethulo chuckled nervously and looked at his hands.

"He is coming this weekend. Initially he wanted to pay for inkomo kamama but changed his mind. So he is coming to pay lobola for our sister."-Sethulo.

"Who is this stupid fucker and where does he stay?"-Zithulele.

“There is no need for you to kill him. You know how much that will anger Azanda. They are not in a relationship per say but he wants to pursue a relationship with her.” Zithulele frowned, not understanding what his brother was saying. He could see his brother’s confusion, so he decided to add. “They met at a club and one thing led to the other. They have rather a sexual relationship. Our sister is a hard nut to crack when it comes to love. I think the guy wanted to score points by doing what’s right.”

“You haven’t told me who this idiot is.” Zithulele said, his anger increasing with each passing minute. What angered him the most was the fact that Azanda and this mysterious man were not even in a relationship. Which means the guy was using sex to take advantage of his sister. “Talk Sethulo.” Sethulo sighed looking at him.

“His name is Sizabantu Maphumulo. He is Roxy’s sister and Mazwi’s son. So the killing is a bad idea. We don’t need bad blood with the Maphumulo family. It is not worth it.”

“Not worthy it? Not worth it bafo? Our sister’s virginity is not worth bad blood? Clearly you don’t love her like we do.”

Sethulo decided to keep quiet because he could see that his brother was angry and he could even start a fight if he wants to. Zikhethele chose that time to enter without even knocking. One glance at his brothers, he already knew something was wrong.

“Who do we have to kill?” he asked already taking his gun from his back. Sethulo just huffed and rolled his eyes.

“No one, I hope. Some guy broke Azanda’s virginity and he wants to come and pay lobola for her. And before you start acting crazy and wanting to kill him, he is Mazwi Maphumulo’s son and we don’t want war with that man. Plus your sister will be angry at you for the rest of her life if you do something to the guy.”

“She is stubborn, yes. But she can’t stay mad forever.”

Zikhethele said brushing his gun a bit and returning it to its place. Sethulo stood up and went to stand in the middle of the room. He looked at both his brothers before exhaling loudly.

“You are not my concern. I don’t care what you do. I won’t be responsible for teaching my older brothers how to behave and reminding them what’s right and wrong. Our biggest obstacle is finding a way to deliver these news to baba and making sure he

doesn't go crazy and do something even more stupid than what you are planning on doing in your heads."-Sethulo.

"Count me out. I am not going to be on the receiving end of baba's wrath. What makes you think he won't lash out on us or even shoot us? Ayy, mark me absent mtakababa." Zikhethele said as he sat on the bed. Zithulele shoot him a look but Zikhethele couldn't care less about his brother's murderous look.

"So you want our sister to be on the receiving end of baba's wrath? You know how long it took for them to have a stable relationship. If we don't intervene or help her in this, it will be the end of their nteke-nteke relationship." Zithulele said and Zikhethele scoffed but didn't answer. "You know I am right." He then turned to Sethulo. "When do you think we should tell him?"

"On Friday. Maybe wait for him to go bath

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go inside his bedroom and take anything he might use as a weapon and hide it. Then tell him the news when he is coming out of the bathroom wearing only boxers."-Sethulo. Zikhethele chuckled and shook his head.

“I wonder why you didn’t become a lawyer or a doctor because you are really smart.” He said sarcastically.

“And who would make sure you guys don’t go out starting wars with almost everyone who doesn’t smile at you?” Sethulo bit back and both his brothers laughed.

“True that.” Zithulele said. “Let me just go see my woman before I die for Azanda’s sins.” He took his phone, car keys and walked to the door. “Make sure you close the door on your way out.” he then walked out.

“If it were up to me, I would drive to eGoli this instant just to give that fucker my peace of mind but I am not that insane.” Zikhethele said.

“But you are that insane and you could drive there now.” Sethulo said matter of factly.

“You don’t have to remind me of how crazy I am.” He responded rolling his eyes and walked out. Sethulo sighed and followed his brother.

VELISANI JIKI

He calls me and asks me to come out. I didn't even know he was going to see me today. It's already late, exactly 5pm, and my parents are about to come back from work. I tidy up at the kitchen, since I am done cooking and then go change into a shorts, a vest and flip flops. I take my phone, lock the main door and walk to his car. My parents are going to think I am at Azanda's home anyway. I climb inside the passenger seat and he drives off immediately.

"Hello to you too Mr. How are you doing this evening? I am doing fine as you can see. Just that you usually greet someone when you see them for the first time on a new day." I say when I see that he isn't going to say anything. He chuckles and focuses on the road. He takes the path to eMvulazi and stops just before reaching eWela. He parks the car beside the road and turns to me.

"How are doing today my love?" he asks in a charming voice and I just can't deal. My heart melts instantly. I roll my eyes and step out of the car. I lead on my door. He also comes out, stands next to me and brings me into his arms. He kisses my forehead and temples a couple of times before exhaling loudly.

“Is everything okay?” he shakes his head. “What’s wrong?” he looks at me.

“Who is Sizabantu Maphumulo?” my eyes pop out. How the hell did he find out about Siza? And then my mind travels to the moment where Azanda told me about him coming to pay for her virtue. I didn’t think she was serious but judging by the look Lele is giving me, I can say that she was pretty serious. She cleared her throat.

“He is Roxy’s brother. He was also one of our trainers. He was or still is very close with Azanda. Wait, is this about him possibly coming to pay for breaking her virginity?” he gives me a scrutinizing look before nodding. Siza is very brave. If I were him, I wouldn’t try to prove my manhood by walking into the lion’s den. “He is really going to go ahead with his plans? He is more stupid than I thought.” He chuckles.

“A man in love will do anything to prove his love to a woman.” I frown.

“Siza is in love with Azanda? Did he tell you that?” he shakes his head.

“He knows of our family and our reputation. Yet he is going to come to a place where we were all born, raised and trained to

be the men we are today. He is stupid in love. But I would probably do the same thing with you.” his hands travel to my butt and he squeezes it. I giggle and lean even closer to him. Luckily there are no houses around this place. So it’s just us and those few cars passing.

“I don’t think my father would be cool with you coming to rub it in his face that you slept with Me.” he smiles.

“I am not that stupid. I would just pay for your lobola to avoid any bad blood between him and I. which I am going to do after that upcoming competition of yours.” I frown and take a step back from him but he just laughs and brings me even closer to him.

“Please tell me you are joking.”

“Unfortunately I don’t joke with things like these, my love. I am going to organize a meeting with your father so that we can discuss the way things are done in your culture and then we will take things from there.” he doesn’t even let me say anything. He just presses his lips on mine.

“Siza is a bit nervous about coming to the village.” Roxy states as I walk her to her car. I chuckle.

“He will have to be strong friend. I never forced him to come and do things right. He is the one who wanted to act holier than though. Tell him that he has to brace himself for a few punches he is going to get from my brothers because trust me, they are coming and I learnt a lot about meddling in men’s fights. I won’t even defend him. I will stand afar watching my brothers beat him up.” she laughs.

“You are more evil than I thought.”

“And you laughing about the possibility of your brother being beaten up means you are more evil than I am.” She snorts and leans on the car. I lean next to her. “What’s up between you and Nkululeko?” she sighs.

“Do all village men talk about lobola after only a few weeks of dating?” I frown looking at her. “He started the serious talk this week and it’s not that I don’t see a future with him. I mean I love this place, I do, but I don’t belong here. My whole life is in Joburg. My apartment, job, friends and family. If I decide to move here, what will keep me busy? I love him but I am also a

realist. I just don't see myself settling here." I nod and look ahead.

"I was born here. I have been to big cities but I prefer and will always prefer life in the rural areas. Not that I don't like the city, but it was not built for me and not every youngster wants to move to the city for a better life. Some of us want to create a better life for ourselves and the next generation here in the rural areas. So I totally understand you. You are the city girl and I am the village girl. I have my family here, friends, loyal customers and the real Azanda. How about you sit down with Nkululeko and tell him this? Maybe he will understand and even want to move to eGoli for you." she chuckles.

"You really think ibhinca would agree to move to the city just because of love? I don't think so."

"You have little faith on your man. He is open-minded and very understanding. Just talk to him. He is going to understand and get your point." She exhales loudly and then smiles.

"You're right. Maybe I will see you tomorrow. I don't know if women are allowed to accompany men in these types of occasions but if not, I will just come as your friend." We hug

and then she climbs inside her car. I walk back home and find Nyezi with her bag in the couch waiting.

“Mom is not coming back here, so I suggest you pack your stuff so that you can drive us to ekhaya elikhulu.” She says and turns back her attention to the TV.

“Yes Miss Dictator.” She rolls her eyes and chuckles.

I get to my room, pack a few stuff in my bag which I put in my huge suitcase, and go take mom’s car keys and then head to the garage. I drive the car out and park outside the gate. Nyezi locks the door and gate before climbing in. I stop by Veli’s house to pick her up. I need her for some moral support this weekend. We then firstly drive to Thandanani to get some booze to get us through the weekend. Of course we are going to drink in mugs but we can’t not get drunk. We buy a 48 pack of Bernini and pack it on my suitcase. I know the suitcase might raise suspicions but nobody will be brave enough to tell me to open it.

We then drive to ekhaya elikhulu. I think all my brothers are home because all of their cars are parked inside the yard. I park the car in front of the main house’s kitchen door and we climb off. We greet the aunts at the kitchen and then head to our

room. After a few moments, Lusanele and Makabongwe walk in.

“What did you bring? We couldn’t even buy booze in town today because dad was with us.” Lusanele asks already opening my suitcase. I laugh and shake my head. She smiles widely when she sees the booze. “Clever girl. You sure are going to need it for tomorrow. I don’t see the day going smoothly.” She takes out a dumpy and opens it before downing it. “Yabanda kamnandi.” We all follow suit. While talking the door opens, we quickly hide the bottles but take them out when we see Mnyamane walking in.

“Oww you guys are covered? Bafo wanted me to buy you something from Manzolwandle.” He says.

“You can add bhuti. This won’t be enough. We just wanna get drunk. Plus we are off cleaning and cooking duty.”

Makabongwe says and Mnyamane laughs.

“So you guys are fine with Bernini?” he asks.

“And 2 bottles of Gin.” He nods and heads out.

“Zisazokhala.” Veli says and we all laugh. We finish the alcohol we have opened and then go out to greet my brothers, the wives and Sokalisa. He smiles when he sees me. He is standing with his cousin, Skhwili, who we call babomncane most of the time.

“Seeing more of you emagcekeni alayikhaya makes me so happy ndodakazi.” I smile. “Do you need anything? Goodies?” I chuckle.

“I am sure bhut Mnyamane has that covered.” He nods. “Will see you later baba. I only wanted to greet you and let you know that I have arrived.” He hugs me with a wide smile and we go back inside the house. Mom stops us before we go inside our room.

“You can go to your rondavel and sing as loudly as you want, we won’t complain. Just make sure you hide your bottles.” She says and we laugh.

Kwa Buthelezi, there is a rondavel for the daughters which is used for umgonqo and when there is a big ceremony and there are no rooms for the guests to sleep in. luckily the rondavel is behind the main house, so nobody will see us as we transport the alcohol. We quickly transport it. This rondavel even has a

bar fridge, couches and a table. We load the alcohol in the fridge and make ourselves comfortable. We know that our brothers will surely join us later. We try to accommodate Nyezi by not talking about sex and boys. Somehow we end up talking about Ntokozo and Sethulo.

“I have no problem with the girl. I don’t even know her that well. I just hope she is not too bitchy because if he brought her to Jozi, things might be serious between them and she might end up being our sister in law.” Makabongwe says. We are joined by Azonotha

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Skhwili’s daughter; Thabitha and Owethu, the aunts’ daughters. Luckily Owethu is Nyezi’s age, so their curl up to a corner and start chatting.

“Enough about that Ntokozo girl, when are we going to Durban to deal with that skank that cheated on our brother?” Lusanele asks and I laugh. All the Buthelezi descendants in this household breathe war. The moment they are brought into this world, they are fed war.

“We don’t need to beat her up, we just have to show off bhuty’s new woman on our social media accounts. Even if she

has blocked us, someone will show her and she will wish death upon herself.” Azonotha says and we all agree with her. They have also joined us in the drinking game.

We start singing and dancing. Soon our brothers join us with their own alcohol but they also place another 48 pack of Bernini near the fridge and place the bottles emsamo.

“Oww so that’s why you weren’t answering your phone? You are here and drinking.” Zithulele asks looking at Veli with a smirk. She just giggles.

“We all left our phones in the bedroom we are going to sleep in.” she responds. He nods and pulls her to stand.

He hugs and kisses her in front of us. We have all stopped what we are doing we are watching the love and the restlessness newest episode live with new cast. They finally break the show, Zithulele sits down and brings Veli to sit on top of him. She is now a blushing mess and can’t even look at anyone in the room.

“OVeli will kill a person shame. Here we are, gossiping about our brother and you didn’t care to tell us that you are the new

woman who makes his smile like an idiot and spends most of his time staring at his phone.” Lusanele claps hands dramatically and we all laugh.

“It wasn’t my position to tell you guys. He was supposed to introduce me.” Veli defends herself shyly.

“You should’ve brought that beautiful Maphumulo friend of yours.” Somnyama says as he settles next to me with a beer bottle on his hand.

“As if you would have the courage to say something sensible to her.” he chuckles.

“But still.” I laugh at him. He is the most feared Buthelezi brother but very clueless when it comes to love. We talk about some things and then continue with the singing and dancing. Later, Sethulo, Zithulele and Zikhethela walk out but they leave their phones on the table indicating that they are coming back. Ayabongwa quickly follows after them. I wonder what’s up.

NARRATED

After receiving a go text from MaWanda, Sethulo made eye contact with his brothers and they walked out and headed to MaWanda’s house. They quietly made their way in and tiptoed to the bedroom. When MaWanda saw them, she nodded and walked out. The brothers made sure to check if there are any

weapons in the room. They moved them to the lounge. Sokalisa was singing while bathing. After a few moments, the singing stopped and he stepped out of the bathroom. Upon seeing his older sons, he frowned. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"I am just going to cut straight to the chase baba. Some guy from KwaMaphumulo is coming to pay ilobolo for Azanda tomorrow morning. We just wanted to inform you that. We are off now." Zikhethle said already opening the bedroom door and one look from Sokalisa made him freeze.

"Repeat what you just said boy." His voice was scary, they wished to flee even using the windows.

"Baba they met in eGoli and things got too romantic. That's why he is coming here tomorrow." Sethulo said.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"Hhay baba, say anything you wanna say to her to me. I will pass on the message." Sethulo said taking a step closer to Sokalisa who gave him a quick hard slap. He gasped but clenched his jaws.

"You can take out your frustrations on us baba, not her. We will only allow you to go talk to her once you have calmed down. You know how hard it was to build a relationship with her. Don't ruin that just because some boy has shown interest in her." Zithulele said.

“Where the fuck is my sjambok? Your sight is making me angry.” Sokalisa said searching everywhere for any weapon. He took his wife’s bag and threw it at Zithulele. “Who is this fucker? Do I know him? What’s his father’s name? I will kill every living member of his family.” he said angrily as he punched the wall.

“Normal fathers are usually happy when their daughters go out to get married.” Ayabongwa said and Sokalisa quickly charged to him. He wrapped his hand around his throat.

“My daughter is 21 years for fuck’s sake. That son of a bitch hasn’t even known her for too long and now he wants her for himself. Don’t you think that’s questionable? He only wants to fuck her and I won’t let that happen.” Sethulo cleared his throat and Sokalisa released Ayabongwa’s throat. “Talk boy.”

“They have already...umm...you know.” He said connecting his index fingers and Zithulele sent him a ‘what the fuck?’ look.

“FUCK YOU! ALL OF YOU! GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY ROOM!” Sokalisa shouted and they didn’t even wait for him to utter another word. They quickly rushed out like mice being chased by a cat.

We are woken up by someone shouting from the gate.

‘Sikhulekile ekhaya, KwaShenge, Sokalisa, Mnyamane Ka Nggengelele. Yithi o Maphumulo. Sithunywe undodana wethu ukuba masizocela isihlobo esihle’

And here I thought they are here to pay for inkomo kamama but that’s not something to shout about. I hope Sokalisa doesn’t kill him. I groan touching my forehead. I have a massive hangover. We slept at 3 am and judging by the sunlight, I can say that it’s 6 or 7 o’clock. I wake the others and we go to the main house. There is so much movement in the kitchen and outside. Looks like people are preparing for a big feast. One thing I like about being home is that we are only called to serve people and not be involved in the cooking or cleaning.

We get to our room and clean ourselves up. Azonotha gives us the bioplus patches. I hope they will help with the massive hangover. We clean our room and go back to clean the rondavel. We are then called to serve the elders. After that we are given our food. We eat and the young ones wash the dishes. Only after that are the Maphumulo elders allowed

inside the yard. We are told to go sit on our rondavel while the negotiations proceed.

“Can we just continue where we left off at dawn? This hangover is not on.” Thabitha says and we laugh at her before continuing drinking but this time we are using mugs just in case an elder walks in and decide to scold us.

“So you and bhut omdala neh?” Azonotha smirks at Veli and she giggles. “Tell me, has he popped the cherry yet? Don’t be shy. We are all past umhlanga babes. Sesiphila emseni.” I break into laughter. Azonotha has Veli’s personality. She is forward and talkative but has a kind heart.

“We haven’t slept together yet but we have kissed a couple of times.” Veli responds and we all give her undivided attention.

“If you were to rate him out of 10, what number would you give him?” Makabongwe questions.

“He is such a good kisser, so I would give him a 9 out of 10. And before you ask why 9, even pros need some room to perfect their skills.” She answers with a shy smile. “Your turn Azanda. What would you give Siza?”

“An 8 out of 10 on the kissing. Same reason as you. A 10 out of 10 on the muffing and a 12 out of 10 on the fucking.” These bitches scream and someone from outside shouts for us to keep it down. We laugh.

“Now you’re making me miss my man.” Lusanele says pouting. “So it’s safe to say you are hooked to his dick? How huge is he anyway?”

“I have nobody to compare him to. What do you guys consider huge?” she quickly takes on her phone and shows me different dicks. “Why do you keep dick pics on your phone?” she shrugs with a smirk.

“I am a porn lover.”

“Lord have mercy on your soul.” She laughs. “Anyways that’s how huge he is.” I point at some dick nje. She looks at it and licks his lips.

“Damn sbari is gifted. Are you sure you don’t have a bore hole down there after getting down and dirty with him?” she asks passing the phone to everyone else and I just laugh. I am sure the pensioners would murder us if they were to hear our conversation now.

“Anything above this is from upper Africa. You would be ungrateful if you were to leave him because of his dick.” Thabitha says and I continue laughing. Yaz aziphili lezingane.

“I have seen your brother’s dick though.” Veli says in a shy tone. “We once showered together when we were at Richards Bay. I have never seen a dick so huge and thick. I nearly ran out of the shower naked.” we break into laughter because her facial expression is just too funny.

“It made you wanna prolong the cookie popping?” Makabongwe asks.

“It made me wanna abstain nje sisi.” She responds and we continue laughing.

We move on from the sex topic though and while discussing some things, aunt Nothile makes her way in carrying a glass of wine. This one doesn’t care about drinking openly. She is the official drunkard aunt of the family. She is also a semi-rich auntie because she doesn’t have kids, lives in Durban but doesn’t work. Sokalisa gives him a monthly allowance. She always arrive at the morning on family gatherings and leave at afternoon just to avoid any arguments with her siblings or even the wives.

“What are you guys drinking?” she asks as she makes her way to the bar fridge. She removes a dumpy and pours it all on her glass. “Your in-laws are very handsome though Azoh. Your father in law, God.” She licks her lips and we laugh at her. “I have seen him many times in Durban but he never takes notice of me. I even got into trouble on purpose in one of his malls hoping to be taken into his office and disciplined, instead I was taken to the security’s office. You can imagine my disappointment and annoyance after that.” my aunt is such a whole vibe but she is a bad influence

so the mothers never allow us to go visit her or even spend a night at her house when we are in Durban.

“What are they talking about right now auntie? Why are they taking too long?” I enquire and she rolls her eyes.

“Skhwili had to calm your father down. Apparently someone said something that angered him and he almost chased all the negotiators out.”

“What did they say auntie? Why are you coming here with an incomplete paper?” Azonotha asks and auntie laughs.

Before she can answer us, Thabitha's mother informs us that they are calling us inside the house and we should wear doeks. I only have a few but I keep them in my wardrobe at home. Why do we need head wraps? Anyways after giving us disapproving looks, she walks out and comes back with MaVezi who gives us her doeks. We head to where the negotiating is taking place and one glance at Sokalisa lets me know that he doesn't like whatever is happening here.

"So which one of these flowers did you son see and would like to pluck out from our garden?" Skhwili asks. Isn't that question asked during lobola shit? But I have never witnessed the inkomo kamama whole process. So maybe it's done this way.

"The one wearing a pink head wrap." Nzelwe says. We don't even know the colour of the doeks we are wearing. We just took what we were given and wrapped them around our heads.

"Azanda ndodakazi, do you know these people?" Skhwili asks once again. I raise my head and looks at Nzelwe. I am a bit relieved that Siza is not here.

"Yes baba, I know them." I respond.

"Okay. You can all leave now." We stand up and head back to our rondavel.

“Don’t mean to forward, but dade the money that was layered ecansini didn’t indicate inkomo kamama. It screamed lobola oe. What if baba forced them to pay lobola for you?” Lusanele asks as I open another bottle of Bernini. I give her a look but don’t say anything. I am a bit stressed and anxious right now. I am not sure about the shit going on and that’s making me uneasy.

After about 30 minutes, my thoughts are disturbed by ululations. I frown and dash out of the rondavel. The aunts and other relatives are singing and dancing, rejoicing about something.

“Yoh I didn’t think your boy had it in him. Uzishaye zaphелеla. All eleven cows and one extra. 6 love cows and the other six were monetary. Now you see why I wanted his father’s attention? These men know how to take care of their women.” Aunt Nothile says. I am even more confused right now. 12 cows? Somebody better come and explain this to me before I lose my mind. I walk to where my mother is and she gives me a nervous smile. She is guilty and responsible for this chaos. I just know it from the look on her face.

“Mama what did you do?”

“I did what I thought was best for everyone.”

“And what was that mama? Going behind my back?”

“Listen mtanami...” I shake my head and take steps back. “My love please listen to me.”

I rush to the room we have been occupying, take my phone, her car keys and my bank card. I walk out of the main house and I can hear her calling my name. I jump inside her car and as I am about to drive out of the main gate, I see my brothers heading to one of the cars that the Maphumulo’s came in. I drive out of the gate and I spot Siza standing out of one cars. I park the car but don’t turn off the engine. I strut to him and he looks like he is about to run.

“I can explain Azanda.” I slap him and he gasps.

