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Storm Never Last Falling in Love Again by Ayanda. N

PROLOGUE

Aniboy'nakelela.

Ubani o beka shada

Isencane lengane”

The women were singing, excitement was all over the place. Who wouldn't be excited? It's my wedding day after all, I am finally getting married to the love of my life. I've been waiting for this day all my life. The planning I've been doing for this wedding to be a success, took most of my time I almost dropped out of varsity. Sindiswa and her crew are there ones doing our(me&bridesmaids) face beats. I've googled her work and she comes in highly recommended.

“So, how do you feel”? She asks.

Me: I am nervous and excited at the same time. The day I've been waiting for it's finally here. I am finally going to go down the aisle and make things official with my man.

Her: Marriage it's a beautiful thing babe and remember to put God first.

Me: Thank you Sindi.

Her: You welcome. Let's get you done then, then go and grace your man with your beauty.

Me: He will surely be graced. I want him to shed a tear when he sees me. If he doesn't then I'm cancelling the wedding.

We laugh

“Kuzokusiza loko(that will help you)” Kat my big sister said coming in my room. I've asked her to be my maid of honor and she turned me down flat, she did not even want to think about it. Here she is wearing jeans&crop top with push ins, clearly she is not going to attend the wedding.

“What will help me? Did you actually think that I will cancel my wedding? Girl please” I reply.

Her: Why are you marrying that cheater anyway? Obakeng doesn't deserve you.

Me: Just because Andile cheated on you with your best friend, doesn't mean that every guy cheats and besides Obakeng never gave me a reason to suspect that he is cheating. He values my worth, can't say the same about Andile.

I saw her facial expression change, she became angry.

Her: I hope you will live to tell the tale that you “almost. Almost”.

Me: Almost what? Are you threatening me?

Her: Why would I? I was just saying in passing miss “know your worth”.

She stands up and looks at me in a funny way.

Her: Remember almost.

She turns and walk away. I sit there confused. What did she mean by “almost”, argh I push that thought at the back of my mind. I don't want anything to ruin my day, not even Kat. Sindiswa finishes with my face and she gives me my heels that I am going to wear, they are very beautiful I must say. She helps me put them on. I stand up and look at myself in the lengthy mirror, I look beautiful. I look like a goddess. The dress suits me perfectly, this mermaid dress was chosen by Zano Kat's friend.

“Look at how beautiful you are” my mom says behind me. I did not even hear her coming in. I turn to look at her and I see tears in her eyes

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crying is her specialty.

“Urh uh we are not wasting tears today. We are going to celebrate and have some fun” I say holding her hands. “Thank you mama. Thank you for everything and thank you for being an awesome mother” I continue to say.

Her: My daughter is leaving me. Oh Zubenathi, go well baby and always know that my door is open for you. Come back home if the marriage no longer works out. I don't want you coming back in a coffin.

Me: Thank you mama and I will definitely come back.

I hug her trying not to cry.

Her: The Khumalo's are blessed to have a bride like you. Time to go my princess. I'm sure your groom is already waiting for you. Uncle Bhekani will come and walk you out, I love you.

She hugs me one last time and leaves my room. This is it the time is now. I pick up my bouquet on top of the bed and wait for my uncle to come, I am nervous. 10 minutes later he still isn't here, I am now panicking. What's going on now? Sindiswa decides to go and find out what's going on, I sit on the bed. Can my wedding just go accordingly? God, please let there be no hiccups. I say a mini prayer. I hope Sindiswa comes back with my uncle. She comes back looking rather out of it, I stand up and rush to her.

“What's going on? Why are you looking as if someone died? Where's Obakeng”? Already my voice trailing.

“I think you will have to sit down for this” she says.

“I don't wanna fucken sit down! Where is Obakeng? Where is my husband Sindiswa”?

Her: He is missing along with his best man. His phone rings unanswered.

Me: No no what are you saying to me? He can't just disappear. He can't embarrass me like this. He better be here right now!

Her: They are trying everything they can to find both of them. Both families are going up&down.

I shake my head. I did not wanna believe this. I sit down and breathed in&out. Just then my phone rings, I quickly take it from the bed and answer without checking who is calling. It better be Obakeng.

“Hello”

“Hello ma'am you speaking with Celia from Medi hospital. You are stored as Mr Khumalo's next of kin” she says.

I chuckle...

Me: What are you trying to say? Where is my fiancé?

Her: Unfortunately he died on his...

The phone slipped through my hand falling down. I shake my head, my lips already trembling. It can't be. I hope that this is a prank. Schucks must be out here playing me. Tears are already gushing down my face, they are mixed with mucous and make-up. I look at Sindiswa who has my phone in her hand, her look said it all. My fiancé is gone. I sink down on the floor and let out a sharp cry. Clearly that got everyone filling up my room, I hear more cries and it was chaos.

“How could you do this to me Obakeng! How could you! You were my life! I gave you my all, how dare you leave me! Without even saying goodbye. How how?! How could you? Sthandwasami, why didn't you take me with you? Obakeng”! I cry till I hiccup, they bring me water and one of my cousin's help me drink up since my hands are shaking. The pain I am feeling right now is unbearable, it's too much. I just wish that someone can come and rip my heart away. I just want the pain to go away. It hurts. It cuts too deep. My heart is bleeding

tears!!! My love left me. He is no more. 6 years together and he had to die 3 days before we celebrate our 7th anniversary. He left me without saying goodbye. God are you even there? Why punish me like this? Why?

1

Zubenathi

I am pacing up&down. I am stressed. I mean my in-laws don't want me to be part of my fiance's funeral. They don't want me near their house, apparently I bewitched their son and got him killed. How could I bewitch or kill the person that I loved with my all? I mean I loved Obakeng and still do. You know what's funny? Obakeng's mother was there one who told Obakeng to marry me, she persuaded him. She saw me fit to be her bride in-law. Maybe they were doing it for the clout. If that's the case, then I can say that they really did it good. I guess they tolerated me because I was dating their son, some family members on their side made it very clear on the word go that they don't like me. Those one, I thank them because they did not string me along or sold me false dreams. How are they expecting me to mourn him if I'm not going to attend his funeral? How will I know where his resting place is? The funeral is 2 days away. I am going to gate crush it whether they like it or not. They can't bury my fiancé without me being there, if it means involving the police then let it be. The rest of the week has been really hell for me, I was always in my room. I did not want to see anyone, I even refused food. I was a crying mess. A knock come through at my door and I tell the person to enter,

the door opens and Busi one of my cousin's come in with food. She put the food on top of the dressing table and leave. I look at the food, I don't trust her, so I am not going to eat her food. I don't care if my mom cooked it, but since it was brought by Busi I won't eat. I continue pacing up&down I am really stressing but I will bury my fiancé come high or hell waters, I will bury the love of my life. I drink the Gordon's straight from the bottle, I need this for my own sanity.

I wear my black knee length dress and tie my red doek. Yes, I am going to lay my man in his final resting place. I am going alone, well not entirely alone but the cops will escort me. None of my family members were allowed anyway. We are all witches that time Obakeng's mother always prays, every day. Nxa. I walk out of my room and I find my family watching TV. They look at me as if I am crazy, not believing that I am doing this.

“Where are you going”? my dad ask.

“To bury my fiancé”

Him: Are you out of your mind Nathi? That woman made it very clear that she doesn't want you at her son's funeral.

Me: That woman won't tell me what to do. I am going to bury my Fiancé, finish&klaar. I will see you guys later.

Mom: Who are you going with?

Me: The cops obviously. Bye.

I walk away before they can try talking me out of it. My uber is already waiting for me at the gate. I text sergeant Mashiane that I am on my way to the funeral I need escort. We got to Obakeng's house with the police van following behind me. I get off the uber and so did the police get off their van, I make my way to the tent with my heels clicking. The pastor is preaching. He stops when he sees me. Everyone turns and look at my direction, they whisper amongst themselves. I don't care about them I am here to bury my fiancé.

“Ufunani la wena mthatkathi? (what are you doing here you witch) sowufuna ukubulala nathi njengoba ubulele umfana wami”? (Now you want to kill us like you did with my boy)

I just look at her and sit down with the two policemen standing next to me. This old woman likes drama. She sits down cursing.

“Ijah a praying woman. Yasis”! I say.

I hear her click her tongue. People stand up and give out their speeches and how of a good guy Obakeng was. It breaks my heart that I am not able to say my piece but he knew

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He knew how I felt about him. A girl maybe older than me with 2 years stands up, she is wearing black. She sniffs.

I fold my arms, this I wanna see.

“Oh, Obakeng my love” she says.

“Oh hell to the no. Did you just say your love?” Did you really really in your right mind call my fiancé your love”? I ask the girl already standing up looking at her from head to toe. I am fuming right now.

“Hhayi wena mloi hlala phansi. Yingakho bengingakufuni la, Benghazi uzomoshha” (Hhey you witch sit down. That is why I didn't want you here because I knew that you were gonna cause trouble)

Me: Trouble my foot! You cruel old woman. So, you decided to hire some girl and paid her to pretend to be Obakeng's wife? And she is heavily pregnant. How can you be so cruel? Maybe you the one who bewitched him!

The family stands up and start insulting me. I do not beg down, I also insult them with every insult that is out there in the world.. One gun shot rings in the air, and we all get down screaming even the police. These two are useless right now.

“I'm here for my wife. Bathabile let's go now! What the fuck are you doing here? Since when are you pregnant”? the man half shouts. His voice carried out so much authority.

I stand up wanting to see this man and so did everyone else. The man grabs Bathabile and take out the pregnant pillow. Everyone in the tent gasps in shock and start talking amongst themselves, see? This happens when a witch is caught. The aunts&cousins insult me and saying that I'm the one causing dispute in their brother's funeral. Obakeng's mother bowed her head in shame, she did not want to look my way.

“ Can I just bury my fiancé in peace? I don't have time to fight you. I am here to lay my fiancé to his final resting place and I wish he hunts each and every one of you at night bloody witches”, I say and sit back down. I was really not in the mood for them. The service went on and we leave to the cemetery. I cry so much as they lowered his casket, I feel like my heart is being torn into pieces. He is really gone. I cry no one came to my aid, I don't care because I am crying for my fiancé. The love of my life. Someone helps me to stand up since I am seated in the sand, I look who it is and it is Sindiswa, I am grateful for her. She is not my friend and I've only met at my "almost" happened wedding. She hugs me and I cry in her arms. The love of my life

is gone. I will never see him again. After the burial, Sindiswa offers to drive me home. I am so broken, my heart is just too torn. I am incomplete. I look outside the window as she drives playing gospel music. The drive home is long. He may be gone but never forgotten. All the memories we shared together, plays like a movie in my head. I drift off to sleep...

Reading of the will day came and I was still not called to come and sit with them. Luckily for me the lawyer was a very close friend of Obakeng, before he went to the family he showed me the will first. Well, Obakeng left almost everything for me and few rands for his family and the farming business. The cars, the house, the two restaurants were all in my name. I am the owner. Obakeng's mother called me and insulted me with everything she had. She accused me of killing his son because I knew that he left everything in my name. Old woman Please...

5 years later...

Insert 2

Nathi

“Rise&shine Nathi” Sindiswa wakes me up opening the curtains in my room. I cover my eyes with my hands preventing the ray of sunshine from blinding me. She get the covers off me. If only she knew that I have a terrible headache she wouldn't have open the curtains.

“It's time you lived your life again Zubenathi. It's been 5 years for Christ sake! Obakeng is gone he is never coming back. I'm

sure he wouldn't allow you to lose yourself like this because of him being no more” she says.

I keep quiet...

“You need to let go of him. You need to free him Nathi, I'm sure his soul is restless in that grave of his because you refusing to let go of him. He needs to rest in peace, you holding him from crossig over” she continues to say.

“What is it that you want me to do Ndi”? ask calmly.

“Claim your life back! You've been locking yourself in this house of yours for decades. You refuse going out, like heck you even refuse to go out and buy grocery for yourself! You are torturing yourself. Look at how untidy your room is. Hohoho, let me not get started about you. Your hygiene to be exact. You look like an old woman, and this drinking of yours is making you to age quickly. It's time to take charge of your life Zubenathi, no one will take charge for you on your behalf” she says.

"I...I can't Ndi. It's not that easy" I reply picking up the bottle of Gordon's on top of the headboard.

"Pull yourself together woman! I'm tired of this pity party of yours! I'm done Nathi"! she shouts at me.

I burst out in tears. Nothing new as usual.

"Hahaha. I knew it. I knew that the river of Jordan is coming. Cry all you want Nathi but I'm telling you the truth. Until you put your life back in order, I will not come back here" she says.

I look at her wanting her to tell me more of what she's talking about. What does she mean? I open the bottle and drink straight from it, well that's part of my everyday life I must say. I am even used to the bitter taste, lately it feels like water.

Me: Wh...what?

Her: I am done with you and your pity party. I've stopped living my life because of you. I thought that you were gonna start

taking charge of your life. I've hoped and hoped that you will claim your life back but no instead you drowned yourself more in alcohol. Nothing real makes sense to you. This ends now, Nathi. I am done with you and just so you know your mother is sick. Goodbye, Zubenathi. Call me again when you've decided to take charge of your life again.

She stands up takes her bag along and grab the bottle in my hand and threw it against the wall, it breaks it's pieces scattering all over the floor. I look at her in total awe, did she just break my Gordon's? She clicks her tongue leaves banging my bedroom door. I jump and once again I open the river of Jordan. She is right. I need to take charge of my life back, but where do I start? How do I start taking charge of my life? I lie back on my bed and close my eyes. This isn't what Obakeng would've want me to do. He would've wanted me to continue living my life the best way I know how. He would've wanted me to be happy. But how am I going to continue living my life without him in it? My whole life, my whole happiness was with him. It's supposed to be with him. We were each others center world. We had each other, just the 2 of us against the world. Now, I am left alone. All alone. We were in love. Everyone at university knew how much we loved each other, we were the "It" couple. Some hated us and some loved us, we did not have

any friends. We were each others friends we were even staying together in a back rented room and we were to buy our house after we got married. We had our lives planned out but God decided to take what means so much to me. I am no longer the same person I was before, I am a walking Zombie. It all started back in highschool.

I was dating his friend Xolani, well not dating dating. It was actually a bet on their side. They placed a bet with his friends about who will get me first

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they had it all planned out. Xolani persuaded me and we were in the same class, he would always do anything to get my attention. I finally gave in to his persuasion. We dated and we did the deed, I lost my virginity to Xolani. That bastard! Anyway, the following day he did not greet me in the morning like he usually does. He ignored me the whole day, mind you I did not have any friends back then. During lunch break I saw him kissing another girl, well not just any girl but Asiphe the "fly chicks squad" captain. They were the most popular in school. I felt my lips trembling not believing what I am seeing with my

eyes. He used me. He played me. then tears followed. I stood there watching them. They held hands and continued kissing, he lifted up his face and his eyes met with my mine. He smirked and winked at me, he showed no remorse or whatsoever, he was actually proud of himself. I turned back, and ran to the bathroom and cried. I quickly wiped my tears as soon as I heard footsteps approaching, I get into one of the toilets. I didn't want anyone to see me crying.

“Girl, I see that you and X decided to mend things” Sino says.

“What did we mend? We did not mend anything” Asiphe replies

Sino: You trying to tell us that you guys never broke up?

Zuziwe: But how, because X was dating that nerd girl?

Asiphe laughed her bitchy laughter.

Asiphe: Oh please they never dated. It was a bet on who was going to hit it first, she thought she was the IT girl. Besides I overheard X telling his friends about how bad she is in bed. She is cold.

They laughed. My heart sting with pain.

Nosi: X already hit it? Talk about being loose.

Zuziwe: It's not as if like she is better than you. You have no competition, that's why X can't let go of you.

They laughed again and I heard footsteps. Thanks God they left. I am such a fool. I am one big fool, how can I sell myself so short like that? I feel so used, I feel cheap. I lost my virginity through a stupid bet... Before I knew it the rest of the school knew that I slept with X and how cold I was. The stares I was getting almost made me drop out of school, the ones from the teachers were the worst. I was a topic for 2 full weeks. The news subsided and that's when Obakeng came in just then he proposed love to me. I denied him, and told him straight up that I don't want him, I hated men. He never gave up. He also came to hit&run but

too bad cause he has already fallen for me. He had no choice but to confess. He stopped hanging out with his friends and we started spending more time together. I was called names and insulted by his friends&girlfriends but he stood by me, ever since then we became inseparable. We loved each other a lot, we did everything together. It was just the 2 us against the world. From grade 11 to varsity. He was the love of my life. My soulmate.

3

Nathi

“It's time you let go of me and live your life Zubenathi. You can't keep on holding on to something that's no longer alive. It's time to free me, and live your life. I love you and forever will. Now free me from your heart, let go of me. Let me rest in peace. Free me. Free me from your heart my love”

“It's not that easy Sthandwa sami. How do I start? Where do I start”?

Him: Start by forgiving yourself. Love yourself then let go of me, take your time. You making it hard for me to cross over.

Me: I don't wanna let you go. We had so much planned together Obakeng.

Him: I know. Look, I am running out of time but always know that I will always love you and I am watching over you. I love you.

Me: I love you too.

Him: Now wake up and take charge of your life Bubbles.

His voice sounded distant and it eventually disappeared.

I wake up startling and sweating my heart beating out of my chest. I was in a peaceful place, oh with my one of course. I look at my surroundings, and I realize that I am still in my room. The dream felt so real. It's like something have been lifted off my shoulders. I feel lighter and new. I smile thinking of the dream. Well, he finally visited and freed me, I guess I have to free him too and let him rest in peace. I take out my phone underneath the pillow and check the time, it was just after 12pm. I get off bed and go and take a bath; a thoroughly bath. I don't know when was the last time I had proper bath. I get out of the bathtub and wrap a towel around my body. I look at myself in the lengthy mirror and I don't like what I am seeing. I look fat and ugly, then I look at my room, oh God what a mess it is. It looks like a pigsty. Fast food takeaways are all over, gin bottles and so were my clothes, they were scattered all over. I'm thankful for Sindiswa, this girl helped me a lot for the past 5

years, she never gave up on me no matter how much I pushed her away. I can say that she is the pillar of my strength and her words really got to me. Obakeng did confirm them too. I am willing to live without him. It won't be easy but I will try. I change into more casual clothes and start cleaning my room. I start by picking up the empty bottles, I look underneath the bed and there are still full ones. I shake my head, I will go and dispose them down the drain. I know that the kitchen and the lounge are clean. I am taking charge of my life again. No more mourning. No more self pity.

v

Sindiswa

I dish up for me, my husband and his 2 spoilt brats. I have no child of my own, we've been trying for one with no luck. Let's just say my marriage is doomed, we've been married for 12 years. Siphos cheats like nobodies business. His mistresses always calls just to insult me, he sometimes bring some of them while I'm away. I have no one to talk too and my family doesn't care, as long as Siphos showers them with money they are happy. Then there's Zubenathi. I can't even tell her my

problems she has her own demons. I've tried everything I possibly can to help her move on, but she doesn't budge. I ended up giving up on her, she will come around when she is ready. I am carrying a lot of baggage myself, and my mother in-law is not giving me any peace. I am dead inside, I'm just a walking Zombie. I put his food in the warmer. It's half past 2 in the afternoon and I'm done cooking, he will be home in 30 minutes. The brats are not back yet, Siwe is 16(girl) and Bahumi is 12(boy). They are so disrespectful. I am not allowed to scold them if they do something wrong, once I do I get a beating too. I walk to the lounge and watch some TV, my life is a mess. I can't even get out of this loveless marriage, once I try my mom makes sure that she brings me back here, she practically drags me, actually she doesn't want me in her house. Just then my phone rings and it is Zubenathi

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this is a first. Zubenathi never calls me I always call her and for her to call me it's strange, I answer anyway.

“Babe” sniffing.

“Hey babe, you sound down what's wrong”?

Me: Nothing babe. Everything its fine.

Her: Not convinced. I know you and I know when something is troubling you.

Me: It's nothing really. You sound lively today, sup?

Her: I am not letting this issue of you go but for now I will pause it. Well, your words made me realize how much I was missing out on. I even dreamt of Obakeng telling me the very same words you told me. What's the use of hanging on to something that no longer exists?

Me: Yhey finally! My friend is back and I'm glad that this time I managed to get through you.

Her: Yeah yeah whatever. Anyway look, I will see you tomorrow I'm going to my parents house now.

Me: What? That's good baby. I'm so happy for you. It is about time.

She laughs...

Her: I know. Look we will talk later and I want you to tell me what's wrong with you. What's going on in your life. You were always there for it's time I return the same gesture, I love you.

Me: I love you too.

I sniff and hangs up. I guess her call cheered me up a little. Thanks God she finally came to her senses, I love this girl...I guess now I will have a shoulder to cry on too.

The door open and Sipho walks in, he reeks of a female's perfume, nothing new there. Everyday its the same story just change of smells, he doesn't even touch me anymore and I'm fine with that, I don't want to catch any diseases. He goes straight to our room, well his "room" now I no longer share it with him. I sit and watch TV, today I am not running him bathing water he have hands. Eish kana he will come here and grab me roughly. I stand up and sneak to the guestroom. I lock my self in and get into blankets... I hear him shouting my name.

Not today bastard not today. Even though he treats me like shit, I still love him.

v

Nathi

I drive through my parents street and kids are playing in the streets, the street is lively I must say with neighbours gossiping here&there. Drunkards making noise and girls gallivanting not knowing what to do. Driving here makes my heart beat out of my chest, the last time I was here was 3 years ago, I'm sure my parents thought I've abandoned them. I see my sister's (Kat) playing, sounds weird calling her my sister, I shudder at that thought. Her kids are playing outside, I guess they still recognize my car because Inno(first born) runs inside the yard, I guess she went to inform them. I drive through and pull up on the driveway my parents are already outside and so is Kat, I hate Kat with passion. She killed the love of my life even though she refuses, nxa. Due to substantial evidence, she was let free. I couldn't help but notice the tears in my mother's eyes, I get off the car and run up to her. I hug her for my dear life and cry.

“I'm so sorry” I say. Dad joins in the hug, we group hug.

“We are happy that you finally came home. You finally remembered that you have a family” dad.

I continue crying as I let go of the hug. Mom kisses me all over my face. She can't believe that i'm back.

“Let's go inside” she says.

Me: Let me go and get the stuff I've bought for you guys.

Kat: Hhe the golden egg is back. Bewu right la bewuhleli khona(you were right where you were staying)

I look at her from head&toe and I shake my head. I ignore her and go to my car.

“Hambo Mncedisa phela(go and help her) Kat” mom tells Kat.

“ngimufuni duze ne moto yami. Angidingi sizo lwakhe” (I don't want her near my car and I don't want her help) I reply.

Her: Yabona kuthy udelela njani? (See how disrespectful she is?)

Dad: Stop it Kat. Go and start cooking.

Her: What am I going to cook? Ngikhathelwe yi chicken.

Inno: That's the only thing we have mus Mama.

Me: Angazihluphi (she mustn't bother herself) I've bought take aways.

The kids come and help me carry the grocery bags inside the house. I've bought enough to last them for a while.

Mom: Hawu uthenge sonke istolo?(you brought the whole shop)

I laugh and shake my head.

We get inside the house with my mom holding my hand as if I will run away. As soon as I step inside the house my heart breaks. The cupboards have no doors and I think the fridge is not working because I see water on the floor. The tiles are out of color, I get to the lounge and the couches are torn, the TV is blurry, you hardly see pictures.. Let's just say the house is very unwelcoming, it's embarrassing for me of course. I mean my house has intact furniture and still look brand new. The bedroom doors were adjacent. I shake my head and sit down. First thing tomorrow morning I will have to go and shop for furniture, I still have the money that was left for me including the one for the restaurants I sold. I've neglected my parents for far too long and I am sure they are a laughing stock in the community. Inno dishes up for us and we eat, the kids ate like they did not eat anything in the afternoon. What is Kat doing kanty? What does she do with their grant money? I look at the kids and they really worry me, they look untidy and skinny.. I have a lot to do here that includes taking care of Kat's kids.

4

Bayanda

I look at Aziza busy doing her make-up. I'm sure she's going out with her friends again, nothing new there anyway. As I'm speaking now I am waiting for her to make me breakfast even the cup of coffee I'm holding in my hands it's getting cold now.

“I am waiting for breakfast Aziza. I have a meeting at 09:00 with Mr Genaro” I tell her.

“You have hands Bayanda. Use them and stop pestering me, geez” she half shouts.

I nod and exit the bedroom closing the door behind me. Aziza is my long term girlfriend, she was the sweetest when I met her but now I don't know her at all. She has changed a lot for the past year. She's no longer the girl I fell in love with. I wanted to pay Lobola for her and she said she is not ready to fully commit to me, she has a life to live. I mean it's not as if like she was gonna change or anything, I just wanted to be with her. I made myself cereal and ate then took my briefcase and leave. She

calls me and I just stare at the screen I know that she wants money. I am not about to entertain her she will have to learn the hard way, that nothing comes easy in life. If she wants money she must work for it. I'm tired of spoiling her, she gets all the luxury she wants but doesn't care about me. All she cares about it's keeping up with the trends. I get to the restaurant, I guess I was early because Mr Genaro pulled up behind me. I get off my car and so does he, we meet halfway and shake hands.

“Morning Bhayanda” he can't pronounce my name let alone my surname.

“Morning Mr Genaro” I reply.

We get into the restaurant and I follow him to his office. He gestures me to take a seat opposite him. I sit down and one of the waitress comes in, she greets us.

“What would you like to have”? She asks.

“Juice and your famous breakfast will do” I say.

“And the usual for me” he says.

The waitresses nod and exit his office. I hope he will consider my offer today, I pray he does. I really want this restaurant.

Him: What can I do for you today Bhayanda?

Me: Same old same old. I'm still interested in buying the restaurant.

Him: You finally got the money?

Me: Unfortunately no but I managed to raise 80% of it. You will get the remaining amount once the restaurant is operating again.

Him: You are not trying hard Bhayanda. Get me at least 90% then we will talk.

Me: Mr Genaro, where will I get that kind of money? Work with me here.

Him: Do you know how many people want the restaurant? Do you have any idea? Some are willing to give me the money without thinking twice.

Me: I am trying my best Mr Genaro.

Him: I am giving you 2 weeks if you haven't gotten my money by then, then you will leave me with no choice but to sell it to someone else.

Me: I understand Mr Genaro and I will try and get the Money.

I sigh. Where will I get it? I've exhausted all of my savings.

This is bad. If I don't get this restaurant then I am doomed my life depends on it. The waitress brings our breakfast, I've lost appetite.

v

Nathi

I brought everything the house needed with the help of Sindi of course. We are now at one of those fancy restaurant, it feels weird to be sitting here in a public place with lot of people walking up&down. Sindi forced me, I did not want to.

“See how refreshing it is to be out of your apartment”?

I nod...

Her: This is life. Look at all these people they also have problems but they don't coop themselves in their houses.

Me: It's refreshing I must say. It feels weird though. Anyway, how are you? How is your marriage?

She looks into space and I swear I see tears forming in her eyes. I did not say anything nor pester her, she will tell me everything when she is ready.

Me: You don't have to tell me now. You'll tell me once you ready, let's just eat our food and enjoy the outing.

Her: Thank you doll.

We eat having a light conversation. I must say that it is indeed refreshing to be out of my comfort zone. Some woman approached us, she looks really familiar I must say but I don't remember where I know her from. She greets us as soon as she get to us. We greet her back.

“Lovely seeing you again after 5 years Zubenathi” she says.

“Urh...m. Thanks. Not being rude and you are”? I ask.

Her: Bawinile Obakeng's cousin.

Me: Oh my word. Look at you all grown up.

I stand up and hug her.

Her: How are you?

Me: Good thanks and you?

Her: Good too. It was nice seeing you again

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let me go before my husband comes gun blazing. Enjoy your lunch guys. This is my number call me, we have a lot to talk about.

She gives me her card and walk away

Sindy: That's the only cousin who loved you out of all Obakeng's cousin and family.

Me: I know and I feel bad that I've forgotten her.

Her: I'm sure she understands besides it's been long since you last saw her.

Me: I guess. Do you think the furniture guys have arrived at home?

Her: Yes I'm sure they've arrived.

Me: Well, we better get going then. We have to help with putting in the furniture.

Her: You right and don't worry about the bill I will pay.

She settles the bill and we stand up, I am busy browsing through my phone when I bump into someone causing my phone to fall. We both get down same time wanting to pick up the phone. Our hands touch and I quickly retract my hand from his.

“I got it” he says.

I quickly stand up and so does he, our eyes meet and boy oh boy isn't he handsome? He is perfection I must say. We look into each others eyes, there's something about his big ocean eyes. The last time I was this close to a guy or felt like this was when I was with Obakeng. Someone clears their throat and it is Sindiswa, I've forgotten about her, we break the eye contact and he hands me my phone. I look at the screen and it has cracked.

Him: I don't mind fixing it.

Me: It's Ok...I did not even finish my sentence and Sindiswa chirps in.

"She would really appreciate that", she tells the guy.

Me: It's fine really.

I pull Sindiswa and we walk away.

"Dude what was that all about"? I ask looking back and he is still standing at the door looking at me..

"It was nothing. Besides I saw the chemistry between you too, it was too deep&real" she says laughing.

Me: You and over thinking things, ai.

Her: It's what I saw phela I've been observing you guys.

Me: Shut up.

We get into her car, I left mine and we drive off. Kiss it better by Rihanna is playing. Who is he? Good Lord your male species are doing the most.

v

Kat

I watch as the furniture guys off load the furniture. I must say that I am really happy that finally we will have a new furniture and a new tv, as much I don't like Zubenathi but I'm glad that she has my parents best interest at heart. She is perfect. I saw how my own parents praised her, I saw how happy she was with Obakeng. I envied her life and I still do. Infact it was better when she was not around, now she has come back to portray the good girl that my parents wants. In their eyes I am nothing, all I do is make babies. I have no direction or aspirations, I am

just a baby maker to men that don't love me. I have 5 kids and I am failing to take care of them, that's why I've resorted to drinking alcohol and sleeping around in exchange for toiletries. I wonder if Zubenathi knows that she is adopted and not the biological daughter to my parents. Nxa. I hate her...I will have to blast her bubbles after this and tell her that she is adopted. My smile vanishes as soon as I see Sindiswa's car pull me up on the drive way, argh I hate her too. She is very determined that I'm the one who killed Obakeng. Well, everyone thinks that but who wouldn't after that threat I made? I did not kill him. I am not a killer. I walk away, I am going to drink some alcohol. I walk past them and click my tongue, pushing Sindiswa out of my way.

5

Bayanda

I couldn't stop thinking of that woman that I bumped into earlier on. She was very beautiful. When our hands touched I felt some deep connection with her, I don't even know when was the last time I felt like that. What is love at first sight? Is this it? I wish I knew what it was but this its definitely a new feeling. My best friend Sizwe enters and he is with his girlfriend Bawinile, Aziza is not around I don't know where she went. They greeted and made themselves comfortable, Sizwe opens the fridge and takes out some beer. This is like his second house I tell you.

“Where is Aziza”? He asks.

Me: I don't know bruh, I got home and she was not here.

Him: Arh, this girlfriend of yours is just a girlfriend by name. She is not a real girlfriend.

I shrug...

Him: What are we having?

Me: What did you bring?

Him: I brought my empty tummy. I know that you always have food in here and besides my girl is hungry.

I did not hear anything else he said after that, my mind was replaying the events that took place in the afternoon. I find myself smiling alone, I'm day dreaming.

I am brought back to reality by Sizwe nudging me.

“Dude WTF! Where is your mind at? You even blushing” he says and laughs.

I just look at him with a straight face on.

Him: Who is she man? I mean she got you all whipped up, you did not hear anything I said.

He laughs again...

Me: If you don't stop talking or laughing I will chase you out of my house. Its no one.

Him: Hmmmm, defensive are we? I wonder. At least tell me her name and I swear I will let this issue go.

Me: I don't know man. I don't know her name but all I can tell you is that she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen. She is so beautiful bruh.

I wiped my face with my hands, I can't get her picture of my mind.

Him: What? How come you did not get her name? Bayanda, are you losing your touch?

Me: She was in a hurry. Can we drop this issue now? I'm done talking about it.

Him: You better wipe that wide smile on your face right now, because once Aziza gets here she will deal with you.

“And why would I want to deal with him”? Aziza asks coming in. My mood just dropped at that instant.

Me: I'll be in the lounge.

I walk away, Sizwe follows behind me and so did Aziza.

“Hey girl” she greets Bawinile.

Bawinile greets back with a nod. Bawinile doesn't like Aziza, that's a fact and she does not even pretend. Is evident.

“Why did you walk away from me while I was talking to you? Are you trying to impress your friend or something”? she asks.

Sizwe: Listen here girl. Don't you ever ever say something like that. Why would he even try to impress me? I've known him for far too long and you my dear better start taking your girlfriend duties seriously.

Aziza laughs...

Her: Girlfriend duties? Like what?

Him: Like cleaning, cooking and doing laundry for your man.

She chuckles...

Her: You expect me to do wifey duties while I'm still a girlfriend? Boy, Bayanda have hands for as long as we are not married he can do things for himself.

Him: And how about you go and work for your “money”?
Bayanda is not your bank. So, I guess you can also work for yourself since you have an ability to do it.

Her: How dare you come in my house and insult me?

Him: I am not insulting you, I am telling you facts. Know what your duties are and stop being a gold digger.

Her: Bayanda are you really seating there listening to him insulting me? What kind of a boyfriend are you?

I take the remote and turn up the volume. I don't have time for their Tom&Jerry nonsense.

Aziza storms out and goes to wherever where. Sizwe sits down and we watch soccer, we did not say anything to each other. Bawinile is making us food, Sizwe&I look at each other and start laughing. What we are laughing, we also don't know. I hear wheels we all turn to look and it is Aziza pulling her suitcase.

She is moving out? God you are good. She stands at the passage and looks at us.

“So you are not going to try and stop me”? she asks.

I shake my head.

Her: I hope you don't regret this nxa!

She storms out...

We laugh again. She likes drama this one.

“That's not nice guys. Bayanda please go and talk to her as much as I don't like her, I don't want anything bad happening to her” Bawinile says.

“Don't worry yourself she will come back and she knows where she is going” I tell her.

She nods and continues cooking...

v

Aziza

“He fucken watched me leave chomie can you believe it? He did not even try stopping me” I tell Anita, hrowing myself on top of her couch taking off my weave.

“And it's all that friend of his fault. Do you have any idea how he insulted me and called me names in front of my boyfriend? That fool did not even try defending me! Not even a little bit” I continue telling her.

Her: I still don't understand why are you still with him. I mean you have Lunga who is willing to do everything for you.

Me: Nita Bayanda is good in bed. He knows where to touch, he is fucken good, do you hear me?

Her: The question stands. 'Do you love him?'

Do I? No I don't but I love the sex.

Me: Yes I do love him but I love the sex more.

Her: You only in it for sex? What about your happiness Aziza?

Me: What's happiness without sex? Anyway enough about me. Where is the wine?

Her: Thought you will never ask! Let me go and fetch it.

She stands up...

I look at my phone just in case he calls or something but nothing

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eish. I may pretend as if I don't care but deep down I do. Bayanda loved me when everyone turned their back on, he was actually my pillar. He picked me up from the streets and cleaned me up. I don't know how or what happened but I fell out of love with him. I am only with him because he loved me while I was nothing. I have to be closer to him now more than ever, once he gets the restaurant I must have my shares. I will not let him go, not now anyway. I will have to milk him dry then I will dump him. Now that he is kinda losing interest in me I will have to make him love me again. I must make him to be the only woman that he sees and thinks about no one else, I will have to go the traditional way. He can't slip away from me now not when he is this close to getting the restaurant. Anita comes back with the wine and some chilli biltong, well that's how we usually do it. She pours for both of us and we click glasses.

v

Nathi

My parents house looks like a real home now, the new furniture blended in very well. I just need to put tiles on the floor and on the wall and change the bathroom set, this is the least I can do for them since I neglected them. My mother couldn't stop crying and my dad is left speechless, I just came back from fetching them from the spa. They needed to exfoliate their body and relax. My mother hugs me for dear life, I shed a tear.

“Siyabonga mntwana wami(thank you my daughter) wasenza abantu ebantwini(you made us people amongst people) dad says.

“Kubonga minah baba no mama. This is the least I can do for neglecting you guys for so long”

Him: Least? This is huge mntanami. We have to thank God for these blessings. Buka kuhle njani(look at how beautiful it is)

Mom: Kakhulu baba. Siyabonga Nana wami for all of this. May God bless you.

Me: Thank you mom&dad. God will surely bless me, you can take a tour around the house.

They did just that while I started cooking, I love seeing them this happy, well at least I still know my way around the kitchen. I just cooked a simple meal for them, macaroni&mince with melted cheese. I dish up for them and take their food to them, they are watching news.

“I wouldn't mind living up like this everyday” Zuziwe Kat's second born says.

“This will be your life from now on” I tell her.

Mom can't stop complementing the furniture. We all eat while having meaningful chats, how I missed this moment right here. Being with my family is the best I must say, I promise to never neglect them again. Inno offered to wash the dishes. We are

now watching generations I don't like it but I have no choice but to watch it. The door opens and Kat bangs it close, she is drunk and she is walking off balance. You can smell the alcohol from the kitchen to here in the lounge. The kids shifted a little, they look scared.

“Kodwa Kat mntanami how could you embarrass yourself like this”? mom asks.

“Embarrassing myself? Now that the bastard of a daughter is back, I'm embarrassing myself”! She yells.

I ask the kids to excuse us without uttering anything, they quickly stand up and rush to their rooms.

“Hhey leave my kids alone. Enhlek who do you think you are? Go and look for your real parents and leave mine alone! Do you hear me”? she says then burps and the smell of alcohol&smoke in her mouth fills the whole lounge.

My parents look down on the floor shying away from looking at me.

“Mtsheleni! You thought that you were gonna keep the secret from her forever right? Tough luck I've just asking exposed it”!

“Stop it Katlego! Ungenwe yini(what has gotten into you)?

Her: Gotten into me? Is seeing this bastard of a child taking my space. Go and look for your parents Zubenathi and leave mine alone.

Me: These are my parents too Kat whether by birth or adoption. They are my parents. They raised me and is not my fault that you are a failure. It's not my fault that you are a baby making machine. It's not my fault that things never go well for you, and you know why? It's because of your evil heart and all the bad deeds you did. You go and look for those so called parents of mine while at it do something about your life! Excuse me. I need to rest I have an early morning tomorrow.

Mom&Dad see you in the morning.

I stand up passing Kat who is standing there inbalanced, nxa. She thinks that she can just ruin my life, nonsense. Her words don't move me not even a little bit, talk about being dramatic. I am sharing a room with Zuziwe&Inno, Kat is one bitter human.

6

Sindiswa

I wake up and my body is sore. Sipho beat me up last night, he accused me of cheating just because I was not home when he came back. I tried explaining to him that I was with Zubenathi but he did not want to hear it. I forced myself to go to the kitchen and start preparing breakfast for him and his brats to my surprise I find them eating. I greet and they didn't greet back, good. I go to the bread bin to take out some bread and I find none. I sigh and decide to make myself cereal, I go to eat in the dining room. I switch on the TV and watch some music. I hear the door opening then closing, they left. Good riddance to rubbish nxa. I stand up and go take a bath, I am going to see my parents I wonder how are they going to welcome my visit. I get to their house and my mother comes out and start insulting me from the gate.

“What are you doing here? Didn't I tell you not to come here if your husband is not with you”? she asks.

“I miss you mama” I tell her.

Her: Don't tell me that nonsense! You miss me you miss me, did you come with money?

Me: No Mama. Mama I am here because I am not happy in my marriage.

Her: And what do you want me to do? Welcome you back here in my house?

I nod already crying...

Her: Listen to me and listen very carefully. You gonna go out on that gate and go and fix whatever problems you have with Siphon. I can't lose money because of your selfishness. Out of my yard.

I kneel down begging her, my tears did not even move her. She asks me to stand up, I thought that she is going to hug me but instead she pushes me out of her yard.

“Don't ever come back here without your husband” she says then looks at me from head to toe and clicks her tongue then walks away leaving me standing there at the gate.

I am beyond shattered. My own mother just turned me away! My own mother! The woman who gave birth to me, unbelievable. I walk to my car with tears streaming down my face. I get inside and rest my head on the steering wheel, I just can't believe it. It all feels like a dream, like someone will wake me up from it. My own mother. My own mother turning me back out of her yard. From today going forward she is dead to me dead!

v

Nathi

“Hey babe it's me Zubenathi. Your love. I miss you baby every single day, every night. I know you said that I must let you go, I am finally letting you go. But in my heart you will always remain. I love you Mtungwa wami, I'm here to ask you to guide me in finding a man like you. I know that you always watching

over me and please forgive your family. I know they did us wrong but please forgive them

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I love you Mtungwa. Watch over me” I say and I stand up. I feel at peace. I finally got to talk to him.

I pass by wimpy and buy breakfast for the whole family. I woke up very early and decided to come to the graveyard to talk to my ex. I'm sure my parents think I left. What Kat said last night didn't bother me because I already knew that they are not my real parents, my biological mother once came to see me and that was the last time I saw her. She told me everything and why she decided to put me up for adoption, her reason is rather somehow. I mean how do you choose your boyfriend over your own blood? Ai some women. I am very much grateful to the Ndimande's for raising me. Not once did they show or treat me like I'm not their own. They put me through great schools and varsity. I owe them that much. I get home and I find them already awake. I greet them and mom stands up to hug me

“Bengithy usishiyile. Siyacolisa ukungakutsheli” (We thought that you left us sorry for not telling you) she says.

Me: It's okay mama. I knew that you are not my real parents, Busisiwe my real mother once told me.

Dad: Why didn't you say anything?

Me: Because even after what she told me you still remain my parents. Not once have I felt like I'm not one of you or belong here. I love you a lot, nothing will come between us. We've been through a lot together and you were my support system. I will never trade you guys for anything.

We shared a hug.

Them: We love you.

Me: Not like I do. Breakfast is ready.

Mom: Wuhhh we gonna get fat with all these take-aways.

I laugh...

I love these parents of mine. They deserve the world. The kids went to school and Kat is sleeping.

v

Bayanda

I get to the office and I head straight to my office. I am an HR manager in one of the big firms in Jo'burg. Alu my P.A shortly follows after me with my coffee. I work from home most of the time.

“Good morning sir. Your schedule looks like this; you have interviews at 09:00am and a meeting with Mr Genaro at 3pm” he tells me.

I thank him and he exits my office. I let my my tie loose, I need to breath a little. I wonder why does Mr Genaro want a meeting with me, I don't have money and there is nothing I can do. The

banks don't wanna loan me, so I might as well leave this whole restaurant thing. Clearly it is not meant to be mine, I sigh. ALU comes back with my my muffins, I thank him and he exits my office. I look at the time it's half 8, lemme prepare myself for the interviews, I hate interviewing people. It annoys me.

●●●●●

I am seating here waiting for Mr Genaro and he is not here, I am losing patience. An hour later he is still not here. I settle my bill and leave, I bump into him at the door.

“You leaving already? Sorry to keep you waiting I had things to do” he says. “Shall we”?

I nod and follow behind him. We sit down and he calls for a waiter.

“Let me not waste your time. How much have you raised so far”? He asks.

Me: R800 000

Him: You still standing on that? I've given you a lot of time. This is your last chance. I will give you an offer of 100 0000.

Me: What? That's ridiculous.

Him: It's the least I can do. It's better than forking out R1.5 million. Think about it and time is moving.

I sit back and look at him. He is crazy, where am I supposed to get so much money? Ai...I am defeated. I am dead!

7

Nathi

I am woken up by someone banging my door, no scratch that he/she is breaking it. I get off bed, take my robe from the chair and go and check who it is, well I know that it is Sindiswa. She's the only person who knows where I live, I open the door for her and she is frantic and her face is bloody. I quickly pull her inside the house, I check the coast and it is clear. I go to my room to fetch my first aid kit and go back to her. She looks like a mess, her hair is also messy. I mix all the things and start cleaning her wounds, no one was talking only her sniffs made noise. I look at the clock on the wall and it's just after 03:00am, I wonder what happened. I make her tea and give it to her then I sit next to her and drink mine too.

"Sorry for coming announced. I had no where to go Nathi, you were my last hope" she says.

"It's fine babe you know that you welcome here anytime. This is like your second home" I tell her.

Her: Thank you babe I don't know what I would've done if you were not around

Me: You were gonna come in and make yourself comfortable, you have the keys mus.

Her: Thank you though.

Me: I know, duh. So, Ice cream?

Her: You still asking? Bitch me bring that comforter here.

I stand up then go and fetch the ice cream I take 2 big spoons. I put on some movie and we start eating. It's late yes but who cares? Well, I am still waiting for her to tell me what happened. I can't push her though but what's the use because she is losing herself? Is Siphos abusing her? Cheating on her? Oh my word. I can imagine. I've been too self centered and completely forgot about Sindi. She always came to see me but I never suspected anything or was it because I did not care about her feelings? Or was it because her smile fooled me? I'm such a bad friend. She

has been strong for me yet she was out here broken and hurt, she managed to smile through the pain.

“Hey babes, why are you crying”? she asks.

I didn't even realize that I am crying. I wipe my tear and look at her.

“I've been such a bad friend babe. I was too self centered and I forgot about you. How selfish of me? You were here trying to cheer me up whereelse you are also broken. Why didn't you talk to me”? I say.

“How was I gonna talk to you? You didn't care about me or anything around you. I felt like I was gonna burden you with my problems, while you were mourning” she replies.

Me: Either way babe you were supposed to reach out to me. Who knows maybe I might've gone back to my senses a long time ago. I'm sorry for neglecting you babe

Her: I understand Nathi. Yes, it's hard going through so much yet there's no one you can vent to. I had to bury my feelings deep within me.

Me: I am here now babe you don't have to go through everything alone. I am your shoulder to cry on and you can always come to me anytime you want. Talk to me about your feelings, your marriage. Everything babe.

Her: Thank you friend. I will tell you everything when the time is right.

Me: When will be the right time? Or will it be when you are hospitalised and left to die?

She shrugs.

Me: If you not happy then why not leave the marriage? For how long are you going to endure the abuse? I'm not a fool, I know that Siphon beats you.

Her: You think I haven't tried leaving him? God knows I tried by all means but I end up finding myself falling in love with him again.

Me: Nonsense! You need to stop justifying his actions. You wanna be a statistics, huh? If love is no longer served, leave.

Her: Can we drop this issue? I am not in the mood.

Me: Wow! Suit yourself then Sindi, I am only trying to be a friend.

Her: Don't. Just don't try!

Me: I'm going to bed.

I stand up and leave her there, what wrong did I do? I was just advising her as a a friend, sigh. I get into the covers and close my eyes.

I wake up to an empty house, I guess Sindy left early avoiding me. I make a mental note to myself that I must go and remove my hair, it looks untidy. I take a bath and go to the mall. First things first I start at the salon, this salon is packed I must say. I came here because of the reviews I saw on their Facebook page it comes highly recommended, I look at the que and it's a no from me. I go around the mall and I spot another salon, this one had 2 people. I get in I hope they know what they doing. One of the hairdressers escorts me inside, I tell her what I want and she makes me seat on the chair.

v

Sindiswa

I left Nathi's place earlier I am avoiding her. I know that she meant well but she doesn't know what I've been through. I've tried so many times to leave Sipho but I always come back crawling to him. It's like he has a hold over me

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I don't see myself surviving without him or is it because I am dependent on him? He actually made me stop my face beat work. He told me straight up that I lack nothing, I have everything and of which it's true. I am a house wife a foolish house wife that is. I know that he has left already, he thought that I was sleeping in the guest room. I make myself food and the brats too went to school. The door flew open and I can hear heels clicking all the way from the kitchen to the lounge. I fix my eyes at the door wanting to see who it is, oh and it's the she devil herself. She is with some village girl, I roll my eyes and focus on the TV.

“Where is my son”? she asks.

“Am I his bodyguard”? I respond.

Her: You are his wife you have to know where he is.

Me: I don't keep tabs on an old man. Why not call him?

Her: I don't even know why he is still keeping you here, you are useless.

Me: And?

Her: Why am I even arguing with a barren? Go and make us tea.

“I will go and make it ma” the girl says.

Her: Sit down Sihle you are a visitor here. Useless makoti will go and make it for us.

I look at her and laugh then continue watching TV. I don't have time for her.

Her: See how disrespectful she is? I know that you my dear will be a better wife for my son, not this old barren hag.

I choke on my food, did she just say wife?

Me: Wife? Wife to whose husband?

Her: To my son Siphon. Lobola has been paid for her, she is Siphon's second wife.

Me: Over my dead body! Siphon is not going to take another wife. I alone I am enough for him.

She laughs...

Her: What are you talking about? They are traditionally married and Sihle here is expecting. A real woman not you.

It can't be. Tears form in my eyes and I am about to break down here, this is a joke. How could Siphon do such a thing and not tell me? How can he marry behind my back? No, this girl won't last here I will make sure of it.

MamaZala: Go and make us tea and wena Sindiswa take Sihle's bags to Siphos room.

I look at her and stand up going to my room leaving the bags there. I take my phone and call Siphos but it put me through voicemail, damn you Siphos. How could you do this to me? How? I am pacing up&down with my chest going up&down. This girl won't last a week here, that's a promise.

v

Aziza

I finish making food for Bayanda, he doesn't know that I am back. I want to surprise him. I check the coast first outside and I don't see his car coming. I take out the love portion in my pocket and sprinkle it on top of his food, chanting his name. I put the food in the warmer. The nyanga told me that the muthi will work in one day, I can't wait to have a full control over him. I will make sure that I ban that friend of his Sizwe from coming to this house, he is too noisy&troublesome. I take a bath and wear a sexy lingerie, it's the afternoon I know but I want to

surprise him I know that he will be back any minute from now. I pour myself a glass of wine and sip on it. I hear his car pulling off the driveway, I stand up and go to the kitchen. I open the robe and lean on the wall, I look sexy bathong. The door opens and his jaw drops as soon as he see me, plus the muthi that I smeared on my body whuuu shame. He drops his brief case on the floor and comes to me. He pulls me close to him, kisses my lips and part my legs apart. His finger makes his way to my kushna and I'm dripping wet, I wrap my legs around his waist and he takes me to the lounge, he lays me on the couch and tears my lingerie apart...yasis, it's working just fine. His phone rings disturbing the Scotch hitting moment, I am pissed. He gets off me and go and attend his phone.

“It's urgent” he says and disappear to the kitchen, nxa.
Whoever called him doesn't have timing.

v

Nathi

I look beautiful I must say. The cut suit me perfectly now I am almost done with dying it. 2 girls got in and the other one looks frustrated.

“I don't know why they refused to do my hair I mean I made an appointment. They are incompetent, now I will have to settle to do my hair in an average salon” she complains.

“What choice do you have Leandra? I'm sure they not that bad. At least you leaving in 2 weeks time” responds the other.

Leandra: If only dad can find a buyer for the restaurant.

Friend: He still hasn't find one? Time is moving.

Her: He wants to sell it to some guy and the guy doesn't have the money. My dad is very determined that he will take care of the restaurant.

Friend: Let's pray he finds the money.

Her: Let's. I don't wanna see myself here anymore.

This sounds interesting. Seeing that I don't have anything going on for me, why not buy it? At least then I will have something that belongs to me and possibly keep me busy, I hope it is one of the restaurants I sold a long time ago. I pay and tip the hairdresser, he did an amazing job. Next stop spa treatment...

8

Nathi

I am standing near the door at Genaro cuisine restaurant, as soon I got home yesterday I googled "Restaurants being sold", few of them popped up but the Genaro one caught my attention since it looked familiar. Actually looking at it now, it looks like the one I sold even though they've made few changes here&there. I look at the time and it's almost 08:00, what time does this restaurant open? Because while Obakeng was owning it by 07:00 we were already opened. I sigh as I tap my feet on the floor, I see one of the waitresses coming to open the door. She just looks at me and opens the glass door, I follow after her. She hears my footsteps stops, turns around and looks at me.

“Who told you to come in? We are not yet open” she says. She is rude this one.

“I am here for Mr Genaro” I say.

Her: Mr Genaro? What are you to him? Didn't he tell you that he has kids and actually married?

I just look at her not respond to her.

Her: And you are suddenly deaf?

Me: What time will Mr Genaro be available?

Her: Don't you know that people make appointments?

I am getting fed up with this girl, she just wants to see the other side of me and it's definitely not a good one.

I turn to walk away when an old man enters, he is on the phone. He passes me and go straight to his office, I follow behind him my instincts tells me that this is Mr Genaro. I hear him bidding farewell to whoever he was talking too and that's when I knock.

“Come in Tasha” he responds.

Tasha? Whoa, he thinks that I'm that waitress, wuhhh shame. I make my way inside his office and he is seated busy fiddling with his laptop. I greet and he lifts his face, he looks at me and gestures me to sit down I sit.

Him: Good morning ma'am. If you are looking for a job then I'm sorry but we are not hiring. I am actually selling the restaurant maybe you can come back when there's a new owner.

Me: Good morning Mr Genaro. And no I am not looking for work, I am actually interested in buying the restaurant.

He takes off his glasses and looks at me then chuckles.

Him: You? You want to buy this restaurant? With what money? Parents money?

Me: Name your prize.

I am suddenly annoyed by him. How dare he judges me without knowing me first? Nxa. Nonsense.

Him: Young girl I don't have time to play.

Me: And I have one?

Him: R1.2 million cash.

I open my bag and take out my cheque book.

Me: Can you please borrow me a pen?

He looks at me with his mouth agape. Did he not tell me bull not so long ago?

Me: Are you giving me the pen or?

He looks at me then wear his glasses.

Him: Where did you get all of this money young girl?

Just then as I am about to answer him his phone rings and he picks up and answers it, looking at me with questioning eyes. Am I invisible? Wow, this son of a birch doesn't take me serious...

Him: I've already found a buyer and she is willing to pay the full amount.

-

Him: Yes right now. She has a cheque in her hand as I am talking to you now.

-

Him: I will try and talk to her on your behalf.

-

Him: Keep well and I pray she agrees.

He hangs up and looks at me then clear his throat. This ought to be interesting, I fold my arms and give him my full attention.

Him: That was one of the guys who really wants the restaurant but he doesn't have enough money to buy it.

Me: And you telling me this because?

Him: He was asking if you can be kind enough and go 60/40. 60 is yours and he will take 40.

I think about it. Well it's not a bad thing considering the fact that I have lot of things to do. It is actually a great idea. He can oversee things here while I'm home doing lord knows what, I'll

be like a distant share holder. I'll always come here when I have time.

Me: Well, it's not a bad idea. Actually you can start drafting the contract. I don't mind going 60/40.

Him: Really? Can I call him and tell him the good news?

Me: No. Let's just say I'll be a distant shareholder. He can oversee things here but he better not slip up.

Him: He won't. He will turn this place around I trust him.

I nod and we shake hands. Sign, sealed and delivered. Now moving on to the vacant one, I wonder how it looks like. I'm sure the windows have been broken into. I stand up and bid my farewell to Mr Genaro. I walk out and the girl stops me.

“What did I say to you”? She asks folding her arms.

Me: About?

I look around and I can see that some customers haven't been helped, I shake my head.

Her: About going to Mr Genaro. Didn't I tell you that he is married?

Me: What's in it for you? Why are you so concern about who he sees?

Her: Because Mr Genaro is a very good man. I don't want whores like you lurking around.

I shake my head...

Me: Do you still value your job?

Her: What do you mean?

Me: Because I can fire you right now without thinking twice.

Her: What do you mean?

Me: I mean that I am the new owner of this restaurant Missy.

I fold my arms and look at her. She is tongue tied, she doesn't even know what to say.

Me: You know what. You are actually fired!

I say and walk away leaving her standing there stunned. I wonder how she treats customers
her attitude stinks.

√

Bayanda

I am in my office hoping that Mr Genaro gets back to me with good news. I really need this. My door opens and Aziza comes in, she looks beautiful. No wonder why I fell for her she is a goddess. I stand up and meet her half way, we hug and we sit down on the couch. She has brought me breakfast since I left early. I kiss her lips and she giggles.

“How far are you with getting the restaurant? Is Mr Genaro still giving you a hard time”? She asks.

Me: No. It's just that someone was willing to buy it cash.

Her: What? What did Mr Genaro say?

Me: I asked him to talk for me with her on my behalf and go 50/50.

Her: It's a woman?

Me: Yes it is.

Her: I don't like the sound of this.

Me: Relax babe. You are the only girl for me no one else.

She breaks into a smile and kisses me. Just then my phone rings, I answer it and it is Mr Genaro.

“Sorry for getting back late to you. I was dealing with Tasha's package, can you believe that the new owner fired her on the spot”?

My heart sinks at the "new owner" word. So, she denied partnering with me?

Me:, Oh, is it?

Him: Yes. Anyway she has agreed to go 60/40 with you.

Me: Really?

Him: Yes. Congratulations Bhayanda. Your contract is ready and you can deposit your payment, your partner already paid and signed.

Me: Thank you thank you Mr Genaro I'll be there first thing tomorrow morning.

I hang up and run to Aziza, I pick her up and spin her around.

“I got it baby. We got the restaurant baby, we are owners” I tell her putting her down.

Her: This is good news baby. This calls for a celebration.

Me: Indeed. Let's go and pop the champopo baby.

I pack my things and we walk out. I am so happy, can't wait to tell my family the good news. This has to be the best day ever. I finally got the restaurant and I have my woman next to me, what more could I ask for?

v

Sindiswa

Sipho is home and he has locked himself in the room ever since he came back from work. Me&Sihle are seating here watching TV. Sihle is seating on the floor with her head down like a real Zulu Makoti. Wuhhh hhayi. Sipho's mother is busy knocking at his door begging him to come out. I did not even bother cooking, the new wife will cook. The brats come back from school and they are shocked to see this woman seated on the floor.

“Who is she”? Siwe asks. No greeting, disrespectful prick.

I say nothing and continue watching TV.

“Hey you woman. Who are you”? Bahumi Asks.

“I'm Sihle. Siphos wife” she replies.

They both laugh like laughing and not pretending.

Siwe: Really? You are my father's wife? When did all of this happen?

Her: 4 months ago.

They laugh again...

Bahumi: So, Sindiswa failed to do her wifey duties and dad decided to marry you in secret? What makes you think he won't do the same to you once you become useless and bore him?

She looks down and not respond.

Siwe: Is my brother talking alone makoti? Answer him.

Her: I did not mean for this to happen. The family forced us to.

Her: Did they point you with guns on your heads, huh?

She shakes her head...

Bahumi: Did they tell you that Siphos is married? Did his family tell you that he lives with his wife?

Her: They did. But she's a barren she can't give Siphos kids, I have to give them a heir.

Bahumi: Are we not his kids? Huh? Are we not enough for him?

Her: I don't know. I am just here to fulfill my duties as his wife.

"Daddy*, Bahumi screams on top of his voice. I hear commotion and I see Siphon coming down running with his mother following behind him. He stops in his tracks as soon as he lands his eyes on me. He looks down.

"You called me son" He says to Bahumi.

Him: Yes I did. Who is this woman?

He looks at me then Sihle ,his mother then back to Bahumi&Siwe.

Him: She is my new wife

He scratches his head. The kids laugh.

"What's funny"? Siphon's mother asks.

"Whoa mthakathi asikhulumi nawe" (wait you witch we are not talking to you) Siwe says.

How I love them right now.

Her: How dare you call me a witch? Siphos why are your kids this disrespectful?!

Siwe: Awume gogo mthakathi we still want to know who this ugly woman is.

I see Siphos looking down. See? Now he sees how disrespectful his kids are. Akere he always said that I'm the one who is disrespectful and always tell on his kids.

Bahumi: As much as I don't like Sindiswa but did you consider her feelings in all of this? How she will feel? Worst part you did not even tell her. You kept it a secret yet you claim you love her? How could you allow this to happen Baba?

Siwe: How vele? We don't want this woman in this house. You must build her her own house, we don't want her here.

Him: She is expecting my child. She can't leave this house.

Her: Oh wow! You are dead to me. From now on never ever do anything for me, actually I will save you the heartache and go and stay with Nobuzwe.

Him: What are you saying Siwe?

Bahumi: Exactly that. We are leaving this house so you and your newly found expecting wife will have peace. We don't wanna stress her. She will not handle us.

MamaZ: Good riddance to rubbish bloody spoilt brats!

Bahumi: On second thoughts we are no longer leaving. New expecting wife we are hungry.

Siwe: Yes we are and by the time we finish taking off our uniform we expecting our meals.

Me: I will go and lie down I had a long day.

I stand up and walk away. I am not about to teach her the ropes, she must learn by herself. I learnt by myself too. She must feel the wrath of those spoilt brats. I get into my room and lie on the bed, I listen to music and drift off to sleep. I shut down everything.

Aziza

Bayanda is busy calling his family telling them the "good news", I won't lie. I am bored to say the least, we are supposed to be having dinner for 2 and enjoy the news together. Now my only worry is this "woman" that she's partnering with. What I will need to do, is to find out who it is and then make her sell all of her shares to Bayanda. If she refuses then I will have no choice but to take her out, then I poison Bayanda dead and get my happily ever after with Lungisani. Bayanda comes back and he is all smiles. He sits next to me and put my legs on top of him and starts massaging my feet. The door opens and I know that it is Sizwe, he comes in and sits down because he never knocks.

"Bafo" he greets not acknowledging my presence.

"Bafo" he replies.

Him: Heard the good news boy, congratulations.

Bayanda: Thanks man.

Him: So, no celebration braai nyana or outing?

Bayanda: I am celebrating with my woman.

Him: I see. How about weekend then?

Bayanda: I will not be around. I am going to see my mother.

Him: Oh okay. What are we eating?

Me: Eating? In whose house? Do you buy food here?

Him: I wasn't talking to you Aziza.

Bayanda: Bafo that's my woman. You must talk to her with respect. You always come here and finish my food, that shit stops today.

Him: Hau Bafo and nou?

Bayanda: Next time come with your own food or take out some money and contribute.

Him: Alright skhokho.

He gives me the eye and I smile at him.

Bayanda: Please leave

Him: Hawu, what did I do now?

Bayanda: You disturbing me and my girlfriend we in the middle of "celebration"

Him: Nc nc nc. She has finally won. She finally got you and you Aziza baby girl I am watching you. I can't wait for the day you beg for mercy. Can't wait to see your plans fail.

Bayanda: How dare you talk to my woman like that? Does she owe you something? Do you want her?

Sizwe stands up, chuckles and shake his head.

“Don't ever come here and delete my numbers I will do the same with yours” Bayanda tells him.

Sizwe leaves without replying him. Thank you bab' Dlokuvu.

Him: Baby you don't have to worry about Sizwe. I will make sure that he stops coming here, he is bad news.

Me: Thank you baby for standing up for me.

Him: Anything for you baby.

I smile, this is working just fine. He is where I want him to be, in my full control very soon he will give me his bank cards. No man it will jump that I fed him something, he can keep them.

v

Sindiswa

I take my food and go to my room passing Siphos&Sihle bonding, Siphos hand is brushing Sihle's tummy. They look cosy and I feel a little bit jealous but I push that thought over my head. Siphos mother left, the kids told her too in fact they chased her out. I get to my room and start eating after this I will go and ask Zubenathi for a place to stay for few weeks, I hope she will agree to it. I finish eating and start packing my bag, I am leaving. I just can't stand them. I take a quick bath then grab my suitcase and walk out. I don't descend yet, I wanna listen in since I am hearing some quarrelling taking place.

“So, we not eating tonight”? I hear Siwe asking.

“I've cooked for you guys” Sihle replies.

Bahumi: I don't eat spaghetti!

Siwe: And I don't eat both Spaghetti&Mince! Do you even care wena?

Siwe: Dad, why didn't you tell your wife that we don't eat what she has cooked?

Bahumi: Does he even know? He is hardly here maybe if he played his fatherly role, then he would know that we are allergic to certain food.

Sipho: I'm sorry guys. Sindiswa was supposed to tell her how you like your food. She had to show her how things are done in this house.

Siwe: And in your right state of mind do you think she will help her? First things first you've disrespected her by bringing another woman in her house without talking to her! Now you want her to help the very same woman who broke her marriage? A homewrecker?

Him: You will not dare talk to me like that! I am still your father. You must talk to me with respect.

Bahumi: Or what? Are you going to beat us? We would like to see you try.

Him: We can always order in.

Them: No take-aways during the week!

Him: Fine suit yourselves.

Sihle: I can always cook your favorite meal, I don't mind.

Him: You are not cooking for any of them. Listen here you spoilt brats, from now you must respect Sihle and see her as your 2nd mother.

Bahumi: You know what. I'm done with this. You can stay with this homewrecker of yours and she must never ever cook for us. Sindiswa is the only one who will cook for us.

Siwe: I will also eat the food that is cooked by Sindiswa not this witch

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I don't trust her.

Sipho: I thought you guys don't like Sindiswa.

Siwe: Yes we don't but she is much better than this nonsense you've brought for us. If given the chance to choose, I will choose Sindiswa over this woman.

I wipe my tear and descend the stairs, wheeling my suitcase. They all turn and look at me then my suitcase.

“Wait, are you leaving”? Bahumi asks.

I nod...

“Please stay for us Sindiswa. You know we can't survive without you and we promise to respect you” Siwe pleads.

Me: I would like to stay guys but I can't. I can't share a house with another woman. Especially a woman that caused me heartache. I have to give her her space. Plus she's pregnant and I don't want to stress her.

Sipho: Sindi please baby we can work this out. We will find a way around this.

I shake my head and walk away, blinking my tears away

“Sindiswa please” Bahumi pleads. “You can't leave us alone. How are we going to survive without you”?

Me: I promise to come and visit you every now&then.

I take the car and the house keys and place them on top of the table.

“Baby please. Don't leave me” Siphos stands up and kneels down before me. I can't help but notice the excitement smirk in Sihle's face.