“How dare you, Siza? How could you? Without my consent or permission? What the fuck made you think we are on the same page? Why the fuck did you do this?” he opens his mouth to say something but I don’t wait for him to respond. I run back to the car and climb inside. I can see my brothers and father coming towards Siza with sjamboks and sticks. When he notices them, he starts running away. I hope they can beat him to a pulp. My phone rings and I switch it off before driving off in high speed. Fuck mom and Siza.

NARRATED

Roxy was driving to the Buthelezi household when she saw a disturbing sight. Her brother, Siza, was being beaten by the Buthelezi men on the side of the road. She slowed down and parked just before them. She got out of her car and ran to her brother. She pushed everyone away, covered her brother with her small body and the beating stopped. She helped him stand up and she made him walk to the car. He climbed into the passenger seat and she closed it before returning to the Buthelezi men who were just looking at her.

“I don’t mean to be disrespectful but why the hell did you do that to my brother? Why did you beat him up? What was his fault because it takes two to tango? It would’ve been better if one person was beating him up, but all of you ganging up on him. That’s just being cowardice. Whatever respect I had for you all has just vanished into thin air. Did your in-laws beat you up like this Sokalisa when you came to pay for ilobola?” she didn’t wait for an answer. Instead she ran to her car and drove out in high speed. The men angrily returned home. Mazwi was standing in the yard with the other Maphumulo men.

“Where is my son?” he asked.

“He left with Roxanne.” Somnyama said and he went to his room. The others followed suit. Sokalisa looked at Mazwi and he cleared his throat.

“My apologies for our behaviour. It was uncalled for. I just wasn’t expecting this. They told me about the negotiations last night and I didn’t even come to terms with it.” Sokalisa said and Mazwi nodded.

“I hope that there will be peace between our families as time goes on. When we said we are here to form a relationship between the two families, we meant that. We hope that will be possible. We will be waiting for you to come with umbondo.” Mazwi said before straightening and walking out.

His family members followed him. They had already had food and drinks. So they were good. They climbed inside the cars and drove off. Sokalisa went in search for his wife and he found her in the girls’ bedroom. He sat next to her and when he tried wrapping his arms around her

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she shrugged him off.

“Mkami what have I done now?”

“Why did you go after that boy?” she asked and Sokalisa was tongue tied. “Azanda is gone. She didn’t know about the lobola. She only thought they were going to pay for umqhoyiso. We told them to pay for ilobola because we feared that you would do exactly what you just did.” Sokalisa stood up and he looked at his wife.

“What do you mean by gone Fundiswa? Where is my daughter?” MaNene shrugged as she tried to call Azanda one more time but this time she went straight to voicemail.

“She took off after finding out about lobola.”

“I thought she was running away from me.” Fundiswa rolled her eyes before standing up. “I will tell someone to track the car.”

“My car doesn’t have a tracker.”

“Fuck!” he cursed angrily as he paced up and down. He finally walked out and went to Zithulele’s room. He found him changing his bloodied shirt. Zithulele looked up and frowned. “Tell all your brothers to go out there and find your sister. Don’t come back without her.” he walked out and Zithulele was so

confused until he remembered seeing Azanda drive off. He quickly put on a clean shirt before going to his brothers.

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“You can calm down now. I am not injured.” Siza said to his sister who was pacing up and down. She had cleaned his wound and was now back to being angry.

“They are hypocrites. All of them. How could they do this to you? And why did dad allow them?” she shouted. Siza sighed and laid his head on the bed. His family was on their way to the lodge.

“You will never understand the way men communicate. There is a reason why dad didn’t get involved. Now can you please calm down and sit down? You are giving me a headache.” He said and Roxy huffed before sitting down on the edge of the bed. “Any luck with Azanda?” Roxy shook her head.

“I think she switched off her phone. But how could you do this to her? You could’ve at least warned her. Your actions were barbaric and you just acted like cavemen. You were wrong to

decide for her. You could've asked what she wants before practically buying her."

"You saw first-hand what those Buthelezi men did to me because of ilobola. How do you think they would've reacted if I just came and said 'I broke your daughter's virginity and here is a cow as compensation?' I think I would've been on my way to the morgue right now." Roxy's phone rang and she jumped but was disappointed to see who was calling. Nevertheless, she answered because she didn't wanna raise suspicions.

"Hey." She said as she stood up and walked to the window.

"Hello babe. Has your family left yet?" Nkululeko asked.

"No."

"They are there now?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Please inform me when they are gone so that we can talk. I miss you by the way and I love you."

"Okay." Nkululeko chuckled before hanging up.

“That was your boyfriend, right?” Siza asked and Roxy rolled her eyes. She wasn’t going to answer him. “Ignoring me won’t do because I might just tell dad you are dating some bhinca from around here.”

“Fuck you and he is not ibhinca.”

“Oww, so you are dating?” he asked with a smirk and Roxy bit her lips to stop herself from cursing him. They heard a knock and Roxy went to open. She smiled when she saw her father and attacked him with a hug. He wrapped his arms around his princess.

“How are you doing, angel?” he asked as they walked inside her suite. She hugged the others and went back to her father.

“I am good daddy.” Everyone find a place to sit and Roxy went to snuggle next to her father. She was a daddy’s girl and she was always teased about that.

“You’re being breastfed now?” Siza asked already laughing and Roxy threw a shoe at him. “Ouch. Give a man a break. I am still recovering from the in-laws wounds.” He said as he continued laughing.

“I am glad the negotiators didn’t know how you looked. I swear to God I was sitting on one butt cheek afraid that someone might recognize me and I might be punished for your

mistakes.” Nzelwe said and they laughed at him because he was really nervous throughout the whole negotiations.

“So did you guys avenge me?” Siza asked sitting up.

“What for?” Mazwi asked. “You knew very well what you were doing when you went after a Buthelezi princess. I also got burned when I was courting your mother, so take these lashes like a man. I only hope that she is worth it.”

“She is. What did her family say?”

“Not much. I just said they should communicate with us when they have set the date for umbondo.”

“I don’t think that will happen soon. You guys should let Azanda and I sort out our differences and fix our relationship before we can proceed with anything.” Siza stated and his father nodded.

“I didn’t even get to meet my daughter in law but I saw how she was when she talked to you. She is her father’s daughter through and through.” Mazwi said and they all laughed.

“Yes she is very stubborn but I am hoping to tame her a little.” Siza let out and Roxy laughed shaking her head.

“Good luck with that.”

Parking in the Mkhize yard, I climb off the car and find my grandmother already waiting for me with her hands on her waist. I already know that my parents have contacted her, otherwise she would have ululated and danced for everyone to see by now. That's how much she loves me.

"Yazi Azanda you are not that old for me to beat you up." she says and I chuckle.

"Hawu gogo, I drive all the way from Nongoma to see you and this is the welcome I get? Should I go back?" I ask as I step closer to her.

"You know this trip wasn't blessed by your parents. They have been worried about you. They even called me asking if I haven't heard anything from you. Whatever they did, it's not enough to stress your parents like this MaShenge. Anyways, how did you travel?" she asks as she wraps her arms around me. I melt and hug her back.

My grandmother has the warmest hands ever. Adlula awe Snake Park. She releases me and we walk inside her house. She

lives with my two cousins, Zime and Niyanda. They are both my uncle's kids and they actually volunteered to stay with gogo. Mainly because she is not strict and she is very loving. Zime is a nurse at the local hospital and Niyanda is works at some factory. They are both not here by the way. Gogo starts by making juice for me and then puts some scones on a plate before she hands it to me. We go to the living room and sit down.

"Now tell me what those stupid love birds did to you so that I can go deal with them." I laugh at her seriousness. She could really go there and give them her piece of mind. I sigh.

"Gogo, while in Jozi I met a guy. Things went on too fast and we ended up sleeping together." I am not about to tell my grandmother that Siza and I are nothing but fuck buddies. "We agreed that he will come and pay inkomo yomqhoyiso gogo but he switched up on me and actually paid full lobola for me. I found out that mom actually knew about Siza's plans but she didn't bother telling me. They treated me like some price to pass around. They didn't consider my feelings or ask me what I needed. What they did is like some arranged marriage thing."

"But you know the boy, so it's not an arranged marriage."

“Gogo that’s beside the point.”

“Azanda you know how your father is. You honestly think if the boy’s family came and proudly shouted ‘we are here to pay for inkomo yomqhoyiso’ he would’ve smiled? I am pretty sure he would’ve sent them away with bullets flying. He would’ve really killed that boy. Whatever your mother did, it was to save that boy’s life. Now stop being stubborn. Call them and tell them you’re here and you’re safe.”

“Give it two more hours gogo.”

“Ngzokushaya ke mina.” I laugh before taking my phone. I switch it on and notifications come in flooding. A call immediately comes in. It’s from Mnyamane. I answer it.

“Ohh Nkosi yami. Sisi wami thank you for answering. Thank God you’re okay. Where are you? Are you hurt? Tell us so that we can come fetch you. We were told not to return home without you.” he says very fast. I chuckle and wait for him to calm down.

“I am fine bhuti. You don’t need to worry about me. Just tell Sokalisa and MaNene that I am okay and I am safe where I am but I am not coming tonight.”

“You are calling your mother MaNene, something must be wrong. What is going on? Please tell me.” I smile. We don’t even have a strong bond but it warms my heart to hear that he is worried about me.

“Just a small misunderstanding. I am fine bhuti. I have to go now.” I hang up and then dial mom’s number. She answers almost immediately.

“Kodwa zibulo lami

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are you trying to kill me? How could you just take off like that without telling anyone where you were going? To top it all off, you switched off your phone. What if something bad happened to you? How would we have found you? I understand that you are angry, but you shouldn’t have done what you did. It was really wrong Azanda and inconsiderate. Don’t ever repeat what you did. You hear me?”

“Yes ma.”

“Now where are you?”

“I am with the person who didn’t betray me or decide for me what it is that I need.” She sighs. “I am safe. I only wanted to

say that. I will see you soon and please apologize to Veli for me. I didn't mean to abandon her. Sleep well ma." I hang up and send a message to Veli apologizing before switching off my phone.

"You kids of today. I would've gotten the beating of my life from my mother if I pulled a stunt like that." gogo says shaking her head and I laugh. We continue talking and then I go freshen up before she gives me a gown to put on. I put my phone in my mother's bedroom and then head to the living room. I find Zime and Niyanda sitting with gogo. I didn't even hear them come in.

"Hello batase." We exchange hugs before I sit next to gogo who hands me a plate of food. Whatever belief you have that after visiting gogo, you go back to your place having gained at least a few kilos. Gogo always wants to see me eating. She never wants to see umtanomtanakhe hungry.

"Why didn't you tell us you were coming? We would've came back early just so we could welcome you home." Zime says with a smile.

“It was unplanned, mtase. But next time I will surely inform you prior.” They nod.

After a while, gogo retires to her room leaving me with Zime and Niyanda. Well Niyanda doesn't stay long. He tells us that he is fetching his girlfriend who is pregnant by the way but still in her first trimester. He leaves and Zime and I tidy up and also wash the dishes before we chill in the living room.

“So what brought you here?” she asks.

“Mom and some stupid guy nje who pain lobola for me without my consent.” Her eyes pop out.

“You are lying.” I shake my head. “OMG! I should definitely move to Kwa Mahede. You guys have drama for days.” I laugh at her and no we don't have drama. Just my mom wanting to dictate things and Sokalisa allowing her because he can't say no to her. “Do you know the guy? How well acquainted are you with him?”

“We have slept together a couple of times.” She screams and gogo reprimands her from the bedroom. We laugh and lower our voices.

“That guy must be your boyfriend then. Why are you switching up on him and why are you being dramatic?” I roll my eyes.

“He was coming to pay for inkomo yomqhoyiso, not ilobola. He ambushed me and he was wrong to think that I would just go ahead with this plan or idea. It’s too much for me mtase.” It’s easy to speak to Zime because she is only 24 years old.

“Is he cute?” she asks biting her lip and I laugh.

“You have Instagram, right?” she nods. “Search @siza_phumulo and tell if that’s cute or not.” She takes her phone and goes to her Instagram. She gasps when she discovers my ‘future husband’.

“Girl, this dude is hot like a heato. Damn. And look he has posted a photo of you.” I frown.

“What?” I sit next to her and take her phone. She is right. Siza posted a photo of me which I took the night we first met. He has captioned it with ‘Phakade lami’ and added a ring emoji.

The comments are crazy. Some are congratulating him, some complimenting me and others are like bitter exes, pointing out the 'wrong things' about me. Siza is crazy yaz. "This guy needs to get checked out. He is insane. There he goes again doing something without consulting me. We are not even dating."

"But you are traditionally married. So you have to go and face the music mtase. There is no need for you to be all stubborn now. It's too late. You just have to find a common ground and move the fuck on. There is no time for playing now." I scoff.

"But he has to pay for this shit he did to me. He has to." she laughs before opening Siza's Instagram story. It contains three pictures of me and one video and a picture of his family in the Buthelezi household. Siza is going to be the death of me, I swear.

“OMG! This dress is coming along so good. You are good at this baby.” mom says squeezing my shoulder. I chuckle as I stand back and watch the dress.

Well I came back home on Monday and we talked with the rents and sorted out our differences. It wasn't easy accepting mom's apology but after some 24 hour therapy with gogo, I melted a bit and had a chat with the rents. Turns out Sokalisa also didn't know about the lobola thing. They only told him Friday night. Well I also wish I could've had a heads up. I thought Veli would be upset but she just laughed at me. This was too funny to her. It amused her.

Anyways, Siza sent his sister to deliver the pearls here before leaving. I haven't spoken to him and I am not going to do that anytime soon. I have worked on the dress for the full 2 days without even sleeping for more than 4 hours each night. It is halfway there and I only have 9 days left on my deadline. I am just glad that the other accessories are done, just the dress left. And because she paid us so much money, if I have enough time, I will make her beaded block heels with a matching bag. I hope she will love the gift.

“It is beautiful, right?” I ask with a smile.

“You should definitely design something like this for your traditional wedding.” I stare at her and she raises her hands in surrender. “Let me leave before I say something that might anger you.” she says sarcastically before heading out, laughing. Mom is dramatic though.

I yawn and stretch my arms. My body feels tired but I have to keep on working and I also have to make time for rehearsals because the competition is nearing. I go take some few notes from my bag, grab my phone and head out. I would've taken mom's car, but I need to stretch my legs. So I wake the walk to Mvulazi tuck-shop. There might be cars in the main road but the peace I feel walking is just right. I am not even one of those people who put on earphones when I am walking alone. I just wanna hear the sounds of the livestock and even people shouting at each other.

I get to the tuck-shop and see nice car outside. I pay no mind to it. Instead I walk inside and purchase an energy drink with some snacks. Walking out, I nearly drop the plastic I am carrying when I see the owner. You have got to be kidding me. He smiles

at me. I have already said that this man is going to be the death of me. Why is he still here?

“Is my wife not happy to see me?” he asks with a smirk. Ohh I see he is done being apologetic. I huff before walking to him. I know there is no way to ignore him now that he is here before me. I look at his face. His bruises are starting to fade away.

“Don’t worry, Roxy made sure to nurse me back to health.” I roll my eyes.

“Why didn’t you leave with your family?”

“Because I didn’t want to and because I wanted to make things right between the two of us before heading back to Jozi.”

“I don’t like what you did, Siza. And the way you announced our ‘engagement’ on Instagram.” He smiles.

“I am sorry. Can you please forgive me, phakade lami?” he steps closer to me and places his hands on my hips. He perks my lips a couple of times before I laugh and stop him. “How about you give me a tour of Ehlalankosi?” I chuckle.

“Not today. Maybe some other day. I have rehearsals and a dress to finish.”

“Just an hour of your time then.” I huff and nod. He leads me to his car and opens the passenger door. I slide inside and he closes it after me. He also gets in and drives off.

“How did you know that you were going to see me today?” he smirks.

“I didn’t. I just had hope.” We get to the lodge and we climb off the car after parking it. I leave my things on the seat. He leads me to his room. “Before you ask, Roxy went to see that idiot she calls boyfriend.” I laugh. This thing of hating your sister’s boyfriend runs in the male gene, I guess.

“Why don’t you go beat him up?” he chuckles.

“He has back up and I don’t. Plus he is the son of Induna. I am sure beating him up is like a huge deal.” I continue laughing. Well I don’t think they would hold that against him. Nkululeko is fucking his sister. He has the right to beat him up. It’s the language that men use to communicate with each other, violence. I yawn and throw myself in the bed. He removes my shoes. “Are you that tired?”

“I haven’t had a good night sleep in 3 days. That dress is tiring me. Plus I don’t even have assistance. I don’t think people will get my vision about it, but yoh I am tired and fucked up.”

“Turn over.” I frown and look at him with my eyebrows raised. “Trust me. And take off your t-shirt and bra.” I sigh and do as he says. He leaves the room and comes back after a few minutes. He climbs on the bed and straddles my butt. “If it happens that you fall asleep, I will wake you up after two hours, okay?” I giggle and nod. He pours some oils on my back and starts massaging me. God, his hands are doing wonders and they are practically releasing all the tension in my body.

“Do you have real feelings for me or you just paid the lobola because my mother ordered you to?” he sighs.

“Your mother didn’t order me to do anything

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Azanda. If I felt cornered or didn’t have any feelings for you, I wouldn’t have come. I am afraid of your family, yes but that isn’t the reason why I did what I did. You are a very interesting lady, Azanda. You aren’t phased by my charms. You don’t even give a damn that I posted you on my wall. That alone would drive thousands of girls crazy. You just don’t give a fuck about who I am and that’s one of the things I like about you. You are strong willed, proud of who you are and where you come from. You are not afraid to stand out from the crowd. You are just amazing, MaShenge.” His words make my heart melt.

“Well, if you must know, I also think that you have a good personality, ignoring the arrogancy part.” He laughs. “I just didn’t like the way you did those things without consulting me but it is water under the bridge now.” He sighs.

“So my father wants to know when is your family bringing umbondo.” I roll my eyes.

“Baby steps, Siza. Baby steps.” He laughs. “Plus I am unemployed.”

“As if money is a problem la kuwe.” I laugh. Well he isn’t wrong on that point.

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NOMZAMO

‘Bazali bami, ningixolele nami angizenzi

Nami ngilawulwa inhliziyo,

Ikhalisa isginci ngidansele sona

Baba nomama wami

Njengoba nani nangizala nibabili

Ngicela ningipheni ithuba nami

Owami umuzi ngizakhele wona'

She sang with a smile on her face as she imagined a guy she saw. She was busy knitting a bikini top. She was so far gone, she didn't even hear Senzelwe and Ntokozo sitting in front of her. Senzelwe cleared her throat and Nomzamo nearly jumped up. She placed her hand on her chest.

"Jesus Christ, why did you scare me like that?" she asked.

"Who are you singing about? We understand you have a beautiful voice and all, but whose got you all Ntaba Yase Dubai all of the sudden?" Ntokozo questioned with accusing eyes. Nomzamo just blushed and rolled her eyes.

"Well I saw this guy at Nunns tuck-shop yesterday. He was driving a really nice car and he looked like he wasn't from around here. With a fade and a beautiful smile. He was wearing jeans, a t-shirt and sneakers. He even greeted me and smiled." She said, her mind already drifting off to the moment she saw the mysterious guy.

“Did it go beyond the smiling and greeting?” Senzelwe asked. Nomzamo scoffed and they laughed. “Well if it was meant to be, it will happen.” Nomzamo rolled her eyes.

“On the other news, a guy from Jozi came to pay lobola for Azanda this past weekend. There was so much drama in that yard but everything was successful and the guy paid 12 cows for her. 6 monetary and 6 live cows.” Ntokozo said and Senzelwe gasped while Nomzamo frowned.

“Few days in Jozi and boom she comes back with a man who pays lobola for her that fast? She is definitely pregnant. That’s Miss Perfect trying to conceal a scandal. Imagine what people would say if she were to fall pregnant while attending the reed dance? Itshitshi elimithi.” Senzelwe said and laughed.

“Do you have a picture of that guy?” Nomzamo asked and Ntokozo took out her phone.

“Phela Sethulo bought some data for me. The guy has a very large following on Instagram.” Ntokozo said as she tapped her phone and she finally reached Siza’s wall. “He already posted her and wrote Phakade lami.” She showed her friends the wall. Nomzamo tensed and she got angry.

“Fuck, that’s the guy I saw at the shops. That’s unfair. Azanda can’t just get everything she wants. I like that guy and I am going to get him.” she said breathing heavily and Ntokozo carefully removed her phone from Nomzamo’s hold.

“Let’s just focus on the competition. You will go after Azanda after that.” Ntokozo said trying to calm her friend down who wasn’t interested in calming down.

“No. Azanda is not going to win. Not this time around. I am going to take her man away and her pride.” Nomzamo said before she smiled and continued singing, paying no attention to her friends.

I don't know how to feel about Siza coming to my home or him being here in the village. A part of me is happy but another part is anxious. Yesterday ended with me taking a power nap in his bed and he only woke me up when mom called. You should've seen the smile she had on her face when Siza came to drop me off. She was so happy to see him and even invited him for dinner today. Well Siza promised to help me with the dress, so he is going to be here in a few minutes. Mom is at work and Nyezi is at school. My crew and I finished the accessories and that's just so cool. I have tasked Veli with doing the beaded heels and matching knobkerrie because I know she is very good at that.

A car hoots from the gate and I walk out of the door. I go open the gate and close it after he has driven in. he parks under the tree and climbs off. He is looking so handsome in cotton shorts, a short sleeved t-shirt which he has left the first 3 of its buttons open and sandals. He has really cute feet so he often wears sandals just to show them off. He smiles as he comes closer to me.

“How are you doing MaShenge?” he asks already bringing me closer to him, hugging me and squeezing my butt. I squeal and hug him back.

“I am fine. How are you doing?”

“I am good. You can lead the way.” I take his hand and lead him inside, all the way to my mom’s bedroom. “Wow.” He says as the dress comes to a view. “This is all you?” I chuckle.

“Well not the material but definitely the beading.”

“This is so beautiful Azanda.” He touches the dress to feel the beads. “You are seriously talented. How come you have never done anything like this before?” I shrug.

“I didn’t think I was capable of it until now.” He nods.

“I have noticed how talented people like to downplay their skills.” I roll my eyes and chuckle. I head to the kitchen to get some snacks and juice and then place it in a table far from the dress. “Okay, you will tell me what you need me to do and I will do it.” I nod and hand him a small tub with pearls, beads, needles and cotton. I also hand him an apron.

“We always wear them for precautionary measures.” He nods and puts it on.

The past two days I have managed to do the top part. So right now Siza and I are going to do the bottom part of the dress. I start by showing him how it's done and he follows my instructions. He is pretty good and a fast learner. I would definitely work with him in the near future or like forever. Time flies when you are working and actually having a bit of fun in between. My phone beeps, indicating that the time is 1:00pm, indicating that I should take a break and Nyezi is going to be back in like 2 hours or less. I put my tub down and look at this work of art we have put together. Siza mirrors my actions.

"That was the longest I have worked without sitting down." He says and I chuckle.

"Indeed two hands are better than one. Because of your assistance, I don't need to pull an all-nighter tonight because you have helped me cut my work short. And you are really good in this. You deserve compliments." He smiles and looks away.

"Are you blushing?" I laugh at him and he just rolls his eyes. He comes to stand behind me and places his hands on my shoulders, slowly sliding them down my arms. I breathe out and I can feel him smirking.

“Do you know how beautiful and sexy you are, Zanda?” he whispers lowering his head closer to my ear and biting my earlobe gently. I gasp. “Has anyone ever told you that?” he continues whispering in an intoxicating way, kissing my neck. I shake my head.

“Nobody has ever had the guts to tell me to my face that I am sexy.” My voice comes out harshly yet softer than ever.

“Allow me to show you how sexy you are and worship your body.” He turns me and claims my lips instantly.

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VELISANI

Azanda told me that Siza is going to come help her out with the dress but I know that they will end up tearing each other's clothes off. The drama that followed after her lobola negotiations was actually amusing. I don't know how I would feel about Lele if he were to pull a stunt like that. Yeah we are dating, but I think you shouldn't surprise your partner with something like that. You should inform them so that they can prepare themselves mentally and physically. And also look good. I mean if the Buthelezi family were to come and pay lobola for me

I would want to have a fresh hairstyle, some new nails, make-up in case I take photos with Zithulele and a nice dress.

My phone beeps, a message from Lele informing me that he is held up in Eshowe and he might come back later on or even tomorrow. One thing I like about him is that he always informs me about his whereabouts even when I didn't ask. In fact I don't even have to ask because he just does it effortlessly. I respond with an 'I love you and I miss you' text before wearing my sandals and walking out of the house.

I am not going anywhere in particular, I just wanted to take a walk before practice because I am really bored. The competition is in three weeks and we have prepared all the items we are going to present in it. There are 7 categories for the whole competition. What I can say is that the Maphumulo family is monied because each winner of every category is going to get R2000, a medal and certificate. The team who is going to win BEST INGOMA/UKUGIDA is going to get R10 000 and is going to be the new ambassadors and face of Yakhanathi Organization. This is so exciting really.

Izimbali Zomhlaba chose me to enter for UKUZIBONGELA category; Azanda for UKUCULA category; Sisanda for BEST BEADS WEAVER and Nyezi for BEST CROTCHETER. We chose not to enter for the best poet category because we didn't need to participate in every category. Azanda is our best singer and best bead weaver but we couldn't put her in 2 categories.

As I am approaching the main road, I spot Nomzamo with Mcebisi. I am pretty sure he fucked her and then discarded her like that. But how are guys' mara? How do you fuck someone who has been in a relationship or an entanglement with your brother? And also why does Nomzamo keeps selling herself short? Who does she think will love her genuinely and treat her like a queen if she keeps behaving like trash? Anyways it's none of my business. As I am nearing them, they break off the hug and Mcebisi walks towards me. He winks at me before walking past. The fuck is wrong with him?

"Where is your puppet master? Phela you are always following Azanda around, I am pretty sure you even follow her to the toilet to show just how much of an ass kisser you are." She states with a smirk and I just roll my eyes. She is always trying to be spiteful.

“I would be very careful if I were you. You are not esigodini sakho, Nomzamo. One wrong move and my back up will be here within a blink of an eye. Try shit with me, I dare you and I swear to God you will regret it.” She laughs.

“I will not waste my energy on you Mpondo girl. I am saving it for when my crew and I beat you up in the competition.”

“And who will give you the victory fuck?” I ask with a smirk and my eyebrows raised. “One of the Nyandeni loose dicks? No man wants you and now you just keep trying to squeeze yourself everywhere. I always thought you were on the bottom but fucking Mcebisi?” I laugh. “That’s a new low, even for you mavulimlenze.” I smile at her and continue with my journey.

“Don’t fuckin turn your back on me, Mpondo girl. Come face me. Are you that scared of me?” I laugh, turning to face her.

“I am saving my energy for the competition, Zulu girl. If I were you, I would also do that. And maybe visit the salon while at it. That weave deserves some treatment. It’s long overdue if you ask me. What type of friends do you have? To let you wonder around with that in your head? I would rather be ‘Azanda’s puppet’. At least she is always honest me and loves me so much. Unlike your fake friends.” I chuckle before turning again and walking away.

Siza continued helping me for three days and in those days, we managed to actually finish the dress. I was very proud of myself that I managed to do everything before the actual deadline. The team was so proud of me. mom even suggested that I go study for dressmaking so that I can make more money out of this new skill I have developed. I love the faith she has in me. I was supposed to take a flight to Joburg to deliver the outfit but Siza said we will drive together because he has some stuff to do before the competition. Him and I have become very close and I can actually see our marriage working out. But we haven't talked about that. We are still getting to know each other. I also told him that it would be better if we talk about the merits of our relationship after the competition. I don't wanna be stressed about something like that for now.

Veli also came through with the heels and bag. My friend is so talented. She should actually do this regularly. I mean there are so many brides who want unique heels to match with their dresses for their weddings. With my skill and hers, we can take Izimbali Zomhlaba to greater heights. Siza and I are leaving tomorrow. Tonight he is supposed to have dinner with us plus Sokalisa. Dad really surprised me when he called me and said he knows that Siza is around and he would like a sit down with

him just to iron out a few things and talk about a way forward. Siza was shit scared when I told him but he knew he couldn't say no because that would anger dad.

Siza asked me to take him to my favourite spots around here. So we are currently driving to Nongoma Gardens. But first we went to town to buy some snacks and champagne. We get to the place and he is in awe. He keeps looking around with a smile. It's like his first time in a park like place.

“Babe, this place is amazing. Thank you for bringing me here.” He says with a wide smile before taking out his phone and taking pictures of the place. I Goli though. I take a throw I grabbed at home and stretch it on the grass before placing the snacks we bought on it. I also place two cushions on the vacant space in the throw. Well I knew we were coming here, so I came prepared.

“I am to please, Sizabantu.” He rolls his eyes.

“You know how to ruin a great moment wena ngane ka Nqengelele.” I laugh. “Can I take a few pics?” I nod.

I strike a few poses and he photographs me. We also take a few selfies and even ask some passerby to take pictures of the both of us. When we are done, we settle on the throw and start eating. But not without Siza photographing the picnic.

“So what does your father like?” he enquires as he opens the champagne and pours it on the plastic flutes. He hands me the flute. I chuckle.

“Thank you. Sokalisa is not a man that can be bought but you just have to prove just how much of an honourable man you are. But that might be difficult because you are anything but honourable.” He laughs.

“Hawu babe, and here I thought I was doing things right. What have I done wrong?” I take a sip. This is very tasty but it's not something you can drink occasionally. Maybe once in a while or on a special occasion. Like your first date with you supposed fiancé.

“You never tried you take me out on a date while we were in Jozi. You have never bought anything for me. You also slept with me at my mother's house a couple of times.” He laughs

again and shakes his head. He takes one long sip at his drink and then looks at me.

“If I remember correctly, when we were in Jozi, you wanted nothing to do with me but the only thing you weren't beefing with is my dick. And you are quick to judge. I am sure you didn't even pay attention to the package that I sent with the pearls. Also I don't remember you saying no when we shagged at your mom's house. So please, no double standards ngoduso yami. You and I aren't honourable and that makes us a match made in heaven.” He bends to perk my exposed thigh and then sits back. I chuckle, shaking my head. Siza is so sly.

“I didn't see any package Zaba. So excuse me on that part.” He smiles widely.

“Zaba?” he asks with his eyebrows raised in excitement or fascination. I snort and roll my eyes. God.

“Since I am your ‘fiancé’,” I use quotations. “I figured it is right that I have my own name that I call you with. So you are Zaba, my fiancé, not Siza the fuck boy.” He laughs adorably as he takes my hand and kisses it.

“And you wonder why I fall for you every single day.” I am blushing. Does he have to be this charming? My phone beeps and that breaks off whatever moment we were having. I clear my throat and retrieve it from my bag. It’s a text from mom telling me to come back so that I can prepare for the dinner. I chuckle and put it back. “Curfew is up?” he asks with a smirk and I laugh.

“You are crazy yaz. But no. You have to take me to town, I need to buy a few things before going back home.” He nods.

We continue eating and chatting. He is even taking videos. Between him and I, he is the one who loves showing affection in public and on social media. He posts a few videos on his WhatsApp status and Instagram story. He then posts a few pictures on his wall. This one is going to make ladies hate me. Ever since he pulled that ‘phakade lami’ stunt

I think I gained 2k followers. Most of them are ladies and some are his friends. Our picnic finally comes to an end. He helps me pack things up and gives me his car keys so that I can drive. He has never been on a car driven by me, so he is impressed by my driving skills.

We get to town and I drive to the new mall just before Rockafella. It's not really new but you know how us, black people, always call something like this, new. Like those people from Esikhawini, Richards Bay and Empangeni. They always call the garages at N2 ama garage amasha even though they have been there for years. We actually went to Rockafella yesterday during the day with Roxy and Nkululeko. Siza was making it his mission to make Nkululeko uncomfortable but at the end, they were getting along like fire and paper. Don't even know if that's a good example. We park the car and head inside. I take a few items and he keeps looking at them.

"You wanna make 7 colours for me?" he asks already holding in a laugh. I shake my head.

"You are not that special." He breaks into laughter and a few people turn to stare at us. "People are starring Zaba."

"Let them stare, I don't care." He does a little cute pout and I just laugh. When I am done picking the few items we head to the tills. While standing in a line, a guy who I went to school approaches me with a smile.

"MaShenge, long time no see, hey." He says before coming close to hug me but I extend my hand instead. He chuckles

before shaking it. “Where have you been? I haven’t seen you in ages.” I chuckle and steal a glance at Siza who is just staring at this old classmate of mine blankly.

“I have been good and our business is booming. Izimbali Zomhlaba. You should check us on social media. Anyways this is my fiancé, Siza and Siza this is an old classmate of mine, Siyabonga.”

“Nice to meet you ndoda.” Siya says and Siza just nods in response. I have never seen him so... serious. I am internally laughing inside. “Anyways it was nice to see you after so long, MaShenge. If you were single, I would say we should exchange numbers so that we can catch up but I know that would be very disrespectful of me.”

“Not disrespectful but ignorant. We still have a lot of stops to pass by babe.” Siza says smiling at me and placing his hand on my back.

Jealousy looks good on him. Siya smiles at us before walking away. I look at Siza and just laugh at him. He rolls his eyes before paying for the items. He is so dramatic. Before leaving town, he buys milkshakes for us and a sparkling strawberry sunrise krusher for Roxy. He also buys a boxmaster meal for

Nyezi. My sister is going to be happy about this. She is such a foodie.

He drives me home and when we get there, he helps me carry the plastics inside. Both Nyezi and mom are home. Phela it's a Saturday. He greets them before giving Nyezi her meal which she dances over. I walk Siza out when he is done socializing with the most important women in my life.

Sokalisa drives in and parks his car near the front door. He climbs off the car and he is not alone. He is with his most feared son. His greatest weapon and basically his clone, Somnyama. If he wasn't my brother, I would probably assume that he is inkabi coz he is very scary and intimidating. Even Veli goes mute when he is around. He doesn't even try being intimidating. It's just his nature. This is probably a scare tactic. I just hope Siza doesn't fall into whatever trap they have set for him. They come inside the house and we exchange pleasantries. They sit on the lounge and Nyezi brings them drinks. Siza is supposed to arrive in 15 minutes. I hope he doesn't arrive late. I didn't even get the chance to take a look at the gift he says he got for me. When I got home, we just started cooking and mom even forced us to clean. Yey moms can be bullies shame.

"Sokalisa, why did you bring your bodyguard? No offence bhuty." I say and Somnyama chuckles.

"None taken dade." He replies sitting back.

"Now you want me to come without back up?" dad asks and I roll my eyes.

“What backup? Who is going to attack you? And why would Siza do anything to hurt you? After attacking him like that, he would be a fool to do something to you, plus he wouldn't do anything to harm you. You are just being dramatic.” He chuckles.

“Mkami we will be continuing with our ceremonies after Azanda's competition. And we will start extending your house at that time.” He says to his wife.

“Baba why don't you leave this house as it is and build a new house on the left side of the yard? You saw how big that space is. You can even build a double story with many garages there.” Somnyama says and dad nods.

“Now that's an idea. Nkanyezi, how is school?” Sokalisa questions and Nyezi smiles.

“Everything is going great baba. We are closing for holidays next week Friday.” She answers. He nods.

“Maybe you and your sisters can go to that thing where you girls sleep in a lodge for a weekend and come back on Sunday evening.” He says and Nyezi freezes before screaming.

“Like a weekend getaway?” he nods. “At a place of our choice?” he nods again and laughs.

“But I know you won’t be in charge of choosing the place. Your sisters will probably bully you into a place that they desire.” I laugh and roll my eyes.

“It’s not bullying baba. It’s suggesting. Plus we are her elders. We can’t go to a place that she likes. What if she chooses Disney Land?” I state and mom laughs. Somnyama joins her.

We continue chatting until we hear a car driving in. the Buthelezi men left the gate open. I stand up and head outside. Siza climbs off the car and locks it before walking to me. He smiles. He is looking very handsome in jeans, a t-shirt, a blazer and sneakers. He is carrying a gift bag. I hope he is not going to try and buy Sokalisa with gifts because that is going to be a bad idea.

“I thought we talked about the gifts thing.” He chuckles.

“Yeah, I decided otherwise. Now let’s head inside before they think I am chowing you in the car.” He says with a smirk and I scoff.

“I am pretty sure they will think I am giving you some pep talk because apparently you are scared of the Buthelezi men. By the way Somnyama is here.” his eyes pop out.

“You are joking, right?”

“I wish I was.” I take his hand and pull him inside the house before he can get a chance to run away. This fear he has of Somnyama is so amusing. We get to the lounge and the room goes silent. I quickly release his hand. He clears his throat.

“Evening boShenge. I am Sizabantu Maphumulo originally from KwaMaphumulo but I work in Joburg.” Siza says with an alien deep voice. Damn he sounds so sexy. Sokalisa stands up and Somnyama also stands. Dad moves closer to Siza and then he extends his hand. Siza shakes it.

“Nice to finally meet you under normal circumstances. Welcome to the family.” he says and Siza nods.

“Thank you.” Somnyama also comes to shake his hand. “I bought this for you. Even though your daughter said I should buy a gift for you, I figured it would be rude of me to come

empty handed.” He hands the gift bag to Sokalisa. Sokalisa opens it and I see a smile stretch out before he straightens up. “Did Azanda tell you my favourite?” he enquires.

“I don’t even know your favourite alcohol baba. So could I have told him? I honestly thought you were a Christian who doesn’t touch alcohol and only drinks during Passover season, the wine that represents the blood of Jesus.” I state in a dramatic tone and he laughs before everyone else joins him. “So what did he buy?”

“Glenmorangle Signet Highland Single Malt Scotch. This costs R2.5k right?” he asks and Siza nods. “You can go dish up now, ladies.” He says and I know that’s his way of getting rid of us.

I roll my eyes inwardly before walking to the kitchen. Nyezi and ma follow me. I don’t help with anything, instead I lean on the wall

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hoping to hear what they are saying. Luckily in our house, you can hear anything, even someone speaking softly in the

bedroom. Ma chuckles and shakes her head before taking out dishes. She knows I am not going to assist them.

“So you really love my daughter, neh? What is it that you love about her?” - Sokalisa.

“Azanda is stubborn and hardheaded. That is something I established the first time we met and it attracted me to her. I am not one of those men who like submissive women. I love someone who has strong opinions and is not swayed by anything or anyone. It took some time for her to fall for me. I love the fact that she didn't go crazy over me or fall for my charms until at a later stage. I love how proud she is of where she comes from. She is not shy to just break out and say 'Mina ngingu Buthelezi, u Sondiya, u Phungashe'. She is full of pride. She has passion and very goal driven. She is independent and very talented on her craft. She is just amazing. And she is also beautiful. That's why I love her.” - Siza. His words are so beautiful. They warm my heart.

“So what do you do?” - Somnyama.

“I am a trainer at Yakhanathi which is a family organization that focuses on teaching and enhancing skills to mostly black young

people in the country. I also own 2 bakeries which have cafes in Jozi.” - Siza. Well I didn’t know about the bakeries.

“You know how to bake?” - Somnyama.

“Yes, I do. I went to many trainings just to perfect my skill. But I don’t have time to bake. I only do it when a friend or a family member has a birthday.” - Siza.

“Well I have a sweet tooth, so will you bake for me?” – Somnyama. Aibo, since when? Siza chuckles while Sokalisa laughs.

“Anything for you sbari, but once I am back from Joburg.” – Siza.

“So what is your plan or way forward with your relationship with my daughter? You stay in Jozi while she stays here. How is your relationship going to work? How sure are we that you are not going to get tempted and cheat on her? I love my daughter, so I would hate to see her heartbroken and I would hate to kill the boy she loves but I would do it without even blinking if you hurt her.” – Sokalisa.

“I am not perfect and I know I will make mistakes in our relationship but one thing I can promise is that I will never

cheat on her. I am not a cheater. Hell my last girlfriend left me because I am a workaholic. And I think with the distance thing, Azanda and I will talk about it and come to some conclusion or agreement on where are we going to stay or how are we going to maintain a long distance relationship.” – Siza. Thank God he didn’t decide for me this time around.

“When is the wedding?” – Somnyama. Hhaybo since when is he this talkative? I am fine with him saying two sentences in one day. This is too much and he is asking the wrong question right now.

“I will answer that question after I have spoken to MaShenge.” – Siza. Good boy, at least he listens when I talk. I would’ve literally killed him if he decided on a wedding day without consulting me. I hear footsteps nearing and I quickly go stand beside the sink. Somnyama walks in and looks at me with a smirk.

“I know you were eavesdropping dade.” He says chuckling and I roll my eyes. “You can bring the food now.” He walks back to the lounge. Ma places Sokalisa’s plate in a tray and orders me to serve him first. I do that, serve Siza and then go take my food. I sit down next to Siza and start eating.

“So everything is okay?” ma asks looking at her husband who smiles at her. Wait, is that a smile or a blush?

“The boy seems genuine. I just hope he is not trying to fool us because if that’s the case, he will wish he was never born.” Sokalisa states with a smile. How can you smile while dishing out a threat like that? I look at Siza and he just winks at me. How can he be playful at a time like this? These men love taking risks.

The trip to Joburg was very fruitful. B-Lady was so impressed about her dress. She even tipped me with an impressive amount of money. She said that from there on, I was going to be the person who designs all her African outfits. She nearly cried when she saw the beaded heels. I was happy that she loved everything about her outfit. She even said she will recommend me to her celebrity friends so that I can get exposure. After the hype she gave me, I found the courage to go and enquire about fashion courses in some colleges and varsities in Joburg. Initially, I never thought of moving to Jozi but this is a career move, to boost my career and gain more knowledge and experience. I know some people will think I am moving just to be closer to Siza but my parents are going to understand.

Siza really outdid himself during the three days we spent at Jozi. He took me out for lunch, we then went to a club and spent a night Sun City Hotel. After that, he took me to a shopping spree at Zara, Gucci, H&M and also Sportscene. He said I should go crazy and I did just that. Coming back home, I had so many shopping bags. I even bought a thing or two for mom, Nyezi, Veli and Sokalisa. Veli always buys something for me when Zithulele takes her out.

So we are now driving back to Nongoma. But before we came back, I went out for brunch with his mother. She is a really cool woman and she is happy that Siza is getting a grounded woman for a wife and someone who isn't afraid to speak her mind and challenge her son. She also likes the fact that I come from a rich family, so I don't see Siza as my walking bank. Mothers and worrying about who is eating their sons' money, funny. After the competition, I also have to go and visit the Maphumulo family in the rural areas.

We finally get home and he drops me off before heading to the lodge. It's already 9pm and I am pretty sure Nyezi has gone to sleep. Mom welcomes me in and helps me with my bags. We place everything in my bedroom before heading back to the lounge to chat.

"So how was travelling with your future husband?" she asks and I smile.

"We bonded and got to know each other on a deeper level. He is a really cool guy and I have decided to give me a real chance. I have feelings for him and I want us to explore whatever it is that is going on between us."

“You don’t have a choice, baby. You two have decided to include families in your union. So you have to get your shit together. And the client, did she love the outfit?” she asks munching on the burger I bought for her in Jozi. She doesn’t even care that it’s cold. Mom has her moments but sometimes she is just a sucker of junk food.

“She was beyond excited about it and everything just suited her perfectly. She even tipped me. Her outfit made me think.” She stops eating and wipes her mouth with a serviette.

“You want to go study fashion?” she asks but it sounds more like a statement. I nod. “You were destined for great things, my child. You are a Buthelezi princess and you were born to be independent and not work for anyone in life. I want you to be successful and I wanna brag about you to anyone and everyone who cares to listen. So even if you wanna go overseas like Nyezi, you have my blessing.” I smile and hug her before settling back to my seat.

“Thank you for that, Sthenjwa. But I am thinking of Johannesburg. I already have a school in my head and all I need is tuition money because it’s a private college. I want to ask for

the money to Sokalisa but I need you to be on board with the idea because I don't want it to seem like I am undermining your financial independency." She smiles and shakes her head.

"Even if I wanted to pay ngenkani yami

he would probably lock me up and change my mind with his dick." My eyes pop out and she laughs. "Don't act all innocent on me. You know exactly what I am talking about. Anyways, I don't have a problem with you asking him to cover your fees. He is also your parent. So he is responsible for you. I can take care of your rent and give you a monthly allowance." She takes a sip of her juice.

"I still have 5 months left till the year ends. I was hoping I take umbondo to the Maphumulo family and have umkhehlo and umembeso in December. After that I can move in with Siza in January. Not that I am so eager to live with him, but I want us to know each other more and learn about each other's habits, likes and dislikes before we say 'I do'. I know that Sokalisa is going to be against the idea, but you can maybe persuade him." I give him my biggest smile ever. She huffs and rolls her eyes.

“It is going to be hard for him to accept that but I will try and talk to him. You have made quite a valid point. Getting to know each other before officially committing yourselves is very important. I think every couple need to live together at least a month before getting married so that they will know what they are getting themselves into.”

“Maybe you can also give him a lastborn while at the convincing part. That will make your case easier.” I say winking and she gasps.

“Aibo Azanda.”

“Come on ma, you’re 39. You can still fall pregnant. I need a little brother.”

“Ayy Azanda, I am too old to walk around with a huge belly, get weird cravings and send your father all over town in the odd hours of the morning.” She shakes her head with a slight frown.

“That’s the whole reason. Have him distracted so that he won’t focus his whole energy on me. Anyways you might even be pregnant as we speak. Ever since you guys reconciled, have you used protection? Are you using any contraceptive?” her eyes pop out and she swallows hard.