I shake my head and exit his house.

I walk till I'm out of the yard and I let it all out, I sit on the pavement outside and cry. This shit hurts. Is this the end of my marriage? My uber arrives. All I need now is some strong shot and get drunk till I pass out!

v

Nathi

I finish bathing and go seat by the pool looking at the view. Being lonely sucks I'm telling you. I am seated with my bottle of wine next to me and reading shameless a book written by Lex Martin, it is a very interesting read I must say. The breeze is so soothing I can even sleep here. As I am reading a book I see an uber pulling thru my gate, I look at the person who descends off it and I am surprised to see Sindiswa, she has a suitcase with her. I get up from the resting mat and go meet her halfway. I buzz her in, she looks like a mess and smells of alcohol, I shake my head and help her with her bag. I take her by the pool, then go and make a strong cup of coffee for her. She looks worn out, why is marriage like this? Mine would've been like this too, having to endure nonsense? No it wouldn't have been. It would've been perfect. I shake my head and take her coffee to her, I hand it to her and sit back down. I hear her sniff, I don't dare ask because last time she told me to "stop trying" and you know what they say. "Once bitten, twice shy" I look at her and her mind is far away. I take my book and continue reading it.

"You know he brought another woman to our house. Actually his mother brought her to our house, I knew that, that woman hates me but for her to bring another woman in my house is beyond me" she tells me.

I put my book down and focus on her.

“He paid Lobola for her 4 months ago and she is pregnant. Can you believe it? She is going to give him a baby something I failed to do. I am not woman enough in his eyes”

I have no tissues here with me, so...yah.

“Now she has occupied my house. She is going to sleep in the same bed that I slept on. He is going to fuvk her like he did with me. He didn't even think of talking to me first and find out how I am feeling. He did not consider my feelings in all of this”.

She chuckles and shakes her head, tears streaming down her cheeks

“I am not important in his life Nathi. He doesn't respect me and he fell out of love with me” she continues to say.

“I'm sorry. He is such a jerk, you deserve better babe, your Mr right will come” I say.

Her: I don't want Mr Right. I want Siphos.

Me: Okay.

Her: Just okay? Is that all you have to say Nathi, after I poured out my heart to you?

Me: What do you want me to say Sindiswa? You know that I've been and still am single for 5 years, what do I know? I don't even remember when last I was in love.

Her: I'm sorry Nathi I don't know what came over me.

I nod...

Her: I truly am sorry.

Me: It's okay.

Her: What are you reading?

Me: Shameless by Lexi Martin

Her: Is it nice?

Me: Very nice.

She nods and looks at the street. I continue reading my book. I hope she heals from whatever she is going through. Why doesn't she leave him again?

Sihle

Only a month here and I am already tired, actually no I am drained these kids are making my life a living hell. They are giving me sleepless nights. I've tried everything to gain their love, from cooking their favorite meals to going and watch their games but they are ungrateful. Stupid spoiled brats. Siphos? Siphos can't discipline them, they take him up there anye nyi. It is very evident that they don't like me, they've made it clear very that they want Sindiswa. In their eyes I am a home wrecker. I agreed to be Siphos second wife because of the money I will get from him, being pregnant is a bonus. I don't even know if this child is his or Lwazi's. Lwazi was my boyfriend I ended things with him when I heard that the Zuma's are coming to pay Lobola for me. To say I was not excited I would be lying, I was beyond excited. I mean I've been crushing on Siphos since back in the highschool, and now that I am actually married to him it feels like a dream come true. If only I could get his kids to like me, uh uh not a chance. Those kids hate their grandmother with passion, the very same woman who gave birth to their father. Imagine me then, I am nothing to them. They basically don't like anyone, I don't think they even have friends their attitude stinks. Amidst of all this I am glad that I don't cook, Siphos always brings take

always as for the brats I don't know how they survive and they are not bothered shame. I am watching cooking with Siba on TLC and binging on some Yogurt with simba, this is life. All I do is just watch TV, eat, bath and sleep. The door opens and I know that it's the twins, they come to the lounge and stand by the door.

“What have you cooked because I don't see pots on top of the stove”? Siwe asks.

Me; Since when do you guys eat food that is cooked by me?

Bahumi: So, you answering a question with a question?

Me: No. I did not cook because you guys don't eat my food.

Siwe: Did we say that?

Me: No but your actions said it.

Bahumi: So, you decided not to cook? What is my dad eating?

Siwe: You buy him take always. You want him to die because of calastrol?

Me: No not at all. How dare you say such about me? I love your father I will not do anything to him.

Bahumi: Why are you here?

Me: What's with all the questions?

Siwe: Is it because of the money my dad has, is that why you agreed to get married to him and fell pregnant for him with that bastard that you carrying?

I am fuming now. I stand up and give her a hot slap.

“How dare you call my child a bastard? I've had enough of your nonsense”! I yell at them.

She smirks and looks at his brother who also smirks. What are these kids up to?

“Who gave you the right to slap my sister? What did she do to you”? Bahumi asks.

Me: You heard what she said. I will slap you too if I have to I am tired of your nonsense, I am older than you. You should respect me!

Him: Respect you? You don't deserve our respect. Why didn't you scold her like any normal parent would?

Me: Scold her? You guys are full of nonsense. I will sort you out come high or hell waters, I will teach you some respect.

Siwe: You mean you gonna beat us?

Me: If it needs to be then yes, I will. I am not a weakling like Sindiswa!

Bahumi: Don't you dare compare yourself with Sindiswa. That woman is more of a woman than you'll ever be.

Siwe: Let's let her be. Can't wait for her to start crying herself to sleep.

They laugh and walk away.

What do they mean by crying myself to sleep? Is Siphos a cheater? An abuser? I am now curious to know what they mean. I sit back down and continue watching TV when the door flew open and comes in a fuming Siphos. He charges straight at me and start strangling me. I try removing his firm grab on my neck and I am failing, I can't breath my eyes changes to being pure white. This man wants to kill me, I swear.

“Siphos What the hack man” a guy says removing him from me.

His firm grip loosens and I cough trying to catch my breath. I rub my neck and I feel some pain, I don't even know what I did to him.

“How dare you! How dare you slap my daughter? Never in my life have I ever raised a hand at them. I don't remember them calling me telling that Sindiswa beat them. But you? You have the fucken nerve to slap my daughter? Who gave you the permission”.

He is angry. His veins are popping and his eyes are red.

“Answer me dammit” he roars.

I shake my head and I am already crying, these kids will pay for this. I am scared I have never seen him like this before, the loving man is not there.

“I'm sorry. I did not mean too, they called my unborn child a bastard! A whole fucken bastard” I say.

Him: And you saw it fit to slap her? Why didn't you reprimand them, huh? Why didn't you?

Me: I tried but they pushed me. Why are you even defending them?

Him: Because they are my children, woman!

Me: I am also carrying your child Siphon in case you've forgotten! What about me? What about how I feel? I've tolerated your brats' stinking behavior for a long time, I am tired of them!

Him: If you are "tired" of my brats, then I suggest you start packing your bags and leave my house. Actually I will call my mother to come and fetch you.

Me: You don't mean that Siphon I am your wife and it was a mistake. I let anger get to me!

Him: That anger made you slap my daughter? You know what, I'm going out. When I come back I don't want to find you here.

I stand up and approach him, he pushes me and I fall back on the couch. He clicks his tongue and walk away, his friend following behind him. I hear giggles behind me I turn to look and it's the nuisance themselves.

“This is not over! This is far from being over! You will regret ever messing with me” I tell them.

“We know. We know that you are going to take the witchcraft way

go ahead Missy we have all the guns laid out and while at it think about your unborn baby's health. Stress is dangerous for women in your situation. Save yourself some heartache and leave as my dad instructed you to” Siwe.

They then turn and walk away, these kids will be the death of me. I will have to get rid of them! I scream in frustration. They think they won but they have another thing coming, I am here to stay.

v

Nathi

Today is the opening launch of Z&B restaurant. The theme is black with a touch of red. I told Mr Genaro to tell my partner to use our initials. Sindiswa has gone to meet up with her old friend from school. I take my car keys and drive to the restaurant. There are cars already parked, so I also look for a spot to park I see one and drive to it. I park my car and get off then make my way to the restaurant. The decoration looks beautiful, only a few people are invited though, the media is also here. They ask for my tag and I show it to them, thanks to Lungs for giving me his. I sit down and one of the waitress brings me a glass of wine, I take it and scan the room for any familiar faces. Whoa, who do I know? No one, so what am I scanning. Someone sits next to me, I turn to look and it some guy. He is handsome but has this visible scar on the left of his eye. He greets and I nod.

“Zweli Mthembu is the name” he introduced himself.

“And I'm Zubenathi Bhembe”

Him: Lovely knowing you Zubenathi.

Me: Likewise Mr Mthembu.

Him: So, are you here with someone?

Me: No. I am all by myself.

Him: Me too. How about after here we go to my house and get to know each other better.

I chuckle and shake my head.

Me: What do you think I am? You think I am some random whore that you always pick up in the clubs and go home with?

Him: Not at all. I can see that you are one of those independent lady and you could do with some fun. You look like you last had some fun a long time ago, I promise to make this a memorable moment.

Me: I am not interested Mr in whatever you say. I have far more important things to do than to listen to a pervert like you.

I say standing up, I don't like nonsense. I see Bayanda going on stage with his girlfriend clinging next to him for dear life, they have set up a mini stage. The girl hits the glass and everyone's attention befalls them. Oh, so the man I bumped into has a girlfriend, great! What was I thinking anyway? A guy like him is never single, argh the goes my almost became "boyfriend" I roll my eyes.

First things first I would like to welcome you all to Z&B restaurant opening launch. Thank you for honoring the invites in such a short period of time. I can't believe that I am finally owning this restaurant. I had hiccups financially, I even thought

of dropping all of this thing. Well, little did I know God had other plans for me. He sent me someone to partner with me and I am glad that the restaurant will be in good hands and we will be working with each other very well. Our waitress&waiters here are willing to go an extra mile in serving the guests with pride&Integrity. Thank you all and please let's enjoy ourselves and taste the food” he says.

Before he gets off at stage, one journalist raises her hand I wonder what she wants to ask. Bayanda nods.

“Since we all know that B stands for Bayanda what does Z stands for”? she asks.

Him: Z? I don't know what it stands for. Zanele maybe?

Everyone laughs. What is the joke again?

Her: How come you don't know what it stands for. Isn't she your partner?

Me: She is but I don't know her nor seen her live. We don't even keep in touch.

Her: So, you've partnered with a ghost?

Him: Pretty much so and no more questions, let's enjoy everyone.

He leaves the podium and I smile a little, nice speech. I look around and I see everyone went back to doing what they were doing. Well, this is where I call it off a night, my work here is done. I look for the man I was chatting with earlier and I see him flirting with another woman. "Jerk" I mutter to myself as I go out. My life is so boring though, I shake my head and walk to the car.

v

Sindiswa

I lied to Nathi about meeting an old school “friend” of mine. I couldn't bring myself telling her that I am meeting up with Siphon, she would've stopped me and lectured me, argh. I am already at the guesthouse as per our arrangement in terms of location. I know that some of you are calling me names right now and how much of a fool I am, you guys don't understand. I love Siphon and not being able to see him for a month really stressed me, I couldn't function at all. I just did not want to accept that he has moved on, I just couldn't. Y'all should've seen my face when his name flashed on the screen! My tummy was doing spins, my heart leapt with happiness....A knock comes through at the door. I go and open it, there he is standing looking all sorts of yummy and a little bit drunk. He attacks me with a kiss and pushes me back inside and kicks the door close, he touches me all over my body. His kiss was rough but I love it regardless. He tear off my dress and push me on the bed, he parts my legs apart and pulls my hair making my head to fall back...

11

Nathi

5 months later the restaurant is doing good and the turnovers are pretty good. I must applaud Bayanda for holding it down. Well, we still haven't officially met as “partners” just yet, we communicate via E-mails. The other restaurant I decided to turn it into a library and study hall, oh and a small internet café on the side. It is still under construction though. Anyway, today I have a date. I have been single for far too long and so I decided to join the tinder gang, giving relationships a new chance and I got to mingle with few of the potentials there. Some were fakes while some were just perverts, gross I must say. I video call some of them just to make sure that its really them, not some hot dashing male model they got from the internet. I pray that this one goes well because I've been very unlucky when it comes to successful dates. I've been battling with my mind on what to wear, I mean I'm going to a picnic. See? This potential of mine is taking me to a picnic at some park around here, I hope he will bring enough food because I'm such a foodie, I love eating. I finally settle for my summer dress and sandals. I take my car keys and drive to the park. I get to the park and I scan for Mr Him Vuyo Mashaba, yeah yeah. Apparently he is some big business shot around here. Why ain't

he married? I also don't know. I see him seating on a blanket, he looks nothing like in the pictures or video calls! This is not him, I swear but he is the only one with a picnic basket next to him. I take out my phone and call him just to make sure, it rings and I see him answering it. I laugh! This guy looks like a phara/druggie. I roll my eyes and hang up. My mind is telling me to drive, and go back to my house and leave him here but the other part is disputing that. Argh, let me just go to him. Maybe just maybe, argh whatever. I walk to where he is seated and I greet him.

“Ek'se. Sit down” he greets back without even looking at me. He is busy playing candy crush. The nerve of him.

Wow! I roll my eyes, this one is a true phara I'm telling you guys.

“That's the reason why you single” I say.

Finally he looks at me, good Lord this is not what I have signed up for. He is chewing a match stick, and his eyes are blood shot

red o kare he had a pull or one, ai, total turn off. He rakes my body from head to toe and licks his lips.

“ou not bad. You actually good” he says.

I shake my head. This one is definitely wasting my time.

“Why don't you look anything like in the pictures? You look like a druggie”! yelling.

“Haven't you heard of filters”? he shoots back.

Me: Nope I haven't and why are you using filters? You are a man for Christ sake!

Him: Who said filters are for females only? We did not buy these smartphones not to use the camera filters. Now sit down and let's get to know each other better.

Me: I'm fine standing.

Him: You came all the way from the burbs just to stand here and watch me eat? Enhlek, you think you better than me neh?

Me: Why would I even think that? I mean you Mr hot shot business man, clearly I am not better than you.

Him: Just sit down woman!

Me: Why are you shouting?

Him: You working on my last nerves. I am trying to be a gentleman here, so please do me a favor and meet me half way.

I laugh and sit down. He seems like an interesting character this one, imma gonna enjoy this picnic after all.

Him: Beer or Oros?

I laugh. He is not being real right now.

Me: Water will be fine thank you.

Him: I did not mention water, woman.

Me: Oros, will do then.

Him: And don't expect expensive food like strawberries, creams and chocolates. Here I only deal with Bunny chows, Dumplings and cow heels.

Me: What?!

Him: Exactly. Now, let's start eating and enjoy.

This guy is just unbelievable! Fucken unbelievable! I am a joke to him, A whole "Lmao" because wow. What a phara business man.

v

Sindiswa

Sihle is pacing up and down I think she is having labour pains, I'm not sure. I am relaxing on the couch watching her causing me unnecessary headache. Oh and by the way she is overdue, well I might have a hand in that but who cares? This woman almost ruined my 12 years of marriage. I won't lie to you guys, being back here is useless. Siphso doesn't acknowledge my presence, everything is about Sihle. Sihle this Sihle that. We are not even having sex, who am I kidding? We don't even exchange words, I really don't know what I did. I really thought that we were gonna work things out, but boy was I wrong? I was very much wrong I am even regretting coming back here. All I do is cook for him&Sihle. Clean for them and wash their laundry, all Sihle does is to send me around I can't even complain because I am told that I am more of a maid than a wife, since I'm unable to conceive. The kids have moved out, they are now staying with their maternal aunt. They've ceased keeping contact with their father, they want nothing to do with him. I am a slave in my own house while Sihle is the Queen of

the house. Even if I want to move out where will I go because I did not tell Zubenathi that I am leaving, I just packed my bags and left without telling her anything or bidding good bye. I only called her 2 weeks later when I have already settled

and as per usual she preached to me and asked me why didn't I tell her. She even told me that I don't even know my worth just imagine! Who does she think she is telling me that I don't even know my worth?

“Call an ambulance for me Sindy, I am in labour” she tells me.

I look at her and turn up the volume. She has hands so, I am pretty much sure that she can call the ambulance herself. She is screaming now and of which is irritating me.

“You are disturbing my peace with your screaming keep it down”! Yelling.

My words fall into deaf ears because she screams more and busy saying the baby is coming. I take my phone and dial Siphos number and it goes straight to voicemail. I hear something slurping down, I turn to look and it is Sihle. I think

she fainted or something because she stopped screaming. Panic gets me, and I quickly dial an ambulance, I give them all the details and hang up. What to do now? I am so clueless. I run to the kitchen and I grab a bottle of water in the fridge, then I go back to her and pour her with them. She wakes up gulping for air.

“My baby. Please save my baby” she says in a faint voice.

She stands up slowly, I don't dare help her. She is on her feet now. My eyes tell me to look on the floor, I look and I see blood. I look at Sihle's legs and it is flowing in her legs. She starts running around again, this time it hits her hard because she knocked down the wine cabinet and all the wine fall, scattering on the floor.

“What the hell Sihle! Do you know how expensive these wines are, huh”! Yelling.

She screams too and starts walking up down blood dripping on the floor. This is tiring, like seriously. I sit back down waiting for

an ambulance to come. I try calling Siphho again and his phone is still on voicemail. I pray the baby doesn't make it.

√

Aziza

“Found who she is”? I ask Sam. One of my trusted contacts, well my father's contact to be specific.

“Nothing. I even tried hacking the computer system, nothing” he responds.

Me: Dammit. Why isn't there anything about this person? Why don't we know who it is? This is frustrating.

Him: But I've called one of my friend in America to hack Mr Genaro's cellphone. Maybe we might find something.

Me: Maybe. You not sure.

Him: Yes, I am not but I hope we find something.

I nod and click the pen roughly on top of the table.

Him: What time is your boyfriend coming back? Where is he anyway?

Me: He went to buy toiletries for me and I don't know what time he will be back. Wanna have a little fun?

He smirks and then comes and stand behind me. He starts massaging my shoulders, his hands are such a turn on, I am getting turned on now. His right hand moves down to my chest then my boob, his other hand follows suit. He is pinching my nipples now and nibbling in my ear, well Bayanda and I never have sex. His machine is not working, it never wakes up no matter how much foreplay I do. I tried every technique in the book but nothing, that's why I decided to find myself a fuck buddy to satisfy my sex cravings. I don't know if it's the muthi or what, I don't know. Anyway back here, he blows air in my neck and I feel some tingling sensation. My nipples hardens,

mans knows how to turn me on. A knock comes through at the door, dammit.

“Who is it”? I ask.

“It's me” Bayanda responds on the other side.

Me: Hang on just a minute.

Sam takes out his hands on my boobs and I fix myself.

Me: We will continue with this later. The usual place.

Him: Whatever you say.

He goes and sit on the couch pretending to be reading a newspaper.

“Come in” I say.

The door opens and he comes in carrying grocery bags. I don't know if he's dumb or what, why would he bring the grocery here? Does he want the workers to start talking? I don't know man but this muthi made him stupid or did I overdose? Urhh, he is like a puppy following everyone who tells it to follow. If he continues like this, people will eventually see that I did something to him, and I don't want that, I will have to visit bab Dlokuvu again. Since I've managed to make him turn his back on his family, it's fine. They've stopped asking questions I practically told them where to get off. He places them on the floor and sit down. Oh, did I tell you that I now run this place? Yes, I do and since the silence partner is unknown I have all the freedom I need.

Him: I got everything you wanted and I've bought some extra sanitary pads.

Me: Thanks. Mind going out again?

Him: Go out to where?

Me: Argh never mind. Make yourself useful and starts filing the invoices.

Him: On it ma'am.

I look at Sam who is looking at me somehow, his stare is not giving me any peace at all. I hope he is not thinking something sinister, like taking the restaurant or something. I smile and he smiles back. Why is he still here again?

v

Nathi

To say I am bored will be understatement. I am BORED like real BORED. This guy is nothing like what he presented himself to me, his English is just not on I am not saying mine is. It's just that his is worse. We are not even having a proper conversation, he is busy telling me about soccer&rugby. He is not even a business man, he is a gambler and to him gambling it's a job. His words not mine. Right now I am trying a way on how I will

leave because honestly I have had enough of this guy. 2 hours wasted to absolutely nonsense.

“As I was saying, I...” he did not even finish his sentence, I hear female voices from a distance. I can tell by the look on his face that he knows them. I travel my eyes to where the noise is coming from and I swear I almost peed on myself. 5 girls are coming our way and they are heavily armed, they look angry. If they were to start whopping me I wouldn't survive.

“Shit Dineo! You better leave now or else uzolala e sbhedlela akashayi u girl uyabulala(You don't want to find yourself hospitalized. That girl doesn't hit she kills), I will distract them” he tells me already standing up going to them. He did not have to tell me twice! I stand up and start running for my life, I can hear them insulting me behind. I get into my and roar the engine to life, off I drive! I look at the rear mirror and I can see them running to my car. I take out my hand and show them my middle finger, no more!!! I am done with picnics.

12

Sihle

“It's okay baby. Mommy is here with you and she is going to love&protect you with her all. Your father? He will be very delighted to hold you in his arms, I can't wait for him to see you”

Voice: It's time to go now. You can give him back.

Me: Give you back? I can't give you my son! Who are you and why do you want my son?

Voice: Because he has to go, time is running out and you need to go back to the world.

I can't tell if the voice its of a man or a woman, it sounds muffled.

Me: Go back to the world? What are you talking about? I am not giving you my son. I am not!

Voice. Fine then, let me bid my goodbye to him then.

Me: You promise not to take him away from me, right?

Voice: I promise.

Me: But I don't see you, why are you not showing yourself?

Shone through a very bright light blinding my eyes, I protected them with my arm shielding myself from the light, it was too bright. It becomes dim again. I look at where the light was it was no longer there, that was weird. Something tells me to look at my arms, I look at them and they are empty.

“No no no! My baby please give me back my baby. You promised! You fucken promised”!

“He is safe and at peace now” the voice echoed until it became silent again.

I run around in circles in this beautiful garden, I see no sign of life. All of a sudden I feel cold and I fall down.

••••

I slowly open my eyes, and I am welcomed by a big light looking down at me, this one was less bright compared to the one I saw. Was it in a dream or what? But whatever it was it felt real. I look around the room I am in and I realize that I'm at the hospital. I move my hand to my tummy and it's flat, panic take over replaying the scene that landed me here. My baby! My baby! I want my baby! The machines start beeping abnormally, tears streaming down my face. I feel like suffocating. I look for the panic button that's near but I see none. I can feel my walls closing in on me real fast. I don't know if I'm having panic attack or heart attack, right now I need to be stabilized, but what's the use because I've lost my baby? They took him. They took him from me, I had him in my arms. I held him and they had to take him away from me. 9 months+1 month of crazy cravings, swollen feet and nausea were nothing. It was all just a waste of

time, it was all for nothing. Thinking of it njer shreds my heart into thousand pieces. I start to shake roughly, and I can feel my mouth filling up with lot of saliva. Where the hell is the stuff anyway? This is utter nonsense! The door flings open and I see a nurse coming in, “Oh my God” she says and rushes out. She comes back with a doctor and three more nurses.

“Sedate her she's having seizure”! the doctor gives out an order.

The nurses scurried across the room doing Lord knows what! One nurse puts a metal in my mouth preventing me not to bite my tongue. The other one injects the drip with sleeping drugs and the doctor is writing something in his file. I slowly close my eyes. Maybe this is all just a dream, I will sleep then wake up from it, it has to be a dream.

v

Nathi

As soon as I arrived at my apartment I take off my weave and blocked this phara guy everywhere. To think that I almost got beaten up by those Kasi girls gives me chills, imagine a whole me being beaten? I laugh at it, it's ridiculous! Urh urh, relationships are piece of shit. How do you guys relationship though? Because wow ku tricky. I take a quick bath and I decide to drive to the restaurant just to check how it's going. What if they've traced my number plates and they are hunting me down as we speak? Nope, I will go tomorrow. Seeing that I'm bored, I decide to give my mother a call, she answers on the third ring.

“Nono” she answers.

Me: Hey ma unjani? (How are you)

Her: Siphilile sisi wena?(We are all and you)

Me: Yaphila nami(I'm well too). Benginihlola njer(I was checking up on you)

Her: Siyabonga nono(Thank)

Me: Don't you guys need anything? Are you covered?

I can hear her sigh, I wonder what's wrong.

Her: Eish nono asizwani nokukuhlupha(We don't like bothering)

Me: Get out of here! Aning'hluphi, you guys are my responsibility. Khuluma nami(Talk to me)

Her: Labantwana bane trip yeskolo and asinamali yokubabhadalela(The kids have school trip and we can't afford to pay for them)

Me: When is it and how much?

Her: Friday and it's R250 per child.

Me: And they will need pocket money and food for the road.

Her: Yes. That's why singafunanga ukukuhlupha.(That's why I did not wanna trouble you)

Me: You are not mama. I'd spend on you guys other than clubs or something. What is Kat saying?

Her: Usena 3 days angalali la endlini.(She hasn't been sleeping at home for 3 days now)

Me: What a useless mother she is. Don't worry mama I will send you money if only you promise to come over for lunch tomorrow, sizokhuluma kahle nawula(We will talk well when you here)

Her: Uyopheka? (Are you going to cook)

I laugh...

Me: Yes mama I will be cooking.

Her: Oh, see you then ke. Uzosilanda?(Are you going to fetch us)

Me: See you ke. I love you and I will hire you guys a transport.

Her: Alright. Love you too and ngizoza nama(I will come with biscuits) kuku for in case.

Me: Alright if you say so.

I hang up and browse through the TV channels. Right now I don't know why my mom doesn't trust my cooking

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I mean I once cooked for them when I went to visit and she even complimented my food, gosh mothers and overreacting. I have to buy everything I will need, let me go now and not waste time I still have to print out recipes.

v

Bayanda

I am done doing laundry and cooking. Aziza went out with her friends, and she will be hosting them here in our house later on. I gave her all of my cards that's how much I love and I wanna see her happy. I've even allowed her to run the restaurant, and I decided to stay here at home and do all the chores, she even has my phone with her, I don't dare touch hers. You know I even stopped going to my parents house, I'd rather be here with Aziza than them. Speaking of them makes me angry, I hate them. Seeing that I have no plans I decided to go and take a nap. Before I could even stand up and go to my bedroom the door bell rang, I stand up and go and attend the door. As soon as I open I am met by a punch from my older brother. I did not expect it, he throws them at me mercilessly. I don't even know what I did to him.

“Pick him up! We are going to make him vomit all the love portion he ate” he yells.

I feel myself being yanked up and I am now standing looking at my brother straight in the face, I am too weak to move or say anything. As blurry as my vision is, I see Aziza behind him. She hit him with a brick and he falls down, the other 2 let go of me that's when I take a knife from the table and stab one in the leg. The other one runs away. Aziza pushes me inside the house and closes the door, my brother is still passed out at the door and so is his friend.

“We will have to move out of here. They will come back for us and you know how dangerous your brother is. Start packing our clothes while I go and make a phone call” she says and walks away.

I steady myself and go start with the packing.

v

Sindiswa

I am pacing up&down in the lounge. I am in deep shit, instead of rejoicing I'm filled with regrets. Should it happen that she loses the baby then it's all my fault, and Sipho will have a fit a major one I'm telling you. I can run away but where will I go? I have no where and I have no money. My only option right now is Nathi. I run to the guest room, open the closet and start taking out all of my clothes, I take out my suitcase underneath the bed. I throw them as they are, I zip it close. I wheel it and before I can even put my hand on the door handle, the door flings open, and here stood Sipho angry as ever. His eyes travel to my suitcase, I shake my head tears already streaming down my cheeks. He pushes me back inside the house causing the suitcase to slip out of my hand.

“First you kill my baby then you want to run away? Bitch I will show you who I am”! he roars and I swear I just peed on myself a little.

He pulls me by my braids that I did 3 days ago. I fall on the ground and he pulls them again dragging me across the floor. All I could say was sorry but my sorry fall on deaf ears! He opens his bedroom door and starts kicking me senselessly, all this while I am covering my face with my hands protecting it. He kicked me with his boot and I feel few of my bones breaking,

he gets on top of me, and removes my hands on my face and pulls them to him, he twists my left arm and I feel some excruciating pain. Punch, Slap, kick, punch slap kick. Spits on me and kicks me again. I see him take out his belt and he is beating me with it, I feel every flesh of my skin stinging with a burning sensation. I am losing all the ability to hold on, I can feel my soul slowly leaving my body. He stops and looks at me.

“I'll be back for you/ I am not done with you. Today I will kill you just like you killed my baby”!

He walks out and bangs the door. I am lying in a fetus position, my body is in my pain. With the last strength in me I reach for my phone in my pocket, I'm just glad that he did not take it with him. I dial Nathi's number and she answers after her phone ringing for a while.

“He...he'll...help me. Ple...please” I say and hang up. I've brought this upon myself, I have to suffer the consequences.

13

Nathi

I stop my car abruptly in her drive way or should I say Siphos? Argh, it's one and the same thing. There's another car parked, I guess it's Siphos. I leapt out of my car and run inside the house, I can hear noises coming from upstairs, I Ascend them as quickly as I can and follow the room where the voices come from, it's female voices.

“You are useless wena! How can you do such a stupid thing?! Now we will no longer be receiving our monthly allowance because of you”! her mother, I think. Is yelling at her, no scratch that she is shouting at her.

“Mama let's take her to the hospital and then you will question her later, she is dying” Hlomile (her younger sister)

“It's best she dies because right now going forward she is useless. Very useless. She better fix this mess” she says.

I couldn't stand her insulting Sindiswa like this. I made my way in pushing her hard aside deliberately, she almost fell but she balanced herself with the wall. I crouch next to the helplessly, brutally beaten Sindiswa and I put my hand on her neck feeling her pulse, it is still there but it's faint.

“Mile please help me pick her up, she is heavy” I tell Hlomile.

Hlomile comes and help me but her mother stops her before we can make Sindi stand on her own.

“You are not going to help this good for nonsense girl. Her friend will help her” she says and walks away.

Hlomile follows behind her. I shake my head and lift up Sindiswa slowly, she is heavy yoh and I don't think we will make it down the stairs, it's a lost cause. In fact we won't even make it half way! Now, I have to think of plan B. I hear heels clicking on the floor and I am stunned to see Hlomile and her mother, I wonder why the change of heart. Anyway let me not dwell on it too much. I hold her from the legs, Hlomile holds her upper body and her mother holds her head. We make our way out as

slowly as we could, I couldn't help but notice the disgusted look on her face. I can't help but think of the insults she hurled at her earlier on. I put her at the back of car and I thank Hlomile for the help I don't even dare thank the mother. I go to my driver's seat and roar the engine to life. I hear a knock on my window, I roll it down and it is Hlomile.

“Which hospital are you taking her to”? she asks.

“General hospital of course. She deserves to be taken there” her mother replies.

Alright, her mother is a pain in the ass and I am trying not to lose my cool. I take a deep breath.

“I'm taking her to a private hospital” I say.

Her: Who's going to pay for her bill?

Me: How is that any of your business?

Her: Don't you dare talk to me like that I am not your whore of a mother.

Me: You will never be her even if you were given a chance! You bloody old crook nonsense hag, Voetsek!

I slid up the window and drive off. Sindiswa's mother is one sick old wrinkled face hag. I look at Sindiswa and shake my head, this one doesn't listen at all, and I wouldn't be surprised if she goes back to Siphos. Hhayi hair air maarn. If this is not a wake up call for her, then I don't know what will wake her up.

v

Aziza

I take off my shoes and make my way to the small mud hut. It is in a secluded area. Anita is the one who brought me here and here I am again. First the snakes comes and licks you for what

I also don't know. The snake is not that enormous. After it licks you Bab'Dlokuvu follows. I put down the R100 on the mat.

“Makhosi” I say.

“Ubuyile futhi”? (You back again)

Me: Yebo Makhosi

Him: Kwenzenjani?(what's going on)

Me: Lomuthi onginike wona Makhosi ai, yazi lendoda yami iseyisi yoyo.(The herbs that you've given me, ai. You know my husband has become a toy)

Him: Wenzeni wena? Lomuthi bewoku menza ukuthy umthande ungamuphenduli I siyoyo(What did you do? The herbs I've given you was to make him love you not turn him into a toy)

Me: Ngiyazi Makhosi. Indaba bewungenzela kancance bengifuna into esheshayo.(I know. The thing is the herbs were taking their time to work and I needed something fast)

Him: Manjer ufuna ngikwenzeleni? Now, what do you want me to do for you)

Me: Siphindisile e muva(Take it back). Remove the spell.

Him: Angeke kulunge loko sewumoshile and kuseza okukhulu(It won't be right, you've ruined things already and more is coming)

Me: Uchaza ukuthini?(what are you saying)

Him: Sekumosheke konke. Uzenzile manjer kumele ubhekane nalendaba yakho mina angeke ngisa kusiza, o kwami kufeziwe(All is ruined. You've brought this upon yourself, you will have to face the issue at hand and there is nothing I can do to help you. Mine has been fulfilled)

I take a deep breath. I am ruined. I am done. Not unless...I look at Makhosi.