“I am a doctor, I would’ve felt something by now. Anyways, go rest. You have been on the road for many hours. I am sure your behind hurts like hell. Goodnight problem child.” She takes her goodies and walks to her room leaving me laughing. Maybe Sokalisa has really scored.

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He has an office in town where he spends time meeting with some taxi owners and potential business allies. So I catch a taxi to town and buy him inhloko nedombolo. He was a taxi driver before he became this business mogul that he is today, so he loves African cuisine. He hates fried chicken, especial if it is from KFC, Hungry Lion or Chicken Licken. Sometimes he goes to KFC for their boxmasters only.

I walk to his office and on my way I am greeted by his drivers. Ayabonga and Mnyamane are here giving some of the drivers orders. I hug them and then head to Sokalisa. I find him in a serious meeting. Well I burst into his office without even knocking. He is with three other men who are a bit scary. He cracks a smile when he sees me and then he stands up.

“Gentlemen, we will have to continue our discussion later. You know how rude it is to keep a woman waiting.” He says walking to me. The other men chuckle before saying their farewells and heading out. “To what do I owe this visit mtanam?” we both hug and sit down.

“I just wanted to see you baba and I brought you something to eat.”

“I thought I was doing everything right. There is no need to poison me.” I break into laughter.

“I don’t have a reason to hate you that much, baba. So as you know, I designed an outfit for a celebrity and she was very impressed by my work. She gave me an idea. I wanna go and study for fashion in Jozi next year. The name of the school I wanna go to is STADIO formerly known as LISOF and it has two branches. One in Randburg and another in Pretoria. The course is a year long.” He nods.

“So you need me to cover your school fees?”

“Yes. It is R50 000 for the whole year. The course is Higher Certificate in Fashion.”

“Okay. That’s nothing. So what else do you need?” I clear my throat. This might go South, so I need to choose my words right.

“Siza and I were thinking that it will be good if we have umbondo next month and then umkhehlo and umembeso can follow in December but we are not in a hurry to get married. Maybe we can do that after I have completed my certificate.” He sighs.

“You want to live with him in Jozi, right?” I swallow hard and nod. “Well after umkhehlo, you guys will be traditionally fiancés, so I can’t deny that request. But please don’t settle if he is abusing you. I know you can take care of yourself but love can make you blind. I will give you this freedom but please don’t make me regret my decision.” I smile and stand up. I go side hug him and he chuckles. “Now what did you bring for me?” he asks licking his lips and I laugh.

NOMZAMO

She was fuming over the fact that Azanda was yet to win another man who had caught her attention. She thought about letting this go but she wasn't about to let Azanda succeed. Not this time around. Especially after being humiliated like that. She kept pacing around, up and down thinking of ways to end this sham of a union. An ideal finally struck and she smiled as she hopped outside.

She filled the bath basin with cold water and carried it to her bathroom. She poured pink salt into the water and she started bathing. She also shaved her underarms and cookie. She discarded the water when she was done. She put on uvela bahleke on her eyebrows and then Lotioned her body. She got dressed in a pink double crazy plunging neck ruched detail satin slip short dress with pink sandals. She took her bag, waved at Senzelwe as she walked to the taxi stop.

So many cars hooted as they passed her. She smiled because that meant she was looking superfly. After 9 minutes, a taxi finally stopped. She climbed inside and it drove off. Kwa Nongoma you couldn't just hitchhike, especially in a route that

has taxis because that could start a war with the taxi drivers. She paid as the taxi neared her destination. She climbed off and breathed out loud, trying to calm down her nerves. She was excited. She entered the lodge and then headed to the reception where her friend, Amanda, who was a receptionist sat painting her nails.

“Mnganami.” Nomzamo said actively and Amanda smiled, standing up and coming around the desk to hug her, sure not to ruin her nails.

“Hey babe. You are looking so sexy today. What’s up? Who is the lucky fish?” Amanda asked wiggling her eyebrows.

“Well you have to give me a room number. I want it to be a surprise.” She licked her lips and Amanda did a mini scream before she went to her desk.

“Name?”

“Siza Maphumulo.”

“That is some fine ass meat right there. I think he has a girl though. I have seen that Buthelezi girl, the one from Kwa Mahede going in and out of his room. Yoh that girl acts like a saint whereas she is nasty as hell.” She paged through some

book and found the room number. “Room 3 mngani, right next to his sister’s room.”

“Thank you friend. I owe you one.” Nomzamo winked at her and then walked away. She was feeling super confident.

When she got to room 3, she found the door wide open. She walked inside and placed her bag on the stool near the door.

“Babe is that you? Damn you’re early. Just wait a few moments. I am finishing up here.” Siza shouted from the bathroom.

Nomzamo smiled as she quietly removed her dress and stood in the centre of the room. She was wearing only a blue panty. Siza came from the bathroom and he screamed a bit when he saw a stranger in his room. He blinked a couple of times before he collected his thoughts. He was topless and wearing jeans with sneakers.

“Who are you and what the fuck are you doing in my room?” he asked in a harsh tone.

“Come on Siza, are you honestly going to ignore all this fresh meat in front of you? Take advantage of me. I am sure your girl is starving you.” she walked closer and Siza took a few steps

back. She laughed. "I never took you for a coward. Now come on and remove these panties. They are so tight around me." she moaned a bit as she played with the elastic of the panties.

"I don't know who you are or what you want in my room. You even know my name. That screams stalker. Please leave before my fiancé gets here and finds us in a compromising position. She is crazy, so she might not believe me." She laughed rolling her eyes as she cat walked to Siza and pinned him on the wall with her body. "Lady please. I don't wanna humiliate you by chasing you out wearing only panties. Leave now."

"Stop being a pussy and eat mine." She whispered seductively. Siza held her shoulders and softly pushed her away.

"I am rejecting you, Nongoma prostitute. Rejecteka phela nawe."

"ZABA! I'M HERE!" Siza's eyes popped out as his worst nightmare came alive.

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AZANDA

“So friend next year I am going to study Fashion at a college in Joburg.” I say to Veli. We are sitting under the tree drinking Sprite and eating Roman Cream Biscuits. It's been 4 days since we came back from Jozi. Siza and I see each other everyday and spend an hour or two touring and romancing each other.

“I am coming with you.” She quickly responds and I laugh rolling my eyes.

“Your man is here kwa Nongoma. You think he is going to be cool with you leaving him to go study in another province?”

“He will just have to deal.” She says shrugging.

“Maybe you don't love my brother as much as you claim to.”

“Don't get my actions twisted. I love your brother and currently, he is the love of my life but he is not going to be an obstacle that might hinder me from reaching my full potential.”

“Okay, friend. I am not fighting.”

“As if you would win against me.” She says proudly and I laugh. “Anyways, is everything going well between you and Siza?” I smile.

“Yes. He is very romantic and loving. He loves the places I have taken him to ever since he came here. We are still yet to get to know each other on a deeper level, but I am falling for him.” She claps excitedly like a kid in a candy store.

“That's very good to hear chomie.” Her phone rings. She smiles before answering. “I have to take this.”

“Put it on loud speaker.” She rolls her eyes but she is still smiling. She does as I tell her.

“Phungashe.” – Veli.

“Wangibiza kamnandi sthandwa sami. How are you doing?” – Zithulele.

“I am good. Where are you?” – Veli

“In Mandeni but I will be back before sunset. Relax. I wouldn't be late for the most important dinner of my life.” – Zithulele. Veli giggles while playing with her dreads. Love neh.

“My mom can't wait to meet you, officially. Dad doesn't know it's you, so you better be prepared for a few slaps here and there.” Zithulele breaks into laughter and Veli joins her. I am just too noisy, otherwise this is a very private conversation and I am not needed.

“I will pass by the dentist and ask her to inject me with those injections that make you numb so that I won't feel the pain.” Typical Buthelezi man. Veli just continues laughing. “Anyways love I was just checking on you. See you tonight. I love you.”

“Uthandwa ndim, Sondiya.” She giggles a bit and then hangs up.

“You are so whipped baby girl.” I comment chewing on my biscuits. She waves me off.

“You will know the feeling once you are deep in love with the city boy.”

“So family dinners and shit?”

“Lele is serious dude. He wants to unite the families and I won't stop him because I love him and I wanna see how this goes.”

“Mmm.”

“Yey go see your man and leave me alone.” I laugh and stand up.

We head inside the house and while I freshen up, she cleans up at the kitchen. I get dressed in jeans, a simple plain t-shirt and Gucci sandals that Siza bought for me. I grab my bag and head to the lounge to find Veli watching TV.

“I am ready.”

“I will walk you to the taxi stop. Nice shoes by the way. I love them.” I smile.

“Thank you.” I lock up and we head out. “So you're prepared for your category in the competition?”

“Well prepared chomie. I am going to nail this shit. I know we are going to win, so we should go to Umcebokazulu lodge just to celebrate. We should book it.”

“Or we can just go to Rockafella oe to reduce some unnecessary costs.” She nods.

“That also sounds like a plan.” We arrive at the stop. “Don't do something I wouldn't do.” I laugh.

“Honey I can't contain myself. Siza is just too sexy.” She laughs.

“Hambo tyiwa ke.” I give her the middle finger and she just laughs again.

A taxi comes a halt and I climb inside. I get to the lodge and head to Siza's room. It's already open.

“ZABA! I'M HERE!” I shout before stepping inside. The sight before me numbs my joints and make me drop my bag on the floor.

“Baby this is not what it looks like. I don't even know this whore in front of me.” He pleads. My throat goes dry. I don't even know what to think or how to react. What the fuck am I being made to witness? The witch smiles.

“Am I going to given a chance to explain?” he asks and I chuckle. “Okay. Psycho mode has been activated. I know that chuckle.” He sighs and turns to Nomzamo. “Look lady, I don’t know you and you sure as hell don’t know me. Who are you and what are you doing in my room?” Nomzamo giggles biting her lip and leaning closer to Siza.

“We were about to have fun before this mood killer showed up. So let’s not stop on her account. Better yet, she should join us.” I laugh SMH. I am really being tested here.

“Sizabantu Maphumulo, this lady here is my biggest rivalry and she always go for what I have. She is very jealous of my life and is always looking for ways to belittle or defeat me. So I am not shocked that she went for you, the obvious target. I am more concerned about the nakedness in the room.” I say calmly. I know Nomzamo wants me to lose it and act out of character, but I am not going to do that. I am not going to lower to her level. Not today.

“I just showered babe and you know how I get dressed. Jeans first, shoes and then top. I honestly don’t know this woman. If

you say she is your nemesis, then that means she targeted me. I am more concerned about how she knew my room number though.” Siza says turning to Nomzamo who frowns.

“I guessed it.” She says chuckling nervously.

“How about we go ask the receptionist? I mean, if they can allow someone inside without any clearance with the guest, then this BnB isn’t safe. Hitmen can come in and kill you just like that.” I state and Siza nods before moving to the bed to take a shirt which he quickly puts on. “You can get dressed now, Nomzamo. We have had enough of your not attractive boobs. If your body was that appealing, it wouldn’t have taken Siza that long to devour it.” Her face changes immediately and she charges to me. She manages to land a mean slap on my left cheek and I laugh. “I don’t fight with people below my standard. Now get dressed. I have had enough of your disgusting body.” She groans before bending to take her dress from the floor and wearing it.

“What the fuck was that?” Siza asks already moving closer to Nomzamo who moves to the wall. I hold Siza back.

“Come on, love. She is not worth it.” He huffs.

“Next time you slap my fiancé, you’d wish you were never born. She is not a Zion drum. You have no fuckin right to hit her. You are the one here trying to seduce her future husband with a worn out body. She should be the one beating the hell out of you.” he says in a spiteful tone and Nomzamo clenches her jaws looking away. I guess that’s her way of keeping the tears at Bay. Siza takes a deep breath and steps back. “Let’s bounce.” we all head out. He grabs Nomzamo’s upper arm and practically drag her to the reception area. When we get there, I laugh immediately when my eyes land on the lady behind the desk.

“Now that explains everything.” I say and Siza turns to me with a frown. “That woman right there

she is close friends with this one. Quarter to besties.” I point at Nomzamo. “So I am pretty sure she gave Nomzamo your room number willingly. She also have some hate in her heart for me. When you find out the real reason behind their hate, please call me.” I walk away and Siza quickly grabs my waist. That was fast.

“Don’t leave.” He says deeply in my ear and something within me moves. He turns to the receptionist. “Why did you give this

girl here my room number?" he asks in a serious tone. Amanda looks at Nomzamo for some rescuing but Nomzamo looks like a chicken that has been baptized.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Amanda responds looking uneasy. Siza chuckles angrily.

"So if I go to the security officer and ask for some footage, I won't see you talking to her and giving her my room number?" Siza questions and Amanda swallows hard. "Call the manager. NOW!" he bangs the desk and she jumps shaking. She reaches for the desk phone and dials a number.

"Yes, sir... A guest is looking for you. Yes now... It's very urgent sir... Okay I will let him know." She hangs up. "He is passing by Bhekumthetho. He will be here in a few minutes. You can settle down on those couches."

"Sure. You can leave now, Miss whatever your name is." he says to Nomzamo. She gathers the bit of dignity she still has left and walks out with her tail between her legs. "Come. Let's sit." He pulls me and we go sit on the couches in the lobby. He actually makes me sit on his lap. Siza is not scared of public

display of affection. “What was your first reaction when you found me in that compromising situation?” I chuckle.

“I have Buthelezi blood running in my veins. Violence is in my DNA. So the first thing that always comes into mind in situations like these is, fight first, ask questions later.” I state and he laughs.

“Not that I am condoning violence but seeing you fight would’ve been so sexy.” He bites his lower lip and I laugh. “So what did your parents think about you furthering your studies?”

“They are on board. They kind of guessed that you would want to move in with me. Although it’s a bitter pill to swallow, Sokalisa agreed that it’s important to get to know each other before getting married. Mom also agreed. She was more worried about Sokalisa agreeing.”

“Well I am happy that I am going to have you all to myself.” he brushes my thighs. “Why did you wear a jean?” he asks in a frustrated tone and I laugh.

“Because I didn’t wanna get fucked.” He chuckles.

“Like that would stop me.” that sends electricity all over my body. Siza is so sexual and I love that. imagine being a virgin, getting introduced to sex for the first time and finding a partner who thinks fucking every day is too much. I don’t think I can deal.

“Are you well financially for umbondo, umkhehlo and umembeso?” he chuckles.

“Never undermine amandla endoda love. I might shock you.” I roll my eyes and he laughs. “Anyways you don’t have to worry about anything. I have it handled. So are you going to sleepover after umbondo?” I shrug.

“I don’t know. I will have to ask for some advice from my mothers.” He nods. The manager walks in and Siza and I stand up.

“I believe you are the people waiting for me. Maphumulo, I thought everything was going well and you were enjoying your stay. Has something happened?” the manager asks and Siza nods.

“Something has indeed happened. Your receptionist shared my room number with a stranger and she walked into my room. She nearly made me break up with my fiancé because the stranger actually undressed and tried seducing me.” Siza states with his serious face back on. The manager turns to Amanda.

“Amanda is this true?” he asks and Amanda looks like she is about to shit on herself.

“Sir, it’s not what it looks like. I can explain.” He gives her a look. “Nomzamo is my friend. I thought I was doing her a favour. I didn’t think it would backfire like this. I am truly sorry. I will accept whatever punishment you give me.” she says with her hands together in a pleading gesture.

“How about you go home for a week and think about what you have done?” she frowns. “Yes genius. I am suspending you for a whole week. But before you leave, apologize to Mr. Maphumulo and his fiancé.” She looks at Siza.

“I am so sorry, sir and you Miss.” She looks down.

“I am very sorry Maphumulo. Something like this won’t happen again.” The manager apologizes on Amanda’s behalf.

“I really hope so. My sister lives here alone in her room. Your reception’s actions has made me question if she is really safe alone.” Siza adds and the manager sighs.

“I assure you that she is safe and you are also safe. For compensation, you can proceed to the lounge and I will have the kitchen staff prepare something for you and you fiancé to eat, on the house.”

“Good then.” Siza hooks his arm on mine and we head to the lounge.

“I love it when you’re all serious and tough.” He laughs.

“You are such a weirdo.”

“Your weirdo.” He kisses the side of my head.

“You are making it so easy for me to love you. I love you MaShenge wami.” I smile.

It's four days before the competition and I am super excited and also anxious about it. I am looking forward to it and to seeing Siza's family because they are all going to be present in the competition since they are sponsors of it. Everything we are going to submit at the competition has been prepared and packed. All that's left is for Veli to submit it two days before the competition.

Anyways enough about the competition. I have to get out of this bed. I open my eyes and sit up to stretch my arms. I try climbing off the bed and my legs are heavy. I try once again and nothing happens. I uncover my legs and scream when I see the problem. They are three times their size and I have blisters all over. I try screaming again but my voice doesn't come out. What is going on with me? Tears just cascade down my cheeks because I don't know what is happening but I know that this has to be witchcraft. I lie back and just let tears flow because it seems like I am hopeless.

"Good morning sisi. I am rushing. I just wanted to check on you." Nyezi says cheerfully with her head peaking in at my door. "Why are you still in bed?" she asks.

“Call mom.” I try to make my voice less shaky. Instead it comes off hoarse and barely audible.

“What was that?” Nyezi asks walking in. I cover my face with my hands and just wail. “Sisi you are worrying me. What is going on?” she removes my hands from my face. “What’s wrong? Why are you crying? Did bhut Siza do something?” I shake my head.

“Please call mom.” She looks at me with a face full of concern. “Please.” She quickly walks out of the room and comes back with mom instantly.

“What is wrong, my angel?” mom asks.

“Get Nyezi out.” she frowns.

“What happened to your voice?”

“Get Nyezi out and lock the door mom.” She does as I tell her. Nyezi knows never to defy mom. She comes back and stands beside my bed. I sit up and uncover my legs. She glances at them and exclaims.

“Shwele Ngunezi! Kodwa soneni kubani!” I cover my legs and lie back down once again. “Azanda what is going on? When did this happen?”

“I woke up like this and with my voice gone.”

“Someone is bewitching you. How could they do something like this to you? What could you have possibly done for them to go to such extreme lengths?” I shrug and wipe my tears. Crying doesn’t help, I know, but I am broken and shattered. I need to offload and what better way to release what’s inside than to cry my eyeballs out since I can’t scream? Mom takes a few deep breaths and sits on the edge of the bed. “We have to go to your home. Your father and MaMhlongo will know what to do. I need you to get up. Can you do that?” I shake my head. She sighs and stands up. She uncovers me, takes some head wraps and wrap them around my legs. That hurt like a motherfucker. I just close my eyes and accept the pain I am feeling. “Sit up.” I sit up and she goes to unlock the door.

She heads out and comes back after a few minutes wearing a worn out dress and a head wrap which she has wrapped the wrong way. She carries me in her back and we head to her car. She helps me into the back seat and heads inside the house.

After a few seconds she comes back, climbs into the driver seat and drives off. Every bump, pothole and rock on the road feels like hell. We finally arrive at the Buthelezi household and mom drives in because the gate is already open. She climbs off the car and shouts all my brothers' names and even my father's name. They all come out with their guns in their hands ready for war.

“What is going on mkami?” Sokalisa asks. Mom just points at the backseat where I am at and then she breaks down. I think I would also break down if I were her. Imagine your child going through some shit and you not being able to help her with anything. That's just torture in a different level. Zithulele comes to the car and opens the back seat door.

“Dade, what's going on?” he asks with a frown. I extend my arms to him and he helps me up. He carries me out of the car in his arms. His eyes pop out when they land on my legs. “What happened to you, Azanda?” I shrug and bury my head in his neck hiding my tears from everyone.

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NARRATED

Zithulele quickly rushed Azanda to MaMhlongo's rondavel. MaMhlongo was inside, cleaning but she stopped everything she was doing the minute Zithulele entered with Azanda in his arms. She immediately knew what was happening. She could feel the past couple of days that something bad has happened but she couldn't pinpoint it.

"KODWA BOSHENGE SONENI!" she exclaimed with her hands on her head.

Zithulele placed Azanda on a grass mat. His brothers and father made their way in. MaMhlongo uncovered Azanda's legs and everyone was in shock. Azanda's legs were much worse than the state they were in when she woke up. She glanced at them and then continued crying.

"Don't just stand there

MaMhlongo. Do something." Sokalisa said as he knelt beside Azanda and grabbed her hand. "You are going to be okay, ndodakazi." He brushed her hand. He raised his head and looked at MaMhlongo with pleading eyes. MaMhlongo sighed and mixed a few herbs.

“Drink this. It will temporarily make you sleep. You need to rest.” She made Azanda drink the concoction. It was very bad but it did a trick because Azanda was out like a flame in two minutes. MaMhlongo turned to Sokalisa. “I can’t help her baba. Please call her grandmother. She might know someone who can help her. We have to move fast before whatever witchcraft is happening, paralyses her.”

Sokalisa stood up and went outside. MaNene was sitting on the veranda in front of the main house with her head buried between her knees. Sokalisa walked to her and kneeled before her.

“Mkami.” She quickly raised her head.

“Is she okay? Is she healed? Did MaMhlongo manage to heal her?” Sokalisa sighed and shook his head.

“You have to call MaMkhize. She knows someone who might be able to help our daughter. We have to move fast before whatever is happening to her, causes a permanent damage.” Fundiswa just broke down and wailed. Sokalisa brought her into

his arms and comforted her. “Our daughter is going to be okay, mkami. You need to have faith. Faith will get us through this stage. In a few days everything will be back to normal. You just need to trust your God.” Fundiswa stopped crying and looked at him.

“My God?” Sokalisa chuckled.

“You believe in him and I believe in my ancestors, so he is your God not mine. Anyways, call your mother. We will be preparing for the journey in the meantime.”

“I left my phone at home. Give me yours.” Sokalisa blinked a few times.

“Use it at your own risk. Don’t faint on me if you find out about my side chicks.” Fundiswa changed instantly.

“Side chicks? Are you kidding me right now? Don’t you have enough women in your life? What the fuck do you need side chicks for? Hhe this old man.” Sokalisa chuckled.

“Don’t swear emzini wami and I don’t have side chicks. I have enough on my plate.”

He took out his phone from his pocket and handed it to her. She dialed her mother's number and she answered after a few rings. Sokalisa stood up and went to give his son orders. MaMkhize answered her phone after two rings.

"Mkhwenyana, what a pleasant surprise eksen kangaka." MaMkhize said cheerfully.

"Mah, it's me." Fundiswa spoke in a less cheerful voice.

"Fufu what is wrong?" her mother could detect from just those two words she said that Fundiswa was definitely not okay.

"Someone is bewitching Azanda ma and it's really bad. MaMhlongo can't help her. She said you might know someone who can help her, so we are on our way there."

"Nkosiyami. What happened to my granddaughter?"

"She woke up with her voice gone. Her legs swollen with blisters. It's really bad ma." MaMkhize sighed.

"I will go and talk to Mangethe. Hopefully you will find everything ready for you the minute you get here. Travel safely and mtanami, don't forget to pray. This is the devil testing you. Don't let him win." Fundiswa nodded.

“I won’t ma. See you soon.” she hung up and sighed before standing up.

“I can lend you a dress and a head wrap if you want.” MaVezi said standing at the door. Fundiswa turned to look at her before checking out her outfit. She chuckled.

“You know how crazy it gets when kids are involved.” MaVezi nodded and also chuckled.

“I can relate. I once went to Benedictine wearing only a petticoat and barefoot when Sethulo was shot.” Fundiswa cracked a smile. She could’ve laughed if it was under different circumstances. “Come on.” They went to MaVezi’s house.

ROXY

I have tried calling Azanda for like a hundred times but she is not answering. We are supposed to go out today because we haven't been spending much time together since Siza came here. She always say I should call her before driving off so that when I get to her home, I won't have to wait for her, instead I will find her in the gate already waiting for me. Maybe she spent the night at Siza's room. I mean that could be the only explanation why she isn't answering her phone. I can't even contact Nyezi because she is at school. I lock my suite and then walk to Siza's. I knock for a few moments and he opens wearing only boxers. He looks a bit grumpy.

"You also don't know where she is?" I ask pushing him and walking inside the room. His bed is unmade and there is no sign of Azanda inside the room.

"Morning to you too sisi. How are you doing today?" he yawns, stretching his arms and walking to the bathroom.

"Cut the theatrics. Where is your girlfriend? I have been trying to contact her to no avail. Is she avoiding me, Bantu?" I make his bed. Everyone in my family knows I am a neat freak. I can't

stay in an untidy place. He comes back from the bathroom and chuckles when he sees me fixing the pillows.

“I last talked to her last night. She is also ignoring me.” he states shrugging and goes to take his phone.

“That is unlike her. Maybe something happened. Azanda is not someone who is moody or throws unnecessary tantrums. There has to be a reason for this. We should go to her home and find out what’s happening.” He sighs.

“If you insist.”

He goes to shower and comes back to get dressed. When he is done, we head out and drive to MaNene’s house in Siza’s car. When we get there, the gate is locked. It is never locked when Azanda is home. We then proceed to the Buthelezi household. Most of the cars aren’t in the yard. There is only two cars parked. We park just before the gate and climb off to speak to the guard in the gate.

“Morning sir. How are you?” I greet politely and he smiles.

“Morning miss and sir. How can I help you?”

“I don’t know if you recognize me but I am Roxy Maphumulo, Azanda’s friend and this is Siza, her fiancé. I know we are being dramatic but we are looking for her. She isn’t answering our calls. We went to MaNene’s house to look for her but the gates were closed. So we decided to come here. Is she in?” the guard sighs and shakes his head.

“The young miss was brought in here in the early hours of the morning by her mother. They took her to Ndlunkulu’s hut, I think to help her in whatever that was happening to her but Ndlunkulu couldn’t help her. So they all got into their cars and left with the young miss.”

“Is Azanda ill?” my brother questions.

“It seemed like it because she couldn’t walk on her own. Her brother carried her to and from the hut. You didn’t hear from me, but I think the young miss was bewitched by a witch much more powerful than Ndlunkulu since she couldn’t help her. They have been gone for three hours now and we don’t know when they are going to come back.” I nod and turn to Siza.

“Can you please update us if you hear any new information?”
the guard nods. They exchange contacts and we climb back
inside the car.

“Azanda was bewitched?” I ask as soon as we drive away. “But
by who? Why would anyone wanna harm her just days before
the competition?” and then it clicks in my mind. “Or you this is
competition related? They don’t want her to participate
because they know chances of her winning are pretty high. Yoh
hhay this place is something else.” I look at Bantu. He isn’t
saying anything. His jaws are clenched and his grip on the wheel
seems pretty tight. “Are you okay?” he chuckles.

“My fiancé, the love of my life is not well and I have no idea
where she is. I don’t even have numbers of her brothers, father
or mother. I am losing my mind right now. I don’t know what to
do. So that’s why I am silent.” He says in a stern cold voice and I
just choose to keep my mouth shut because I know my
accusations are not helping.

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NARRATED

The Buthelezi family finally arrived at Emahlabathini. It was MaVezi, MaWanda, MaNene, Sokalisa, the brothers and Azanda. MaMhlongo was left behind. No matter what beef the wives had, when it came to the children, they would forget about their squabbles and focus on the kids. They found MaMkhize already at the gate waiting for them. They exchanged pleasantries and she climbed inside the car before directing them to Mangethe's house. They got to his house and they climbed off the cars. Zithulele carried Azanda off the car and put her on his back. A helper came to greet them and led them to Mangethe's working hut (esigodlweni). MaMkhize decided to stay with Mangethe's wife because she knew Mangethe will end up doing a reading of every Buthelezi member in that room. Yes her daughter was about to be married to that family, but she didn't need to know all of their businesses. All she needed is her granddaughter alive and well.

Mangethe started sneezing, groaning and making all sorts of weird noises as soon as they walked in. their presence was weighing him down a bit but he knew he couldn't ask any of them to wait outside. "Mbekeni Lana. (Place her here.)" He said gesturing at the grass mat laid in the middle of the room. Zithulele quickly did as instructed. "Kumele ngabe ufile.

Bebesho ukuqeda ngaye kwasho ukuthi amadlozi akubo ahlezi embhekile imihla namalanga. (She is supposed to be dead. They nearly ended her, luckily her ancestors are always watching her and protecting her.)”

He groaned and then mixed some herbs. When he was done he took a razor and cut each and every blister on Azanda’s legs. He then rubbed insizi on her legs. She immediately woke up and screamed because the pain she was feeling was unbearable. Her voice was still not back but everyone could hear her scream because she was the only one making noise in the room. MaNene also cried because she couldn’t handle seeing her daughter in so much pain.

“Please calm down. She doesn’t need you crying right now. You have to be strong for her. You will cry in private.” MaWanda whispered in her ear before brushing her back. She quickly wiped her tears and focused on her daughter.

Mangethe made Azanda drink some concoction. It was bitter but Azanda swallowed it and dozed off after a couple of moments. He mixed other concoctions and poured them in two 2l bottles. “She will bath with this one and she will steam and

phalaza with this one.” He then folded some umuthi on a newspaper. “She will apply this on her legs every time after bathing. It will take a while for the dark spots to go away. Once she is completely healed, you will take her to a skin doctor to treat her.” He made another concoction and poured it in a 500mls bottle. “She will boil this one and drink it 4 times a day. It will bring back her voice.” He then sighed and sat back down.

“I am pretty sure you knew your daughter was bewitched before even coming here. Your daughter has enemies, many of them. Some she inherited from you,” he pointed at Sokalisa. “And some she just created herself because people hate it when someone starts something from scratch and it succeeds. One of her enemies, a young girl around her age, saw it fit to bewitch her. She is lusting over her fiancé and she tried to seduce him but her actions were in vain. She was humiliated, so in return, she thought going after your daughter will get her the fiancé and make her win the upcoming competition.” He tilted his head to the side and looked at Zithulele.

“You are on the right track. The woman you’re with, she is your wife and your true love. Treat her well and never let go of her. She is a rare diamond.” His eyes moved to Zikhethela. “You have a baby on the way and the woman carrying your baby is a

snake. She is capable of bringing your whole family to its knees. Be careful.”

He looked at Ayabonga and chuckled shaking his head a bit. “You need to start taking life seriously and stop making unnecessary enemies along the way. They might put your family in danger one day.” his eyes moved to Sethulo and he sighed. “Your girlfriend loves you, she does. But the company she keeps is not good. She is friends with the person who tried to kill your sister. Yes, she wasn’t involved but if you want a future with her, she will have to choose between her friends and you.” Sethulo swallowed hard. He stood up and walked out because he couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

“I will go get him.” Zithulele said standing up.

“No it’s okay for you both to leave. Vele I am done with you.” Mangethe said and Zithulele nodded before heading out. Mangethe looked at both Somnyama and Mnyamane. He shook his head and exhaled loudly. He directed his eyes to Mnyamane. “There is a man you killed in your teenage years. His son is after you. He is going to kill your twin hoping to get to you. You can either stop the upcoming death by killing him or

apologizing to his family.” he then moved to Somnyama. “The beast inside of you doesn’t want you near a woman because women tend to render us weak. So no, you are not scared of women. The thing you put inside you is the one distancing itself from women. If you want to settle down and find a woman you love, you would have to change who you are, start over, get thoroughly cleansed before embarking on that journey of life.” He sat back. “The kids can leave now. Take your sister with you.” Ayabonga stood up and picked Azanda from the floor. The Buthelezi children left the room in a somber mood.

“You all understand your role in the household?” he asked looking at the wives. “You do understand that it is your duty to make sure everyone gets along and there is peace in the yard?” they nodded but with uncertainty. “I just wanted to remind you of your duties. You seem to have forgotten. I know you came because of this man but the world doesn’t revolve around you. Yes the woman is supposed to keep the bed warm for the husband but she is also supposed to keep the household warm for the kids. There is four of you, handling one household can’t be that difficult.” The wives looked down.

“Fundiswa.” MaNene’s eyes popped out as she raised her head to look at Mangethe. “You have been gone too long from the Buthelezi yard. For you to come back peacefully and claim your rightful place as the third wife, you and your fiancé have to do

cleansing ceremonies. You for leaving umuzi wakho with a white chicken, you have to cleanse the Buthelezi yard. Nqengelele, you have to cleanse both the Buthelezi and the Mkhize yard with white goats. The Mkhize yard for breaking their daughter's heart and the Buthelezi yard for chasing your fiancé away."

He looked at MaVezi. "Whatever crazy thoughts are running in your mind ignore them because you will be the one to suffer the most." MaVezi wished a ground could open and swallow them. Mangethe smiled. "Well today was not your day but I was supposed to help your daughter and now that I have helped her, you can leave. If you one on one consultations, you would have to book Me." he looked at Sokalisa. "Beware of the company you keep. Come and take your daughter's medicine." Sokalisa stood up and went to take all the medicine. He handed it to his wives and took out a roll of cash from his pocket which amounted to R10 000.

"Akubongwa futhi akuvaleliswa." This basically meant that you don't say goodbye to a healer and you don't thank him or her for the help he has given you. It's the rules. He stood up and headed out followed by his wives. They all climbed into the cars and drove out.

Two days before the competition. I haven't recovered to my full potential but I am getting there. My legs are getting better, thanks to whatever that inyanga did because I was out 99% of the time during the consultation or the healing process. I can walk now and I can talk properly. My voice is back but still rough around the edges. The only solution my team came up with was that Nyezi will be the one entering the singing category instead of me because she also has an amazing voice like mine.

I was brought back to the Buthelezi household. All my brothers have been catering to all my needs. Even if I say I want a KFC twister or Spur ribs or a Big Mac, they make things happen. Sethulo has been avoiding me ever since we came back. Somnyama is actually the one who has been keeping me company and talking to me, weird right?

Anyways one of the guards makes his way in. he greets me with a smile and I respond.

"Nkosazana, someone is here to see you. Your fiancé." He says and I nod. My phone is at home, so I haven't contacted anyone

in over 24 hours. I communicated with Izimbali Zomhlaba via Nyezi.

“You can let him in.” the guard nods before heading out.

I sit up straight and cover my legs with a throw. That’s my life now. Being shy about my body because of someone else’s work. People are evil out there. After a few minutes, Siza walks in. he looks around and quickly rush to me. He kneels before me and hugs me tight. I moan in pain and he lets go of me.

“What’s wrong?” he asks and I shake my head with a smile.

“How are you doing?” he frowns. “Come on, sit next to me and tell me how you have been.” I pat on the seat next to me and he takes it. “Now what did I miss?” he chuckles.

“You are playing it cool, like you didn’t just ghost me for 2 days.” He says with a smile but I can see emotional pain behind it. I sigh.

“I was bewitched. I think you have probably figured that out. My legs are awful and you can hear how hoarse my voice is. The person who did this, intended on me not participating on the competition.”

“Can I see?” I frown.

“My legs?” he nods. “But...”

“You are my fiancé and my future wife. I am entitled to know everything about you. The good, the bad and the ugly. Now show me your legs.” I swallow hard and uncover my legs. His eyes pop out as he sinks into the floor and brings his face closer to them. He touches one of the healing blaster with his index finger and I flinch. “Does it hurt?” I nod. “Who did this to you? Does this mean you won’t be able to compete?” I give him a fake smile and shake my head. I know who did this but I am not going to tell him. I know he can blow things out of proportion if he can.

“I don’t know who did this. The healer I went to is no miracle worker and I know I won’t be strong enough for ukugida, so I have just told myself that I won’t be competing. Trust me, it’s a hard pill to swallow but there is nothing I can do.” he sighs and goes back to his seat. I cover my legs. He brings me closer to him and we cuddle.

“You are going to be fine. Everything is going to be okay.”

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SETHULO

He knew he had to talk to her, sooner or later. But he didn't like to delay the inevitable. After what happened to his sister, he wasn't okay and he somehow blamed himself for all of this. because if he didn't date his sister's enemy, maybe her enemies wouldn't have known much about her and it wouldn't have been easy to bewitch her. His reasoning was crazy but he just knew that this was somehow is fault.

Instead of being parked at the Sikhosana gate, he found himself in front of the Jiki gate. He and Veli were not close but since he was already here, he knew he had to go in. there was a reason why his heart led him here. The gate was open

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so he walked inside and knocked when he reached the door. Veli opened but frowned upon seeing who was at the door.

“May I come in?” he asked politely with a small smile. Veli opened the door wide.

“Yeah, sure.” They walked to the lounge and he sat on one of the couches while Veli stood on the entry way. “Is everything okay? Did something happen to Azanda or Lele?” she asked anxiously because she couldn’t think of any other reason Sethulo Buthelezi was seated at her lounge. He chuckled.

“Nothing is wrong. I am actually here to talk to you about something person.” Veli relaxed a bit but she still doesn’t understand what brought him here.

“Do you need anything to eat or drink?” Veli asked and Sethulo nodded.

She dashed to kitchen and placed freshly baked mini scones on a tray. She poured juice in a small jug, placed it and the glass on the tray. She went back to the lounge and placed the tray on the coffee table. She sat on the couch opposite his. He took one of the scones and took a bite.

“These are delicious. Did you bake them this morning?” he asked and she nodded with a smile. “You should definitely bake

some for my mother and Azanda. I am sure they will appreciate them.” her smile grew wider.

“I made more than enough. I can pack them for you in a container before you leave.”

“That would be good.” He took a sip of the juice and sat back. “Now you must be wondering what brought me here.” she nodded. “I am sure Azanda has told you about her current illness.” She nodded once again. Azanda did inform her, Lele also did. She was livid and she wished to go and rip Nomzamo’s throat soon after she heard but Lele managed to talk her out of doing anything crazy. “Well as you know, I am dating Ntokozo and she is kind of like your enemy. Even though I have established that she had nothing to do with the attack on my sister, I can’t help but feel part of this was my fault. I brought a snake at home and my sister suffered because of my actions. I am just responsible for everything that happened.” She sighed. Lele briefed her about Sethulo’s guilt but she didn’t know it was this deep.

“Bhuti, none of this is your fault and none of this is Ntokozo’s fault. Sure we may be ‘enemies’ but we would never hold her accountable for her friend’s actions. Just like I wouldn’t like

Azanda to be held accountable or hated for my actions.” She exhaled loudly. “I think you should ask Ntokozo to choose. Her friend is a snake, she is evil and she deserves to be treated as an outcast. If she is capable of bewitching someone because of a man who doesn’t even love her, what makes you think she won’t bewitch Ntokozo? What if one day the affection you show your girlfriend is too much for her to watch and she decides to bewitch both you and Ntokozo?” Sethulo buried his head in his hands and groaned in frustration.

“What should I do?”

“Look at me bhuti.” He raised his head and looked at her. He was miserable and looked like he hasn’t slept in forever. Veli sympathized with him. “You love her and you see a future with her. You have to do what’s best for you and leave the ball in her court. Tell her what her friend has done and just ask her to choose between you and her. Her decision will determine your future. The decision might be in favour or against you. You just have to respect it.” He huffed and finished his juice.

“This sucks but I guess I have to do it.” Her face softened.

“Even if you guys don’t end up together, you are a good guy. You will find the perfect woman for you.” he nodded.

“Thank you. I should get going. How much is your consultation?” Veli frowned and he chuckled. “You just became my therapist, so how much is your consultation?” she broke into laughter.

“Well your happiness is my consultation price. Once you are happy, I will be content.” He smiled.

“Once again, thank you.” Veli stood up.

“Let me quickly pack those scones before you leave.” She took the tray and went to the kitchen. She packed a few scones on a container and went back to the lounge. “Here you go.” She handed the container to him. “Let me walk you out.” they both walked out and just as they reached the gate, Zithulele’s car came to a halt next to Sethulo’s car. He climbed off and strutted to them.

“Ngiyadlelwa bafo?” he asked and Veli and Sethulo both laughed.

“I am whipped bafo, so I wouldn’t do anything to Nqengelele’s daughter in law. I just came for some advice and I did get it, plus free scones.” He raised the container.

“Give me one.” He tried to take the container but Sethulo stepped back laughing.

“See you soon, koti.” He kissed Veli’s cheek and rushed to his car. Zithulele turned to Veli with a smile.

“What did you do to him?” he asked as soon as Sethulo drove off. “He has been sour the last two days. There has to be something you did to him.” Veli chuckled.

“I am a great listener and I give out good advices. Now come, I cooked for you.” she took his hand and led him inside the house. He was grinning like a chimpanzee.

SETHULO

He parked outside her home and just sat on the car, controlling his breathing. He wanted to speak to her. Wanted to get this done as soon as possible, but he was still uncomfortable about the whole situation. He remembered his father's words before driving off.

'Whatever you do, son, don't tell anybody about Azanda's state.'

He somehow knew his father was referring to Ntokozo. He thought about his last conversation, which was with Veli. She helped a lot with the internal battle within him. He sighed and texted her. He hadn't been in contact with her for 5 days straight. He knew she was mad at him or just worried. It took her two minutes to get ready and come out of her home. She climbed inside the car.

"Sawubona Ntokozo." He said as he drove off. That was cold, Ntokozo thought. Although he was from the rurals, Sethulo was

a real gentleman and he still believed a woman shouldn't open doors in the presence of her man.

“And then? What's up?” Ntokozo asked.

She was the type of girl who didn't let things slide and she always called him out when she saw faults. Sethulo chuckled quietly as he continued to drive without answering her. She sighed and sat back as she realized she wasn't going to get her answers. They got to the sports ground and Sethulo parked the car. He turned off the engine and then climbed off the car. He opened the boot, took out two camp chairs and set them up. Ntokozo came to sit and he sat next to her. He cleared his throat.

“Who do you love the most between your friend, Nomzamo and me?” he asked and Ntokozo frowned.

“Why are you asking such a question? What has gotten into you?” she was shocked and was definitely not expecting such an answer. After ghosting her for more than 3 days, she was expecting some explanation, not this.

“I asked you a simple question, Ntoko. Who do you love the most between Nomzamo and me?” he asked again, his tone was still low and calm. As it has always been.

“I have known her my whole life. The love I have for you and the love I have for her is different. I love you both but of course I love you more because you are my boyfriend and a possible future husband.” He smiled a bit and looked away. He knew Ntoko would want a valid reason for him wanting her to end a childhood friendship.

“So if you were given a chance to choose, who would you choose?”

“You, obviously.” She said without hesitation and he smiled.

“I guess that’s settled then. After the competition, you will cut all ties with her. You can still see her during your group meetings and what not, but I don’t want your friendship with her to continue. She is toxic and not right for you. I also don’t trust her and I don’t trust her hate towards my sister. She has the power to manipulate you or use your friendship to destroy my family or my sister.” her mouth went dry and her eyes were popped out as she tried to capture or register in her mind what this man in front of her was saying. Nomzamo was her best

friend and although she had her Hlomu moments when it comes to mistreating friends, that's how friendship was. So she didn't understand why Sethulo would want her to end such an important friendship in her life.

“But Sethulo you aren't thinking straight. She is my best friend and practically my sister. Why would I suddenly end my relationship with her? All because you said so? Come on. And she wouldn't manipulate me in that way. I am my own person and I make my own decisions. I would never bring harm to your family. Don't you trust me? How can you see a future with someone you don't trust?” she was getting angry and Sethulo couldn't care less about her dramatic ranting. He chuckled.

“Ntokozo, do you like my sister?” she frowned. “Azanda, do you like her?” she swallowed hard. Truth of the matter

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she hated her. You know how friendship works. Best friends share everything, even or especially enemies. He smiled painfully because that just confirmed she might actually choose Nomzamo in the long run. “You hate my sister and if I were to ask you why, you wouldn't answer. Nomzamo hates her because Azanda is effortlessly better at everything and instead

of your friend trying to better herself or even ask advice to make herself more skilled, she is always trying to think of ways to bring down my sister. You always directly and indirectly help with plans to bring down my sister.” he sighed and looked straight in her eyes.

She was now shaking and fear was written all over her face. Fear of him dumping her because of a few stupid mistakes made by her best friend. Didn't they say 'sins of the fathers always descend upon their children'? Now why was she about to pay for sins of her best friend?

“I love you, Ntoko. God knows how much I love you. But I would choose my family any day over someone who wants to bring harm upon them. Blood is thicker than water when faced with enemies or any other situations. My sister is not the one who always makes me laugh at random occasions, who always have a silly way of putting a smile on my face, who always becomes my therapist when the going gets tough and someone who is my personal cheerleader. You are that person. You are someone I would love to spend the rest of my life with. Someone who would become besties with my mothers, especially MaNene and MaVezi because they are younger and I think you would have some things in common. You are the

woman of my dreams, believe me, you are. But if you continue being friends with Nomzamo, I can't make an honest woman out of you. I am sorry, but I can't risk the safety and the wellbeing of my sister and my family."

Tears were rolling down her cheeks and it took everything for Sethulo not to reach out and wipe them. He swallowed hard and stood up. He walked about a few meters away from her and sat down on the grass with his back facing her. He cleared his throat, trying to get rid of any weakness or the urge to just wail. This was hurting him more than it was hurting her. He stood to lose his woman but he was his sister's keeper before he became Ntokozo's boyfriend.

Ntokozo was frozen on her seat. She hadn't seized crying and her cries were now even more audible. After what seemed like forever, she calmed down and her eyes trailed to the man sitting far from her. She had dated before, a couple of guys, but none of them every treated her like Sethulo. None of them ever showered her with gifts without expecting something in return or trying to apologize with them. All of them wanted sex before anything but Sethulo said he will wait until she was ready and he did wait. She knew that relationships always had a way of ending. One minute you're happy and then boom, the next

minute something comes and just steals away your happiness, just like that. Something or someone. She knew what her decision was as she stood up and stretched her legs. She went to the driver's seat and took out Sethulo's phone. She browsed through his music app and finally came across their song. She pressed play as she made her way to him.