Me: Baba angeke sikwazi ukumdabulisa amafu?(Can't we kill him)

Him: Angeke kulunge. Nawe uzom'landela nomndeni wakho.(It won't be possible. You also follow suit and so will your family) ngaphandle ke kokuthy athole Umuntu uzomuthanda ngokwe qiniso, lapho ke uzophepha(Not unless he finds someone who will truly love him, only then the spell will be lifted off)

Hhayi I don't want him loving someone else! I want him to love only me.

Me: Makhosi kuzokusiza ukuthy ungisize or ngizotshela abantu ukuthy ungum'tgakathi(It will help you to help me or else I will tell people that you are a witch)

He laughs and his laugh booms across the small hut, a laugh that makes my whole body hot. My vision becomes blurry and I

lie on the floor in a foetus position. I don't know what's happening to me, I start scratching myself, my whole body is itchy.

“Angibhenywa ntombazana. Ngizokufundisa isifundo”! (I not taken for a a ride. I will teach you a lesson)

His voice booms across the room...I can hear voices in my head, issa mess.

v

Sindiswa

I wake up and I realize that I am at the hospital. Well not your public hospital but a private one judging by the beautiful painted walls. There's a TV mounted on the wall, this must be one expensive hospital. My body is still in pain and so is my face. There are books on the shelf, your magazines, Novels and poetry. I take the remote that is next to the bed and switch on the TV. I am trying so hard not to think about what happened

to me, I am blocking the events from occurring. I just want to forget about everything and Sipho. I just wonder who brought me here, I pray and hope it was Nathi. The door opens whilst in those thoughts and a doctor comes in smiling he looks fine and the coat suit him well, he is just not my favourite coffee but he can be Nathi's cup of cappuccino!

“Good evening Sindiswa. How are you feeling now? I'm Dr Molope. Your doctor for the night” he asks and introduces himself.

I shrug...

Him: I understand. Would you like to open a case of domestic violence?

Me: Domestic violence? For who?

Him: For the person who is responsible for landing you here.

Me: I don't want to and it was just a little misunderstanding.

Him: This looks nothing like a “little misunderstanding” this is deeper than this. You have broken bones.

Me: So? That's nothing new there. Who brought me in?

Him: Some woman. I did not get her name and it seemed like she was in a hurry.

I couldn't help but notice a smile forming in his lips. Could it be that? Uh uh, no I don't think so.

Me: I see. The bill?

Him: She settled everything.

Me: I see.

Him: Still don't want to open a case?

Me: Yes. I can not open a case for my husband. He did nothing wrong and I hope this is the last time you yelp about this.

Him: Very well then. I will send a nurse to come and give your medication and your meal.

Me: Thank you.

He nods and walks away.

Who does he think he is telling me to open a case for my husband? I will deal with him my way and that little tramp called a wife!

v

Nathi

I'm at the mall buying grocery for tomorrow. I want to go all out for my parents and Kat's kids, at least they will keep me company. I am pushing my trolley when I feel someone pulling my dress, I look down and it is this other cute Angel. She looks distraught though and it's like she's been crying, I look around to see if she came with someone but I see no one approaching us. I kneel down just to level up with her.

“Hey what is your name”? I ask.

“Le...lelo” she responds.

Me: Okay Lelo. Why are you wandering alone at the mall? Who did you come with?

Her: I came with my aunt but sh...she left me because I was crying for ice cream. She started shouting at me and left me here.

Me: What the hell? What kind of an aunt is that that leaves a little girl like you in the mall alone! Where are your parents?

Her: Never met my mom and my dad is working night shift. He is a doctor.

Me: Hmmm...how old are you?

Her: 10 years old.

Me: Okay Lelo. Let me finish shopping then I will drive you home and I will buy that ice cream you've been crying for, okay? She nods.

Me: Okay. Now walk right next to me and don't talk to any strangers, okay?

Her: Crystal. What's your name?

Me: Nathi.

She nods and we continue walking. Who on earth leaves a young girl at a mall with all the kidnappings&killings happening currently? Yasis! Heartless bastards. I hate the aunt already even though I don't know her, argh.

14

Bayanda

“Eat this meat bruh” my big brother offers me meat.

Me: I'm good bro.

Him: Come on man. Do you know how far I went to get this meat?

Me: Why would you want to go far just to buy meat? There are butcheries nearby.

Him: Heard that it's good quality and I had to taste it, I actually agree, this meat is quality. Just one bite and I will understand if you don't like it.

Sizwe: Try it bro. Maybe you will like it, who knows?

Me: If it means getting you guys off my back then I will just eat it.

Them: We will.

Sizwe: That's a promise.

I take one big chunk and bite tasting it, to my surprise the meat is mouthwatering. It's actually nice I must say.

I find myself eating the whole chunk of meat.

Sizwe: We told you that this meat is of high grade. It's levels, not fit for the ghetto.

I laugh...

He is one crazy bastard. I see them smiling and sipping on their beers. I love this moment right here it's refreshing and calming. We are having a random conversation when I feel my tummy

clenching. It was hot and the meat is doing gymnastics I'm telling you, I can feel that I will have a runny tummy. All of a sudden I feel nauseas, I am doing all of this looking at my brother and my friend, they don't seem to notice that I'm dying here. I try calling out for them to help me but no voice comes out. Everything in my stomach starts boiling, I'm sweating and I am about to spew everything. I didn't even wait any longer, I can sense the vomit wanting to come out fast and before I know it, everything came out. I vomit everything that I've eaten, I can't seem to stop vomiting. I can literally feel my intestines wanting to come out.

•••••

I wake up very fast. The dream I just had felt so real, why would I even have such a dream? According to my understanding in African culture if you dream eating that means someone is bewitching you. Who would want to bewitch me and why? Why did my brother give me that meat? Could it be possible that he is the one bewitching me? I sit up right and I realize that I am not at my place. Where am I? I get this urge of wanting to go and throw up. My stomach is boiling and I am sweating just like it happened in my dream. I leapt out of bed and look for the nearest bathroom, I can feel the vomit up here in my throat. I

see one since the door is open, I make my way in and I do not waste any more time. I throw up everything at that instant, just like in my dreams. What the actual fuck?!

v

Nathi

I am done cooking and setting the table. I must really give myself an applaud because wow, I went all chef here. The food looks great and let me not get started about the taste. I put everything into place and go to the kitchen, I pour myself a glass of wine. My family will be coming in any minute from now. Dad hates alcohol with all of his heart, I quickly gulp down the wine and rinse my glass. I can hear voices and I know that it is them, this will actually be their first time coming here in my apartment. A knock comes through, I go and open the door.

“Welcome to my home family. Please come in” I say holding the door for them.

My mom and Kat's children eyes are wandering around. I go and hug my mother then my father and lastly the kids. I lead them to the lounge and they get settled.

“Yikwakho la Sisi Nathi”! Is this your house) Nobuhle, Kat's 3rd born asks.

“Yes baby it's my house” I reply her.

Her: Yinhle(It's beautiful)

Me: Ngiyabonga (Thank you)

Dad: You've outdid yourself my daughter. I am so prod of you.

Me: Thank you pops.

Mom: Hhayi nokho une taste, akufani shem(Hey, at least you have taste. You trying)

Me: I always had taste and you know it.

Her: Suka la wena(shift here)

I laugh...

Me: You know I'm right. Athi nginiphakele(Let me dish up for you guys)

Dad: Finally! I thought you will never say that.

Me: Yeah yeah.

I've cooked Rice, Roasted lamb leg, grilled chicken, creamy spinach, potato salad, green salad, chakalaka and beetroot. For dessert I will be serving them Malva pudding and chocolate mousse with berries

Advertisement

guys I went all out for my parents and the kids. I finish dishing up and I hand them their food.

Dad: You've cooked your whole grocery?

Me: Nope the whole store.

Mom: Kubukeka kumnadi(It looks delicious)

Me: That's because kumnandi vele.

Dad: We are the ones who will rate you. Stop rating yourself.

Me: My bad.

I sit down. Dad says grace and we all start digging in. Judging by their faces it's confirmation enough for me that the meal tastes amazing!

Mom: You've topped it.

Me: I know.

Dad: I hope there's more left because we want take aways. This is scrumptious my daughter.

Me: Look at you speaking bombastic words.

Him: English is my speciality.

We all laugh. It feels nice spending time with my family, all of us in one roof.

Inno: You must give me the spinach recipe sis Nathi. It tastes nice and it's my first time eating it.

Me: Stick with me baby girl and you will go places.

Her: I'm sticking with you sis.

We high five and laugh.

Me: Dessert time. Come and help me Inno.

Buhle: Nami ngingeza?(can I also come)

Me: Of course! Three is better than one.

We all stand up, I place my hands on their shoulders. Maar why would Kat torture these innocent and bubbly souls?

√

Bayanda

My stomach feels empty. I shake my head and stands up. I've been seating here ever since, I thought that I was dying. I feel

lighter now and it's like something have been lifted up off my shoulder. I open the door and make my out, I want to know whose house is this and what am I doing here. Whoa, where the hell is Aziza? I go to the kitchen and I see someone making juice and humming a song, I guess she is the owner of this house. I clear my throat and she jumps dropping the glass she had in her hand, she turns to look at me and I can see shock written all over her face.

“Good Lord! What the hell”! she yells.

Me: Hello to you too. What am I doing here?

Her: Here? Oh, Aziza said that you are looking for a place to crash for a few days.

Me: Why? What's wrong with my house?

Her: Wrong?

Me: You heard me.

Her: You don't remember anything?

Me: Do you think I would be asking you if I knew?

She shakes her head.

Me: Now talk.

Her: Let's just wait for Aziza and she will clarify everything for you. I am just helping out with a place to stay I don't know anything.

Me: Where is she?

Her: I...I don't know. She did not tell me anything.

I nod and leave her there going back to the room where I was in. I am trying to put pieces of puzzles together, something is

amiss and this woman has guilt return all over her face it's like she is hiding something, but what? Something is just not right. I don't know man, something is just not right. I feel like I've been living a double life or something or I've been under a spell. It's all a blur but I will get to the bottom of this.

v

Aziza

My head feels very heavy and my body feels cold. I don't know what happened, everything is just a blur. I am at tops spar buying myself a bottle of wine, I need it, my throat is super dry. I pay for it and drive off. I look at my phone and I have 15 missed calls, whoever it is they can wait. I have to get home and take a long bubble bath then deal with my so called boyfriend. I have to do something just to tame him not to be a toy, he is useless right now. I park my car at the garage and go inside the house. I pass Anita who is pacing up&down eating her nails. She pulls me by my hand.

“I think he is out of it. The portion is no longer working” she says shaking.

“Let go of my hand, I don't have time for this” I yank my hand off her and head to the room. I open the door and I stop on my tracks, Bayanda is seating on the bed looking at the door. He smiles at me and I return it back.

“Hey” He greets.

I look at him, something has changed.

Me: Hey Babe.

I get in and close the door behind me.

Him: Please lock the door I don't want your friend coming here disturbing us.

I nod and lock the door. No man, it's like he is the old Bayanda not this puppet one.

He puts his hand in his pocket and his hand comes out with a red small piece of cloth tied with black wool, he lifts it up in the air.

Him: Spill!

Me: I...I can explain.

Him: I'm listening

His voice is cold, it sends shivers down my spine and I am sweating. If looks can kill I'm sure I would've been dead by now, I shake my head.

Him: S.P.I.L.L. I won't report myself.

Yeap, he is back and right now I have to think fast.

v

Sihle

I descend the stairs and make my way to the kitchen, I am hungry. I stop on my tracks when I see Siphos seated on the couch looking at a picture, it's like he's been crying. I walk up to him and he is looking at Sindiswa's picture. My blood boils at that instant. Why is he looking at a picture of a heartless woman who killed our baby? I snatch it away from him and he looks up at me and clicks his tongue.

Me: Why are you looking at her picture? This woman killed our baby Siphos! Our son and you still have the nerve of looking at her picture, how could you?

Him: Because she is my wife and I love her!

Me: What about me Siphos? You are supposed to be comforting me and help me mourn for our baby!

Him: Go back to your home or something and leave me the hell alone! I am going to look for my wife!

Me: How could you be so heartless Siphho? What wrong did I do to you?

I am crying and it seems as if like my tears don't move him.

Him: I don't have to explain myself to you.

Me: Do you honestly think she will get back together with you after you landed her at the hospital?

Him: Yes she will. Because she loves me and she is my wife!
Now, excuse me.

Me: You dare go out of that door don't come back here! We are done.

He moves close to me and I can feel his breath.

Him: You threatening me in my own house? You've agreed to be my second wife. I told you that you will always come last to me. Deal with it and take it up like as strong woman that you are! Don't even try and stop me!

He pushes me and I fall back on the couch. I hear the door slamming, I let out a loud painful wail. He doesn't love me. He doesn't! I...I can never be Sindiswa, I can't replace her. It hurts, it hurts so much!!! He is heartless. A cruel bastard.

15

Sindiswa

I am now feeling much better compared to last night, the pills really did help with the pains and the staff here is very dedicated to their job, and very friendly. Their professionalism is on point and the care they give, God bless them. The door opens and a doctor comes in, a different one but ke what am I expecting because Dr Molepo works night. She stands next to my bed and flash me a colgate smile.

“Good day Mrs Baloi” she greets.

“Good afternoon Dr”

Her: I'm Dr Schoeman and here with me are your results.

Me: Is it that bad?

Her: Not at all. You have few broken bones, ribs and a twisted ankle and I don't know if you knew or what but you lost your baby.

I let out a sarcastic laugh. This Dr better tell me that this is a joke.

Me: What are you saying exactly Dr? You mean that I was pregnant?

Her: Yes and by the look of things it seems like you were three months pregnant. I'm sorry for you loss, Mrs Baloi.

I feel my head spin. How? I mean we've been trying for years for a baby without any success and now here is this Dr standing before me tells me that I lost my baby. How? I mean I saw no changes in my body or eating pattern, this is just too much. A part of me is relieved that the baby did not make it, I mean I did not bond with it imagine if I did and became attached to it? I do not even wanna think about it. On the other side it would've fixed my marriage with Siphon, I'm sure he was gonna stop being abusive towards me. I saw how he was with Sihle whilst she

was still pregnant, he made sure that she got her everything she wanted and made sure that she was comfortable. I'm just sad that I will not get to experience any of that, not even a pinch of it. I close my eyes and process it, I will not even mourn for a foetus. It wasn't a full made baby anyway. I'm just glad that I did not know about it, as for Sihle now that she has lost her baby this means that her stay at my house has come to an end. She must leave and allow me to fix things with my husband. Whoa, who am I kidding? I am not fixing shit with him. I want him to suffer and that whore wife of his. Nah, I wouldn't survive watching him suffering, he is still my husband and we are very much still married. I know that some of you think that I am a fool, stupid and a doormat but I vowed to love him through good and bad times. Through trials&tribulations, through thick&thin. Till death do us apart, I made these vows in front of a pastor, church members, family&friends. We vowed to love each other till the end. I've made a vow before God. I am a wife and my aunt told me to "Bekezela" and that's what I will do. I will fight for my marriage. Oh, I've even forgotten about the Dr's presence.

Me: Will that be all?

Her: Yes and I will discharge you tomorrow.

Me: Great. I can't wait.

Her: Is there a specific person you would like us to call to come and fetch you?

Flip, I forgot my phone and the only numbers I know by head are Siphos'.

Her: If there's no one we can hire you a cab.

Me: Don't worry yourself about that, I know exactly who is going to come and fetch me.

Her: Very well then. I will send one of the nurses with your medication.

Me: Thank you Dr.

Her: Are you sure that you fine? Don't you need counselling?

Me: I am super fine, Dr. Don't worry about me.

Her: Very well, I will excuse myself.

Her pager goes on and she quickly gets out of my room, I guess she is rushing to another patient. Okay, now to call my husband and tell him to come and fetch me.

√

Bayanda

We are now back at our, hol'up, did I say "our"? Uh uh let me rephrase that. My house. Aziza has been crying ever since we arrived here pleading with me to forgive her and not chase her out. She has locked herself in what used to be our bedroom. She told me everything...she told me how she bewitched me, she confessed. Well, at first she did not wanna confess she was going around in circles, I am disgusted by her. Looking at her

right now makes my blood boil. I feel like snapping her neck in one motion and go and throw her body far away or in a river. Oh yah, as I was saying. As she was busy defending herself and trying to reason with me she started screaming and shouting, "leave me the hell alone. Okay okay I will confess, I will tell him everything ", she kept on saying those words. That's how she ended up confessing to me that she has bewitched me, her friend is the one who took her to Inyanga who gave her the herbs to use on me. How sick is that. I've been under a spell all along, i'm sure my workers were laughing at me. She practically made me a mime, I chuckle. She fucken controlled me. Controlled my money, my restaurant and my fucking house! I was a whole joke to everyone who knows me. What pisses me off more is that she made me turn my back against my family, my friends actually to everyone. She isolated me. I can't even believe that she hit my brother with a brick, my whole brother and knowing my brother he is gonna come at with everything he has. He won't understand that I was under a spell and controlled, that I was not myself. I hate myself for being weak! How come I did not notice that she was using muthi on me? It's fucken unbelievable, how it wear off I am glad and I am grateful for that dream I had eating that meat. I rake my hands all over my face, I am disgusted at myself. I pour myself a glass of whiskey and gulp it down one time, that witch is leaving my house I don't care where she will go, I just don't wanna be near

her right now and in future or else I will kill her. I will go to jail for murder. I pour myself another shot and gulp it down again. I wipe my lips and ascend the stairs to my bedroom. I try opening the door and it is locked, fuck. Plan B in motion, I kick down the door and it opens and i'm inside the bedroom. She stands up as soon as she see me

she comes to me and tries to hug me I push her aside and start packing her remaining clothes and her toiletries.

“Bayanda please I'm sorry baby. I...I didn't know what I was doing” she pleads.

She kneels and hug my legs, I shake her off and she falls down. I take all her luggage and go and put it outside the gate, I made sure that I packed everything of her. I don't want to see any trace of her things in my house not even her string of hair. I get to my room, pick her up and put her over my shoulder. She is screaming&kicking begging me to put her down. I throw her on the grass and get back inside the yard, I lock the gate and go inside the house leaving her banging the gate. I need a fucken cleansing ceremony and I will have to go home and apologise to my family. Women are cruel&heartless. Fuck love and everything I'm done with relationships, relationships are a

scam. Yasis female species, who on earth told them that in order for a man to love you, you must use a love potion? Whoever told them that crap deserves to rot in jail. Let a man love you naturally not because you forced him too. Love potion have it's own consequences, ladies wise up and stop bewitching your boyfriends. Wuhhh hha ahh, I never thought that Aziza will use muthi on me. A whole fucken Muthi, good Lord Jesus of Nazareth! This is causing me unnecessary headache. Women are a bunch of headache and a cup of witchcraft actually a jug!

v

Nathi

“Don't you think it's time you give love a chance again”? That's my dad.

We are now sitting in my beautiful garden, mini park of my mine. It is only me and my parents the kids are watching cartoons and stuffing themselves with junk.

Him: It's been over 5 years now since Obakeng died. You are not getting any younger and so are we. We want grandkids, we want to see you get married. I wanna walk you down the aisle.

Mom: He is right nono. Sekuyi skhathi sokuthi uthole umuntu (It's time you find yourself a man)

I think back of the dates I've been too and none of those guys were real, they were all fake and opportunists. None of them seemed to have genuine love, I mean true love. None of them showed that they are real. They are not Obakeng, Obakeng loved me unconditionally and he showed it to me everyday. I don't think there is a guy out there who will love me like Obakeng did. I purse my lips together. I know that my parents mean well but I haven't found the one yet, I'm not even sure if there is one for me out there. I think relationships are over rated, now it's smash&pass and material things. Love is no longer there.

Me: I tried and I've gone to few dates but none of them seemed to be interested in love, they want smash&pass.

Dad: You see my baby. Not every guy is bad out there, there are good guys who can love you the way you deserve. Who can prove to you that real love do exist. In order for you to get your prince charming you will have to kiss many frogs, all those frogs will lead you to your Knight in shining armour.

I chuckle

Mom: Forget those men that you've been to date with. Work on yourself, go out, make friends and do everything that will bring you peace. Don't go looking for love. Let love find you and it is only then that you will meet you match, he is somewhere out there waiting for you.

Dad: I'm sure he too has given up on love or he is still in the phase. We only want what's best for you baby, you've respected us. You did not go and make babies out of wedlock, you've never defied us, dropped out off school or disappoint us. Well, except for the weekend where you ran away from home to sleep at your boyfriend's place.

Mom: She even went out through the window and jumped the fence. Samufuna ubusuku bonke (We looked for you all night)

I laugh. Them reminding me of that weekend really brought a ball of happiness, life was easy back then.

Me: What if there is no mate for me? What if no one will love me like Obakeng did?

Him: Ah.hha that's the problem. You compared all those men you've been to date with, with Obakeng. You should bear in mind that we are all different and unique in our own way. You can't expect the next man you will be in a relationship with to accept being compared with a deceased. You should give him his chance and see him, don't give you all to him just be sincere and explore all options.

Mom: Okunye ke asithi shada(Another thing we are not saying get married) we want you to live your life like a 29 year old not a 50 year old.

I laugh.

Dad: Give love a chance and you might be surprised.

I nod.

They are right, very much right. I guess my problem was comparing all those men with Obakeng. I will just have to go with the flow and let love lead, well that's if there is love.

We decided to shift the talk to something light and current affairs. They are a right, both of them. Love here I come, hehehe.

√

Rhofiwa

As I step out of the shower I can smell some bacon and that can only mean that my mother is here. I wonder what brings

her here, oh and I hope she has an answer for me today. I quickly go to my room and change then go to the kitchen,

“Daddy” Lelo says as soon as she see me.

I kiss her cheek then go and kiss my mother's cheek.

“What a surprise” I say.

“We are always here, I don't know what you talking about. Sit down I am about to dish up for you, I know that you hungry” she says.

I sit next to Lelo who is busy coloring her book.

Me: I hope you have something for me.

Her: Nothing. The only thing we have is her name, nothing else. Do you know how many Nathi's are out there? There is no way we will find her.

Me: Kitten, can you describe what the lady looked like for me.

Her: She was dark and beautiful with big eyes and has a short hair. That's all I remember.

Me: And her name is just, Nathi?

Her: That's what she said.

I nod

Me: Okay baby. Mom, why did your daughter left my daughter stranded at the mall? What if that woman didn't find her? What if she got kidnapped, raped&killed?

Her: Don't start with the what ifs, all that matters is that she is safe. I don't know why Rendani left her there.

Me: And does she know that my daughter is safe? What did she say to you?

Her: She did not say anything and we haven't spoken ever since the incident.

Me: She doesn't even care, spineless bi...

Her: Language.

Me: I did not say anything. If you don't mind, I would like to have a full custody for my daughter.

Her: What? You know that you can't have it. You know how you get when you angry.

Me: I have healed. I've been seeing a therapist, I am trying to get my life back in order and I will like to start it with my daughter.

Her: It's not that easy. You never get over the death of Melinda. I know that she died while dating with your brother, such wounds never really heal quickly.

Me: It's been 8 years. I am healed. I will make sure that I get my daughter back.

Her: Not while I'm still alive!

Me: You may be the mayor's wife but you cannot take away the chance of being with my daughter. I will air your dirty laundry all over the world and how corrupt your husband is, I dare you to try me!

I stand up, I have to go and get some fresh air before I lose my cool.

“Get back here Brandon! We not done talking” She shouts behind me just as I slammed their door. Fuck fuck fuck!

16

Nathi

I am on my way to the hospital to go and check on how Sindiswa is doing. Antony Hamilton's album is keeping me company. I'm sure she thinks that I've forgotten about her. I've cooked her her favourite meal which is (Dumpling&Stew). I hope that the beating he got from Siphos was a wake up call for her to leave him, not unless she wants to leave him as a corpse. Honestly Sindiswa is draining, she is in too deep and doesn't realize that Siphos doesn't love her anymore. She thinks being part of the "Bekezela" squad is life. Women die in the hands of their spouses every day, the news always and I mean always involve such, not a day go by without hearing about a certain woman found dead. It's a scary country that we live in. We women are not real safe, not at all but we have no choice but to pull through and put on that tough "make up" (look) on. I make my way to the receptionist she is busy typing something on her computer.

"Good morning ma'am" I greet.

"Morning to you too ma'am. Can I be of assistance"?

Me: Yes, I'm here to see a friend of mine Sindiswa Moloji.

Her: What's your name and what's your relationship with the patient?

Me: My name is Zubenathi and I am a friend of the patient, I was the one who brought her in.

Her: Very well then let me check for you.

She typed on her computer.

Her: Okay here she is. She is at ward 4 room 12 and she is getting discharged today.

Me: Great. Thank you for your help

Her: You most welcome.

I walk away and I hear her calling my name, I wonder what's wrong now. I turn back on my heels and walk up to her.

“I just wanted to tell you that you are beautiful” she says smiling.

I chuckle then blush, this woman.

“Thank you and so are you” I say.

I smile at her and walk towards the elevator. Getting a random compliment so early in the morning indicates that I will have a great day, well I am the one saying that of course. I roll my eyes and chuckle, I look like a fool right now. But on the real guys, it's very rare to find a woman complimenting another woman. Phela most we women are our own enemies, we like tearing each other down instead of fixing each other crowns like the Queens we are. Look at me getting carried away. I press the open button on the elevator as soon as it pings open, comes out a furious man. He pushes me so hard that I almost fell.
WTF?

“Hey you swine, watch where you going dammit”! I yell.

“Sorry fucker” he yells back.

“Bloody arse hole” I yell back and step into the elevator. As soon as I press close, I see the man I insulted turning around in a bolt speed. Oh oh, I think I am in deep shit. He marched towards me. I pressed all the numbers, come on come on I say on my mind. 1 more step...2...3...and the door closes, thanks God. The lift goes up, I look at all the numbers and I realize that they actual count up to 30 levels. Well, at least this will delay him a little bit. The elevator stops at ward 4/ I fix myself and walk out of the elevator. I walk till I reach a door with a number 12 on it, I knock and Sindiswa tells me to come in. I make my way inside and I find Sindiswa packing her clothes.

“You are early love, I though...”She doesn't even finish her sentence, I guess she smelled my perfume. She turns slowly and she finds me folding my arms looking at her. I give her the questioning look and she looks down, embarrassed.

“Finish packing I will be waiting for you outside” I tell her and walk out.

If she thinks that I will let her go with Siphos or get back together with him then she better think again. I can not stop her entirely but I wanna knock some sense in her head.

Zubenathi to the rescue, I'm just glad that I got here early. The door opens and she comes out looking down, I take her bag and start walking she follows just after me. There is no way I am letting her go back to that abuser, not ever!

√

Rhofiwa

The elevator it's taking it's precious time to come down. I am mad, I want to deal with that woman who called me an arse hole. How dare she insult me? Who the hell does she think she is? I look at the elevator again and it has stuck on the 3rd floor. Great just fucken great there goes my what what, I chuckle her ancestors are strong I must give it to them. If I grab a coffee quickly at the canteen maybe I might just be lucky and find the

elevator moving again, it better be. I make my way to the canteen and order my coffee, the coffee is the only beverage that tastes like any normal coffee as for the rest, Wow trash. Yeap you heard that right trash, don't get me started on their food, yeerrr. Anyway the Barista gives me my coffee and I go back to where I was standing, I get there and the elevator just closed and it's going up again, shit shit. I make a run to outside and there is no sign of her, well I did not really see what she was wearing. As I am busy looking around a car passes me by almost knocking me down, I quickly shift and look at it. I see that driver showing me her middle finger and shouts "Arse hole" WTF? I just laugh and off she speeds off. She just called me an arse hole 2 times in one day, the nerve! I would follow her if I did not have any plans but I have something to sort out, it needs my attention. I grunt in frustration, well I will find her and when I do, it's gonna be messy.

v

Bayanda

I am driving to my parents house with my heart beating out of my chest. My palms are sweaty

I don't know how they will react when they see me. I mean I turned their back on them, they must surely hate me I don't even wanna mention my brother. Lwazi might attack me as soon as I show my face. I park outside the yard and I see my brother smoking his cigarette, he had a bandage wrapped around his head, he just gave me one scary look. I swallow hard and take a deep breath, it's now or never. If they turn me back I will understand but I will be hurt, I won't lie to you guys. I get out of my car and walk to the gate, it slid open I guess my brother is the one who opened it. I wipe my sweaty palms on my pants and make my way in, I will just have to ignore his gaze and walk past him then straight to the house.

“Ek'se Bayanda zwakala yi” (Hey Bayanda, come here)

I walk up to him. I am ready for his punches or whatever he wants to do with me. He scans me and shakes his head, I look at him.

“Uyabona ukuthy u thando masimba Mfana wami”? (Do you see that love is shit my boy)he says

I nod.

Him: Ubekwa yini la?(what brings you here)

Me: Ng...ngizo xolisa for konke okwenzekile(I am here to apologise for everything that have happened)

Him: Ku grand boi. Ilothekeli bekakufake isdliso(Is that girlfriend of yours, she has bewitched you)

Me: Yah neh. Enhlek I feel like a loser.

Him: You are not a loser boy. You just fell under circumstances.

Me: I messed up. I wanna ask you something, can I?

Him: I know what you want to ask but here it goes. Sizwe&I went to this other nyanga who helped us. Since you were turning your back at us and wanted nothing to do with us. We

asked her to help us appear to you in your dreams and make you vomit all that love portion you had.

I laugh.

Me: That's why. I actually dreamt of you guys forcing me to eat meat.

He laughs.

Him: I am glad that you ate it. You are back to being yourself, you are not under a spell anymore. We need to do you a cleansing ceremony.

Me: Yah and it must be very soon. How do you think the family will react when they see me?

Him: They will be very happy, especially your mom. We all knew that you were under that witch spell. Y'all go around dating yazi.

I laugh.

Me: Look who is talking.

Him: Me? You know I don't do relationships. I smash&pass.

Me: As for me I am done with dating. Done.

He laughs

Him: Let's go inside, I'm the family its on it's way back from town.

He puts his hand on my shoulder and we go inside the house. Well, it is not bad at all. I'm just grateful for my brother&Sizwe's help, they've rescued me from being turned into a complete mime.

“Whip yourself something to eat” he says and walks away.

I shake my head. Let me just help myself since i'm hungry!

v

Rhofiwa

I bang the door as if I want to break it down. The door opens, ah ah just the person I am looking for. I throw a punch at her as I get inside the house, I kick the door close and look at her, she is holding her cheek.

“What the hell are you doing here, Brandon? Are you lost”? She asks making her way to the fridge to get some ice.

“Why do you hate my daughter so much, that you had to leave her at the mall alone? Fucken alone. Do you know that anything could have happened to her! She could've been kidnapped or worse killed”!

Her: And that did not happen right? That spoilt brat of your daughter is safe&sound ain't she?

I chuckle, she is being fucken unbelievable right now. She doesn't even try showing remorse or at least pretending that she cares, just a little bit.

Me: Why do you hate her so much? Why? I just want to know.

Her: I don't hate her. I hate her mother!

Me: Why do you hate Jane?

Her: Because she is a fucking whore! A whole whore and I bet your daughter will be following in her footsteps too.

I have every right to kill her right now but I can't risk with my life and go to jail for her.

Me: At least she knows who her real dad is. Does your husband know that all your 3 kids aren't his? Does he know? Now, who is a whore?!

She attempted to slap me but I held her hand and twisted it. She winced in pain.

“You dare try shit like that I will kill you” I say gritting my teeth.

Her: Just like you killed our brother?

I shake my head.

Me: I did not kill our brother. Your mother did. Actually, you know what? I am done with this family y'all can fuck off!

Her: Our mother might've killed him but you drove her to do it! He killed his son because of you.

Me: She killed her son willingly. I did not drive her, she did at her own accord.

Her: Fact will remain that you are a killer!

Me: Even if I am a killer. I don't have blood on my hands like you!

Her: What are you talking about? I am not like you or your mother!

I chuckle

Me: You think I don't know that you killed that man on his wedding day and made it look like an accident?

I see her swallowing hard and shock was written all over her face.

Her: You don't know what you talking about! Stop accusing me of being a killer!

Me: Well, Big sis. I have a footage.

Her: You what?!

Me: You heard me. You know what, fuck this family!

I walk away but stop at the door.

“Your husband will know the truth tonight” I say and walk out banging her door. I take out my phone and call my friend.

“Brandon” he answers.

“Book me 2 tickets for the next available Australia flight. We are leaving this country” I say.

Him: Who are you going with?

Me: Lelo.

I hear silence on his side then a deep sigh.

Him: Is that wise? You do know that you will be invading her life and jeopardizing your chance of getting full custody for her, right?

Me: I don't care! Just book me those 2 damn tickets and leave everything else to me.

I hang up.