'Angeke ngikwazi Ukuphila ngaphandle kothando

Lijabulisa libuyise inhliziyo

Noma kanjani siya liboph'ifindo

Angeke ngikwazi Ukuphila ngaphandle kothando

Lijabulisa libuyise inhliziyo

Noma kanjani siya liboph'ifindo.'

His thoughts seized as he heard that song. Ntokozo's melodic voice was the star of it all. She had an angelic voice but she always led people to believe that Nomzamo was a better singer than her. Nomzamo always wanted the spotlight on her and Ntokozo didn't want to take it away from her friend because it made Nomzamo feel good about herself. Ntokozo continued singing and Sethulo turned to look at her.

She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. With the puffy red eyes and all, she completed him and the feeling was

mutual with Ntokozo. He attempted to stand up but she shook her head as she lowered herself to the grass, next to him.

“You are the best thing that has ever happened to me and the best lover I had ever received and I am thankful to God for that. You know I would choose anyone over you. I love you that much and I don’t want anything coming between us. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. So, yah.” She chuckled nervously. “I will cut all ties with Nomzamo after the competition. I don’t wanna create enemies before even stepping inside the Buthelezi yard officially.” Sethulo’s heart swelled with overwhelming happiness. He brought her closer to him and kissed her. He pulled away from the kiss and looked at her with a smile on his face.

“There is something I need to tell you first.” She gave him a go ahead look. “Baba has asked me to take charge of the family business in Durban. I know it might be too much for you, but I would really love it if you would move to Durban with Me.” she smiled widely.

“You can bet on it. I don’t want you bringing another city wife like your brother who won’t even be interested in seeing your family.” he broke into laughter and Ntokozo felt content at that moment. Future is not something neither one of them would predict but they were hoping for the best.

ZIKHETHELE

He was the most unhinged Buthelezi brother. Dangerous and unpredictable. You never knew what was going on in his head. One moment you have him laughing and making jokes and the next, he is on the front line preparing for war. You just never know what he is thinking. What Mangethe revealed to him made him angry and he had been containing his rage for so long. He didn't wanna confront his baby mama. She was pregnant and pregnant women are vulnerable and always over emotional. The hormones always drove him crazy but he endured them because she was carrying precious cargo.

He opened the door to her rented room and got inside. He had his own key. She was at work. She hadn't taken a maternity leave because she was still 5 months pregnant. She had just left 2 hours ago, so that gave him enough time to raid her room and find anything that might threaten or endanger his family. The family came above everything. Protecting the family always came first. So the possibility of her destroying his family, killed him.

He raided the whole room, turned everything upside down and he was about to give up when he suddenly came across a cheap phone at the bottom drawer of her wardrobe which contained very kinky sex toys. He was interested in knowing what the hell she was doing with this much sex toys but the phone interested him more. He sat down and started paging it. On the call log, there was only one number. He copied it on his phone and searched who it belonged to in his Trucaller app. After a few moments, the name of the person appeared. Vincent Mabuyakhulu. The name didn't ring a bell but he was surely going to ask his brothers or father about it. He went to the phone's messages and what he saw there made lose his sanity the same moment. He chuckled angrily as he went through all the messages. They were all from the same number, from Vincent Mabuyakhulu.

Happy: he is not suspecting a thing. I am yet to meet his family but I am sure it won't be long now. He has even been hinting about bring lobola to my family. Should I give him the go ahead on that?

Vincent: you are doing well, baby girl. Keep up the good work. And if the idiot wants to marry you, don't stop him. I will personally be in charge of those negotiations and charge them

an unreasonable price. Money is not an issue on those killers. Now infiltrate that family so that we can destroy it from the inside out.

Happy: he won't know what hit him. He is so gullible and too trusting. It's like he is so desperate of love. Luckily his dick game keeps me entertained or else I would've been bored to death by him.

Vincent: you need to complete the mission first baby girl. Just hang on. After all is done, you will drop that curse of a baby in your womb with his rotten family and come back to your bug daddy.

He felt sick to his stomach. The messages were long, too long. It seemed as if Happiness and this man were very much acquainted and they were lovers. He was shaking, unable to contain his anger. He knew he had to get out of this place. He felt himself being suffocated. He walked out, leaving the room in disaster and the cheap phone on top of the bed. He sat on the veranda and send his brother, Ayabongwa, a message with his location. After that he switched off his phone because he knew Ayabongwa will call wanting to know what's going on and

if he couldn't reach him, he would inform the whole family and they would take turns trying to contact him. He buried his head between knees, just controlling his breathing patterns. He wasn't crying. No, he was far from that. Being emotionally vulnerable was not an option. Being emotional was a weakness. The only person who was allowed to show emotions was Sethulo because he was somehow special because he was the most normal one amongst the Buthelezi brothers, but also he hardly cried.

It took Ayabongwa less than 10 minutes to get to where Zikhethele was. He should've been concerned because at Nongoma town, the traffic was always a pain in the ass, even in the middle of the month

when most people weren't busy with grocery shopping. Ayabongwa climbed off the car, together with Somnyama who was with him when he got the text. When Ayabongwa saw the state his brother was in, he knew not to ask any questions about what he was currently going through.

"Where do you wanna go?" Ayabongwa asked.

"To father's office." Zikhethele responded and stood up. He handed his car keys to Somnyama and then went to

Ayabongwa's taxi. He climbed in the passenger seat and Ayabongwa climbed on the driver's seat. They drove off in silence and went straight to Sokalisa's office which was in town.

When they got to Sokalisa's office, they found him seated with an amused expression. In front of him, stood a young woman who was biting his head off over some issue which they didn't catch. Sokalisa never let anyone speak to him like that, except for Azanda. So the brothers were wondering what the hell was going on.

"Are you going to just smile at me like that all day or are you actually going to take me serious?" she asked already getting more and more pissed. Sokalisa chuckled and then looked at his sons.

"I think this one would make a good daughter in law. What do you think, sons?" he asked, still amused by the girl's drama. That seemed to fuel her rage but she couldn't do anything to express it other than shouting at the man old enough to be his father.

“I have important matters to talk to you about, baba. So if the miss is going to stand here, shout at you like a statue, then I will have to take her and throw her out myself.” Zikhethele said in a cold voice as he went to the table near the couch and helped himself to the whiskey. Sokalisa could hear from the tone in which he spoke that his son was not in a good mood. He cleared his throat and gave the girl a serious look.

“I don’t mean to disrespect your authority or anything, but if your father wants to discuss business with me, he will have to come himself and not send you because there is nothing I am going to talk to you about.” She swallowed hard and took a step back. But she wanted to be taken seriously and she knew the only way to gain power against the most feared taxi owner in Nongoma was to face him, head on, without any fear.

“I will be back and trust me, Nqengelele, I will not leave until you hear me out next time.” She looked at the Buthelezi brothers, just a single glance, and then walked out.

“That was feisty.” Ayabongwa commented and Somnyama chuckled before making himself comfortable on the couch near Zikhethele who was watching the glass of liquor in his hand with so much fascination.

“What’s wrong, son?” Sokalisa asked and Zikhethele cleared his throat, raising his eyes to look at his father who had a concerned look on his face.

“Do you know anyone by the name of Vincent Mabuyakhulu?” Sokalisa frowned.

“I know him. We used to be close when we lived in Jozi a long time ago. He is originally from Melmoth. Things went south between us when my father died and I inherited the family business. He was just too jealous and I cut off ties with him long ago. A few years ago, I took a taxi route away from him. War nearly broke out but he wasn’t strong enough to face me head on. He tried to play dirty but didn’t succeed. Why are you asking me about him?” – Sokalisa.

“That’s who Happiness is working with to take down this family. I found out a few minutes ago. And it seemed like there is an intimate relationship going on between them. She has been making me a fool this whole time. Unfortunately the baby she is carrying is mine. If not, I would’ve killed her by now.” His anger was rising and Somnyama placed his hand on his shoulder. “I am not going to touch her. Well not until she has given birth. After that I will kill her with my bare hands. I saw

their texts baba. She feels nothing for me. She even has sex toys to satisfy her. I am just frustrated because I can't do anything to her." he scoffed as he drank his whiskey in one go.

Ayabongwa's phone rang. He looked at Zikhethle before answering it and putting it on speaker. "Happiness." They all turned to look at him.

"Hi bhut Ayabongwa. I am trying to get ahold of Khethele. He was supposed to bring me lunch and he is never late. Do you know where he is?" Happiness asked in the most innocent polite voice ever. Zikhethle poured more whiskey on his glass.

"He had to drive ma to her doctor's appointment in Empangeni. He left his phone behind. I am sure it just slipped his mind. I will make sure he contacts you when he is back." Happiness sighed.

"Well I was craving some a chicken wrap but not a shwarma. Can you please get it for me?"

"I will ask one of the drivers to get it for you and bring it to your work place because I am super busy right now." They said their goodbyes and Ayabongwa hung up.

“The only way to survive this is to get myself someone who will keep my mind off this shit. Somnyama get someone to go clean her room. I left it in shreds. I don’t want her knowing that I am on to her.” Zikhethele said as he handed his brother the keys and headed out with a bottle of whiskey safely tucked under his arm.

Today is the day that we all have been waiting for. The day of the competition. Proudly brought to us by the Department of Arts and Culture in association with the Yakhanathi Organization. We have been looking forward to this event for so long. I have healed. Well I am not as strong as I used to be, but I am fine and I am going to be able to participate in the competition. My voice is back now. Nomzamo won't know what hit her because I am going to make a grand entrance that will leave her dumbstruck.

All of my group members got dressed at my mother's house and they have been taken by the transport organized by my father to the competition's venue. It was changed nge last minute because the owner of the lodge they booked suddenly got greedy and wanted more money seeing that the competition will bring too much money to the organization and the department. So the competition was moved to Nongoma Gardens. Roxy had to do a lot of last minute preparations, luckily Siza was there for her, or else she would've gone crazy.

I am about to put on amakhehlewane when the door to my room opens. I am still at the Buthelezi household. Sethulo steps

in with a plastic bag smiling. Well we had a talk last night and I understood why he was distant with me but I assured him that we are cool and nothing can break our sibling bond, even if his girlfriend were to bewitch me. I would deal with her and not get mad at him.

“I got you something.” He says handing me the plastic. I smile and take it. I quickly open it and I take out what’s inside. I laugh and shake my head.

“Thank you bhuti. You have no idea how much you have helped me. Even though I have to take of most of the things I am wearing, but it’s worth it. Thank you Shenge.” He smiles. He bought me a pantyhose that is the same colour as my complexion.

“Now hurry up. Everyone is waiting for you. We are all accompanying you to the competition. When I say everyone, I mean even Mamkhulu.” I look at him and just laugh again.

“You are lying.”

“No I am not.” Mamkhulu is always at home. She leaves maybe 4 times a month. She is what I call a real pillar of the Buthelezi household. “Now hurry up and get dressed. We don’t want to be late.” he walks out.

I quickly dress up and then check my reflection in the mirror. I look like a true African princess. I put my phone and cash in my small fanny pack. I take a sip from imbiza that Mangethe gave my father. It's bitter but it will help me get through today, so I don't mind the bitterness. I walk out of my room to the yard where the whole family is waiting. They are all dressed in their traditional clothing and they just look very good.

"You deserve a Buthelezi convoy dade. Phela wena you woke up from the dead." Zikhethele says and we all laugh.

Mnyamane asks one of the guards to take a few pictures of us. When they are done, we climb inside the cars and drive off. I am with my mother and father in the car. I wonder how the other wives felt about Sokalisa riding with us.

"Are you ready?" dad asks. He is the one driving and mom is occupying the passenger seat.

"Yeah. I was born ready." They both laugh.

"You are overly confident my child. Just like I raised you." mom says in a boastful tone and I swear I saw Sokalisa rolling his eyes. I laugh it off. I can't even go through my phone because I know many people are going to ask my whereabouts. I am sure

Nomzamo is smiling wherever she is, thinking she has won.
Shame u baby girl.

We finally get to the venue. It seems like the whole competition is about to start. There are so many tents, I don't even bother counting them. I won't mention the number of cars coz wow. But it seems like the stage is in the middle with no shelter. Mnyamane comes to open the door for me and I laugh before climbing out. My brothers start singing and begiya which makes me wanna run away because they are bringing all the attention to us. I look around and finally spot my friends near some group of izintombi which is from Buxedene area.

"Escort me there." I say to Zikhethela who smiles. My brothers will do anything for extra attention, especially when there is a lot of females in one place. These are the same people who have a spot in the VIP section emhlangeni.

"With pleasure." He responds and whispers to my other brothers before they all walk me inside.

Dad and his wives walk away to find a place to sit. My brothers walk me to where my group is and they scream the moment they see me, rushing to bombard me with hugs. My brothers

take that as a cue to walk away but not before Zithulele steals a kiss from his bae. He is whipped. My group asks me too many questions and I just laugh brushing them off. An usher leads us to where all the other groups are seated. They also have a tent of their own. As we approach the other groups, my eyes find Nomzamo's group before locating her. Our eyes meet and I wink at her when I see her shocked expression. That would teach her that you don't mess with the Buthelezi bloodline. We take our seats and we are told the programme is about to start.

Roxy goes to the podium. She is looking really pretty in a blue traditional skirt with beads. Nyezi is the one who made that skirt. Before she starts talking, I see people bowing. I immediately know that someone from the royal house is making an entrance. We also bow. I spot the second queen, KaMahlaba Zulu who is married to the Zulu king. She is with three of her young sons and the royal spokesperson who is also the king's brother. They are ushered to the VIP seats which is where my family is also seated. Trust the Buthelezi family to demand VIP seats everywhere they go. Roxy blushes a bit. If I were in her position, I would be sweating like crazy right now.

She starts off by greeting everyone

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including the royals and moves on to the purpose of the day. “I am not the MC of the day, I just came to say these few important things. In conclusion, I would like to say today we are making history. This is our first annual culture competition and we wish that it’s a start of something great. We wish to come back here next year for the second annual competition and with God’s grace that will happen. Now I would like to hand the reigns over to Khunjulwa Mabika and Kabelo Mandela who are going to be our MCs for the day.” everyone claps for Roxy as she steps down from the podium and the two MCs step up.

The competition starts. There are about 15 izigodi participating but I am not bothered because I know my team is one of the best. They start off with the less hectic categories. The first one is the BEST BEAD WEAVER. We nominated Sisanda for that. So a model walks in wearing Sisanda’s beads from head to toe. They are covering all the private parts and they just look like something Beyoncé would wear at Coachella. We cheer for Sisanda who just smiles shyly. The following category is the BEST CROCHETER which nominated Nyezi for because she is our best. A model walks in wearing a wool bikini with a mini skirt and some nice accessories on her ankles. Damn dade is smart. We also hype her and she actually stands up to bow, making us

laugh. The next category is the BEST POET which we didn't enter for. After that comes the BEST UKUZIBONGELA. We sing as we stand up and accompany Veli to the stage. We go back to our seats and she stands proudly looking at everyone.

“Ndiyintombi yakwa Xhosa kwaye ndiyazigca ngobuXhosa bam. NdinguMabhanqo, utshilibe udumane. Ndizalwa nguMamfene, u Lisa, baza ngomva elilweni. Abantu abamnandi kodwa ndikhulela kwikhaya lo Gaba, ootikoloshe, otitiba, omeyezwa, abantu bolambo.” She continues citing some of her clan names and when she is done, the whole crowd goes wild. She bows a little before coming back to her seat.

“Friend that was fire.” I tell her and she smiles.

“You are up next. Do us proud.” I smile.

The next category is BEST SINGER. Well I am a little anxious as I make my way to the stage but as soon as I am handed the mic, all my worries fade. I start singing Vele Ngiyamthanda by MS Level. When I am done, I get a standing ovation. As I am walking back to my seat, I spot Siza who blows me a kiss. I just giggle and go take my seat.

“Friend that was fire.” Veli repeats my words and I laugh.

They call other categories but we didn't bother to sign up for them. The category we have all been waiting for finally gets called. The BEST ABAGIDI category. They call all the 14 groups before us. Nomzamo's group is called first and then followed by us. Their performance was nice but to someone who really knows ingoma would've noticed a few mistakes here and there. We finally get called and we all stand up. Nyezi starts singing and we all follow after her.

‘Omama makungena thina

Bakikize omama, omama

Makungena thina.’

We get to the front and we start singing and dancing as rehearsed. We make sure our songs don't exceed the time we were given. Siyagida one by one until we are all done and then sing a song as we exit the stage. My legs are a bit sore the moment we sit down but I don't mind because it was all worth it. My father's guards come with refreshments and we thank them as we drink and watch the entertainment, waiting for the judges to make a decision.

We are told that the results will be announced in an hour, so we can stretch our legs and chat with other people. I take Nyezi's hand and we head to where my family is seated.

"Yuh, Nkanyezi. You are so talented. You should definitely knit something like that for me so that I can wear it at the beach." MaVezi says with a smile and Sokalisa frowns.

"No wife of mine will parade in that thing. Over my dead body." He says in a stern voice and we all just laugh at him.

"We are really going to the beach, just the four of us. So Nyezi you should note down our sizes and favourite colours so that you can start working." Mom says with a smirk, stealing a glance at Sokalisa. They are teasing him and they are enjoying it.

"Mina I loved that little skirt. You should make one for me so that I can wear it while cleaning around the house." MaMhlongo adds and Sokalisa groans.

"Yoh! Kill me now." He stands up and walks away, leaving us laughing like crazy.

“You were awesome, Azanda. Your voice is just magnificent. After that performance, record labels are definitely going to run after you.” MaWanda states and I smile, thanking her before taking the seat between her and MaMhlongo where Sokalisa was seated. This is actually the first event we have went to as a whole family, excluding my sisters but they did say they will be there for the braai later on. One thing I love about being at home, is that we never lift a finger. Sokalisa’s wives always do the hard labour because they are the ones who came to the Buthelezi household to keep the home warm.

“Are you guys’ hungry? I am heading to town to buy some food for everyone.” Mnyamane asks. We all tell him what we want. “I am not Uber Eats guys.” We laugh. He notes down everything and then walks away with Somnyama. All my brothers leave.

“Phela I received a call from their mother.” Mom says pointing at the twins with her head. “Saying she heard I was back and that I shouldn’t be too comfortable. She might come back and claim her spot wara-wara. Yoh the nerve. I actually threatened her and said I will kill her if she keeps giving me the main chick side chick calls. She resorted to texts and I have blocked her.

She even texted me with her new number.” This is above my pay grade, but Imma stick around and hear the juicy details while pretending to watch the entertainment at the stage. Nyezi has already left.

“You should tell your husband to call off his bitch. I was also a victim of her drama but I just told Shenge and he dealt with her.” –MaVezi.

“Ayy, he might be tempted to fuck her.” – MaWanda.

“If he does, we will kill him and become millionaires.” – MaMhlongo. They all look at each other before laughing while doing hi-fives.

“That’s my cue.” I stand up and they laugh at me. I see Siza’s mother approaching with Snothy and Smilesihle. I get shy all of the sudden.

“I thought you were leaving. Why are you frozen?” MaVezi asks and they laugh. Yoh these women are a bad combo together. They are okay if they are beefing. I sit back down.

“My mother in law is approaching. Please don’t embarrass me.” they continue laughing. Thixo, labafazi. She finally get to where

we are. I stand up. “Mah, it’s so good to see you.” I say and she opens her arms to hug me.

“You are so talented makoti. Yazi I had to blink so many times when you were singing. You have that voice that just makes a statement. What you did there, they would be fools if they don’t let you win.” She says with a smile and I blush. I turn to face labafazi baka Jehovah behind me.

“These are my father’s wives. MaMhlongo, MaWanda, MaNene and MaVezi. Bomama bomthandazo this is Siza’s mother, Mrs. Maphumulo.”

“Please call me MaShange.” They shake hands and she sits down. “Men are trash though.” She starts off and they laugh before engaging and commenting. I turn to Smilesihle and Snothy.

“How are you guys?” we share hugs.

“Your father is thee man. Damn is he trying to compete with iSilo?” Smilesihle asks and we laugh.

“I think they would burn him alive if he were to bring u number 5. Anyways, where is Nzelwe?”

“He is with dad and Roxy. Roxy is behaving like daddy’s little girl.” Snothy says rolling her eyes.

“Let my friend be, she missed her dad.” They both laugh. We walk away from the old women and head towards a stall where they sell beverages. “Can I please have a bottle of water?” I say already taking out money.

“Make that two please.” He says wrapping his arms around me. I giggle and turn to face him. “You don’t know how beautiful you look today, sthandwa Sami. I actually regret not buying you a ring because all these man are drooling over you. I nearly went to town to buy a temporary one but then remembered they don’t have a jewelry shop.” I laugh and roll my eyes.

“You’re dramatic.”

“And we are leaving.” Snothy says handing us water and walking away with Smilesihle.

“Can I kiss you?” he asks, his eyes already fixed on my lips. I lick them and give him a smirk.

“You want Sokalisa and my brothers to bury you alive?” his eyes pop out.

“Konje they are here? Manje I should go greet them?” he is so spooked, I actually laugh.

“You have no choice, love.” I hold his hand and we walk to where Sokalisa is standing with some men his age. We pass Nomzamo with Senzi and she just gives me a stinky eye. I chuckle, shaking my head. She should be grateful I don’t wanna avenge myself

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or else I would’ve sent back whatever illness she gave me and for hers to be 10 times. We finally get to Sokalisa. He is the one talking and the men are listening. “Baba.” He turns to look at me and he smiles.

“We will talk later madoda.” They leave and I come closer with Siza.

“You remember him, right?” I ask and his smile disappears.

“Please don’t beat him up. This time you will really get arrested.” He laughs.

“I am not an animal, MaShenge.”

“Really?” I ask with my eyebrows raised. He just chuckles, shaking his head.

“Give us a few moments and don’t eavesdrop.” He says dismissing me. I pout and he hands me his phone. “Go play games.” I fold my arms to my chest.

“I don’t wanna be insulted by your women. I must warn you though, you are in big trouble. Keep Maka Somnyama on a tight leash because your wives will kill her.” he frowns. “Don’t take it out on my fiancé.” I smile and walk away.

“Hello.” A voice says behind me and I turn to find this handsome dark skinned man with a beautiful woman next to him. They are smiling. “You must be wondering who we are.” I nod with a smile. An awkward one. “I am Yandisa Ntuli and this is my wife, Mandisa Ntuli. We are friends with Siwenzelwe Maphumulo. When he said we might find talent here, we didn’t think it was possible. Yeah we know talent can be found in rare places, but we weren’t expecting what we heard. Sisi you are a rare gem. A raw amber. We would be so lucky to have you on our team.”

“And what team is that?”

“My husband is so rude sometimes.” Mandisa chirps in with a smile. “We are the owners of Blue Diamond Music. Well I am a

silent owner because I am a doctor and I spend most of my time in the ER.” My eyes pop out.

“You are lying.” I am shocked that someone from Blue Diamond Music, one of the most powerful record label in South Africa, is actually here, talking to me. Not just anyone or a delicate but the actual owners. This label has produced some of the most talented and famous musicians in South Africa and no one has ever complained about it underpaying him or her. It is a dream of any musician to be signed by them.

“You can Google us.” she says with a silly smile. I quickly take out my phone and Google them. Holy shit. She is telling the truth. I look at her with my eyes popped out. “You are still in shock right now and I am sure you anxious about the results. How about we exchange numbers and then we will talk tomorrow?”

“I would love that very much.” We exchange numbers.

“I told you that you will find talent here.” Nzelwe’s voice beams before I can even see him. He wraps his arm on my shoulder and look at Yandisa with a smirk.

“Fine, you won. Drinks on me for the next three months.” Yandisa says and Nzelwe laughs. “See you soon, Azanda and we are really looking forward to working with you.”

“Thank you.” they walk away. “I was actually asking your siblings about you.” he smiles.

“I saw your father chatting to my twin.”

“Go rescue him.” he laughs.

“I was no there when you guys shagged, don’t involve me in your matters.” He walks away laughing. I huff. They announce that winners are about to be called out and we all head back to our places. The MC goes to the front.

“We will announce the winners in accordance with how the categories performed. All the winners will each receive a medal, certificate and a cash of R2000. Without further due, the BEST BEADWEAVER is Sisanda Mkhabela from the Izimbali Zomhlaba group.”

We all scream and escort her to the stage to receive her price. She is shaking and not believing what’s happening. They hand her the certificate, hang the medal around her neck and give

her an envelope which I suspect has cash. She thanks the MC and we head back to our seats. They call other categories and the winners go to the front to take their prizes.

“The BEST CROCHETER is Nkanyezi Buthelezi from Izimbali Zomhlaba group.” Nyezi just breaks down and cries. I am so happy for my sister. My brothers come and escort her to the stage, earning a lot of glances from the ladies.

“Intombi ezibongele kahle eyasemaXhoseni u Velisani Jiki from the Izimbali Zomhlaba group.” I swear my brother goes crazy. He is the one who is more excited than Veli. He hugs her before hooking his arm on hers and walking to the stage with her. She takes her prize and goes to hand it to her parents. I am so proud of her. I hug her tight when she comes back.

“The BEST SINGER is Intombi ka Shenge, Sokalisa, Mnyamane ka Nqengelele, u Azanda Buthelezi from Izimbali Zomhlaba. Izimbali Zomhlaba ziyakhazimula ngempela.”

I smile before standing up and heading to the stage. After I receive my prize, Siza appears in front of me and he goes down on one knee, making almost everyone scream.

“Ucu for indoni yamanzi.” He takes out a beaded bracelet from his pocket and puts it on my wrist. Gosh, this man has me blushing like crazy. He kisses my hand before rushing away, leaving me laughing like crazy. I hand my prize to Zikhethela

and go sit down. Ntokozo wins BEST POET and we cheer for her because she will be joining the family soon. Finally the last category is called and the MC calls the queen KaMahlaba Zulu to announce the winner.

“Sanibonani. What I have seen here today is quite beautiful and magnificent. I would love to see this much craft every now and then. So I have decided to sponsor this event. I will sponsor it. Not my husband.” That’s girl power. We all cheer. “I have also decided to add to the winners’ cash prize. Those who got R2000 will also receive R2000 from me and the winning group will receive R20 000.” We all scream and cheer once again. This woman is goals. “Without wasting your time, the winner for the BEST DANCING GROUP is, MC you were right. Ziyakhazimula ngempela lezimballi. The winners are IZIMBALLI ZOMHLABA!”

Okay, this was expected. We sing as we make our way to the front to claim our prize.

‘Amakhosi engoma

Amakhosi engoma

Azodlala amakhosi engoma

Hhawu amakhosi engoma.’

My father being the dramatic man that he is, he ordered my brothers to go slaughter a cow at home and then told me to tell my group that a celebration was going to be held at the Buthelezi household tonight. It turns out he ordered the house guards to slaughter the cow after we left and now my brothers are going to make sure it is sliced correctly and start braaing it. He actually told Siza to also come with his family. He said he is very proud of Nyezi and I. he also said he has bought presents for us and will give them to us when we get home. My father has so many cows, I don't even know the actual number. What I know is that he always present a cow to all his children on their birthdays. I have 21 cows ekhaya elikhulu while Nyezi has 16.

We drive home but I start at MaNene's house to bath and get changed. I put on some jeans, an oversized white shirt and sneakers. I have been given freedom to wear pants ekhaya elikhulu because of my condition. When I am done, I take mom's car and drive to Veli's home. She comes out of the house after a few moments and climbs in.

"You should definitely take one of Sokalisa's cars when we go to Jozi. We can't be depending on Ubers and being driven around all the time." She says the moment she closes the door and I chuckle. "Are there going to be any real beverages?"

“If there aren’t, my brothers will sort us out and we will spend our time in our rondavel so that no one will disturb us.” she nods. “Are you parents coming?” she shakes her head.

“They wanted us to go spend the night at some lodge in Mthunzini but since I am going to the braai, they will take me out next week. They just left.”

“They are goals.” She chuckles.

We arrive ekhaya elikhulu. The yard is already buzzing. We climb off the car and head to my bedroom. I drink imbiza because I can feel my legs aching. I sit down and do some breathing exercises. I take off the sneakers and socks.

“Are you okay, friend?” Veli asks with a frown. I shake my head.

“Please go find mom and tell her to bring a basin with warm water.” She nods and rushes out. I lie down on the bed and close my eyes for a few moments. I hear the door opening and I open my eyes, sitting up. I frown when I see mom walking in with Sokalisa.

“Is it that bad, ndodakazi?” he asks his voice full of concern.

“It’s not that bad, baba. My legs are just swollen and aching.”

“Take off your jeans so that I can massage you.” mom orders and I nod before taking off my jeans. She pours some salts on the basin and dips my legs inside. It stings, a lot. They both get down on their knees and actually massage me. Look at Sokalisa turning to a teddy bear because of me. Finally the ache goes away and the swelling goes down.

“I feel so much better now.” They stop what they are doing and mom wipes my legs. “When do you think this will officially go away?”

“Once we kill the person who did this to you.” Sokalisa answers with a cold tone. Mom scowls at him.

“You have to be patient, dear. You nearly died a few days back. You know the road to recovery is never an easy one, but I think in two weeks you will be feeling brand new and ready to conquer the world.” she states with a smile and I nod.

They both walk out and I put on my jeans but with sleepers this time around. I take my phone and head outside. My friends are sitting in MaWanda’s veranda and they are singing. They are at the ‘uwineleni’ stage of Jika MaJika. I go join them just in time for my brothers to bring some braaied meet with pap. They

rejoice over it as we start eating. Mnyamane brings a cooler box and places it in the center. We thank him and he walks away.

“Your in-laws are here.” Nombuyiselo squeals and I immediately turn to look at the gate. 3 cars drive in and park where the other cars are parked. Mr. Maphumulo climbs off the backseat of a grey Porsche Cayenne. He circles the car and opens the door for his wife to climb out. That’s cute. The Maphumulo kids climb off in the other cars and I see my mother with MaVezi attending to them. They are led to MaVezi’s house. That’s dramatic.

“You should go serve them.” Nomthandazo says elbowing me and I pout.

“I am sick, they will understand.” They laugh at me. They eventually convince me and I stand up, heading to MaVezi’s house. I enter and find them occupying the lounge.

“Sanibonani.”

“Yebo makoti. You look beautiful.” Mr. Maphumulo says catching me off guard and I just blush while they laugh.

“I just came to greet you and see if you need anything.”

Siza's mother speaks up. "You don't have to worry about anything, my child. Your mothers told me about your situation, so go and chill with your friends. Also celebrate. You did well out there today."

"What situation? Has my brother scored?" Nzelwe asks with a smirk.

"You're an idiot." Siza says smacking his head. He looks at me and smiles. "My father was right, you are beautiful."

"Stop it Zaba." I say backing away and they all laugh. "I will come check up on you later on."

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serif">Roxy stands up. "I am coming with you."

"Me too." Snothy says also standing up.

"Now you are going to leave me with these boring people?" Smilesihle asks and we laugh at him.

"I am also going to leave them nganeyami as soon as I make sure that my husband has eaten." Mrs. Maphumulo says.

“Thatha husband.” Roxy comments and we laugh. We head out, just as Nyezi and Lusanele are about to walk in with trays filled with meat and pap.

“We are going to the rondavel soon. So please bring their food there.” they nod and walk inside the lounge.

We walk to the veranda and I tell everyone that we are moving to the rondavel. They take the cooler box and we head there. The room has been prepared for everyone, grass mats on the floor and a few chairs. I go throw myself in the bed. I am already drained. They start singing and dancing. Roxy and Snothy and blending in well with everyone. Sethulo walks in with Ntokozo and we all stop what we are doing and look at them.

“Dade, you know how I feel about her. Please make her comfortable.” He says to me and then turns to Veli. “Take care of your sister wife.” He tells her to sit on the chair and then he walks out.

“He told me about what transpired between you two, so rest assured. Nobody is going to give you any ugly looks or attitude unless they are crushing on Sethulo.” I state and everyone laughs while Ntokozo chuckles.

“Thank you for the welcome.” She says shyly.

“Don’t expect us not to speak ill about your group though. We won, so we are going to talk about our competition.” Sisanda chirps in and we laugh.

My brothers walk in with more booze and they fill it in the bar fridge. Today they are not going to join us. Maybe they will later on when all the outsiders have left. I stand up and go take ciders from the fridge, handing them to Ntokozo, Roxy and Snothy.

“Next time, you know the way to the fridge.” They laugh. “Veli, take care of your sister wife.” I imitate Sethulo and they both laugh. My sisters walk in and they go straight to the fridge. Izidakwa zika Sokalisa.

We continue singing and dancing, taking a break to chat in between. After an hour or so, a guard walks in and tells us to come to the front of the main house. Sokalisa is calling for us. We all leave our booze and go there. Everyone is already

gathered there and he is laughing to something Skhwili is saying. He looks up as we approach.

“Come here.” I walk to him. “Also you, and you.” he says looking at Lusanele and Makabongwe. We stand in front of him with our backs against the gate. He smiles looking at us. “You three are my gems, my princesses and my weakness. I love you so much and I should’ve done this for you individually when you came of age but I decided to wait for this exact moment.” I frown. What the hell is he talking about? We hear some cars driving in. probably other guests joining the party. “Are you ready for your gifts?”

“Did you get me a Mac notebook?” Makabongwe asks.

“Or a puppy?” Lusanele asks.

“A trip to Dubai?” I ask and everyone laughs. He shakes his head, also laughing.

“Turn around.”

We frown but follow his instructions. My eyes pop out when they land onto the three brand new Hyundai i30 cars parked not far from us with white ribbons on the bonnet. The light blue one has a number plate personalized ‘**AZANDA**’. The bronze one is personalized ‘**LUSAH**’ and the red one is personalized ‘**BONGWE**’. I am startled by Lusanele’s scream as she runs to

her car. Makabongwe follows suit. I turn to look at dad and he is gesturing that I should go check out my new car. I don't do that, instead I go attack him with a hug and he chuckles.

“Wow. Dad. Thank you.”

“You're welcome. Now go check out your new baby.” he says with a satisfied smile.

I quickly dash to my car. This is unbelievable. I first circle it, checking it out. I giggle when I see a **Phungashe** sticker on the back next to the light. I go open the driver's door and I scream when I see that the seats are also written '**Sondiya**' in that place where you put your head at. I climb inside and I smile when I see the keys.

“I'm coming.” I hear Veli shouting before I see the passenger door opening. She slides inside and I laugh before starting the car, taking in its smell and driving out. I drive around for about two minutes and then drive back in the yard. We take tons of photos with our cars. I make sure to force dad to take pictures with me. A lot of them since I will make it a point to write a long ass paragraph in the net thanking him for this gift.

Mom is suddenly besties with MaVezi. They shop together, travel together and they even drink together. This one time I found them drinking wine in the lounge and chatting about anything and everything. The appeasing ceremonies to the Mkhize and Buthelezi family were done and what's left is umkhehlo and umshado for umama. I don't know why she is drinking when I suspect that she is pregnant.

Tomorrow we are taking ingqibamasondo to the Maphumulo house, so we are spending the night ekhaya elikhulu. Mom's house in the yard isn't finished yet, so she occupies the main bedroom in the main house. I take the small box, hiding it in my hoodie and before walking out, my phone rings. It's Mrs. Mandisa Ntuli. They asked that I go to a nearby studio and just record some vocals, more like a demo track, of course they covered the costs of the studio session. So when I was done, the producer emailed them everything. This is the first time I am actually hearing from them after I had sent the demo. I answer the call.

"Mrs. Ntuli." Someone chuckles on the line.

“This is not her. I am Sandile Ntuli, a producer and I must say sisi I am very impressed by your talent. Your vocals are on point and though there are little flaws here and there, that’s nothing a few studio sessions won’t fix. So I am wondering when you will be able to come in and sign your contract.” I take a deep breath. This seems to be moving very fast but I guess that’s how things get once the doors to success has been opened.

“I think I can make it there on Monday morning or during the day because I would have to drive the whole night from Nongoma to Jozi.”

“Okay, that’s great then. You can also bring an adult, possibly a parent or guardian if you feel like some things are going to be too overwhelming or just for the support.”

“Wow that’s cool. Thank you so much. I will surely bring my mother.”

“That’s great to hear. I guess we should expect you at our studios no later than 1pm Monday.”

“Yes. I will make sure I get there before or on time.”

“Thank you for your time. Looking forward to meeting you and actually working with you, Miss Buthelezi. You should work on your stage name.”

“I will discuss that with you and your team.”

“Goodbye and good night.” He hangs up and it takes all in me not to scream for everybody to hear.

I venture to mom’s bedroom and stop at the door when I hear that she is not alone. She is laughing with somebody. I hope it’s not Sokalisa because I don’t wanna see some awkward things. I knock and then enter before anyone gives me permission. She is sitting with Somnyama. Okay, that’s weird.

“I will be on my way mama.” He says standing up. “Dade.” He nods at me and walks out. I lock the door and take out the small box, handing it to ma.

She huffs. “Don’t you know when to give up?”

“Until you prove me wrong.” She rolls her eyes before roughly taking the box from my hand and disappearing to the en-suite. She comes back after a minute and hands it to me.

“Leave now.”

“No, we need to see the results together. We don’t want you saying they belong to Me.” she chuckles.

“I am sure your father would skin you alive. Even though he knows you’re having sex, he doesn’t want you falling pregnant any time soon. Maybe he will be fine once you are Mrs. Maphumulo.” I nod and take her phone to set the timer. I place the stick on the dressing table and go sit next to her.

“So are you ready to become Mrs. Buthelezi officially?”

“Am I not the one who should be asking you that question?”

“Come on, ma. I am like your confidante. The only person you can truly trust with your secrets and your doubts. I mean you may have new best friend but I am your real human diary.” She laughs.

“Are you jealous of my relationship with MaVezi?” I shrug.

“Anyways I was ready to marry your father way before you were even born. 23 years ago

he was the most, good looking man I have ever seen. Still is, in my eyes.”

“Then you should get yourself checked out.” she laughs.

“When you love someone wholeheartedly, their beauty becomes the ultimate beauty standard. Even when you see someone people think is more good looking than your person, wena you be like ‘yeah he is handsome, but not like my man’. Because you know your man’s outer and inner beauty.”

“Manje isn’t that belly heavy when you guys are doing the deed?” she smacks my upper arm. “Ouch mah.”

“Boundaries kid.” I laugh. You can’t help but wonder though.

“Are you ready for tomorrow?” I sigh.

“I have no choice but to be ready. I am hoping for the best.”
She smiles.

“Everything is going to go fine. But Siza’s home is too far shame.” I chuckle.

“Yeah it is. By the way, Sandile Ntuli of Blue Diamond Music called mah. They loved my demo very much and they want me to come and sign a contract on Monday midday. They said I should come with a parent, so I have decided to go with you.” she smiles widely before bringing me to her arms.

“I am so happy for you, my love. Don’t see this opportunity as you leaving the village for greener pastures. This is just you spreading your wings and raising the Buthelezi and Nene flags higher. I am so proud of you.” she screams a bit and kisses my cheeks, making me blush and laugh at the same time.

“I am going places ma, and it’s all because of you. Thank you for always being there for me and for making me this woman I am today.” She smiles. The timer goes off making us both jump and drain a bit of the excitement that we have. I take a deep breath and check it out. “It has two lines mama.”

She buries her head in her hands and mutters. “Fuck.”

“Mah you are going to make a great mother. I mean you have had some training. So don’t worry, everything will be perfect.”

“I am not worried about that Azanda. I was just not expecting this. How could I have missed the signs? I am a doctor for godsake. Plus I have been misbehaving the past few weeks. What if the alcohol intake harmed the fetus?” I brush her thigh.

“It’s going to be okay.” Someone tries to open the door and resorts to knocking when they learn that it is locked.

“Baby, please open up.” Sokalisa’s voice beams and I can’t even stop myself from breaking into a horrible laugh. Did my father just call my mother ‘baby’? It feels so weird to hear him utter the word. Anyways I stand up and go open the door still laughing. I can’t seem to stop myself. His eyes lands on mine and he chuckles nervously. It’s like he has been caught red-handed.

“Yes, baby.” I try imitating mom’s voice and they both laugh. “Let me leave you before I see the thing that brought me to this earth.” I rush out with Sokalisa cursing behind me.

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NARRATED

Sokalisa closed the door behind him and locked it. “I am interested in knowing about what you guys were talking about but I don’t think I wanna know.” Fundiswa sighed before patting on the space next to her. He sat beside her and took her hand into his.

“There is something I wanna tell you. Please don’t freak out.” she started and Sokalisa frowned.

“Are you breaking up with me?” Fundiswa giggled nervously and shook her head.

She cleared her throat. “We are going to be parents for the third and hopefully the last time.” Sokalisa squinted his eyes looking at her.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean you left your best soldiers inside me and I have fallen pregnant.” He smiled a bit and then stood up, making her also stand. He picked her up and she squealed before giggling. “You are going to drop me, love.”

“Never. I would never drop the mother of my kids. I am so excited about this. I am happy. What does one do with all this excitement?” he asked perking her lips multiple times causing her to giggle like a little girl. He finally sat down and brought her to his lap.

“On the other news, the people from Blue Diamond Music has taken a huge liking into our daughter and they want her to come in on Monday to sign her contract, and I am going with her.” He wrapped his arms around her.

“You see the kind of sperms I provide?” he said cockily, making Fundiswa laugh hard. “But I am going to be the best father this child can ever dream of having. I am going to be with you every step of the way and I am not going to do anything to jeopardize our relationship or break your heart. I love you.” he kissed her.

“I love you too.”

Ingqibamasondo went really well, the downside was that we had to wake up at 3 am and leave at 4 am just so we could avoid arriving late because the place is too far. I think I slept the whole way there. The treatment we received was worth 5 stars. Everyone in the yard was so excited and they kept on coming to the tent that was decorated for the Buthelezi family just to see Siza's bride. I also saw Nzelwe's baby mama and she was very warm and kind. Not sure if it was for show but I loved her energy. I also got to meet Siza's cousins, aunts, uncles and grandma. The family is really big.

Anyways a quarrel started when the Maphumulo family said I should spend the night and leave the next morning. Sokalisa was like 'xa bekutheni'. I actually laughed internally at how he turned into a Xhosa man so fast. According to my knowledge, the men don't come but no one wasn't going to tell that to the Buthelezi men. They only came inside when it was time to eat. But at the end of the day, he ended up agreeing, as if he had a choice, and then gave Siza a threat. He was like 'if my daughter is not at home by 12pm tomorrow, you are going to know the other end of my gun'. Trust my father to threaten someone at his own home.

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I open my eyes and realize that I am in an unfamiliar room. Ohh, I slept at Siza's flat last night and I actually hardly slept because he kept me up the whole night. When he wasn't fucking me, he was singing for me and trust me, his voice isn't so pleasant. I sit up and he quickly holds my waist.

"Rest, love. They will give you everything you want. Just chill and give me morning glory." I chuckle and lie back down.

"You finished me last night. So I am not giving you anything today." He grunts and brings me closer to him.

"Okay, I am not going to push further. Just know that I am craving you. In fact I am always craving your warmth, your touch, being in your arms. Ngiyakuthanda MaShenge." I melt in his arms and hug him.

"So in lighter news, mom is pregnant." He looks at me with a frown and then laughs so hard.

"Your father is still sexually active?" I chuckle.

“Mom is 39 years, she still needs some serious servicing. I think if he wasn’t putting it down, she wouldn’t have come back. I have heard her scream and I can tell you that nigga knows how to put it down.” He continues laughing.

“Babe, please stop.” He says out of breath and I chuckle.

“Why the hell would he have 4 wives if he didn’t know how to put it down? Yeah women stay for the money but not 10 plus years. Who is servicing you all those times?”

“The guards.” I look at him and we both break into laughter.

“He actually said ‘baby, please open up’ when he found mom’s door closed.”

“The actual door or the other door?”

“I am not sure, but I was in the room with mom.” We laugh again.

“I can just imagine that intimidating nkabi saying ‘baby’. Yoh my love I don’t think I will be able to hold myself when I see him.”

“Trust me, you will.” I am tired of laughing.

“OKAY, LOVE BIRDS. THAT’S ENOUGH LAUGHING FOR THE DAY. YOU HAVE WOKEN UP EVERYONE!” Siza’s mom shouts from the front door, shocking us and we end up laughing again.

“Let me get decent quickly so that I can go open the door.” I say detaching myself from him. He rolls his eyes.

“Your place is in my bed. You have no right to go open up for him. Just make yourself pretty and stop worrying about everything. Just because we paid lobola for you doesn’t mean you are officially umakoti walapha. We have to do umkhehlo for you first and bring umembeso at your home. After that maybe you can help out here and there but not tire yourself. You will do the hard labour once you are officially a Maphumulo wife.” He kisses me before standing up, wearing his boxers, pants and then heading to his mini lounge.

I get up from the bed and quickly make it after putting on his robe. I don’t hear his conversation with his mother. So I just keep myself busy by tidying up the room and sitting on the ottoman waiting for him while checking messages on my phone. He comes in after a while.

“We can go shower now before they bring you breakfast.” He announces already taking off his pants.

We head to his small bathroom and take a shower. After that we dry up and get dressed. I pack my things and then head to the mini lounge. Turns out mom knew the Maphumulo family was going to ask me to stay, so she packed an overnight bag with all the things I was going to need. A little girl brings in breakfast which is made of eggs, tomatoes, hash browns bacon, toast and mushrooms. There is also coffee. I swear to God they are treating me like a high paying client at a restaurant.

“You should definitely visit often so that I won’t have to go to the main house for breakfast. You know how annoying family can be.” Siza says flopping next to me and eating from his own plate.

When we are done eating, the same kid comes to collect the dishes and then Siza clears up the table.