These people don't fucken know me. Fuck the law I am taking my daughter with me! I get inside my car and drive to her school. Once we get to Australia we will change our identifies. I will e-mail my resignation letter at the hospital via email. My daughter is all I have. I must protect her at all cost.

v

Aziza

“Phuma Bab'Dlokuvu phuma”! I shout.

I am standing outside his hut with a bottle of petrol and lighter. Today imma burn this old crook of a man. It is his fault that I lost everything, everything. Moreover the money I was planning to take of that fucken restaurant, I had everything under control and this bastard had to mess up my plans for me.

“Get out you crook”! I call him again.

Silence.

This crook of a witch is ignoring me, well I am about to show him who am I! I pour the petrol all over his hut, I pour it again on top of his grass roof. I lit the lighter and throw it on top of

the roof, in no time the whole roof was on fire. At least no one will come to his aid. I watch as the hut go up in flames. As I am watching the fire, the door opens and there stood Bab'Dlokuvu. He is so short, in fact he looks like a toddler with an old face. What I saw behind him, turned my stomach in knots causing me to pee on myself. The once small snake now looks a giant snake, in fact this ain't no snake it's a beast! I turn to run away but this scary creature is right in front of me. It opens it's mouth, I scream and cover my face with my hands. I am ready to be eaten and die. Minutes passed and nothing comes. I remove my hands and look, there is no creature, I then turn to look behind me and the hut is no longer there, WTF! I try moving my legs but they ain't budging. I try again and they still not budging! No no no no, I can't be crippled. Something pass me fast and I fall down, blacking out.

17

Sindiswa

It's been almost a week with me being a prisoner in Nathi's house. She made sure that I don't go anywhere, if I do, I have to go with her and of which gets boring sometimes. I am fully healed now, well just minor pains here&there. I miss my house and my husband, I miss being around him, sigh. Anyway Nathi bought me a phone just so I can keep myself busy with social networks, what she doesn't know is that I am still communicating with Siphoh and he has planned to visit me today. Nathi will be going to check on how the restaurant is doing, I'm just not sure about time though. I wish she can go around 12 and possibly get delayed by something or someone. She descends the stairs looking all sorts of beautiful. She greets me and head to the kitchen, I guess she is going to make herself something to eat, I stand up and go to her. I clear my throat and she stops buttering her bread, she looks at me.

“Sup”? She asks.

“Urh...what time are you going to the restaurant”? I ask her.

Her: After I'm done eating. Want to come with?

Me: Nope, I was just asking.

She nods and continue buttering her bread. I leave and go back to the lounge, I will have to text Siphso and tell him to come a little bit early. As I start typing I hear some quarrelling in the kitchen, I stand up and peep through the passage, damn it is Siphso! What is he doing here so early?

“What the hell brings you here in my house, Siphso”? Nathi ask him.

“I am here for my wife” he responds.

Her: Here for your “wife” in whose house?

Him: In your house.

Her: And you think that she wants to see you, after you put her in hospital, huh?

Him: Of course. Actually she is the one who called me to come here.

Her: She what? Why is Sindi such a fool?!

Him: Don't call my wife a fool.

Her: That's because she is one! I guess she enjoys your beatings, she is such a fool. Please leave my house, and don't ever come back.

Him: I am not leaving without seeing my wife. Do you know how cold my bed is without her?

She chuckles

Her: Don't you have another "wife" that warms up the bed with you?

Him: I chased her out.

She laughs.

Her: You are such an arse hole you twat! She just lost a baby not so long ago, and you send her packing? Why didn't you allow her to mourn her loss? You were supposed to be comforting her, you bastard!

Him: I am not here for you to lecture me. I am here to take my wife!

Her: You are more delusional than I thought! You are sick in that 5 dreads head of yours. Leave my house, I don't wanna see you here again. Not now, not ever or else I will get you arrested for trespassing, have I made myself clear?

He chuckles that chuckle that made me pee on myself, that very same chuckle he does when pissed.

Him: Who are you again?

Her: No body you wanna mess with. Take this!

She showed him her middle finger and slam the door in his face, locking it. She turns and looks at me. Anger or disappointment was very much visible on her face.

Her: How could you call him. Sindi? After everything he has done to you? After how he treated you?

Me: You don't understand, Nathi. I love him he is my husband.

Her: Bullshit! He is an abuser and a manipulative lying bastard.

Me: You don't understand! You will never understand, Nathi. It is all my fault that he is like this, I made him to be this monster.

She chuckles...

Her: Unbelievable! Are you hearing yourself? Like, are you really really hearing yourself?

Me: Yes and I will appreciate it if you can stay away and let me handle this my way. Stay out of it and mind your own.

Her: After he left you to die, you still want to go back to him? You enjoy being his punching bag?

Me: You don't know anything, Nathi. I would rather suggest that you find yourself a boyfriend or something, you sound bitter right now.

She laughs her sarcastic laugh, like she literally laughed at me.

Her: Wow just wow! You know what, do you Sindiswa.

Me: I was planning too. Thank you for everything you have done for me.

Her: Hmmmm. Let me just leave because wow, I am not doing this with you. See you when I come back, that's if you will still be here.

She shakes her head and disappear somewhere around the house. I sigh. As if she will find me here. I've made up my mind and there is no one who will make me change it. I tap my finger on top of the counter.

v

Bayanda

Being home with the family feels really great. I hardly do anything apart from eating, sleeping, waking up and bath. I am at peace with everything, I've forgotten about the restaurant, it will keep functioning as long the workers are there. They know the business in&out. I think it's high time the unknown partner

plays her part, she's been working behind the scenes all along now it's time she steps up. I don't know how but she must make it work. In fact I'll just e-mail her tomorrow. The gate slide open and here comes in my crush, looking hot as ever. She hasn't changed much, she's still the same. She comes to all smiles, women.

“Hey Bayanda” she greets me with a smile plastered in her face.

“Sho” I reply.

Her: Long time no see. How are you?

Me: Good.

Her: Geez, why are you uptight?

Me: Even if I am, how is that any of your problem?

Her: It's not my problem

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I was just making a conversation.

Me: I am not interested in having a conversation with you. Now leave my presence.

Her: Stop acting as if we've never slept together.

Me: That was the biggest mistake of my life! I'm sure you were bewitching me.

Her: What? You are full of nonsense.

Me: Bloody witch. You women are a bunch of witches, nxa. Leave me alone.

Her: What happened to you? You were never lie this, what changed?

Me: Your gender happened, now fuck off!

She chuckle and walks away.

Nonsense!!!

v

Nathi

I get to the restaurant. What I see makes my blood boil, actually it makes me angry to the core. The waitresses/waiters are busy chatting while customers are sitting there waiting to be served, there's only one waiter running around trying to help everyone, he might as well join the others with chatting, because wow. I sit down wanting to observe what exactly it's happening. This is like a circuit, you know what a whole gossip show. Right now I am waiting for someone to come and serve me, I sit for few minutes. Nothing, no one comes. I see some customers standing up leaving, I can see that they are fed up and so am I. Where is Bayanda if the restaurant is falling apart like this,

nogal under his watch? Is he aware that we are going to lose customers if not lost them already. The man who was running around comes to me, he is breathing heavy. You can see that he is tired.

“Good day ma'am. My name is Sbusiso and I'll be your waiter for the day” he says handing me the menu.

Me: Sit down.

Him: I can't sit ma'am, I am on duty and as you can see there are people that need to be served.

Me: I know. Don't worry about them you should be worrying about me.

Him: I don't follow.

Me: Sit down. I won't repeat myself.

He sits uncomfortably so...

He: I don't want be fired. I am the only bread winner at home.

Me: You won't get fired. Where is your boss?

Him: He hasn't been coming in for a while now, his girlfriend was standing in for him.

Me: Where is the girlfriend now?

Him: She hasn't been in for a week. Things are falling apart. We Are running out of stock, the waitresses/waiters don't want to work. We've lost customers and some of our distributors wants to pull out their contract, it's a mess. If we go on like this for a month the restaurant might as well close down.

I nod listening to him. Deep down, I am pissed.

Me: Can you please show me the office they were using?

Him: I can't do that. We were given rules, that only the boss and his girlfriend are allowed in the office.

Me: I am also allowed in that office.

Him: Ma'am I don't want to get fired, this is my only income and I am a breadwinner at home.

Me: You don't get it to you? You telling me for the 2nd time now that you are a breadwinner, as if I didn't hear you the first time. I am Zubenathi the sole owner of this restaurant.

He parts his lips apart a little bit. Shock follows after, I feel like laughing.

Me: Now you will go and show me the office. Right?

He nods.

He stands up first and I follow after him, I can see the others looking at us somehow. One of the waitress blocks our way.

“Where do you think you are going with this lady, Sbusiso”? She asks.

“To the main office Thembeke” he hisses.

Her: You know the rules. No one is allowed there except for the boss and his girlfriend. So, you saw the free gab and decided to call your girl and go and get it down at the bosses office? You have no shame.

I chuckle.

Me: Do you know who I am?

Her: I don't know and I don't care. But your loverboy here should've booked you guys a hotel or something.

“Tembeka Thembeke” Sbusiso hiss her name.

Her: What? I am just telling the truth. You can't disrespect the boss's office like that.

Him: She is the other boss. The real boss, Zubenathi.

Her: I don't care...(she stops mid-sentence) what did you just say?

Him: Exactly. She is the “Z”

Her: Oh my oh my. I...I didn't realize.

I raise my hand to stop her from talking any further.

Me: Shall we?

Him: We may. Thembeke can you please move out of our way.

She shifts slowly, her mouth still hang open. The office looks like a pigsty and with the never ending dust, I have a lot of work to do here. I open the windows for some fresh air. It is very stuffy in here.

Me: The files?

Him: They are somewhere here on top of the table.

Me: Please look for them for me I will be back.

He nods

I walk out of the office, and I find them gathered in one place, gossiping as per usual. I clear all my throat and they all turn to look my way, steadying themselves.

“Attention customers due to unforeseen circumstances, the restaurant is closed until further notice. After your meals, you

are all requested to leave. It's on the house" I turn to look at the rest of the staff. "As for the rest of you, you are dismissed. You may all go home" then I walk back to the office leaving them standing there, looking confused. Sibusiso is already busy with the stack of files.

"Things are looking bad" he comments.

Me: We are going to work the whole day if it needs to be. Are you game?

Him: Sure.

Me: Very well then. Go and get us something to drink. Something, strong.

He nods and heads out.

I look at the these files, haikhona. A lot need to be done.

v

Sihle

I look at myself in the mirror and my eye is blue and swollen. No amount of make-up can help cover it up. Siphos came back from where he was in the morning and started beating me, blaming me for taking him away from Sindiswa. He said I took Sindiswa's love of her life, he practically insulted me, and told me how cold I am. My whole body is bruised, I am in pain. I wish I had a friend like Sindiswa's who will protect me at all cost. I am not one to tolerate abuse, you lay a hand on me I leave you instantly but Siphos? I will give him another chance since Sindiswa is out of the equation. I put on my dress and go to the kitchen to start cooking, the door opens and I hear some chuckling, I turn to look and I am met by Sindiswa's gaze. I shake my head. I should've known, I will never take up her spot, she will always find her way back in Siphos arms. This is all just a lost hope, ayikho lento.

18

Nathi

When I got home last night I found Sindiswa not at home, she only left me a letter. Telling me that she has gone back to her husband and I must stop keeping in touch with her. I mustn't bother myself with her. I just don't understand her, I just don't understand why did she go back to her abuser or maybe it is some kind of syndrome. I think she has Stockholm syndrome. I tried calling her but my calls weren't going through, I guess she blocked me for real. I make myself cereal and go through the files one more time. It's bad 8/10 suppliers pulled out, apparently some haven't been paid for three months, how? I also don't know. I tried negotiating with them but they didn't budge, according to them we are a bunch of incompetent fools. What an insult... And it came to my realization that the company was not making profit, some food were rotten but they still served people. What if one of them caught out on that the restaurant is selling spoilt food, then call the inspectors to come and inspect the restaurant? The restaurant will be written off because we are placing people's lives in danger. I've been on the sideline for far too long, honestly I can't really blame Yanda that much because he has been holding the fort ever since the restaurant opened. What I don't like though it's

the fact that he neglected the restaurant, he did not bother appointing someone at least to see things through while he is on leave. I wonder what was going to happen, If I didn't go to check up on it yesterday, good Lord I don't even wanna think about it. I will have to give him a call, he needs to clarify some things for me. As for the stuff, good lord I will have to review their CVS and fire some, because wawu. They don't know work ethics, none whatsoever. Haven't they heard of being professional despite everything going south? Always be professional. I am disturbed by the knock on the door, I stand up and go and attend to it. I yank it open and here stands Sipho leaning against the wall with his 5 dread locks, chewing a bubblegum.

“And then”! I ask him.

“I will ask you nicely. Stay away from my matrimonial affairs with Sindiswa. You don't know half of it” he tells me.

Me: K.

Him: Next time don't look at me straight in the eyes when talking to me, am I clear?

I chuckle...

Me: Who are you again?

Him: As I said stay the hell away from my matrimonial affairs.

Me: Don't worry yourself about that I've distanced myself a long time ago. Even if she dies please do invite me to the funeral, and put me on her obituary, I'll be speaking on behalf of her "friend" I will really appreciate it if you stop coming to my house. Have I made myself clear?

Him: You need to be taught some manners. Someone needs to install some respect in you.

Me: And you must be taught on how to treat a woman. You still a boy, Siphon. I think it's time you start going for people on your level, people who can actually knock some sense in that head of

yours. Don't ever come back here or else, I will get you arrested for trespassing.

He laughs...

Me: And for your information, this house has cameras and is wired, so thread carefully. Next time when you come at me, make sure that you come with something tangible. You will walk yourself out, Goodbye.

I shut the door in his face, who does he think he is coming to my house? I am not a walkover like Sindiswa, my mama did not raise no coward. I stand my ground if it needs too, geez his nerve. I take my laptop and my car keys from the key racks and exit the house I am running late.

√

Sindiswa

I was surprised to find Sihle in my house izolo cooking, I thought Siphosaid she chased her away. I did not dare ask him questions, another thing that brought me joy, was when he woke up next to me in the morning. Yes, I'm now back to sleeping in the main bedroom and Sihle slept in the guestroom. I walk in on Sihle making herself breakfast, I thought that I was gonna find her with Siphobeing cosy, seeing her alone melted my heart. I walk up to the table and took a piece of bacon on her plate, phela she mustn't forget that I'm the first wife and she comes second. I pull the chair and sit down, I pull her plate close to me and start eating. She turn to put the Russian on her plate but she sees that it is not there. She brought her gaze to me then her plate, she puts the pan back on the stove and takes out another plate. In order for her to get bread she has to pass where I'm seated, because the bread bin is right next to me. She looks at me and shakes her head. She grabs the plate roughly from me causing it to fall on the floor, it breaks pieces of it scattering across the floor.

“Wenzani”? (What are you doing)

“Taking my food from you”

Me: Just like you took my husband from me? You thought that he was gonna divorce me right? You thought that I wouldn't come back after that beating he gave me? You thought that you will now have him all to yourself?

She ignores me and go to the fridge. I stretch out my leg tripping her

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she stumbles and balance herself with the kitchen counter.

Her: Wenzani Sindiswa?

Me: What do you think I'm doing?

Her: So, you came back just to annoy me?

Me: How am I annoying you homewrecker? You forget that this is still my house.

Her: Homewrecker? Well baby girl, let me tell you. This homewrecker had your man calling her name last night while y'all were making me love. Funny thing is that he called it three times, if this isn't proof to you that my vagina is the bomb, then I don't know.

I completely lost it and gave her a hot slap, she gave me a backhand slap and all hell broke loose. We are fighting each other and I must give it to her, she moers maarn. We both fall down and start hitting each other senseless, pulling each other with our braids. Rolling on the floor, she was now on top of me beating me I can't fight her anymore she has overpowered me. My face feels swollen, I am going to die by her hands I swear. I feel her body being yanked up from mine. My eyes are slightly closed and I think they swollen. I can hear her crying, pleading with Siphos to let her go, and I hear Siphos insulting her, calling her all sorts of names. As much as I am in pain, I am glad that Siphos came through for me. All of a sudden it is silence, no crying of Sihle and I hear Siphos calling her name, his voice is trailing, could it be that. No no no, I refuse to believe it. I try opening my eyes again but they don't want they are so heavy. I hear footsteps then the door closing, what's going on? I lie there listening to the pains in my body.

v

Bayanda

My phone rings from on top of the coffee table, I pick it up and I realize that the numbers belong to my office. I wonder who is calling me and what do they want, I answer it bored.

“Hello” I answer

“Hello. Am I talking to Bayanda”? He replies.

Her voice is so soothing and calm, her voice is melodic it does something to me.

“Hello? Are you there”?

Her voice brings me back to reality.

M: Urh...m. Yes yes I'm still here. Who wants to know?

Her: You speaking to Zubenathi your partner at Z&B restaurant.

Me: Mhhn? What? Why are you calling me?

Her: When will you be available? I would like to have a meeting with you.

Me: Available?

Her: Yes.

Me: Having a meeting with you? As in sit together and talk?

She chuckles...

Her: Exactly. So, when will you available?

Her voice takes my breath away again, I wouldn't mind listening to it 24/7. Even at 3am it will be the most soothing thing to listen to in the wee hours of the morning.

“still there”?_her voice brings me back to life again.

Me: Yes. I will let you know when I'm free.

Her: I hope it will be soon.

Me: Definitely.

Her: Thank you for your time and have a good day.

Me: Me too, bye.

I hear her chuckling.

I hang up, fuck. I rub my face with my hands.

Lwazi comes in laughing, I look at him and he is still laughing. I wonder what he's laughing at.

Me: And then wena?

Him: Dude, you have a fucken boner! A whole boner, damn.

He continues laughing...

I look at my pants, WTF! I cover my pants with my hands and stand up. Lwazi is still laughing, woman are witches this is proof. I don't think I wanna meet her. If she can give me a boner over the phone what more when I talk to her face to face? I need a cold shower, damn.

√

Nathi

“You know I've never heard the boss stuttering before” Sbusiso says.

Me: What do you mean?

Him: I'm just saying.

Me: Hmmm. Well, I guess we can start operating again tomorrow.

Him: Pretty much so. Let me go and whip us something to eat.

Me: Do you think we should take back your co-workers?

Him: Yes. Apart from what you saw yesterday, they are definitely hard workers and they are very dedicated.

Me: I see. I did not see the manager though, where is he/she?

Him: I don't know. He also disappeared.

Me: Starting from today you are the manager, we shall resume with work tomorrow.

Him: I will notify them as soon as I get home. Let me go and make us that food then.

Me: There's no need. We are done for the day, let's go.

I take my laptop bag and we go out.

He locks the office behind me and follows after me shortly. We make our way to my car, I will drop him off at his house. We drive having a light conversation, him telling me about how he grew up.

“top the car” he says as soon as we approach the dumping site.

Me: Why?

Him: I'm seeing a body.

Me: What?

I pull over and we both get out of the car, we run to where the body is. I don't know how long she has been lying here, she seems like she was badly beaten. I look around and I see no one, well with place is too quiet whoever dumped her here knew that no one was gonna see him. Sbusiso went to her and felt her pulse.

“She is still alive but not for long not unless we take her to the clinic that is nearby” he says.

Me: Do you know any that is nearby?

Him: No.

Me: Then let's take her to the hospital before she dies. People are so cruel out there.

We pick her up and put her at the back and lay her on the seats. He hops in and we off to the hospital. Hold on woman, we will get you help.

Sindiswa

Sipho decided to hire me a stay in nurse, he didn't want me to go to the hospital. I did not even dare ask him about Sihle, I don't want to get beaten for asking rubbish. I hope he sent her to the hospital or his parents house. As long as I don't get to see her every day it's fine by me. As long as I will get to be with Sipho without any disturbance then I'm good. I Stan the fact that Sipho protected me instead of that homewrecker Sihle, I won't lie and say that what she said didn't hurt me, it did, very badly. Hearing him call her name while making love to me, really pained me. It was evident that he was thinking about her while with me, in order for him to cum he had to fantasize about Sihle. I felt worthless. Clearly Sihle was giving it to him good compared to me, thinking of it just disgust me. Now that she is out of the picture, I hope that things will go well. We would go back to what we used to be back then. Marina(nurse) comes in and gives me my medication. I haven't seen Sipho since morning and I'm fine with that as long as he will be coming home to me, nothing else matters. Cutting ties with Nathi was the best thing I did in a long time. She was gonna lead me astray, it's time I befriend married women at least we all have something in common, we all talk one language. Once

i'm healed I will go to church and interact with my fellow married women. I take my medication and sleep.

v

Bayanda

I am nervous my heart is beating out of my chest, I've never been this nervous before in my whole entire life, especially when a woman is involved. I really don't get the fussy because we are going to talk about the restaurant, it's just a business brunch. I must keep that in mind but I don't think I will concentrate, her voice will really distract me. In my mind I can already hear her moaning with her sweet melodic voice, I wonder if her face matches her voice. I even feel like cancelling, I don't even know what to wear. Whether to wear formal or casual, I wanna look handsome but simple handsome. Luyanda my little brother comes into the room without knocking. I look at him as he sits comfortably on top of the bed and looks at me.

"you look nervous. Were you doing something I wouldn't do?", he asks.

I chuckle...

"I have a date meeting" I tell him, scratching my head.

Him: So, why are you nervous? You are used to date meetings, what's so special about this one?

Me: I don't know man but it really makes me nervous. The last time I was this nervous was the time I bumped into some stranger at the mall.

Him: What if you are going on a date meeting with that stranger?

Me: It's impossible.

Him: It is very much possible, maybe you guys will date along the way.

Me: You know how I feel about relationships.

Him: You hate them, yes but not every woman is like Aziza. There are those woman you fall inlove with effortlessly without trying so hard. That one woman who makes your whole world spin.

Me: Dude. Why do you know so much about love, yet you only 24?

Him: I know a lot big brother. A lot, you can always ask me for advice I offer them for free.

I chuckle...

Me: I will remember that next time when I'm in a relationship again.

Him: I have a feeling that you will be in relationship with a stranger.

Me: Stop talking rubbish. Casual or formal?

Him: Semi formal.

Me: Huh?

Him: Formal pants, golf T-shirt and sneakers.

I laugh...

Me: Dude, what kind of fashion is that? It reads disaster, I don't want to be a laughing stock.

Him: Suit yourself then.

Me: How about these chinos and this white shirt? I mean, I can always fold the shirt on the arms then I wear my formal shoes then.

Him: Whatever. As long as the stranger will be impressed, dala yourself boy.

I chuckle...

Me: I have like 2 hours to get ready? What if she doesn't pitch?

Him: She will and besides she is the one who requested the date meeting, right?

Me: Yeah, but still, anything can happen.

Him: Geez stop whining like a woman, time is moving and I'm sure you don't want to keep your "girlfriend" waiting.

Me: Alright. That's it, get out of my room Luyanda.

Him: But we are still talking, Bayanda.

Me: We are done talking. I need to get ready.

Him: I'll be back, Bayanda. This talk is not over.

Me: Just leave you punk.

He laughs and walks out.

Luyanda can be a pain in the arse, Yerrr.

I hope the meeting will go well...

√

Nathi

“How is she doctor? Any signs of pulling through”?

“Nothing so far. She is still very much into coma” she responds.

Me: But she will pull through right?

Her: I am not sure about that. She doesn't even try moving her finger or something, it's a lost cause.

Me: How bad are her injuries?

Her: Same as the previous patient that was here except for the fact she suffered a brain tumor. We had to do an emergency operation.

Me: Sounds bad. Can I see her?

Her: Of course you can. Please follow me.

I follow behind her until we get to the 6th floor which is the ICU, leads me to one of the rooms. I get in and I see her surrounded by machines and an oxygen, she looks terrible. I see no sign of life. I go and sit next to her and hold her hand, I look at the Dr.

“Can I”?

She nods and walks away...

“Hey girl My name is Zubenathi. I am the one who brought you here

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with the help of my friend of course. You know, my friend is the one who actually saw you. As for me I felt the need to help you because you reminded me of my ex friend Sindiswa. She was badly beaten just like you and you know, that arse hole of a man left her to die. Seeing you lying there helplessly reminded me of her. Well, too bad because she went back to her abuser. I pray that you pull through, so that you can tell us what happened to you. I am willing to walk this journey with you and help you regain your life back. You are stronger than what

happened to you. Now wake up so that you can soldier on, you will not go through this alone I am here to help you and so is the Dr”

I feel my hand being squeezed, I thought that my mind was playing mind tricks with me. She squeezed it again, now I'm sure that she is alive. She is willing to pull through. I look for the panic button and press it.

“Stay with me okay. It's a good thing that you making a progress, now open your eyes” I tell her.

The door flies open and the Dr gets in rushing.

“It's everything alright”? she asks coming to this woman's bed.

Me: She squeezed my hand.

Her: Are you sure?

I nod...

Her: Hello woman, can you hear me?

Silence...

Me: Hold her hand Dr.

She holds it and I see the Dr smiling.

Her: She is promising. Please excuse us I wanna attend to her.

She typed something on her pager. I stand up and walk out when nurses come in. I hope it was not a false alarm. I look at the time, oh shit. I am late. I need to go and freshen up, I will come and see this stranger tomorrow hopefully out of ICU.

√

Bayanda

I am having my 3rd glass of draft. I am trying to calm down my nerves, my palms are sweaty. My leg is shaking I am a mess. I don't know why I am getting worked up because I don't even know this woman that I am meeting, who happens to be my partner. I check the time and I realize that I have 30 minutes to myself before she arrives. Maybe by then I would've calm down and ready to focus in the meeting that we will be having, I chose the outside sitting because it was easy for me to see people who are coming on each sides, when I see a woman approaching I think it's her. I wonder how she looks like, how she walks and all that. I laugh at those thoughts, I don't want to get a boner in public. Wait, this person doesn't even know how I look like so, how would she know that it is me? I mean, I also don't know her this is a disaster. There is no way we are meeting today, I should've at least told her what I would be wearing. I shake my head, I guess my nerves were for nothing. All this sweating is just a waste, I chuckle again.

“Care to share the joke”? I can hear her voice sounding so close, like she is right next to me.

“It's nothing really” I reply.

“It doesn't look like that to me. May I”?

WTF. I bring my gaze up and I am met by her beautiful flawless skin and her big eyes, she looks so familiar. Like I've seen her before, she is an epitome of goddess. I am lost in her eyes, there it is , the connection. Then I remember, the mall, her phone, her friend. It is her, I never thought that I will see her again. You know what, not all women a bunch of witches some are a bunch of angels. I am tongue tied.

“Okay. The party is over. Zubenathi is the name” she says stretching her hand. I just look at it, she gives me a look, shrugs her shoulders and sits down.

“So, will you be looking at me the whole day”?

“I...I...excuse me. I need to...to” I stand up and rush to the men's toilet, I look at myself in the mirror. “Damn you Bayanda, get a grip man. Why are you acting like a teenage inlove? Go

out there, its all about the meeting nothing else. Who am I kidding? I wanna tear her clothes and fuck her till she calls my name, uh uh whoa whoa. Where are you going with those thoughts? Think with your brain stupid. Not what is hanging on you down there. It's rude to keep a lady waiting, man up" yeap, the voices in my head are having a conversation. I splash myself with water and go back her, I smile and she smiles back. Boner is out y'all.

"Bayanda is the name" I tell her.

"Lovely meeting you Bayanda. Are we ordering first or we are getting right into the meeting"?

I nod...

Her: Urhm...

Me: Food first.

I wander my eyes around trying so hard not to look at her, I'm sure she thinks that I'm weird.

20

Nathi

Truly speaking this has to be the weirdest meet up I've ever had, for the past hour Yanda have been wandering his eyes around not once did he try to make eye contact with me and focus in the meeting at hand. I don't know how many times he went to the toilet, Lord he is acting like a teenager inlove. I don't want to lie to you guys, he is handsome and have a very broad chiseled chest and strong arms, good Lord let me not get started about his facial features, they are extremely cute. Looking at his lips right now, I wonder how would they taste like on my lips. Thinking of it njer gives me goose bumps and my clit is twitching, I press my legs together. He is eatable, of course with me licking all of his body smeared with whip cream or chocolate and him holding me in his big tight arms, good Lord what is this man doing to me. My panty are wet, now it's my turn to excuse myself and go to the ladies, maybe he will be comfortable for a while.

“Excuse me I need to go to the ladies” I tell him.

“You... You may be excused” he says.

I stand up and go to the ladies, as soon as I get in I do my business and change my panty liner. Thanks God for them. I wash my hands and look at myself in the mirror and smile alone. I shake my head and go out, I see him talking with someone over the phone making hand signals, no maarn this guy is fucken handsome! That girlfriend of his is very lucky to have him, well. I'll just admire from a distance and keep it professional. Strictly business nothing else. I fix myself and go and sit down. He hangs up as soon as I sit down, judging by the smile I think he was talking to his girlfriend.

“Now it's time to order that food since we done with the meeting” he says.

I nod...

He lifts up his hand and a waiter comes to our table with menus, he hands them to us and we thank him.

“We will call again after we are done browsing the menu” he tells him.

The waiter nods and leaves...

I browse through the menu and I am unfamiliar with almost the names of the food listed here. Well, I will just settle for steak

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chicken fillet and green salad.

“Ready to order”? he asks.

I nod...

He lifts up his hand and the waiter comes.

Him: I will have steak and salsa.

Me: I will have steak with chicken fillets and green salad. The steak must be thoroughly cooked, no half done. Thank you.

The waiter nods and walks away. Yanda looks at me and smiles

Me: Are you always like this?

Him: Like what?

Me: I don't know. Jumpy maybe or uncomfortable.

Him: What? No, not at all. I am just tired.

Me: Tired from doing what?

Him: Working on my new project.

Me: I see. When are you coming back to work?

Him: We will be sharing an office?

Me: Is that a problem? If it is then I can always use one of the storerooms as an office.

Him: That won't be necessary.

Me: Meaning?

Him: We can share the office.

Me: Very well then.

Our orders come, I thank the waiter and we start eating. Well I'm the only one eating, he is taking small bites. I don't know who he is trying to impress.

v

Sihle

“What's your name”? The Dr ask.

“Sihle” I reply.

Her: Very good, at least you don't have amnesia. Do you remember what happened to you?

I swallow hard and close my eyes preventing tears from falling. I don't even want to talk about it, thinking of it njer breaks my heart. I thought I was going to die, my whole body was is in pain. I close them hard trying so hard not to cry. If it wasn't for the woman who found me, I would prolly be dead by now. I am thankful to her and her friend.

Me: Yes, I do.

Her: Can I book you an appointment with one of the therapist once you are fully healed?

Me: No, thank you. The woman who brought me here. Will she be back?

Her: Yes, she will. She was really worried about you here. It's like she is a God sent to help save vulnerable woman, may God bless her.

Me: Indeed. The cost? Who is covering it because this look like one of those expensive hospitals.

Her: Don't worry yourself about that, everything is covered.

Me: Are you sure?

Her: Yes.

I nod...

I wonder how much it cost her. Is she that rich? I should really thank her when I finally meet her, as for Siphos I am so done with him. Him&Sindiswa deserve each other.

Her: Let me call the nurse to come in and give you food then medication and rest. Be well.

Me: Thank you.

She walks out leaving me in pile of thoughts. I should get Siphon arrested plus I have all the proof I need to put him behind bars for a long time. I will just have to think it through. The nurse comes in wheeling the trolley, the food here is top notch shame. I thank Nathi, in fact I owe her my life. Now the big question, once discharged where will I go? I can't go home because my mom will definitely send me back to the monster himself. I still value myself, I can't die because of love. God has given me another chance in life, it's time I dala me.

Bayanda

After 2 weeks of running around like a headless chicken, I've finally decided to go back to the office. I can't avoid Nathi forever, one way the other I will have to face her even though she makes me weak and my heart beating abnormally whenever I see her. After that date meeting I had with Nathi my life has never been the same again. She was all I think about everyday, hhayini ladies I take my words back y'all are not a "cup of witchcraft" you are a jug of roses&rawberries. I settle for a simple jean and golf T-shirt with sneakers. I am not going to a formal wear environment, I grab my car keys and exit the house. I'm thinking of passing by a florist shop and buy some flowers for Nathi, I want to thank her for making me to go back to work. What if she is allergic to flowers? Well, I will find out along the way, if she is allergic to them then I will have to buy her chocolates. Thinking of it, buying flowers is extreme what if I will get her in trouble with her boyfriend? I mean, a girl like her can't be really single. I'll just settle for a box of chocolate and some celebratory wine just to ease the atmosphere. I get to the restaurant and it is already up&running it is even packed. We've never had such a huge turnout in here before especially in the morning, I look at the time and it's just after 7:30am. The

workers greet me and I greet back then head straight to the office. I take a deep breath and knock.

“Come in” her voice calls out.

I open the door and make my way in. She stands up and smiles at me, God here is that smile that makes my knees weak. I return the smile...

“That is your table over there” she points towards the table near the window.

“Thank you and these are for you” I tell her handing her the chocolates&wine. “I wanted to buy you flowers but I didn't know if you will like them, so I opted for these two things” I proceed to tell her.

Her: Thank you for the gesture. You should've told me the memo I'm sure I would've gotten you something. Just so you know, I am a big fan of lily flowers should it happen that you

feel like buying me flowers someday. What are we celebrating with the wine?

I scratch my head...

Me: New beginnings and officially meeting as partners.

Her: How thoughtful of you. Now, where are the glasses partner or are we going to drink straight from the bottle?

I chuckle...

Me: I did not think of them and it wouldn't hurt drinking straight from the bottle.

Her: So much for being a gentleman. Since you came with the wine, I might as well be useful and get us those glasses.

Me: Sure...

She nods her head and walk out, I take a deep sigh. That was not so bad. Wait, did she say that next time I should buy her flowers, specifically Lillie's. I am noting this down, she has just given me an approval. I get myself settled on my new leather chair. As I look around I realize that the office has been revamped, it looks lively and smells nice too. I stand up and walk up to her table, I look at the picture frame that's on top of the table. I pick it up, she looks really young here. I smile alone and shake my head, she is indeed beautiful no lie.

“I'm beautiful I know” her voice startle me. I put the picture down and look at her.

Her: Or am I not?

Me: Urhm...of course you are. You are really beautiful.

Her: Thought as much. Don't you think it's a little bit early for us to start drinking?

Me: Throats don't really have opening time, so we might as well start drinking now. We have the whole day.

Her: I guess you right. I've ordered us some breakfast even if you are full, I will not take no for an answer. You are going to eat.

Me: I did not have breakfast anyway.

Her: Perfect. Shall we?

I look at her, she is a whole mood and more. I watch as she struggles to open the bottle.

Me: Let me help you.

Her: Finally! I thought you were never gonna ask, thank you gentleman.

She gives me the bottle...

Her: At least you not acting like a teenager inlove this morning. I see you've finally got some courage or maybe you've grown a pair.

She chuckles...

I've never been with a woman so care free like her, I think I'm in it too deep without me realizing it and I don't think I will come out of that hole anytime. I might as well die inside it. Damn!

v

Sihle

I was now staying with Nathi, she is the one who offered me a place to stay until I get back on my feet. I am very grateful for her help, I've also learned that she was Sindiswa' s best friend until well, Siphos saga. I mean, I would literally kill to have a friend like Nathi she is one amazing woman. My stay here with

her have been really amazing she was helping me every step of the way, let's just say she was my therapist. I ended up not opening a case for Sipho, it was for my own sanity. Knowing Sipho he would've bribed his way out of jail then come after me and my family I wouldn't want to risk myself like that. I've finally managed to contact my mother, she was really shocked to hear from me because according to Sipho he told her that I ran away with some man and his money, imagine his nerve. Anyway I told my mother everything and she understood but she doesn't want me coming back home because the Baloi's are making their lives a living hell demanding their Lobola money. For Christ sake my mother only gets grant money and she has to feed 9 people with it. My older sister's use their kids money to look good and buy themselves alcohol, my mother is actually supporting them. I had it tough while growing up, sometimes we will sleep without anything. It was one of the most painful things ever, now it's better but it's still the same

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I don't know if i'm making sense. I thought that me getting married to Sipho will change things, I thought that I've finally found my breakthrough but I was lying to myself. I need to look for a job even if it's cleaning houses, I need the money to send to my mother so that they can give the Baloi's back their lobola money, that will mean cuttingg all ties with them. Who will hire

me with only a grade 9 report? This is a disaster i'm telling you. I can't even borrow money from Nathi she has done a lot for me, I don't wanna take her kindness for granted but I really need the money. I stop pacing up&down and ascend the stairs, a plan just cane into mind, I get to her room. Her room is very big&beautiful. Everything is white with a touch of charcoal here and there, I open her walk in closet and my jaw drops on the floor. I walk inside and she has too many clothes, as for shoes I don't even wanna talk about them. I raked through her clothes, some clothes are still brand new with price tags. I mean, even if I take maybe half of them and sell them, she won't notice right? I look at her shoes, some are still new too. I pick one up and I look at the price, I am shocked. This shoes cost half of my Lobola amount, in fact 80% of my Lobola amount. How rich is this girl? If I sell half of her clothes I will have enough money to send to my parents and save some for me, it's not as if like I'll be stealing. I mean, this won't even bruise her bank balance, not even a little bit. She will just have to understand and forgive me. I have a one shot at this, I can't mess it up. I take what I can and some jewelry in her jewelry box, I pick up the clothes and go to my temporary room. I look for a big suitcase and I find one on top the Waldrop, I put all the clothes inside and all those that she has bought for me. I descend the stairs with the suitcase, I open the fridge and take some food for the road. Luckily there are no securities here, the coast is clear.

“I'm sorry to do this to you but I have no choice” I put the note on the fridge and exit her apartment.

v

Nathi

I don't remember when was the last time I enjoyed myself like this. Being free like this without any care in the world, it feels good. The conversation is flowing smoothly we not even forcing it. You know Yanda is not so bad after all, he is awesome. We've had like 3 bottles of wine and all kinds of meat we have here going through the list of new suppliers. Thanks God I am not that drunk, I am just tipsy and so is he. I look at the clock on the wall that is mounted on the wall, I shoot my eyes open in shock. We didn't even realize that time it's gone like this, I mean it's half 8 in the evening i'm sure Yanda's girlfriend is going gaga wherever she is. When he comes back from the men's rest rooms we are leaving. I stand up and start packing my things, it's way past my bed time..as the saying says, “time flies when you are having fun” and it has indeed flew. unfortunately our fun have to come to an end.

“Going somewhere”? he asks.

I did not even hear him coming in...

Him: So soon? It's not even 19:00pm yet.

I chuckle...

Me: Look at the time you dweeb, it's almost 21:00pm.

Him: What the hell? Did we get that carried away?

Me: Yeap and i'm sure your girlfriend is worried about you. She must be going crazy.

Him: I can't say the same about your boyfriend, i'm sure he is on a searching spree as we speak.

I chuckle and shake my head...

I take my bag from the table and walk to the door,

“Just so you know I don't have a boyfriend” I tell him and open the door.

“Nathi”

I can hear his baritone voice behind me, he is too close too close.

I turn to look at him, I am so close to his face. I can literally feel his warm breath in my neck. I look down wanting not to look at him, he is making me all kinds of roses and melted chocolate. He lifts up my chin with his finger causing me to look at him in the eyes. He cupps my face looks straight into my eyes and smash his lips unto mine, I soon follow suite and we are kissing. This kiss is wakening some emotions that were buried deep within me. He deepens the kiss and my knees become wobbly, no. This is wrong. This man has a girlfriend and he is my partner for goodness sake. I pull out from the kiss, he looks at me confuse.

“This is wrong. I'm so sorry” I utter and walk out before he can stop me or say something, damn.

Nathi

You know what, I am done helping people. People are taking advantage of my kindness, I try by all means to help and reach out to them. What do they do? They slap you on your face with a plate full of shit. No more helping people no matter how dire their situation is. When I got home last night I found some of my things missing, more especially my clothes&shoes just because I never wore them that doesn't mean I don't know them. If Sihle was a decent human being, she should've asked me for help, it's not like I was going to refuse helping her. Ungrateful humans. One day they will remember me, you know. I couldn't sleep last night, I kept on tossing&turning. The kiss was the one keeping me up, it carried out too many emotions. It felt like I was kissing my future boyfriend, it had love you know. It felt good but bad because I kissed someone's boyfriend, I am not about to a reason for another woman's tears. As much as it hurts, I will just have to suck it up and go on with my life. I get off bed and go take a bath. I wonder how am I going to face him today and for the fact that we work together, it's gonna be hard but then I will have no choice but to keep it professional. Well, I don't think I will be able to keep it professional, I mean he left me wet and yearning for him, for

his touch, his face buried within my thighs. The warmth of his tongue in my...hhayi hhayi, cut. I get off the bathtub and go to my room, I sit on top of the bed. My mind drifts off to thinking about Bayanda, good Lord. What is happening to me? I can't be drifting on&off in thoughts with someone's boyfriend. It dawns in me that I am inlove with someone's man, heavens. Why does it feel so right yet so wrong? I shake my head and look for something to wear. I gotta stop thinking about someone I will never have...

v

Bayanda

I am wide awake with lots of thoughts invading my mind. A part me doesn't want me going to work but another is deciding otherwise. Yet, I can't afford to go to work, what if Nathi doesn't come? I mean, she sure feels bad about kissing me but then it was just a kiss nothing major. You know, I should've told her that i'm also single. Who knows, maybe we might have something going on, maybe a beautiful love story was gonna blossom. Fuck that, I am going to tell her how I feel. If she rejects me then I guess it was never meant to be. But ke she

can't deny the chemistry we have together, the connection there is no way that she can miss it. Argh, well I will have to come clean to her and tell her how I feel. If I die I die, kunyiwe once. Lwazi gets in my room without knocking, so much for having privacy.

“Yow man, no work today”?

Me: Not by a long shot.

Him: What? Why?

Me: I think I messed up. I kissed my partner.

Him: You did what? Didn't you say that, you hate woman and they are a bunch of witches?

Me: Well, that's before Nathi came into the picture. You know, what's funny?

Him: What?

Me: I once bumped into her at the mall she was with her friends.

Him: And?

Me: And what? Nothing.

Him: How was the kiss?

Me: Bruh, it was perfect. It felt like a kiss of my wife.

He whistles and laughs at me...

Him: You already seeing marriage between the two of you? You clearly don't know women. They are all the same.

Me: Nathi is different. She is not the other “women” she is her and very much single.

Him: Why is she single? Maybe she is a psycho, she will kill you in your sleep.

I chuckle...

Me: She is far from being a killer. The only way she can kill me is if she becomes my wife, then I will die a happy man.

He whistles and shakes his head...

Him: You are deep in it man, fucken deep. There is no way out.

Me: I know. I love her. Infact I fell inlove with her the first time I laid my eyes on her. I knew right there&then that she is the one for me, until that witch did some voodoo stuff on me. Argh, I pray I never cross paths with her because if I do, I will kill her with my own bare hands and feed her to the dogs.

Him: She messed you up for real. Why don't you ask this Nathi chick out on a date?

Me: I am planning to ask her today but where will I take her? She looks like she like going to these expensive restaurant, where a small meat cost R322.

He laughs...

Him: Why are you complaining? It's not as if like you can't afford it. Just ask her out and hear what she says then take it from there.

I nod...

He is making sense, whatever her answer will be I will take it even though i'm hoping for her to say yes. Well

she is the one who will decide. I get off bed and go and take a bath.

v

Sindiswa

I am woken up by Sipho talking to someone over the phone, by the look of things I think he is talking with a woman, he will never change.

“I will see you later at our usual spot”

-

“I know and remember all in good time”

-

“I will introduce you to my family soon”

-

“You know that now”

-

“Later it is then. Wear that sexy lingerie I bought for you”

That's it! I turn to him I snatch his phone and throw it against the wall, it open and it's part fell. I am tired of Siphon, he has been making me a fool for a long time and it stops now. He looks at me, anger very much visible to his face, I am ready for him. I get off bed and wear my gown then exit our bedroom banging the door on my way out. I get to the kitchen and switch on the kettle, I take out a knife from the cutlery holder and placed it on top of the kitchen counter. I can hear him groaning coming to the kitchen, I am fed up with Siphon and his cheating ways. He doesn't respect me, not even a little bit. He talks to his mistress in front of me lying next to him, it all ends today. He stands on the staircase and looks at me, his chest going up&down.

“Wenzani”? (what are you doing)

Me: Making tea.

Him: I am not talking about that. What is it that you did back there?

Me: I did nothing except throwing that phone of yours against the wall.

Him: Why did you do it?

Me: Why did I do it? You have a nerve of talking to your floozies in front of me lying next to me? Why would you disrespect me like that?

Him: You can talk back now? And for your own information, I don't report to you. I am the man of this house I can do anything I want when I want to.

I chuckle...

Me: You are sure as hell taking me for a Poe's, Siphon! I've let you abuse me for far too long, I allowed you to disrespect me and violated me in the worst possible ways. I am a broken soul because of you, I am wounded and emotionally drained because of you Siphon! I am tired of you treating me like I'm nothing! I thought you were going to change, I've stuck around no matter how much you've treated me like shit. I've lost my only best friend because of you, I thought that you were going to change but I was wrong. You will never change.

Him: I don't care about your little speech. Why did you throw my phone against the wall? Who gave you the right?

I shake my head with tears streaming down my cheeks, he didn't hear anything I said. This is where I draw the line, I've had enough.

Me: Thought as much. I want out of this marriage.

He tilts his head to the side, shock written all over his face...

Him: Uthini?(what are you saying)

Me: I can't do this anymore. I want a divorce, Siphho.

Him: A what? You must be kidding me.

I shake my head...

Me: I am not kidding, I am serious. My lawyer will be in contact with your lawyer.

Him: You are not divorcing me, Sindiswa. You vowed that death will be the only thing that will do us apart. I am not allowing you to divorce me, Sindiswa not by any chance.

Me: I just did and fuck vows. Look where they got me! I'm in a loveless marriage. Just sign those papers for me.

Him: You are not leaving me Sindiswa! You are my wife, vows are vows.

I try walking away and he pulls out his gun and point it at me with tears clouding his vision, I swallow hard and shake my head.

Him: This is the only way you will be leaving, you will leave me through death. I love you Sindiswa!

Me: If you love me like you say you do, then free me Siphon, let me be free.

I try walking away again and he fires one warning shot in the air. I stop on my tracks and shiver...

Him: You better reconsider what you just said or we both die, right here right now. Take one more step and I will shoot you.

All I do is cry, I should've gotten out when I still had a chance. I am doomed.

v

Bayanda

Getting through lunch time was a mission I won't lie to you guys. I couldn't concentrate, my mind was all over Where else Nathi was going on about her morning as if nothing happened between us, like tf. Who does that? She is very much casual and professional. I put the burgers on top of her table, she is busy with her laptop.

“I've brought you lunch”

“Just a sec”

She finishes doing what she was busy with and closed her laptop.

Her: Thank you. You are such a lifesaver.

Me: No sweat. It's just lunch.

Her: Great. Let's dig in then.

I keep on stealing glances at her as she is busy eating. When she opens her mouth all I see is my cock filling her mouth, Jesus whoa!

Her: Is there something wrong with me?

Me: No, why?

Her: Its just the way you looking at me.

Me: It's nothing.

Her: You haven't touched your burger, why?

Me: Oh, I am not really hungry you can have it if you like.

Her: You sure?

Me: 100.

She smiles and takes it from my hands...

Me: Would you like going on date with me?

I blurt out. I didn't mean to but I already did, so I might as well brace myself for rejection.

She chokes on the burger and I give her a bottle of water.

Her: I'm sorry about that, your question just took me by surprise.

Me: I shouldn't have, sorry.

Her: What about your girlfriend? Wouldn't she mind that you taking another girl out?

Me: I'm single.

Her: What? I thought...what...where is your girlfriend?

Me: It's a long story. Say yes to my proposal then I will tell you everything.

She furrows her brows...

Her: When?

Me: How about tonight?

Her: You'll send me the rest of the details then and thank you for the lunch.

I smile alone, it did not go that bad. I am now convinced that God made her for me, too bad I met her after Aziza, shit. I will have to reserve table for us at Sun international restaurant.

Bayanda

I am all geared up with my 3pc charcoal suit. Lwazi borrowed me one of his expensive suits, I mean I have to impress. I even got myself a new haircut, I look beyond handsome y'all. I've booked us a table in one of the most expensive restaurant around the city. I don't know why but Nathi makes me nervous, the effect she has on is out of this world. I look at myself one more time in the mirror and nod to myself, I look good. I grab my car keys from the bed, the door opens and comes Luyanda, arh arh this boy. He hands me a packet of trust condoms.

I chuckle...

“And then? What are these for”?

Him: For your own safety bruh, don't tell me that you were going to hit it raw.

Me: Who said anything about having sex? It's just dinner, Luyanda.

Him: Yes. Which will lead to sex, I mean you are sex starved and all.

Me: Not all of us think with our dicks, Luyanda.

Him: You are very much correct but then you my dear brother already have a boner.

He laughs...

I look at my pants, great just great and bad timing! I shake my head and fix myself. I need to go back to my place, after the cleansing of my house. I need to get off Aziza's scent and sweat, in fact everything of hers in that house, I need to start everything on a clean slate. I drive straight to the restaurant, my phone rings I look at the screen and Nathi's name pops up. My heart start beating abnormally, I pray she is not calling me to cancel on me, I had to pull a few strings for this date to

happen, she mustn't disappoint me. I answer it while driving since I connected it to the Bluetooth.

“Hey”

“I just wanted to confirm the location”

Me: Bella Dolace restaurant.

Her: Are you sure?

Me: 100%

Her: Well, I am here now and it is closed.

Me: Closed? What do you mean?

Her: Apparently there's a business function going on.

Me: What?! You must be kidding me.

Her: I wish I was. How far are you?

Me: I'll be there in 10 minutes there seems like to be some kind of mistake.

Her: Clearly.

She hangs up...

Fuck fuck Thato! I try calling him and his phone puts me through voicemail, dammit! I have no plan B, I am fucked. I guess we will have to settle for another restaurant, at least then I won't spend too much. I arrive at the restaurant and I don't see her car, she lied to me. I chuckle and get off my car and head for the door but the guard stops for me before I can even make it to the door.

“And then”?

“your tag please” he says.

Me: Tag? What tag?

Him: This is a black&white business function.

Me: What do you mean? I've made reservations 2 days ago!

Him: All reservations were cancelled I am sorry.

Damn! I kick the tyre of my car in frustration, now what?!

“I told you wena clever”

I slowly turn my head and I am met by Nathi's big eyes. I can't get over her beauty. Where did she appear from anyway?

Me: Yeah.

Her: You sound disappointed.

Me: That's because I am. You know I pulled some strings for this date to be a success.

Her: You did not have to go all the way out to impress me honestly. You could've just cooked us a nice meal at your house or go to MacDonald's plus it's open 24/7.

Me: I did not think that you are that kind of a woman you know, who prefers local things

Her: Why do you say that?

Me: You look expensive and like someone who is used to going to high class restaurants.

Her: If only you knew and you can see that I did not go overboard with my outfit. So, where to from here?

I scratch my head, I don't have a back up plan and I can't take her to my house just yet and definitely not my parents house. Luyanda&Lwazi will just make her uncomfortable, not to mention my mother who will grill her with questions and canceling it will make me look somehow.

“Bayanda”!

I am brought back to earth by her calling my name.

Her: I asked a question.

“I don't know” I mumble.

Her: I do. I will host you.

Me: What? I don't want your parents chasing me out.

She laughs...

Her: Just come stop being a sissy. You will follow me with your car, aneh.

Me: But I did not see your car mus.

Her: I don't drive one car, I have lots and lots of cars, well some are still in shops though areye.

She laughs and walk to a black Lexus, a beast. Wow, this girl. Where does she get all this money? Maybe she has a snake, arh ha.ah. let me not think about it. Whoa, a Blessor! Yes she has a blessor. I look at her car then look at my i10, wow this girl is living life. I wonder how her house looks like, I hope it does not surpass mine. I get into my car and follow behind her car.

v

Sindiswa

Sipho has gone out. I don't know where he went, he locked me inside the house. He said that I will not go anywhere, when he pointed me with a gun I swear I almost peed on myself. I have no where to go, I will die by his hand if not me then he will die by my hand but one way or the other, one of us will die if not both. I don't even know what to do with myself, I am frustrated. He even took my phone with him, speaking of cellphone's

I have his in my hand. I managed to put the pieces together even though the screen is baldly cracked, you barely see a thing and it has a password. I tried all of the names I can think of but nothing, well except for one name. I take his phone again and type in the word and as I thought it unlocked, oh it's his ex's wife numbers anyway who died in a terrible train accident. I go to his dial numbers and I check the number that last called him, wow oh wow! I just laugh, I mean really now? Sipho is indeed taking me for a ride, fucking with my own blood sister! The very same girl I left a breast for, my bloody fucken sister. Anger overcomes me. I dial the numbers and it rings unanswered, damn. I throw his phone against the wall with full force and this time around it breaks beyond repair, he will know me today. I pour myself a glass of water and take out the knife in the cutlery holder I look at it and feel it's sharpness with my finger,

it cut me a little causing blood to come out. Perfect this time I am going to use it I'd rather go to jail, he has really crossed the line.

v

Nathi

I'm done serving us food, I got home and cooked a simple meal, well with his help of course and he even finished my wine. He had to understand that I stay alone, so he mustn't expect hot stuff. He offered to make a dessert for us and God he couldn't stop complimenting my house. Like duh, it's not like I live in a 59 rooms mansion! I am sitting comfortably on my couch browsing through Facebook, well there's nothing interesting but ke I have to keep myself busy. Wait, did I tell you guys that I shaved? I mean, duh and bought some condoms for in future of course but ke I wouldn't mind getting laid tonight, sis is starving y'all. She needs some action. I laugh, no man I am not normal guys, I swear.

“Here you go” Bayanda hands me a bowl.

“Thank you”

Him: I tried my best

Me: I see the effort.

He made us a simple malva pudding with peaches and strawberries and some whip cream, too much sugar but it's the thought that counts.

Him: If you don't mind me asking, how long have you been single?

Me: Going to 6 years now.

Him: What? Why?

Me: Ever since my fiancé died 5 years ago I promised myself that I will never fall inlove again.

Him: I'm so sorry for your loss.

Me: It's fine, i'm over it now.

Him: So, you still don't wanna fall inlove again? You don't wanna break that promise?

I laugh and shake my head...

Me: Nope. I am ready to explore and fall inlove all over again.

Him: Someone in mind?

Me: Nah, no one currently maybe as times goes by.

Him: I see.

We finish eating. He picks up my legs and put them on top of his lap and massages my feet.

Him: Nathi.

Me: Yes?

Him: Can you please look at me in the eyes.

I avert my eyes to his, he is looking me straight in the eyes making me shy all of a sudden.

Him: There's something I want to tell you I don't know how you will take it.

My heart is beating out of my chest.

Him: I...I love you, Nathi. I loved for the very first time I laid my eyes on you. Can you please be my girlfriend?

Me: I...

I don't know what to say nina but I love him too. I felt his cold lips smashing into my mine, I smile in between the kiss. I guess we official now.

Me: I love you too Yanda and yes I will be your girlfriend.

He picks me up&spin me around.

Him: Thank you thank you. I promise to love you till forever.

I chuckle...

Me: This means we can start making love right?

He laughs and puts me down, I guess I am not that heavy argh.

Him: Yes but not tonight. Tonight I want us to get to know each other better.

Me: Sounds like a plan.

He is a little bit taller than me, I bury my head in his chest. It's officially mine mus.

√

Sindiswa

Sipho will be here any minute from now, the bottle of three ships is half empty, I am drinking straight from the bottle. The knife is right next to me on this very couch that I am seated on. I take another big swig savouring the bitter taste. "Sindiswa"!, I hear him calling my name roughly, I chuckle and wait for him to come here. He walks in and charges at me and gives a backhand slap.

“Who gave you the permission to go through my phone”?

I laugh with tears running down my cheeks. I take another big swig and ignore him. He slaps me again. He is making me angry right now. I stand up and take the knife from the couch, I hold it looking at him. He widens his eyes.

“What are you doing with that knife? Are you out of your mind”? He asks.

I laugh...

Me: I am going to kill you. Remember our vows? We vowed that only death will tear us apart, you even reminded me in the morning now it's time I remind you.

Him: Are you out of my mind, Sindiswa? Put that wife away woman.

Me: If I can't have you then no one will.

Him: You are out of your mind! You losing it.

His mistake was to attempt to slap me. I close my eyes and lift up the knife and lodge it straight into his heart, I hear him gasp. I open my eyes and I am met by his open mouth and eyes, I let go of the knife still lodge in his heart. He stumbles and falls down holding his chest, a sob escape my mouth and I cover my mouth with my hands. I killed him. I killed my husband. I look at the poison on top of the coffee table. I pick it up, twist open the bottle and drink it. I sit down next to his lifeless body, I lie my head on top of his tummy. This is our forever. This is our “ death do us apart” I slowly close my eyes and hum a song.

24

Catherine (Sindiswa's mom)

I just can't seem to shake the feeling that something is not right, like something bad happened but what I also don't know and for the fact that my heart is beating more than it's normal speed it's driving me insane. My husband comes in he just came back from his business trip. He is forever travelling. Well we are not in good terms, we are in a process of divorce. He thinks that I love Hlomile more than Sindiswa and of which it's not true. Don't get me wrong, I do love Sindiswa but only because she is married in to a wealthy family. Sindiswa is a mistake child, having her was all a mistake a mistake I regret till today and possibly for the rest of my life. With Hlomile is different because she was planned properly.

“When last did you talk to Sindiswa”? He asks.

“I don't know”

Him: Even after she came out of hospital?

I nod...

Him: What kind of a mother are you? You were supposed to bring her back home and not send her back to that abuser.

Me: That abuser is her husband. He paid Lobola for her and spent a lot of money for their marriage to be a success.

Him: I still don't understand why you did not try helping her when she reached out to you. You sent her away like some kind of a beggar. You don't care about her wellbeing, what if that abusive husband of his kill her? What then?

Me: He won't kill her and besides he is not that bad. Just one beat up and Sindiswa starts being dramatic, she had to endure that once upon a time beating. She is a married woman for Christ sake!

He laughs...

Him: Are you hearing yourself, Catherine? Are you really really hearing yourself?

Me: I am merely telling the truth, Mandla.

Him: You are actually saying that my daughter must endure being abuse all in the name of the marriage?! And for your information, I don't remember laying my hand on you. Ever.

Me: That's because you are not a man, Mandla. You are a boy. You don't have the guts too.

Him: I'm just glad that I am divorcing your arse. You are not a woman you are a witch. The devil's advocate.

Me: Did you just insult me? Did you just call me a devil's advocate?

Him: Yes. That's because you are and more. Now let me tell you something; should anything happen to my daughter, there will

be hell to pay. I will rain war on you Catherine. You will see the evil other side of me, don't test me woman.

I laugh and clap my hands...

Me: You don't scare me Mandla. Bring it on!

He shakes his head and walk away.

Who does he think he is threatening me? Imagine a man who can't even get it up threatening me, the nerve of him. Speaking of Sindiswa&Sipho reminds me that I did not get my allowance, I will have to call sipho and remind him it's not like him to forget. Just then my phone rings and it's a landline number, I wonder who are they.

“Catherine speaking, how can I help you”?

“Good morning ma'am. This is Gracie from T&T guest house can you please come by it's urgent”

Me: Urgent? What could possible be urgent at a fucken bnb that must make me cancel my breakfast outing?

Her: Please hurry ma'am it's about your daughter.

Me: My daughter? What daughter? What happened?

Her: The boss will tell you everything when you get here, goodbye.

M: Hello...hello.

Nothing...great and she hangs up on me. I waste no more time, I take my car keys before I get out of the door, another thought cross my mind, what if i'm going there to fix Sindiswa's mess? God, I can't with this child.

v

Nathi

I am woken by Bayanda busy poking my nose. I laugh and open my eyes, this man is crazy.

“What the hell are you doing”?

“Waking you up”

Me: By poking my nose, Really?

Him: Yeap and I must say that it really did work considering the fact that I've been calling you for the past 20 minutes.

I laugh...

Me: Stop lying. What time is it?

Him: 08:00am.

Me: What? We are supposed to be at work already, we are very late.

Him: Wrong. We are supposed to be here cuddling getting to know each other better.

Me: I thought we did that last night hence we ended up sleeping late!

Him: You fall asleep while I was telling you more about me, remember?

I chuckle...

Me: Whatever. Since we both not going to work who is going to oversee things?

Him: Sbusiso. I mean that's the reason why you made him a manager, right?

Me: Very correct.

Him: I've made a very mouthwatering breakfast.

Me: I hope you did not burn down my kitchen down.

Him: Ouch, i'm hurt.

Me: Stop being a cry baby. Let me go and rinse my face and brush my teeth then I will come down shortly.

Him: Alright...

He gives me a perk on my lips, gets up from the bed and walk away. I am watching at his firm arse and thighs, they are perfect. Why did he have to roam around with a boxer in my presence? Has he have no shame? Gosh this man is making me wet without even touching me. Argh such torture. I get off bed and go and rinse my face then I make my way to the kitchen.

Guys my kitchen is a mess it shows that a man was indeed making breakfast. He pushes a plate of the so called breakfast to me. I am not laughing guys but this right here is a "burnte" breakfast. Everything is burnt, talk about a mouth watering breakfast. I watch him as he sits opposite me, he doesn't seem to see the problem. I look at him as he takes his first bite and judging by his expression is a disaster, a whole hurricane.

"I think the heat was too high and I must've added too much salt but it doesn't taste that bad. Try it" he says consoling himself.

Me: Don't justify it. It's a disaster. Let's clean up here then go to mugg&bean to get some breakfast.

Him: I just wanted to impress you babe.

Me: That's the problem about you. Stop trying to impress me just be yourself. I love you just the way you are with all your imperfections and that gap in between your teeth.

He chuckles...

Him: Why did God and my ancestors blessed me with a woman like you after all the girls I've been with?

Me: God saves you the best for last or whatever the saying goes. This is our time, it was time for our paths to cross and they did, I can't wait to tell our kids about how we met and all.

Him: I am so blessed to have a woman like you in my life. You are my whole life and my universe combine.

Me: I know baby I know. Now, let's clean up this mess and go get that breakfast.

Him: Let's clean up, now this is team work.

Me: Okay Mr team work? When are we doing bedroom duties?

Him: Huh? Are you that sahara desert?

Me: A cob of spider webs I tell you.

Him: Maybe after breakfast you might be lucky and finally get your sahara watered.

Me: We can do it now mus plus there are some styles that I got on bad girls bible that I want to try. Some are extreme yes but they are worth a try and just so you know I love WOT, even though I move all my body!

I bite my bottom lip and he furrows his brow and squint his eyes then laughs.

Me: I am joking wena, let's get done here before I take what's mine by force.

He laughs...

Him: You are one crazy woman, you know that?

Me: Yeap I know!

We both laugh and start cleaning up the mess he created, I keep on stealing glances at him. I am one lucky bastard! This whole buffet is mine, he ain't no snack nor starter a whole meat buffet.

v

Catherine

The receptionist ushers me to the manager's office. I was surprised to see the ER team and police walking around here and a certain room had a yellow tape. It looks like a crime scene I wonder what happened. I get in as soon as the receptionist opens the door for me in the manager's office, he is talking with someone over the phone, he gestures me to sit down. After 3 minutes he is done. He clears his throat and pushes a box of tissue and a glass of water, I look at him dumbfounded, why would he give me these things? He is weird.

“Good morning ma'am and welcome to T&T bnb”

Me: Just get straight to the point sir and stop wasting my time.

Him: Very well then. Do you have a daughter by the name, Hlomile?

Me: Yes, why?

Him: I'm sorry to be the barrier of bad news but your daughter has passed away.

I laugh...

Me: What are you saying to me exactly? Hlomile is at her aunt's house she left last night.

Him: Unfortunately not. She was found in the bathtub this morning with multiple stab wounds and strangling marks.

Me: Wh...what are you saying exactly?

Him: Your daughter by the name Hlomile was killed and according to the reports he was murdered by a certain man name Sipho. A boyfriend of hers.

Hlomile did not have a boyfriend. What is this man talking about?

Me: Si...Sipho? It doesn't make sense. The only Sipho I know is the one married to my eldest daughter, Sindiswa.

Him: I don't know ma'am. Do you mind coming with me just to confirm whether is your daughter or someone else.

I nod and stand up. This man is really bullshitting me! I follow behind him. We get to the officers and I am asked to go in since I am the mother of the deceased, I make my way in and go

straight to the bathroom. I look at the bathtub and my heart stopped beating for a few second, it can't be. I let out a piercing cry and they lead me out, my baby can't be dead. She can't be dead. Siphos will pay for this, isn't it enough that he has made my other daughter a punching bag now he goes and kill my golden egg?! I will fucking kill him. What was Hlomile doing in this bnb with Siphos anyway? It doesn't make any sense! Could it be that they were...hell to the no! Hlomile wouldn't hurt her sister like that! I pull up in Siphos drive way and leapt out of my car calling his name, he has to give me answers. I push the door open without even knocking still calling his name. I get inside the house and I stop in my tracks, what I see here makes my insides turn. The scene is making me sick. I am beyond hurt, I lost both my daughters in one day! God, why me? Why such punishment?! I sit down on the floor next to Sindiswa's body and new fresh waves of tears run down my cheeks. Her lips are perched and already turning purple, her eyes are not showing any signs of life. Siphos blood is drying up and there's a lot of it on the white carpet. I lost both my daughters to a man. A murder! An abuser! Siphos ripped me off my precious babies. Why didn't I listen to Sindiswa? Why didn't I protect her as a mother? I've failed her. Siphos money blinded me, it blinded me completely and made me not care about my daughter. It's all my fault and I've just given my husband more reasons to despise me. I hate you Siphos and I hope you rot in hell! I let out

another piercing cry. I know the family will blame me for everything. Every fucken thing, how will I even deliver the news to them? Where will I start?

v

Bayanda

It is only now that I come back home. I had a great day with Nathi and if it wasn't for my mother who was busy calling me I would still be with Nathi even now. I find the family sitting watching some movies, I greet them and sit down in between Luyanda&Lwazi.