“So babe, I am going to Jozi today. Blue Diamond Music liked my demo and they want me to come and sign the contract.” I state as he sits on the coffee table facing me. He smiles widely.

“That’s good news, my love. That studio is legit and they open so many opportunities for upcoming artists. I am so happy for you.” he cups my face and plants a soft kiss on my lips. Someone clears their throat and we both turn to find his aunts at the door.

“Good to see you sucking each other’s faces. I hope we can expect grandchildren soon.” aunt Bonisiwe jokes and I wish the ground can open and swallow me. You know how awkward it is to be caught in such a compromising position by elders. “You can leave now, son. We want to chat to her.” the idiot actually perks my lips before standing up and heading out. I swear to God I am going to give him a mean punch before he drives me back home.

Anyways, his aunts properly introduced themselves and gave me a bit of gossip before leaving. Then it was his mother with her sisters and his uncles’ wives. After that his sisters came, his brothers then his father and uncles. They all just introduced

themselves and welcomed me properly to the Maphumulo household. When I thought I was done, he walks in with his grandma.

“You are so beautiful, my granddaughter. I am so glad I lived to see my son’s wife. I am not going to say much. I just wish you all the best and treat each other well. Also don’t listen to all those who said you must be having grandchildren soon. You are still young. You should enjoy your lives and learn to tolerate each other before bringing a third person to the world because once that person comes, you will have little to no time for yourselves. There are many kids in the yard. If those aunts get bored, they should play with them.” I really wasn’t expecting her to say that.

“Thank you for your kind words, gogo.” She kisses my hand before walking out.

“I know she is wise.” Siza says after she has exited the door.

“I am not speaking to you. You embarrassed me in front of your aunts by that stupid kiss.” He laughs.

“Was it though? Was it really stupid?” I huff before standing up and heading back to the bedroom. Idiot.

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NOMZAMO

She knew the moment she heard the car locking that she was in deep shit. Taxis were not passing, so she decided to hitch hike a random stranger's car. The stranger didn't even use the main road for long. As soon as he reached Mahede, he took the short right to EHawini and she was confused as to where they were going. She couldn't even ask because the guy was playing music on high volume. He was playing Khuzani's new album and she wasn't enjoying any second of it because she was a huge member of the red nation. They got to a deserted place with no houses, no people and just no sign of life. There were only a few nearby trees but they were scary and you could just tell that they harbored snakes.

"Get out." the stranger said lowering the volume and she frowned. "I am not going to repeat myself. Or maybe I should, but in a language that you can understand. Sfebe phuma emotweni yam, uyoze ungingcolisele ama seat. (Bitch get out of my car, you might end up staining my car seats.)"

Seeing that the guy was serious, she shuddered as she opened the door and stepped out. The guy drove a few meters away from her and then killed the engine. After a minute of standing and trying to find signal, a taxi came from the other direction and came to a halt just a feet away from her. The Buthelezi brothers climbed off the car and she instantly knew that this was going to be her last day on earth. Zikhethele chuckled, eating a toothpick.

“I have been craving fucking up your kind for so long. And today, my wish is going to come true.” He said as he closed the distance between them and just gave her a few strong punches that landed her on the dusted ground fast.

“Nsezi, take her bag and make sure it is destroyed with everything inside it.” Zithulele muttered to the driver who brought Nomzamo here. He quickly did as instructed. Zithulele just leaned on the car and watched as his brother took turns bashing the person who nearly killed their sister. If they didn’t act quickly, Azanda would’ve been dead and buried just because of this weak girl. He knew that one punch from him would instantly kill her because he just had so much anger in him.

She passed out during the assault and Mnyamane poured water on her face. It took a few moments for her to gasp and wake up. Zithulele stepped forward and pressed his boot hard on her neck, making it hard for her to breathe. She tried, struggled to breathe, call for help even though it was futile. At the end she lost the fight and decided to give in. The brothers waited for a whole hour, making sure she was done and then chopped her body into pieces before throwing them on the creepy forest. That was the end of Nomzamo, Azanda's nemesis.

ZIKHETHELE

His father asked him to meet up with the screaming lady because he was going on a trip with MaNene. They seemed to go on more trips these days. Azanda moved to Joburg after signing the contract with that record label. It was so sudden but they needed to start working, so she had no choice. So now his father and MaNene seemed to have more time to spend and he just loved touring around with his third wife.

He sat on his father's chair and just took a deep breath, allowing his mind to think about Happiness, the girl who crushed his dreams and broke his heart without even knowing it. He had fallen deeply for her and was planning their future in his head but she ruined it all. He knew he had to break up with her and just co-parent, but he didn't have much energy to deal with her. So Ayabongwa was the one dealing with her for now.

The door opened and the screaming lady walked in. she had a nice body, no lie but her beauty wasn't something to scream about. She was just a plain lady with a natural beauty if he could put it that way. She frowned looking at Zikhethele.

“I thought I was meeting with Nqengelele.” She sat opposite him, placing her handbag on the desk.

“He has some things to take care of, so he sent me here to meet with you. Before we go any further, please tell me your name because I don’t wanna keep on calling you ‘screaming lady’ in my head.” he teased and her frown deepened.

“I have never screamed at you, so why would you call me that?”

“We walked in on you screaming at our father, so pardon me but you are ‘screaming lady’ to Me.” she huffed.

“I am Gugulethu Masondo and which one are you?”

Zikhethele actually laughed. “I am offended by that question. If you don’t know my name, then you will have to find it out yourself. I am not telling.” She rolled her eyes and he smirked.

“What seems to be the problem, nkosazane?”

“Your father took out two of our taxes off the uLundi route and actually replaced us with a friend of his, for no reason at all.

That was so unfair and we want to be reinstated on our routes, but for compensation for all the money we have lost not working, we demand that he puts back three of our taxes. We respect him very much and we are always supporting him. If he doesn't reinstate our taxes, we are going to label him an enemy and that will not end well." Zikhethele chuckled and sat back.

"You have balls for a young girl like you. I must commend you on that. So that's what you were going to say to my father?"

"I was going to say that. I am not scared of him. I just respect him. Plus he wouldn't do anything to me because that would risk war with most of the families Kwa Dabhasi. So I am pretty sure he wouldn't do anything stupid and risk going to war that easily. Plus he has many weaknesses, so he would think twice before going against us."

He exhaled before he took the desk phone and called his father. He answered after a few rings. "Make it fast, my wife is waiting for me." Zikhethele chuckled.

"You started a quarrel with the Masondo family when you took off their taxes off the uLundi route and now they are here complaining. They are actually saying you gave the route to a friend. Is that true, baba?" Sokalisa sighed.

“Give them what they want and deal with Xabhashe. He is the one I replaced them with. Get him another route that will cause less problems.” He hung up.

Zikhethele placed the phone back on the desk before turning to Gugulethu. “My father has agreed to your request. Please give me until Friday to sort out this mess and you can add the third taxi.”

Gugu nodded with a small smile. She took her bag and was about to stand up when the door opened and a pregnant lady wearing tight clothes walked in. Zikhethele sighed and stood up.

“Happiness, what are you doing here?” he asked in a frustrated tone. He wasn’t in the mood to deal with her. One of the reasons why he didn’t go see her.

Happiness chuckled angrily as her eyes went to Gugu. “Ow wow. You are fuckin cheating on me. You bastard. I am pregnant with your baby for godsake. Don’t you care about the emotional stress you are causing right now? How can you do this to me

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Zikhethele? You promised that you will be there for me, always. This isn't always. Now you are hiding your hoes in your father's office? That's what it has gotten to?" Zikhethele clenched his jaws and he went to stand before her.

"Gugulethu is not my girlfriend or side chick. She was here to discuss some business. Do you really think that if I was fucking her, she would be seated where she is sitting right now and not on my lap?" he was trying so hard to contain his anger and he didn't want to think about the fact that she was using him to bring down his family.

"How should I know? Maybe you were playing it cool. Don't you love me anymore? Am I not attractive to you anymore? You fuck me, impregnate me and then dump me. Is that who you really are? A dishonorable man?" she was spitting fire and she didn't care if her voice was too high.

"I think I should go. We will talk soon, Zikhethele." Gugulethu announced standing up and Zikhethele immediately turned.

“Don’t leave. We are not finished.” He didn’t realize that he had placed his hand on her waist. Gugu looked at his hand and then back at his face.

“You bitch, you are seducing my man.” Happiness screamed as she tried to land a slap at Gugu but Zikhethele quickly shielded Gugu, so the slap landed on him. She gasped. “I am sorry. I am so sorry Shenge. I didn’t mean that. Please forgive me.”

“Leave, Happiness.”

“I am sorry. We can work this out. Please forgive me.”

“LEAVE NOW!” He roared and she jumped up before running out. He took a deep breath and turned to Gugu. “Are you okay?” he spoke softly and she nodded.

“I should go.” She said clearing her throat and Zikhethele sighed.

“I am sorry for that. Allow me to treat you for lunch. I know it won’t make up for that barbaric behaviour, but I will know I have tried to make you forget it.” She laughed, she actually laughed. Zikhethele was confused.

“I am sorry for laughing. Just know that I am not interested. I know what you’re doing.”

Zikhethale raised his left eyebrow and smirked. “What am I doing, Miss Masondo? I am just trying to make up for that terrible experience you have just had. Nothing more. Or are you hoping for something more?” he teased and she huffed, rolling her eyes.

“For you information, I hate fried chicken. So whichever place you’re taking me in better not serve fried chicken.”

“So inhloko is an option?” he asked with an annoying smile and she just walked out. He laughed before taking his car keys, wallet and running after her.

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They got to uLundi and he drove to Nandos. She actually smiled as they parked outside and headed inside. When they got to the till point, she ordered a whole full chicken for herself which shocked him because this woman was a size 32 or 34. Where did all the meat go to if she was really a foodie? Anyways he

also ordered half a chicken for himself and 2 full chickens for takeaway. They ordered sides and then went to a vacant table.

“I honestly thought you were going to take me to KFC or Galito’s.” Gugu said looking around and Zikhethele laughed.

“Never judge a book by its cover, MaGugwana. And not all men Kwa Nongoma dream about taking women to Galito’s.” She laughed, rolling her eyes.

“So what’s the issue with your baby mama? I am not one to meddle in people’s affair but from a distance, I could see that there was no love lost there.” he sighed and sat back.

“I am don’t like talking about my problems to people, especially strangers, but Happiness is not who I thought she was when we first met. She is a snake who is with me for a reason and not for love. So I am waiting for the baby to be delivered and then I will cut her off my life, permanently.” She nodded. “So tell me about yourself.” She rolled her eyes trying to hide a smile on her face.

“What do you wanna know?”

“Everything.”

You would think that signing on the dotted line would make things easier for you but things got tough and they were moving too fast. I had to deal with a stylist who wanted me to change my whole image. She even threatened to report me, saying I was making her job difficult, but I said no. I wasn't going to allow her to make me a puppet. Not her, and definitely not anyone at the label. So they had to bring in Veli as my personal stylist. My best friend knew me inside out and she knew the kind of outfits I would love to rock. So they were forced to hire her.

We did a single, photo shoots and promo videos and South Africa went crazy. I was trending on most social media platforms before even releasing the single. The hype was exactly what I needed. So, before the day of the release, we shot a music video. When the single finally dropped, we hosted a huge launch party and all my siblings were there. The rents couldn't come because it was at a night club, but they congratulated me and sent their regards. The gigs started coming in and things were crazy. But I was happy working with Sandile because he understood my sound and voice. The hype on the single hadn't died down, especially since the music video was dropped a week ago. Hundreds of people were posting it

and tagging me. I actually loved the love I was receiving from the public.

And Siza, oww that guy was my rock. He was with me most of the time and they were besties with Sandile. He made sure to be there on all late night studio sessions so that I don't have to drive myself home or get an Uber.

After the launch of my single which is titled 'Uzongilanda'; Lele, the rapper and Keela said they wanted to do a collaboration with me. They are very famous, so I didn't mind. Although I was a bit skeptical since their music is exactly Nasty C's sound. So we scheduled a studio session and we did the song. It was fire. Sandile couldn't stop boasting about it. So today we are going to a listening party. A few of the artists have recorded singles, so we are going to listen to our single and also theirs. I think Veli is coming, well she should be coming but Zithulele is visiting, so I am not sure if they wanna spend all his time here together. By the way my brother paid lobola for the Xhosa princess last month and I was so happy for her. I stay with Siza full time because I don't wanna stay alone in that big Buthelezi house.

“Babe, I can’t find my wallet.” Siza calls out from the lounge and I roll my eyes before taking it from the bedside table.

“How can you leave something at the bedroom and expect to find it in another room?”

“Ohh, sorry.” I hear footsteps nearing and he comes inside the bedroom. I hand him the wallet and take my ring from the vanity. I put it on and then look at my reflection in the mirror one last time.

“Do I look okay?” I ask and he steps closer to me. “Don’t touch me.” he laughs and raises his hands in surrender. He knows that once his hands land on my body, we are going to be late. I am wearing a white off shoulder mesh splicing long sleeve casual jumpsuit with brown strappy heels and a brown matching bag.

“You look perfect, my love.” he takes my bag and heads out. I follow him. We climb into his car and he drives to the studio while playing a Khuzani song. He has that bit of bhinca in him. “Do you see yourself doing a feature with a maskandi artist?”

“Of course. That would be really awesome, as long as I don’t have to make my voice shaky.” He breaks into laughter.

“You are low-key dissing some singers right now.”

“But I didn’t mention anyone’s name.”

“You didn’t have to.” I chuckle and look away.

“Can we please get a Cool Lime from Starbucks?” I plead in a tiny voice and he chuckles before driving to the franchise.

He buys my beverage and then buys a mocha Frappuccino blended beverage for himself. It’s his favourite and it is so delicious. But today I am not going to touch it because I don’t want it mistakenly spilling on my jumpsuit. We get to the studio and he parks before we head inside. We go to the lounge where most people are seated. We greet before settling down and waiting for the Ntuli family.

“Are you excited about this collabo?” Moon Light, one of the musicians, asks. She is a very talented rapper and I believe she is South Africa’s very own Nicki Minaj. The girl has got mad skills. We share the same manager

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so we often see each other and our manager usually books us in same gigs.

“I am. Working with Lele and Keela has been amazing and I will definitely feature them in my upcoming album. I would also love to feature you.” she smiles.

“Well I am the one who will feature you first, but Laney will talk to you about that soon.”

Laney is our manager. Yes, she is white but she understands me better than most people around here and she is multilingual. The Ntuli family makes their way in. Mr. and Mrs Ntuli are looking good as always. Keela is with his shy baby mama and Sandile is with a new date. He always brings new dates to every event. I wonder when he is going to settle down. I hear he once dated Princess Melamina Zulu but their relationship didn't last because of the prince. They settle down and the sound crew plays the songs. They play ours last. The whole song is in Zulu and it is so good. When they are done playing the new singles, they play a jazz song and that means it is time to mingle.

Yandisa is the first one to come to my direction. He stretches his hand and I shake it. “Good work, Azanda. I am impressed. You never cease to amaze me and every time, we learn something new about your talent. That song is fire and it is going to take you places.”

“Thanks boss.” I smile. He greets Siza and then walks away. Others follow to congratulate me on the song. Laney finally makes an appearance. Where the hell was she all along?

“Azar darling.” She hugs me and kisses my cheeks just like one of those French people. That’s my stage name, by the way. She just called me that the first time we met and people just learnt to roll with it. “I heard the song. I have no words for it, just a warning to the world.”

“Where were you?”

“Hey kiddo, don’t give me that attitude. I was getting my groove back.” She hooks my arm in hers and turns to Siza. “Hey lover boy. I am stealing her for a few. Find something to keep yourself busy with.” Siza chuckles. He knows just how demanding Laney can be. We meet Veli and Zithulele at the door.

“You guys are late, but they will play the songs again after an hour. Enjoy. I will be right back.” We hug and Laney pulls me away to the small boardroom near the reception area.

“So, guess what good news I have for you.” I squint my eyes at her.

“You got me a spot to perform at the Global Citizen event?”

She waves her hand around. “Honey that’s nothing. I screw one of the organizers, so I can get you a spot there in no time. But that’s not the good news I have for you.”

“You know I am bad at guessing games.” She groans.

“You will be doing a tour for your new single with Keela and Lele and your first destination will be Umcebokazulu lodge at Nongoma.” She squeals and I literally scream. “Call it a home coming thing.” I have been wanting a gig that will take me back to Kwa Nongoma and I am just grateful for this one. Being successful and coming back to perform at your hometown is like a dream come true.

“That’s great news. So when is the tour starting?”

“Three weeks after the release of your single. I am super excited to go to your home and meet your other mothers.” I chuckle. I always tell her about my father’s wives and she thinks they are interesting individuals. “Anyways, on the other news, I have an interview booked at the ETV morning show on Monday

morning. In fact you are in demand, but we are only taking those really famous television shows.” I nod.

“When I get home, make sure I have a radio interview with Nongoma FM as part of my homecoming. I also wanna go to 1KZN TV. Those shows or channels mean a lot to me and it would be a great honor to be featured in them.” she nods.

“I will see what I can do.” we go back to the party and I go straight into Siza’s arms. I am very attached to him and when I haven’t seen him for long, I love being in his arms. I am just stupidly in love with him.

“You are acting like a diva right now.” Zithulele comments and I roll my eyes. “So, how are you going to balance school with your music career?”

“I will find a way to make things work but what I know is that next year I am enhancing my skills on designing. My goal is still to gain knowledge and go pass it down to the maidens in my community and I am still keen on working with Yakhanathi to do more for different communities. So, I am definitely going to school.”

“Good to know your vision hasn’t changed.” He says with a smile before bringing me into his arms. I love my big brother though. He may not be the one I turn to for advices, but he is also very important in my life.

One thing about me, even if I were to spread my wings and fly up high, I will never forget where I come from. I will never forget my roots, my traditions and my way of life. Being famous doesn’t mean I have to change who I am. I just have to teach people around me to adapt to the person I truly am. I am Azande izintombi Zama Shenge from a small village called Kwa Mahede and I am proud of the woman I am. I love myself and I love my culture.

---THE END---

AZANDA'S INTERVIEW

A SNEAK PEEK ON ONE OF AZANDA'S INTERVIEWS

Zimasa: "Good evening and welcome to your favourite show, What's New And Hot With Zee. Joining us today is the new and fresh face in the music industry. Miss Azar who is currently under Blue Diamond Music. How are you doing, Azar?" Azanda smiles, leaning forward.

Azanda: "I am doing okay, Zee. I am just delighted to be here."

Zee: "how has the journey been like for you? You were discovered at a competition in your home town, if I am not mistaken. How did that feel? Your talent being discovered by one of the most powerful record labels. That might have been a dream come true, if I may say."

Azanda: "I wasn't expecting anything like that at all. I knew I was going to win because I believe in my voice and talent. I know I am a talented singer with a powerful voice but being recognized by bhut Yandisa and sis Mandisa, now that was an emotional moment for me. I was over the moon. At first I

thought they were pranking me.” Zee laughs. I am serious. Anyways the journey has been wonderful. Stressful, yes but nothing short of amazing. It’s good to recognized when you are just walking at a mall and then someone says ‘OMG that’s Azar’. Trust me, that’s awesome.” They both laugh.

Zee: “I know the feeling. So in a Facebook post you posted a while ago, you said you are content at your home town and you wouldn’t move because you just love your way of life and you are not fazed by the city life. What changed or you are a person who easily goes back against her own words?” Azanda chuckles.

Azanda: “I think you know, in fact everyone knows why I moved. A great opportunity was presented to me and I couldn’t let it go just because I once said I would never move. Back then, there wasn’t such an opportunity given to me. I didn’t see myself becoming a famous artist like I am right now. So yeah, I wasn’t going to let it pass. Signing with Blue Diamond didn’t mean I am leaving who I am behind. I am still u Azande izintombi Zama Shenge, the girl from Kwa Mahede who enjoys doing laundry at the river just so I can catch up with my friends on the latest gossip, the girl who enjoys sitting under the tree and doing beadwork and singing with my friends. So I haven’t

changed at all. I was just fortunate to be discovered by a powerful music house.”

Zee: “I was not fighting, Miss Azar, I just needed some clarity.”

Azanda: “But it seemed like you wanted me to ignore an opportunity because of a statement I made a year ago. Let me ask you a question, Zee. If you were me, would you have let the opportunity slip from your hands just because, let’s say, you made a promise to your current boyfriend that you are not going to leave your current place of residence?” Zee chuckles.

Zee: “I would have grabbed it with both hands. Speaking about boyfriends

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tell us about Mr. Sizabantu Maphumulo. You two are quite the public couple. You are not afraid of showing your love to everyone. Don’t you think that maybe he might switch up on you and then make fun of you in public? You know how messy celebrity breakups can be.”

Azanda: “Before answering your question, let me make something clear. Siza is my fiancé, not my boyfriend. We have done all the traditional ceremonies necessary for a prospective married couple. So according to culture, we are husband and wife. Now back to your question, life is unpredictable. But we are not going to stop showering each other with love in private and public just because we are afraid it might end in tears, as most people like to say. And for future purposes, the interview is about me and my music career. So let’s keep off of my relationship. Thank you.” Zee swallows hard and smiles awkwardly.

Zee: “noted. So tell me, what is your ultimate goal in your music career? What’s the one thing that will make you say ‘yeah, I have made it in life’?”

Azanda: “doing a song with H.E.R. I love that woman. I love her voice, her sound. So working with her would be a dream come true for me. And also a song with Tiwa Savage. I know I will achieve my ultimate dreams because with a manager like Laney, everything is possible.”

Zee: “get me my own Laney.” They both laugh. “Fans and listeners love your music. Your collabo with Keela and Lele seemed to shake Mzansi up. So we wanna know what is for you? What are you currently working on? Which project are you currently busy with?”

Azanda: “I have recently completed my first album which features some of the artists in Blue Diamond Music and other South African artists. It is going to be released next month. I am just anxious about how South Africa is going to receive it but I am also excited to drop such an important project.”

Zee: “that’s good to hear. Before we close, is there anyone you wanna send a shout out to? Maybe your family is watching.”

Azanda: “hell yeah they are watching. I ordered them.” Zee laughs. “Anyways I wanna send a big shout out to my parents, your baby is doing the things and she is going places. Shout out to my family, my friends, my group, Izimbali Zomhlaba. Guys, something is brewing and you know what that means in our language. Shout out to my fiancé, I love you baby. Shout out to everyone at Blue Diamond Music, especially my manager and producer. Shout out to everyone who is always there for me and making things possible. Mostly shout out to my fans, thank you so much for the continuous support and because of you, I

have been nominated for the best upcoming artist at the SAMA.” Zee: “that’s huge. Congratulations.”

Azanda: “thank you.”

Zee: “and folks, that concludes our interview with the wonderful Azar. Thank you for tuning in to What’s New and Hot with Zee. Till next time and don’t forget, Zee always bring you the hottest and next big thing.”

.....**THE END**.....

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