“Since when do you spend the night out in my house”?

“It was last night only mama and I did not think you will have a problem with it”.

Her: Think I wouldn't have a problem with it? I do have a problem Bayanda. This is my house and in my house you abide by my rules. You don't do as you please.

Me: Rules? Since when did you start having rules or you made them because i'm here?

Her: I've always had rules Bayanda. Where are you coming from anyway?

Me: From my girlfriend.

Her: You have a girlfriend? An entire you? You never learn neh. Bayanda? When will you ever learn that all these girls are after your money?

Me: If only you knew mama but I will not be discussing this with you.

Her: You've been with this woman for only a what? A day and you've already gained some balls to answer me?

I chuckle...

Me: I am not doing this with you mama and that woman is my girlfriend.

Her: Just so we clear I don't like her already and she is not welcomed in my house.

Me: No problem mama. To keep the peace between us I will be going back to my house.

Her: I see she has already started controlling you. Where are you going because your house has not been cleansed of the witch's scent yet?

Me: I will do the cleansing ceremony myself.

Her: Very good and don't ever come back here. You are dead to me Bayanda dead.

I look at her and shake my head. This woman is unbelievable, it's not a rocket science that she doesn't like me. Wanna know why? Because I never allowed her to control me on how to live my life unlike Lwazi&Luyanda who allowed her to control them. Ai, I will tell you all about her one day. I walk straight to my room and start packing my clothes, I am leaving and no one can stop me not even Lwazi or Luyanda. I am done with seeking validation from my mother as for my dad I'm sure he is whoring wherever he is ignoring this toenail of a devil called my mother. He too can't stand my mother, she is like a pain in the butt.

25

Nathi

I am woken up by my phone ringing I wonder who is it. I take out my phone under my pillow, I first look at the time and its just after 3am. Whoever was calling hanged up, just as I am about to put my phone back under the pillow it rings again. I don't even know the number

“Hello”

I hear some sniffing then shuffling and a loud piercing cry follows after.

“Hello hello”

My heart is beating out of my chest. What if is Sindiswa needing my help? God. By the time I hang up, I am already out of bed taking my robe from the chair and making my way out. I hope I get there in time. I send Bayanda a text message before driving. I know I did say that I will never help her but guys, she's been

with me through my darkest days and I can't really neglect her, now that she needs my help, right? I really don't know why she is doing this to herself, why is she giving Siphso the power to use them against her? What is Siphso exactly giving these women? Is it a love potion or his sex game is 100? Whatever the case may be they can't be blinded like that, haibo. As I am approaching their house I see cars already parked outside, I wonder what's going on. I park mine and leapt out of my car rushing inside the house before I could even get to the door, someone comes out and stops me from entering. I look at the person and it's a woman maybe a little bit older than Kat. Her eyes are blood shot red. She embrace me in her warm arms, I am confused. Why would a stranger embrace me? I am here for Sindiswa. She hugs me for dear life and I can feel my robe getting wet, as she is busy crying more people come out of the house. I am met by Sindiswa's mother who has a blanket draped around her shoulders and she looks really drained. She looks at me, and I can see new fresh wave of tears streaming down her cheeks. What's going on? Why is everyone down and look rather somber? I see her shaking her head. It is only now that I am registering what is going on. No no it can't be true it can't be, I am trembling and my lips are quivering. Tears make their way down my cheeks.

“Sindi no no no! It can't be true please tell me that it's not true”!

“I am so...”

I did not even wait for her to finish talking, I am already summoning a painful wail. Sindiswa can't do me like this. She can't do this to me, after everything we've been through. I break down and fall on the ground, they are trying to comfort me but I am not hearing any of it. You can't leave me Sindiswa, I am so sorry please come back to me. How could you do this to me. Sindiswa, why? Why? The very same woman who was embracing me, crouches besides me and hugs me for dear life. As I am busy crying another wail follows then to painful cries broke out, these one really tore me into pieces. The 2 voices are Sipho's kids just don't know about the first one.

“Sipho Sipho. Mntanami bandla(my child) Sipho ungenzani”? (what are you doing to me)

So both Sipho&Sindiswa are dead? How? What happened?
Who killed who? As much as Sipho's kids are disrespectful and

very much spoiled they did not deserve this, I mean they are practically orphans now. Who ever will step up to take care of them better brace themselves, these kids are a handful. If only she allowed me to help her. If only she got Siphos arrested, If only she divorced him, but then "If only" is no longer valid because they are no more. I am unable to stand up, and I've run out of tears, I am broken & weak. This evokes memories of Obakeng's passing, it's taking me back there.

"Get up Cc. Let's get you inside" she says.

I shake my head...

"Please Cc you will catch a flu"

I still ignore her and rock myself back & forth if only she listened to me. If only.

v

Bayanda

Nathi's text was very unclear. She just wrote "going to help a friend it's urgent" that's it. No address nothing. Right now I am trying to call her but her phone rings unanswered, I pray she is safe wherever she is. I can't lose her I've just found her, she has to be fine wherever she is. I get out of bed taking my phone with me just in case. Not knowing where she is is making me insane, at least if she also included an address I would've know where to go and start looking but nothing. I get in the kitchen and switch on the light I take out the milk in the fridge and pour it in a glass. My phone rings just then, I quickly answer it without even checking the caller id.

"Bayanda speaking, hello"

"Hello baba. This is Boniwe Sindiswa's aunt. Can you please direct us where you stay. We want to bring Nathi" she says.

My heart starts pounding out of my chest, did anything happen to her? I swallow the lump in my throat.

Me: I...is she okay?

Her: Yes she is. It's just that she needs to be with someone now.

Me: Okay. I will send you the address now.

Her: Thank you.

She hang up...

I take a deep breath and I am already dripping wet with sweat. I hear a hooter outside, that was fast. I quickly stand up and go outside. There are two cars parked outside of which one is Nathi's of course. The door of Nathi's car opens and two gentleman step out of it, I approach them.

“Sanibonani Bantu abadala” (greetings my elders)

“Yebo fana. We are not staying, we've just brought that girl in the car” one man says.

Me: Thank you. I will take it from here.

Them: Stay well.

Me: Go well.

They turned on their feet and left

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I open the back door, and pick up the sleeping Nathi her eyes are swollen and there are still tears marks in her face. I take her to my bedroom and lay her on top of the bed and cover her with a blanket. I look at the clock mounted on the wall it's half 5am, I look at her and all I see is pain. I wonder what happened. I walk out and lock the doors then go back to my bedroom and sit on top of the bed.

“Pl...please join me and hold me tight, please babe” I hear her say, her voice is raspy it sounds like she has been crying for a long time. I take off my sleepers and join her on the bed, I hug her from behind and she places her hand on top of mine. She is

even shaking, I pull her closer to me assuring her that I am not going anywhere. I am here to stay.

v

Sihle

Ever since I heard the news of Sindiswa&Sipho passing I've been crying none stop. I can imagine what the families are going through right now especially Sindiswa's mother, losing two of your daughters in one night must be really heart breaking. I wish I can go and pass my condolences to Sipho's family, but after what he did me and how his family treated my mother they don't deserve it. After stealing from Nathi I fled to my aunt's house in Zamani. I've managed to sell 80% of the clothes I stole and took some for myself, the money I got was close to 45k but now I am running short of money. I think I misused the money, I swear I thought that it was never gonna finish but now I'm left with 5k. After 2 days of staying with my aunt I decided to move out, and stay with my newly found friends Aziza&Anita in Anita's apartment. They've even introduced into the world of slay queens but I am still getting the hang of it, I did not want to become one but since I am

running out of money I ended up agreeing to being one and it's no fun at all. The things they do just to keep up with their standard of living is not on, they do a lot of shit of which I don't think I will handle. Oh, yah almost forgot I sent my mother the Baloi's lobola money and for her to buy what the house needs. It's 8am and I just came back from my morning jog, Aziza&Anita have been gone since last night. I go and take a quick shower and wear my shorts with crop top then go and make myself breakfast, I made myself cereal then go to the lounge and watch some TV. The door opens and comes in Buhle&Anita who look drained, I guess they've overworked them.

“Hello Bitch” they greet.

“Hey bitches”

Buhle: Tonight you going out with us.

Me: What? Thought I was gonna start joining you next week.

Anita: Change of plans and the man has already paid so much for you. Tonight you are going to entertain him.

Me: What? You guys can't be serious.

Buhle: Actually we are. Word of advice. Do whatever he asks you to do.

Me: Uh uh...

Her: Or else you die. Your choice Sihle and there is no turning back now, you are in for life only death will help you out.

I look at them in total awe, these girls are taking me for a ride they clearly don't know me shame.

Me: Tonight won't be possible. My husband is dead I will have to mourn for him

Anita: We don't care about him, we need the money and you my dear are gonna work it for us tonight and don't even try of running away.

Buhle: If you try shit like that you will kiss your whole family goodbye. We know you Sihle and we also know your family. You mess this up, one whistle and your family is dead then you will also die. Think about it.

Anita: You better start practising some sexy moves for tonight.

She stands up and walks away, Buhle is long gone. What the fuck did I get myself into? I shouldn't have ran away, I should've just spoke to Nathi. I'm sure she was gonna come through, I messed up.

v

Nathi

I open my eyes but they seem pretty heavy, and I have this unexplainable headache. I look at my surroundings and I realize that I am not in my room, where am I? Blurry as my vision is I see a figure approaching me, I blink and there's no one. I sit on my butt and then I remember what happened Sindiswa, why did you? I blink away the tears and look at the door. The door opens and I see Bayanda coming in he looks worried, as soon as he see me starring at him he rushes to me and hugs me for dear life.

“Thanks God you awake. You've been out of it for few hours” he says his voice filled with worry.

“Water please”

He stands up and walks out then come back with a bottle of water, he hands to me. I thank him.

Him: How are you feeling now?

Me: I don't know. You know I tried helping her, I tried my best but did she listen to me? No. She went back to that abuser of hers called a husband, look now. She is gone, she left that house as a corpse. I feel like I've failed her I should've tried harder but what was the use because she always peed in my face? She did not need my help, at all.

Him: I am so sorry for your loss.

Me: Not as sorry as I am. I will have to call my mother and let her know then later going to Sindiswa's house. I am only going there just because she was my friend as for her mother, yasis.

Him: I can accompany you.

Me: No. I will go by myself.

He nods...

Me: So, this is your house?

Him: Yeah. It's not the best but it covers my head.

Me: It is the best. There are people out there who sleeps on the streets and trust me they will gladly come and stay here given the chance. Appreciate everything you have whether big or small. Care to take me on a tour? I just need to clear my mind.

Truly speaking I do not wanna dwell in a lot in Sindiswa's sudden passing but I won't lie it hurts. Shit cuts deep, damn you death.

Nathi

I make my way inside the yard greeting the people that are seated outside, I make my way inside the house and greet the women who are busy in the kitchen. Sindiswa has a lot of family members of which beats me as to why did she not reach out to them, I'm sure some of them would've surely helped. I shake my head as I enter the bedroom where Sindiswa's mother is mourning her daughter in, I find her sleeping. I greet the women and sit down, I don't even know what to say. Now more than ever I wish that Hlomile can appear somewhere and save me, the sour mood in this room can't be missed it is too loud. One of the girl came in she had a tray with her, she placed it next to me. I thanked her. Another woman came and I recognize her immediately, she is the very same woman who comforted me.

“Oh, Hello Nathi” I did not see you coming in.

“I guess you were busy and of which is understandable. How are the preparations coming along”?

Her: It's not easy planning a funeral for 2 but we are getting there, and its still early days, hopefully by the end of this week everything would've come together.

Me: 2 funeral? I thought Sipho will be buried at his house.

Her: Oh no, its not Sipho its Hlomile.

Me: What? What happened to her? When? Oh my God I can imagine what the family is going through, my condolences.

Her: Sipho killed her.

Me: I don't follow. Why would Sipho kill her?

Her: They were dating.

Me: What? That's not right, Hlomile would never date Sipho. I mean he saw how much of a abuser Sipho was, she saw how Sindiswa was almost beaten to death. Oh, wow this is too much. I...I don't even know what to say

Her: We were shocked when we learned the news and we were never told that Sindiswa was being abused. Her mother never told us, how cruel of her. Maybe if they reached out to us we could've helped, she would still be alive and that bastard behind bars.

Me: That would've all been a waste of time. I've tried to help her several times but it all went in vain. I guess she really lived up to their vows, it's shocking.

Her: Indeed and can you even believe it that no one covered Sindiswa in their funeral covers or burial societies? Not even her own parents.

Me: Wow. Talk about a lot.

Her: Yeah and by the look of things some of these family members are not willing to cough out money, it's a disaster.

Me: I don't mind helping. Sindiswa was my best friend and that is at least what I can do.

Her: Are you sure? I mean we don't want to burden you.

Me: It's alright, I am doing this for my best friend even though she passed on without us mending things.

Her: Thank you so much Nathi. May God bless you.

Me: He will surely bless me.

We laugh...

The church women are here, I stand up and excuse myself. I decided to help making tea...

“We have no biscuits nor sugar. What are we going to serve our guests” says one of the girls.

“I don't know Ntando, this was such a short notice they will have to leave without drinking tea then, they will drink it tomorrow” says another.

Ntando: Yoh hhayi this is a disaster. I am not coming back here tomorrow.

Girl: Me too. I will only come to the funeral because wow.

I shake my head and excuse myself. Why did the parents not buy anything, I mean they got the news in the wee hours of the morning they should've bought half of the things, especially grocery. I foresee a long week ahead. I take out my phone and dial my mother's number, she answers on the 3rd ring.

“Nono”

“Mama I need your help it's an emergency”

Her: Yini Sisi khuluma nami. (what is it, talk to me)

Me: I need 2 20l of biscuits or scones asap, its a disaster in here mama. Things are not looking good, they don't have anything to serve the guests.

Her: Ngizotshela u MamDlamini ukuthy akulungisele, kuzomele athathe lawa womshado waka Sindane.(I will tell MamDlamini to prepare them for you. She will have to take the ones that she baked for the Sindane's wedding)

Me: Thank you mama. I will come now and pick them up.

Her: Okay Nono, zokubona nawufikile.(I will see you when you've arrived)

Me: Okay Mama.

I hang up and walk to my car. What kind of a family is this? They should at least put their differences aside and come together, finish.

v

Bayanda

The sangoma is done cleansing my house. I told him to come late since I was at work, he also gave me some herbs to get rid of any connection I had with Aziza and clean my blood, he gave me a lot of herbs then he cut me with a razor all over my body strengthening me. He then told me to be careful of my mother, I wonder why. I paid him his money and he left. I quickly went to the bathtub and mixed the water with the herbs and take a quick bath...I wear my shorts and go to chill in the lounge, I need to do some spring cleaning but today I am lazing around. I take my phone on top of the couch and call Nathi, when I was about to hang up she answers

“My personal human”

I chuckle...

“Heart holder. How are you feeling now”?

Her: Not good baby and a lot is happening baby. They are going to have 2 funerals.

Me: What? I thought only one person has passed on.

Her: Well

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her sister too and it turns out that she was dating Sindiswa's husband.

Me: What? How could the man be cruel and date his sister in-law? He is a bastard.

Her: And so is Hlomile. Why did she agree to date Siphon knowing very well it was her sister's husband? She is also a

bastard and heartless. I guess it didn't cross her mind that she will be hurting her sister in the process, right?

Me: Eish, I guess you right. They are both wrong.

Her: Very wrong babe. Look, I will have to call you back babe there's a commotion happening here.

Me: Oh, okay. Take care babe. I love you

Her: I love you too.

She hangs up...

Here I am smiling like a retard. Who would've thought that one day I will date a girl like, Nathi? This girl is perfect and she accepted me the way I am. It doesn't even show that she has more money than me. She treats me like I am the head of the house, you know when she asked me to take her on a tour earlier on I was nervous. I mean my house is not beautiful or outstanding like hers and I live in a four room house, she did

not even try belittling me she actually complimented it. I will definitely put a ring on it one day, she deserves the world and I like the fact that she is selfless and kind. Our children will clearly grow up in a loving home with loving parents, of course. I am disturbed by a knock at the door, I wonder who is it. I drag my feet to the kitchen, I yank open the door and it is Sizwe with 2 girls and they have alcohol with them. I open the door wide and allow them in, I wonder where is Bawanile. I thought he was done with this life of a fuck boy, they greet and pass me by. I stand at the door and watch them going to the lounge, Sizwe comes to the kitchen with the carry packs. He opens the fridge...

“Whoa, what are you doing”?

“Meaning”?

Me: Why did you bring those girls with you?

Him: Can't you see that, we going to have a braai? It's time you get back in the game.

Me: Back in the game?

Him: Yeah, fuck boy crew until you ready to date again.

Me: That won't be necessary. I already have a woman and of which I love very much, thank you but I am not interested.

Him: Since when dude? I can't chase these girls dude, I promised them a braai and some fun.

Me: Unfortunately I can't host you guys. Go and look for another joint to chill, in fact why not go to your house?

Him: You want Bawinile to kill me? You know I can't do that man.

Me: I am also sorry but I can't help you, my girlfriend will be home any minute from now.

Him: Dude you are doing this to me because of a girl? A girl.
Another Aziza?

I shake my head...

Me: That's it. Please leave and don't forget to take your girls
along with your friends.

Him: Your mother was right about you. Indeed you are
bewitched once again, this new girl of yours is worse than
Aziza.

I laugh...

Me: And I am very much glad that she bewitched me. She did a
very applauding job, I give it to her.

Him: But don't worry I know what to do

Me: You going to give me meat in my dreams again? Oh, I almost forgot. Thank you for coming through for me. Now leave my house.

Him: You will regret this!

Me: Are you even really my friend?

Him: Ntando! Thando come we leaving!

He looks at me and I look at him too not even moving my gaze from him.

“Wh...why are we leaving? We just got here?”

Him: Stop asking me nonsense. Let's go.

He dropped the carry pack that was in his hands, he clicks his tongue and walks away with the girls following behind him. I

chuckle and start picking up the bottles, our friends though.
Ai...

v

Sihle

We are all looking good in our almost shirts dresses, you can actually see everything. I wear my heels and strap them on, Aziza doesn't look okay ever since she woke up from her nap. She looks like a zombie, even make-up can't hide her hideous face. It is strange I'm telling you, she's even talking to herself or talking to someone but whatever it's strange. Thinking of it makes the back of my hair stand up. Anita soon joins us and we all walk to the car, Aziza offered to be the one driving us. Trust me I protested but since she is the only one who knows how to drive perfectly, I eventually gave in. We all get into the car and off she goes. She is playing music on full blast, here I am thinking of how my first night will be with my client. I pray I don't get to do things that are beyond my experience. I am dragged from my thoughts by Anita screaming, I jog out of my thoughts and Aziza is driving straight into the railway.

“Aziza stop the car you are going to kill us. Slow down”! I shout and so is Anita.

“I promised. I must fulfil my promise we are all sacrifices” she says.

“Aziza please snap out of your crazy thoughts. Stop the fucken car”!

I am now in tears and Anita is busy praying, God please forgive me for my sins and protect my family. I say in my heart.

“I'm sorry but I have to do it. I've been given an order” Aziza says.

Before we know it a truck comes out from out of nowhere hooting, it is coming in a jolt speed. Everything is happening so fast, the truck comes in contact with our car and cause a great impact. The car loses control and rolls over and over and over the last thing I remember is us screaming.

27

Nathi

Friday came faster than I've anticipated. To say it was great week I would be lying, it was a hell of a week. The endless fights and finger pointing was too much, it came to a point where two of the Aunt's got physical and one ended up in hospital, this family is very much unstable and they are ungrateful. After everything I've done for them they thank me with a plate full of shit, Jesus. Me and my good heart though, one day I will die because of it, I swear. Sindiswa's mother was the worst, yasis the nerve of that woman. My eyes are puffy and I am dead tired. I'm so thankful to Bayanda for being with me through this journey and my parents who kept on checking up on me, they've been a strength that I could never have imagined. Almost forgot to tell you, Siphos mother came and throw a very huge tantrum demanding their son's Lobola money and the "allowance" that Sindiswa's mother was getting monthly, it was a huge debate. Anyway they will be seeing each other in court, wuuhhh hhayi. Today I decided to just relax and not do anything. Sindiswa's aunt (Thandiwe) is the one who told me to rest and I am very much grateful to her. My parents were to arrive tonight, the driver will be the one bringing them. After all this is over I will need a holiday, sighs. I am sitting outside with

few of the relatives that arrived today, they came very much prepared, they really did tell themselves that they won't do anything. They are wearing tight fitting dresses, heels. Their hair&nails done but otherwise they are very beautiful except for their attitude. One even had to decency to tell me that I am not in their league why would I want to sit next to them, I am trying to ruin their image. Good Lord your female species I'm unable to can with them. Ntando comes and sits next to me, out of all these ladies here she is the only one who is friendly towards me, unlike the rest and she looks tired.

“I am so over this week. My feet are killing me”

“Me&you same WhatsApp group. I don't even want anything”

Her: I see the rich cousins finally arrived.

Me: Rich cousins?

Her: There ones sitting next to you. You know they think that they are “it” gang.

Me: Why am I not surprised? They gave me a mouthful.

Her: I'm sure they were bragging about their trust fund money and how you are below their league.

I laugh...

Me: Exactly.

Her: I am used to them you know. Even their nasty remarks don't get to me.

Me: Nasty remarks?

Her: Yeap.

I know I'm noisy guys but but...

Me: Why would they make nasty remarks about you? I mean you are family for crying out loud.

She chuckles...

Her: Family? These people don't care about me nor my siblings, I mean even my parents don't care about us. They left us in the hands of our grandmother, whom too doesn't care about us. We are a burden to her, especially me since I am the eldest.

Me: How cruel of her. Why don't you guys move out?

Her: Move out? Where will we go? I am not even working, so how will we survive? I even thought of selling my body but then thinking of all the diseases out there, doesn't allow me too.

I wish I can help her but the way people are ungrateful and always thank me with a plate of shit after helping them, makes me want not to help her. I can detect sadness in her voice but the question is, will she appreciate my help or also thank me with a plate full of shit?

Me: That's bad. I hope something comes up.

Her: Me too. Sometimes I even think of committing suicide but then how will my siblings survive without me?

I see her wiping her tears...

I swallow the lump forming in my throat, she has it bad.

Her: Enough about me and my painful story, we should be worried about a place to sleep.

Me: Why should we be? I mean this house is big enough for all us and besides others will be at the night vigil.

Her: You don't know anything. There only available sleeping place is for the rich. I would go with Aunt Thandiwe but I am not her kids favourite, we can ask the neighbors.

Me: Don't worry about that, I got it covered.

Her: Lucky you. I guess I will have to start looking a place to sleep for me and my siblings.

Me: That won't be necessary you and your siblings are coming with me, end of story.

Her: There's like 8 of us. We don't wanna crowd you.

Me: You worry too much.

Her: Thank you, Nathi. Your kindness is very much noticed.

Me: I try.

Her: Do you stay around here?

Me: Nope. 1 hour 30 minutes drive from here.

Her: Oh

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then we better get done here and leave before the taxis get finish.

Me: Don't worry yourself about that, I got everything covered.

Her: If you say so.

I give her a smile and she returns it...

I hear women singing from the tent, I guess the bodies have arrived. We stand up and go to join the others. As I see Sindiswa's casket I can't help it but break down in tears, another cries follows. I am hurt, it hurts. She is gone for real...before I could even hit the floor, Ntando is already holding me in her hands she helped me sit down. The women continued singing until they disappear in the house, I wish someone can just wake me up. Losing a loved one is never easy.

v

Bayanda

I am woken up by cold breeze hitting my skin. I don't even know how because the heater is on but here I am feeling cold. I open my eyes and I see a figure standing before me, it looks very familiar like someone I know. I fully open them and I see Aziza dripping wet standing right in front of me, Jesus. I jump up and stand on my feet, how did she get in here? I mean, I made sure that the doors are locked.

“Calm down Bayanda. I am not here to hurt you, I am just here to apologise”

“H...ho...how did you get in here”?

Her: Through the window.

Me: WTF!

Her: Shocking I know but can you please just listen to what I have to say and I will leave you and never bother you again.

Me: Talk.

Her: First things first I would like to apologise for everything I've done to you. For hurting you and using multi on you. It was all your mother's doings, she is the one who told me to use multi on you. I told her that you have fallen out of with me, she advised me to go to a traditional healer. I did and it was the biggest mistake of my life I shouldn't have listen to your mother, I should've just left you while I still had time but I thought of the fact that you will soon have big money rolling in made me not to think twice. I was going to milk you dry and flea with my boyfriend, I was a fool I know. I wish I can right all the wrongs I've done to you but I can't, it's too late. I am a spirit now. Another thing you are very lucky to have a woman like Nathi in your life. She is a force to reckon with. Love her and treat her right, she is a very rare gem. Woman like her are hard to find but mostly be careful of your mother. She is going to rain terror in your relationship, I hope after all the storm has passed your relationship will survive to tell a tale. Be strong and

always pray. I will be watching over you, I hope God guides you and protect you. Take care. Oh and don't allow Sizwe close to you, he is an enemy of progress. Goodbye Bayanda and please never change, stay as you are. Remember be careful of your mother, she is very adamant to see you at your lowest then she, she will reign supreme. Be prepared for the storm that is coming but remember, storm never last. They disappear after causing great havoc, take care”

She smiles and vanishes...

I jump up from the couch dripping wet, the dream felt so real. The cold breeze hits again, I look where it is coming from and the window is open. I go and close it when I look on the floor I see a puddle of water. Was I dreaming or it was real? I shake my head, I look at the time and it is just after 20:00pm. I go and get myself cold water, what was that all about? What is exactly my mother up to? What is her mission? God please protect me and my relationship with Nathi. Damn you, Phindile. What is your story? Sizwe what is yours? The warning sounded real. What did she mean by she is a spirit now? Does it mean that she died? When? How? It's all too much, a lot to take in. My heart is beating out of my chest, I just can't shake off the dream or the reality of it.

28

Nathi

It's half past 5 in the morning and I am already done bathing I am now making enormous breakfast for everyone. I am not used to making breakfast for too many people. The funeral will start at 08:00am at home then 09:00am to the community hall then proceed to the cemetery at 11:00. I can't say I had a goodnight sleep because we got here around 02:30 am. Ntando and her siblings didn't believe that this is my house, I mean Ntando's little sister(Anele)she is around 25-26 years old of age. She asked me if my Blesser doesn't have friends, like guys. This child think that I have a Blesser, I am a slay Queen imagine. I don't know why is it that when a black woman makes it in life, there's a man behind it. A Blesser for that matter? Can't we just be congratulated for being independent without being mocked or questioned about our success. It's draining having to explain yourself to people. The door opens and my father comes in and here I was thinking that he is sleeping.

“Hawu baba, I thought you are sleeping”.

“You know I always wake up early”

Me: Some things will never change. What were you doing outside then?

Him: I was watering your garden, I am so disappointed Nathi. Your flowers look dry and unkept.

Me: I don't have time to water them dad but

Him: Then what's the use of having the garden then?

Me: I will start watering them dad I've just been busy at work, don't worry I will start watering them. Still like your coffee with a lot of milk?

Him: I will never unlike it.

I laugh...

Me: Go and take a quick bath then and I will gladly make it for you.

Him: That's why I love you. Are the others awake?

Me: I don't know dad.

Him: Go and wake them up we don't want to be late and you know that your mother takes 12 hours to get ready.

I laugh...

No lies there. My mother take her own precious time and she is forever later.

Me: Don't worry I have an idea on how to wake them up.

Him: You better hurry then because once I am done I am leaving, I don't have time to waste and besides I like to be on

time. You guys need to learn to be constant with time keeping, it's attractive.

Me: What? Attractive to who? Dad please.

Him: I said what I said. Let me go and take that bath, I smell like flowers.

I laugh...

I take the pot and a stainless steel spoon and ascend the stairs, at least their rooms are next to each other. I stand in the middle and hit the pot with the spoon and started singing, I hit it louder and I can hear some frustrations amongst their voices. The door of my mother's room is the first one to open. I've already stopped hitting the pot.

“Mina angizwani nokuvuswa ngathy ngumntwana omncane. Ngizokushaya Nono ngiyabona ngathi ung'khohliwe” she says yawning. (I don't like being woken up like I am a small child. I will beat you Nono, I can see that you've forgotten me).

I walk away laughing. I get to the kitchen and I find my father already eating, gosh this old man of mine. I swear he did some touch ups, that was a fast bath.

“Couldn't you at least wait for the others”?

“don't have time Nathi. They better get down here, have you seen how many are they? They were supposed to wake up at 04:00am and started bathing”.

I nod and join him...

Me: Dad can I please ask you something seeing that we are alone now.

Him: Go ahead...

Me: So I've been helping a lot of people lately and in return they will thank me with a plate full of vomit. They took

advantage of my kindness, they never noticed my work towards helping them. Now there is someone who I actually thinks needs some serious help but after what I've encountered, I dread helping her. What if she is like the rest? I promised myself that I will stop helping people but after talking to her yesterday, something in me shifted.

Him: I know that you have a kind heart and like helping people who are in need, it's in your nature that we can not disagree. Now, how bad is this person's situation? Did you try checking her background? She can be taking a chance for all we know. What I can tell you is that, do a background check on her and find out if she is telling the truth or she just wants money. Remember, not everyone is as real as they say they are.

Me: Thank you dad. I knew that I can always count on you.

Him: If you can see that she is really in need then you can hire her at your restaurant or library, let her work for that money. Don't give it on a silver platter.

I go to his side and hug him...

Him: You trying to suffocate me with your cheap perfume?
Little girl please.

I let go of him and laugh. I sit back down and dish up for myself and start eating while having a light conversation with my father, I am so blessed to have this man in my life. The gang descend the stairs, you can hear them by their chatting. They greet us and sit down, I dish up for them. One says grace and they start eating, they look so innocent, why would their family members treat them like they nothing? They look just like Kat's children before I helped them. I wonder if they are attending school, sigh. Life is not fair at all. Ntando soon joins in with my mother, they sit down. We finish eating and we are getting ready to leave, well this is going to be a challenge seeing that I don't have a big car to fit all these 10 people, plus me. If only at least one of them knew how to drive it would've been better and calling Bayanda is no option, my parents don't know about him. So imagine them seeing him, my dad will grill him and my mother will probably go into shock.

“We have a problem” I tell them.

“Yini ke manjer? Akukwanelisanga ukuthy usivuse ngomsindo”?
(What now? Aren't you satisfied seeing that you woke up us
with making noise?)

Me: Sorry about that Mama.

Her: Khuluma ke inkinga yakho(state your problem then)

Me: The cars are here but they won't carry all of us not unless I
do loads.

Ntando: Meaning?

Me: Meaning that I will have to drop the first load first then
come and pick up the remaining ones and of which will cost us
time. Is there anyone of you here, who knows how to drive
except for my parents of course.

“I do” a young boy voice call out.

Me: Are you sure?

Ntando: He definitely knows how to drive, he sometimes transport goods for our commuters using Bab Shenge's bakkie.

Me: I guess I should trust you then just don't dent my car.

Him: Trust me Sis Nathi

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I won't dent it.

Me: Very well then. I guess I will take your word for it, you will drive the Lexus at least at will carry 5 of you if not 6.

Him: A Lexus? As in Lexus Lexus?

Me: Yeah and please just don't mess it up.

Him: Then what are you going to use?

Me: Range Rover sports evoque.

Anele: I told you that she has a Blesser and y'all thought I was lying. Look at her house, it can fit all of us and our extended family members. Imagine all of us sleeping in our own rooms, not in a kitchen in groups.

Ntando: Shut up Anele, geez.

Dad: Can we keep it moving, I hate being late.

Mom: Ungumfundisi yini wena?(are you a pastor now)

I laugh and leave them to argue, these parents of mine are something else. Bayanda will meet us at the church, he sounded down the last time I spoke to him of which was last night. I hope that today he is feeling much better, I hate hearing him sounding down. In a way, his mood affects mine. Then there's this Ntando issue, I guess I will have to give her a job.

v

Unknown

“How is she”?

“Not looking good. I don't think she has enough time to live not unless she confesses”

Her: That's bullshit and you know it! Should she confess then that's the end of us. We are all going to be doomed and I am not ready to go to jail.

Him: Then what do you suggest we do? You can see that she is suffering.

Her: I don't know. I mean we've tried almost everything and went to different sangomas and we can't even kill her.

Him: It's one big mess up I don't even know how we got here.

Her: I also don't know and now we are stuck, we have no way forward not unless she dies by someone's hands not ours.

Him: You might be on to something but who will want to kill her?

Her: Someone that no longer cares about life, someone who is tired of living. It will save them both their mystery.

Him: You right. We will have to find that someone before they catch up on us.

Her: How far are you with a search of looking for your long lost son?

Him: No progress. I can't even track down His mother but I am not giving up on looking for him.

Her: Best of luck on your quest.

Him: I will need it.

Her: We need to move fast before things get out of hand, we must get the killer. I don't wanna go to jail or die I still have a lot to do.

Him: I share the same sentiments with you, we need to move fast.

We look at her pale body and shake our heads. This was never how we expected things to turn out, it's bad.

√

Nathi

The choir sings hymns...the pastor preaches and family comes and say what's in their hearts, the hall is fully packed. Bayanda is also here, ncah nkosh my support system. The service go on

and on and on and on, the pastor first calls up Hlomile's friend. She says all the good things about Hlomile, I mean they never mention their bad deeds. They now call for Sindiswa's friend and that friend is not me. I am not even feeling bad about it because I would've spoken a bitter truth that not even these family members can stand for, I will seem disrespectful but I would be telling the truth. The service moved to the cemetery, the pastor opened one scripture for the day. Their caskets are lowered and a the choir hymns, the hymn is very sorrowful. I can't help it but cry. She is gone for real, she cut her life short. Her mother cried and I am not moved by her tears, they are fake as they come. They are now throwing in the soil, I stand up and walk away I can't stand pretenders, bloody hypocrites. Bayanda follows me and we go and sit in his car, he looks disturbed.

“You don't look good, what's wrong”?

“It's nothing I can't handle”.

Me: Are you sure? You do know that you can talk to me about anything right?

Him: Can you please just shut up for once, Nathi! I had a long night.

Me: Sorry for being a caring girlfriend. We can always sit here and not say anything to each other.

Him: I just want to be alone, if you don't mind.

Me: I am not going anywhere, I am staying here with you not unless you drag me outside and of which will bring both of us uninvited attention, plus my parents are here, imagine the humiliation they will be facing.

Him: Your parents are here?

Me: Yes.

Him: I am not ready to meet them it's still early.

Me: Relax I haven't told them about you. I will tell them after our first love making.

Him: Who controls your mind? Your mind doesn't have a filter.

Me: I know and I hate it.

Him: But I love its thoughts, they wild.

I laugh...

Me: So, what's eating you?

Him: You are not letting it go are you?

Me: Not by a long shot.

Him: I will tell you after the funeral is over.

Me: You promise?

Him: I promise and I'm sorry for being mean to you unnecessary.

Me: It's all forgiven baby. You will have to talk to me about things that are troubling you, I mean we are one now.

Him: I know babe and I'm sorry.

Me: I know. Let me go we will meet at Sindiswa's.

Him: Meet you then.

We kiss for a brief moment and I get off his car and walk to mine. My passengers arrive and I drive off. She has been laid to rest, it is done&dusted.

29

I left straight after Sindiswa's funeral, I left Nathi to bond with her family. She did show me her parents from a distance and they look young I must say. I pull up in my driveway, I am surprised to see Sizwe's car here. What does he want? I get out of my car and walk to his car and knock on the window, he rolls it down and get out of his car.

“Sho”

I give him a nod...

”Eish boy I am here to apologise for what happened the other day. I was out of line, hade boy”

Me: It's fine bruh.

Him: Does this mean we are good?

Me: Sho

Him: Thanks man.

I open the door and we both get inside the house.

Him: Where are you coming from? I've been waiting for you for close to an hour

Me: To my woman's best friend's funeral, I went to support her.

Him: This girl must be really special to you.

Me: She is very special indeed. Anything to drink?

Him: Don't worry I brought along a bottle of fine whiskey, I knew that you were going to forgive me. So, why not bring something to celebrate I'll be right back.

He went out and comes back with a half bottle of Hennessy.

Me: Why is the bottle half empty?

Him: I was drinking it trying to calm my nerves.

Me: But you don't look drunk.

Him: That's because I drank a lot of water, I did not want you seeing me drunk it would've look like I am not brave enough to face you heads on.

Me: Sure as hell you aren't.

Him: Why don't you go and change while I pour us some whiskey and I've brought some biltong along.

I nod and head upstairs. I take a quick shower and change into casual clothes and head down. I find Sizwe busy stirring a glass of whiskey with a teaspoon, I look at him. Why would he stir

the whiskey? I clear my throat and he jumps as if like he was doing something he isn't supposed to be doing.

“You scared me dude. What the hell”!

Me: I'm sorry bruh. Why are you even scared because you know very well that is you&me in here.

Him: I guess I was in deep thoughts that I did not hear you coming down.

I nod and look at him. He looks so jumpy and he is all over the face. He picks up the glasses and give me the very same one that he was stirring, I feel so uneasy about all of this. I lift up the glass, I am about to drink it when I hear Aziza's voice in my head.

“I said do not trust him. Why do you want to die so young? I mean you have a lot to achieve. This drink will be the last drink you drink” I hear her tell me or maybe my mind is playing tricks on me plus i'm tired.

I shake my head and put the glass on the kitchen counter it falls and break into pieces. I hear him curse underneath his breath, he is acting very strange and he his eyes are wondering all over the kitchen.

“Excuse me”

I leave him standing there and go to the bathroom, I open the tap and rinse my face. What the fuck is wrong with Sizwe? Why is he behaving so strange and why did he sound disappointed when the glass broke? Wait, is he trying to kill me? WTF, why didn't I think of that. Of course he wants to kill me, but why? He is my friend for crying out loud. Did someone send him? If yes, then who? I wonder what did he put in that whiskey, people we call out friends. Sizwe was never this secretive, he was very much open to me, this new him is really putting me off. Now I wonder how would I have died if I drank the whiskey. Was it going to kill me slowly or kill me same time right after I drank it? I shake my head again, this is all just unbelievable. I get out of the toilet and go back to the kitchen. I don't see Sizwe, where on earth is he? I call out his name still nothing, I open the door and I realize that his car is not on the driveway, he left.

Nigga fucken left. What is she running away from? I will find out everything, that's a promise. I head back inside and start picking up the glasses on the floor.

v

Nathi

After tears is underway, people are happy and getting drunk. I will never understand the need for doing an after party. In my mind it's like you celebrating that the person is dead, as if they were troublesome or something. I just got back from dropping my parents and leaving my other car behind, I went with Siza because we had to leave the other car behind. I "rich" gang from last night are friendly towards me all of a sudden. Wasn't I was not in their league last night? Don't they know that you don't judge a book by it's cover? They are a lot, I mean they even offered to buy me booze but unfortunately for them I am not in the mood for drinking a beer, I crave something sweet. Like daiquiri or something. Bayanda left before he can tell me what's bothering him but I will go and see him later, he said he will cook for me. After that breakfast he prepared for me a while back I don't trust his cooking, at all. I will have to order

some pizza just for in case, sigh. Ntando comes to where i'm sitting it looks like she has been crying, I wonder what happened inside the house seeing that almost half of the family members were summoned for a meeting

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she joins me and look away.

“Sup”?

“Let's just say a month from now I will be homeless”.

Me: What? Why?

Her: Grace&Mandla are getting divorced. Grace will be moving back to our grandmother's house and we will have to move out, where are we going to stay? I mean not even the other family members are willing to take us in, maybe each members take two two of us.

Me: That's bad. Your family is very cruel, yoh.

Her: It was gonna be better if I was at least working maybe we would rent a room somewhere in the township.

Me: What kind of a job are you looking for?

Her: Any job. Even if it means sweeping the streets as long as I will be able to feed me and my siblings.

I nod...

Their situation is indeed heart breaking but I will not take them in, I will just have to hire Ntando and work her way up. She needs to know that nothing comes easy in life, you must work hard for it. I have a good heart you know but you don't know what lies beneath it. I hear commotion coming from inside the house and things breaking both Ntando and I stand up and rush to see what is going on. We find Sindiswa's mother fighting with Thandiwe, they were actually beating each other. The others are trying to break them apart but the two women did not even barge, they are at it pulling each other with their doeks. This has to be one of the most dramatic family I've come

across in my whole entire life of existence. All of a sudden glasses are flying in the air, we have no choice but to duck them as for me I decided to leave, I don't wanna get hurt. I get in to my car and roar the engine to life when Ntando and her siblings come running to my car with their bag packs the young ones are crying, I open the doors for them. They all get in and I drive away. I can see another woman through the review mirror shouting at my car, I guess she is shouting for Ntando. I don't dare ask them questions, I put on joyous celebration.

“We will be fine guys, okay? Stop crying. God will answer us soon, we will be fine” I hear Ntando telling her siblings.

“Abasifuni Ntando abasifuni” (They don't want us) a small voice says in between hiccups.

Ntando: I heard baby I heard everything.

Siza: When? You know I don't make enough money in my business and lately it's worse because people don't ask me to transport their goods for them.

Anele: That's the least of our problems. We have to find a place to stay in 2 weeks. In 2 fucken weeks!

Ntando:, Language Anele. There are kids here.

Her: I'm sorry. I might as well go and se...(Siza chirps in)

Him: Don't you dare think about it. I will kill you Anele, no sister of mine will go and make herself available for rich man old enough to be our father! I will not allow it, not as long as I live.

I blink away my tears. How can someone go through such suffering? Kanty what are families for? My worry is the little kids but then what kind of parents leave their 8 kids with their grandmother and not send money?

“Where are you guys staying”?

Ntando: Section BB hostel.

Me: You will direct me to your house then.

I drove for few minutes with thoughts running through my mind, life can be unfair yhey. We finally arrive at their house and the house from outside looks beautiful and the yard too, the flowers are very much alive unlike mine. They all get out of the car and head inside the yard, if the house is this beautiful, why do they look starved? It doesn't make sense.

“Want to me in”? Ntando ask me dragging me out of my thoughts.

Anele: You want her to mock us? I mean she is well off and I am sure she doesn't want to taint her image.

Me: Its okay. I would like to come in.

I get out of my car and I can see the neighbors whispering amongst themselves, I mean duh. Ntando leads the way. We pass the house and we go to a shack, the shack is too stuffy and it looks like a storage of some sort. There are mattresses on the

floor and torn blankets, I hope it is not what I am thinking right now. No normal person can stay in this dump, I refuse. Ntando is not even looking at me in the eyes. She is ashamed I guess.

Ntando: We don't have chairs as you can see but you can sit in that bunk.

He points at a bunk that is full of metal stuff.

Me: Is this where you sleep?

She nods...

Her: This is our house.

I feel something move past my feet very quick, I look down and it is a rat. I scream and jump up crouching on top of the bunk. The other kids rushed in wanting to see what's happening, they look at me then the floor. The young kids chuckle.

“Its just a rat cheese girl, chill out” Anele says with an attitude and rolling her eyes. I get off the bunk and go and stand outside, I am scared of rats. They make my skin crawl, as for Anele I don't know why she has an attitude towards me.

v

Phindile

“What do you mean by the glass fell off from the table”

“I mean exactly that”

Me: What really happened?

Him: I did as you told me then I handed him the glass he was about to drink but something happened, I also don't know what it was. He brought the glass down and place it on top of the table and it fell. He excused himself and I left.

Me: You did what?!

Him: I left. I was too jumpy and he noticed that.

Me: Dammit Sizwe! How can you disappoint me like this? I trusted you!

Him: I know but I happened, I'm sorry.

Me: I guess its time for plan B.

Him: I will not be part of it. I will do things my way and may you do things your way.

He hangs up before I can even say anything, dammit this boy. I guess I will have to ask one of my sons, one of them will have to agree even though it will take a lot convincing for them to agree, but still I will try. I will break that son of a bitch!

Ntando

Before Nathi left she gave me a couple of rands, I count the money and it's R1 500. At least it will keep us going for the upcoming days, at least I will buy us some food and look for a cheap room to rent. I won't lie to you guys, our lives are not a bed of roses and whip of creams, we are struggling a lot. We hardly have enough food to eat, we sometimes leave on people's hand outs. It's not much but at least they keep us going. The young ones are attending school at a nearby primary. I have grade 11 while Anele dropped out in Grade 9, Sazi is the only one who has completed school but he couldn't further his studies due to financial crisis. My grandmother treats us like trash she hardly gives us food to eat. She will always insults us and tell us that we are a waste, we don't deserve to live. We will die like animals. I am so used to her insults in a way that they no longer get to me. I mean, I was raped by his eldest son countless times under her supervision, every time I tried telling her, she will tell me that I brought this upon myself. I was seducing his son and now that I finally slept with him I cry foul, in her words. She always said "You wanted too" I don't know how many abortions I made. I am beyond broken, shuttered and bruised. it came to a point

where I even thought of committing suicide but then I thought of my siblings. I am like a mother to them, I am all they have. I had to survive for them. Then there's Anele who is very rebellious, she doesn't listen to us. She always goes out at night and sleep with older men for alcohol. It was gonna be better if she was sleeping with them for food or toiletries, all she thinks about is alcohol. I also tried selling veges but that businesses did not get any far, 2 days was enough. My stock became ruined, all of it I don't even know what happened to them. The pain of seeing my siblings sleeping with empty stomachs pains me, sometimes I will boil water and pretend to be cooking I will take long and they will end up falling asleep. Come morning they will remind of the "pap" that I was cooking, I would lie and tell them that the rats have eaten it. At least during lunch at school they eat, I love the fact that despite our circumstances they still soldier on, they are very dertemined to change our home situation they always come up on top at school. I take out the food that I stole at Sindiswa's funeral and heat it up using a stove, they will eat now and later. I will wake up early tomorrow and go shopping, well it will be a little bit of a challenge because I will have to hide the food so that my grandmother won't see it. Anele comes in looking bored&annoyed, I honestly don't like the way she spoke to Nathi earlier on. Her attitude towards her really put me off,

Nathi was just trying to help and she had to shove it straight up in her face, I must talk to her.

“Anele we need to talk”

“About what Ntando”?

Me: About the way you spoke to Nathi, I didn't like your attitude towards her.

Her: What is in it for you? Why do you care?

Me: Because she helped us Nathi. She took us, all 8 of us and given us a place to sleep without any hassles, she even brought us home. Why are you not thankful?

Her: Why should I be thankful to her? She only helped us because she pitied us not because it comes straight from her heart.

Me: Why would she wanna pity us? She didn't even know about our situation until now.

Her: Are you blind? We are written “poverty” on our faces, any rich person can spot that and besides I don't like her.

Me: You don't know what you talking about, Anele! Why do you even hate someone you do not know, huh?

Her: Because she has everything and we have nothing. She also thinks highly of herself and I bet you she is much younger than you and she has already made it in life. Aren't you moved by that? I mean her house can fit all of us and the will still be more rooms left. The cars in her garage?

Me: Whoa whoa. So you hate her because she has money?

Her: Exactly and the fact that you became friends with her all of a sudden. Do you think that a person like her would befriend someone like you? I mean take a look at you then at Nathi and see the huge difference. Oh and did you see how disgusted

she was as soon as she stepped inside our house, did you or you were to busy begging her for friendship?

Me: Whoa, I am so not believing you right now. Your envy for her is sickening and you are not even trying to hide it, Nathi is one humble person and friendly too.

Her: That's because she felt pity for you. Nathi will never ever be friends with you, get that into your thick skull. For a 32 years old, you sure are dumb. Look, you even stole the funeral left overs! How sad of us!

Me: At least we will go to bed on a full stomach than to go to bed on an empty stomach, Anele. In fact why don't you and go and look for a job and put something on the table instead of complaining! I am tired of your attitude Anele tired!

Her: Why would I look for a job when I have a boyfriend who supports me

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huh? Tell me genius.

Me: Does this boyfriend of yours even love you, Anele or he is using you for sex?

Her: He loves me Ntando. Not that you will understand anyway.

Me: Does he at least buy you toiletries? Clothes? Ever been to his place? Gives you money to spoil yourself or y'all book a hotel, fuck and he buys you McDonald, then that's it?

She looks at me blankly.

Me: Well then, I guess I have my answer. I hope you don't catch any diseases while at it, miss "I have a boyfriend who supports me" I guess you will be eating dinner with your supportive boyfriend.

Her: We were going out anyway.

Me: While at it, ask him to help us to look for a place to stay. He is rich after all and I'm sure he wouldn't mind helping his girlfriend in need.

She clicks her tongue and walks away.

Anele will be the death of me, I swear. I take a deep breath and go and sit outside watching my siblings playing, they always play inside the yard they don't have any friends. Sazi went out at least he has friends, well I can't really call them friends but people who he chills with. I pray that we find a place to stay before 2 weeks comes and possibly get a job to buy grocery and some toiletries and proper blankets even if they are second hand, they will keep us warm.

v

Nathi

I get home and I find my parents cuddling, geez these old peeps of mine they just don't wanna age. I greet and head straight to

the bathroom and take a quick shower, I wear my track pant and tank top then go back and join the parents but first I go and fetch some ice cream. I squeeze myself in between them and make myself comfortable, I give them each spoons and my mother gives me one of her famous looks that makes one shiver but as long as my dad is here, I have nothing to worry about my mother won't do me anything.

“So, what are we watching”?

“Ukuthy uyithola nini I ndoda” (When are you getting a husband)

I chuckle...

Me: I'm still waiting for the right man mama.

Dad: Take Mr wrong and pull him to the right and viola you got your Mr right.

Mom: I think she needs deliverance for the curse to be lifted. Aicha Nono you need a river cleansing ceremony with all kinds of animals that are there.

Me: I don't need any cleansing ceremony mama and there is no cursed put upon me.

Her: Ngeke uwazi.(You will never know)

Me: Why do you like switching languages?

Her: Because I can.

Me: I see.

Dad: Who was that guy you were taking a walk with at the cemetery?

I choke on the ice cream, how did he see that.

Mom: Are you okay Nono? Did you dad say something wrong?

Me: It was my partner, the one I am partnering with at the restaurant.

Mom: Partners that kiss? What kind of partners are you?

Me: Geez mama. He was removing something on my lips.

Dad: But your lips were fine, Nono there was nothing wrong with them.

This is getting uncomfortable...once upon a time I had a similar conversation with them but now, yoh.

Me: Geez parents, excuse me I need to start cooking.

Mom: No need Nono I've already cooked. Now, who is he?
When did you start dating? Does he make you happy?

Me: Fine fine. His name is Bayanda and IR's been a couple of weeks and yes he makes me very happy.

Dad: Do you love him?

Me: Yes, I do. In fact I fell inlove with him months ago before we officially met.

Mom: So, it was love at first sight?

Me: You can say that.

Dad: He better treat you like a princess that you are or else he will have me to deal with and that's a promise.

Mom: Finally some light in your life. As I wait for my grandchildren, I am going to be a super gogo Nono.

Me: Whoa whoa, hold the train. We talking kids already?

Her: Yes we do. One way or the other you will have them, it's nature.

I laugh and shake my head....

Dad: So, when are we meeting him?

Me: Very soon daddy dearest very soon.

Mom: Ungalibali I laka mkhwenyana Sisi kahle kahle mele ushaye(Don't forget protection in fact you need to) double the prevention.

Me: Thought you said you wanted kids ma

Her: I did say but still you must double up it's for your own good, trust me.

Me: What time will you be leaving tomorrow?

Dad: Who said anything about leaving tomorrow? We will be here for 2 weeks.

Me: Huh?

Mom: Siku holide apha kwakho Nono, kushayela umoya omnandi futhi akunamsindo.(We are on holiday here in your house, it's a breath of fresh air and there's no choice)

Me: Oh, Wow right.

Her: If bewunama plan wokuvalela khohlwa Nono.(If you had plans to bring your boyfriend over forget)

I chuckle....

They are so unbelievable! I thought they only came here for the funeral but they had other plans and they didn't bother telling me? Talk about party poppers ok'salayo i'm going to my mans house. I will need to find an excuse because my dad will give me a mouthful and mom will clearly tell me about going to fetch a baby and so on, ai. I am so not ready for their lectures. And Ntando's home situation crosses my mind again, I will have to call her and give her the job and maybe I can find Siza a job as a driver. After what I witnessed today it's best I help them, should it happen they take my help for granted God will deal with them. My phone rings and Bayanda's name pop up on the screen, at least now i'm in the kitchen dishing up for myself. They won't hear me talking to Bayanda.

“Babe”

“Baby. What time are you coming”?

Me: Half 7 babe, my parents are sleeping over. Well they are actually visiting for 2 weeks, according to my mom they are on a holiday here in my house.

He laughs...

Him: Your parents sound like cool parents.

Me: They are. Trust me.

Him: Won't they have a problem with you coming for a sleep over.

Me: Not at all.

Him: Oh, okay and don't worry I've already cooked and the food looks better than that breakfast.

"I hope it tastes better too" I mumble.

Him: What was that?

Me: I can't wait to taste it. See you later babe.

Him: I love you.

Me: I love you too.

I hang up...

“Uyolala ngaphandle vele”? (You are going to sleep outside)

That was my mother's voice.

Me: Yoh mama.

Her: Hmmmm. Sicela ama coffee ayi 2 with full cream and biscuits, they are in that cupboard please Nono.

Me: Yes ma.

Her: Malala ngaphandle (outside sleeper)

I chuckle and she walks away, damn this woman of fine. Its gonna be a long 2 weeks.

Bayanda

The dinner table is set. I decided to go all romantic with the candles, rose petals and stuff, I then hired a chef to cook for us. I paid him, what Nathi doesn't know, won't hurt her. I check the table one last time and it is perfect, I decided to set up the table in my garden. At least there's light here and a very clear view of the street. I look at the time and I know that she will be here soon, I dash to the house fast and change into more comfortable clothes, I look at myself in the mirror and damn boy I look fine. I go to the kitchen and pour myself a glass of whiskey. Her car hoots outside and I rush out, I open the gate for her, she drives in and park her car. I close the gate and go to her. She climbs out of her car and she is looking beautiful, she did not go overboard with dressing up. She was wearing a simple buttoning dress with gladiator sandals. I met her half way and we hug, I take her hand and lead her in to the garden. She gasps and covers her mouth with her hands, I don't know if she likes it or what.

“This is beautiful baby. Your efforts are noticed”

“Since I couldn't take you to dinner, I decided to bring the dinner to you”

She chuckles...

Her: I see.

I pull back her chair and she sits down, I sit opposite her.

Her: When did you do all this because you said you tired?

Me: After my nap.

Her: I don't believe it but otherwise I love the set up, it's very nice.

Me: Wine or juice?

Me: Wine will do just fine. I don't really like juice, it makes me sick

Me: Sick how?

Her: It's a long story. Now, where's the starter?

Me: Coming right up, just sit back and relax.

She nods...

I put the something meaty platter in the tray and walk out, I place it on top of the table and sit down joining her.

We said grace and I dish up for her first then myself.

Her: It looks nice and I hope it also tastes as delicious as it looks.

Me: Trust me babe. It taste so heavenly.

Her: I will hold on to your word.

She takes her first bite and I am outchea holding my heart in my hand. By the look of things she is enjoying every minute of it.

Her: Who made this?

Me: I did.

Her: Why are you lying?

Me: I am not. YouTube tutorials really helped.

Her: For a first timer you sure as hell Cook perfectly like a chef.

Me: I guess I had it in me I just needed that one push to showcase my talent.

She laughs...

Her: You know the truth but the starter really does surpasses your lies, I can't wait for the main course.

Me: You gonna love that one.

Her: I hope there's more meat, especially grilled or fried chicken.

Me: There's enough meat I know how much you love it.

Her: A man who knows how to please my stomach. Seems like it's gonna be a long fun night.

Me: Lots and lots of fun.

She chuckles....

We continue eating over a light conversation, sharing laughs here&there. It's effortless.

v

Phindile

I walk inside the his not so appealing room and I find him sitting busy in his laptop. I greet and sit next to him. At least the room is for a time being until he is done helping me, he must come through for me.

“How far are you with the findings”?

“Still the same. I am not finding anything”

Me: Dammit Skhumbuzo. Are you aware that time is not on our side?

Him: I am very much aware of that, Phindile.

Me: Then make it snappy. He must be destroyed but with that new girl in her life it will be a little bit hard.

Him: Should it happen that you succeed, what next?

Me: I take everything that belongs to me

Him: Why are trying to ruin this boy so much? Isn't it enough that you killed his mother and stole him?

Me: That's because his mother was having an affair with my husband and he is the results of that. Now, he will get to have all the things of my husband that he has worked hard for.

Him: But she did not know that Moses was married Phindile and besides, you are not even sure if that child is Vusi's.

Me: What are you trying to say to me Skhumbuzo? What is that you are saying exactly?

Him: We both know the truth Phindile. Your husband was infertile and i'm pretty much sure that the boy's father is out there looking for his son.

I laugh...

Me: That was after that woman bewitched him. If he is not his real father then why did he leave everything in his name, huh?

Him: Maybe because he saw that he will be an assert in future and maybe he knew that you were planning to kill him, of which you succeeded in doing of course.

Me: Assert my foot! I will go all the way out to make sure, that I destroy that useless boy. I did not kill his father. Moses killed himself, if only he did not cheat on me, maybe he might still be alive. I want to break that piece of trash to a point of no return. After I am done with him he won't know, what hit him.

Him: What are you planning to do to him exactly?

Me: I want to kill him. I want to crush his bones and twist his neck. I wanna look at him dying a slow painful death.

Him: Killing him is a little bit extreme don't you think?

Me: Then what do you suggest I do, huh? Fold my hands and sit back and watch him take everything of mine?.

Him: Not really. Put your plan on killing him halt for now, I have a much more better idea.

Me: I don't know Skhumbuzo. I don't know but I hope that this plan of yours work, I really pray. I am leaving it to you.

He nods...

Him: When are you telling Luyanda, the truth?

Me: Please don't start with me Skhumbuzo. You know very well that won't be possible

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he rather die than finding out the truth and you better make sure that you don't tell him too, if you know what's good for you.

Him: One day he will know the truth Phindile. You can't hide it forever!

Me: Just shut up and start drafting your so called successful plan, so long I will ask Zweli to invite Bayanda to a party.

Him: That's and idea and you need to pretend as if you forgive him and accept him as he is along with his girlfriend, build a relationship with him. Make sure that you show him love even if it means faking it, once he accepted your fake motherly love pretence we will strike him the least he expect it.

Me: I hope it will work but just know that I still hate him. It will be hard to pretend but I will just have to suck it up.

He nods...

Him: Start by inviting him to dinner and then apologize to him be sincere and show that you mean it.

Me: Now you pushing it Skhumbuzo.

Him: I was just saying.

I can't bring myself to even mention his name, what more now that I have to pretend to love him like a son? Yerrrrr! It's gonna be a long one fake motherly love I will be giving to this piece of rubbish.

v

Nathi

Honestly the night is going pretty smooth except for my mother who keeps on calling me none stop, I don't even know what she wants because I told her that I will be back before midnight. I mean I did tell her not to expect me anytime soon, sigh. Overall the meal was very scrumptious, I will have to give it to the chef he knows how to whip a mouthwatering meal. Honestly Bayanda thought that I wouldn't catch on that he is not the one who cooked, I mean the breakfast he once made was a receipt for disaster and all of a sudden he is pro in cooking? A whole full meal? He can only fool children not me. Right now I am sitting in this couch watching a movie punching in my mother's numbers, Bayanda went to buy some snacks and another bottle of wine since the first one is finished. It rings for a while, I am about to hang up when she answers.

“Nono”

“Mama”

Her: Nini ngiku shayela u cingo(I've been calling you none stop)

Me: My phone was on silence mama, I couldn't hear it.

Her: Mhlambe bowunguziba nje Nono.(Maybe you were ignoring me)

Me: Soze ngakuziba.(I will never ignore you)

Her: Kuhamba njani ngapho?(How is it going that side)

I laugh...

Me: Konke kuhamba kahle mama(All is going well)

Her: I was just checking. Udlile?(did you eat)

Me: Yes mama.

Her: Usuke udlile la mus Nono(You left here already eaten)

Me: I will never say no to meat, uh uh.

Her: Izokugulisa Inyama Nono(Meat will make you sick)

Me: Alikho ithuna Le nyama Nono (There is no grave of someone who died because of meat)

Her: So wena uyazi ukuthy bonke laba abashonile babulewe yini?(You know what killed all of those people on the grave)

I laugh...

Me: Yoh mama.

Her: Angiyiboni I ice cream la, nini ngivula I fridge. (I can't see the ice cream, I've been busy checking in the fridge)

I laugh...

Me: It's there mama, just that it's written Tin roof and why do you want to eat an ice cream so late?

Her: Ye? Hawu loko siyabuzana sinobaba la ukuthy I tin elinjani elihlala e fridge and we watching the view(We've been asking each other with your father about it, what kind of a tin that stays in the fridge)

I laugh again...

My mom is really cracking me up right now, who would've known!

Me: That's it mama. Gotta bounce now.

Her: Ini?(what)

Me: Gotta go.

Her: Oh and I've put something in your bag, do check it out.

Me: Yini Leyo?(What is that)

Her: Uzobona Nono(You will see) , I love you.

Me: I love you too and pass my love to dad.

Her: Umyeni wami?(My husband)

Me: Yeap and bye.

I hang up and laugh, my mom is really crazy I tell you guys. She is a whole mood and Bayanda have been gone for far too long now, is not even funny and I am falling asleep. Where the hell is he? I take my bag and open it, I am met by a bunch of condoms! What the actual fuck?!

v

Bayanda

My car broke down and now they towing it, I've been gone for too long and that will make Nathi worried plus I left my phone at home, eish. I called an uber...I get inside the house and I find her passed out on the couch and a movie playing, dammit. I put the things on top of the table and shake her waking her up. She opens her eyes and rub her eyeballs, she looks cute.

“Hey, you back”

“Yes”

Her: You've been gone for too long.

Me: My car broke down and I had to use an uber.

She nods....

Her: Did you get everything?

Me: Yes, I did.

I sit down next to her...

Her: My mom called.

Me: What did she say?

Her: She was asking if everything is going good.

Me: She really cares about you.

Her: And noisy too.

Me: What do you mean?

Her: You will soon find out babe, soon very soon and be ready for her and my dad.

Me: Should I be worried?

Her: Not at all. Enough about my mother, let's drink and have some fun.

I pour the wine for both of us, she opens a packet of chips and puts her legs in my lap, we opt to watch a movie action movie to be precise. I am sucker for such, the conversation is flowing I wouldn't mind doing this everyday. We tickle each other, laugh and tease each other, we run around the house like we kids. I am enjoying every single moment of it. We collapse on the couch and look at each other, I smash my lips into hers and she welcomes them...

Ntando

I am woken by a loud bang at the door and Siza calling my name. Siza sleeps in another room, I groan and cover myself with the blanket.

“Vuka Ntando, we will be late”

Oh shit, I quickly stand up and pour myself bathing water in a basin, I take a quick bath and wear my best clothes that I have. Oh yes, yesterday I received a call from a manager Z&B restaurant telling me to report to work today and I must tell my brother too. After hanging up I went to Siza in the next room and told him the good news, his excitement was very much visible and I understood why, I doubt he even slept last night. I've never prayed like that in my whole entire life after receiving that phone call and I don't remember applying at that restaurant, but God came through for me. I comb my afro and take my bag leaving bread money underneath Sinekelo's pillow, I kiss my siblings foreheads and head out. Anele has been gone since our little argument yesterday, I don't even understand as to why did she have to make the Nathi issue a big deal, sigh. I

find Siza already waiting for me looking anxious, I can't help it but think of my siblings leaving them alone but I am doing this for us. To better our lives. At least Snikelelo will watch after them, she is 14 years old. We walk to the bus stop, I am a nervous wreck and so is Siza. He is busy biting his nails. The bus gets full and we set to leave, the way I am so nervous I can't even talk and my leg can't stop shaking.

We arrived at Z&B restaurant, the words are written in bold you can never miss them. It looks like we are early seeing that it is still close

“How are you feeling”?

“I am very nervous, I don't wanna lie to you”

Me: I am a nervous wreck too.

Him: I am just grateful that we will be working. This means that we can start looking for a room, a double room.

Me: We can start looking for one after we knock out and possibly move in tomorrow, that's if we get one and that's a big If.

Him: How are we going to pay the rent? We don't have a penny now.

Me: We do. Nathi gave me some money yesterday before she left.

Him: God really did send us an angel in a human form with Nathi.

Me: He did indeed and I will forever be grateful to Nathi for helping us.

Him: What if Nathi is the one who got us the job? I mean it makes perfect sense after she came to our home and saw the situation, she then decided to hire us.

Me: No Sazi I don't think so. Maybe she has friends and connections, you know rich people know people who know people.

Him: For someone who has money she is as hell very humble&friendly. Why can't the "it" cousins of ours be like her?

Me: I wish I had an answer to that but unfortunately I have none.

Him: Yeah. What if the Z stands for Zubenathi? That's her full name right?

Me: Yes. Wa...it. You are must be right. How old is this girl? She looks younger than me but she has achieved a lot in her entire life. Maybe she is a trust fund baby.

Me: I see but when will we get our breakthrough and live happy like everyone else?

Him: Everyone is going at their own pace and our journeys are different but one way or the other, we will eventually reach our end of the journey. This is our start to greater things, now I will be able to buy myself the phone I always wanted.

Me: With my first salary I will take our siblings out just for them to enjoy themselves.

Him: With the remaining money we will buy the essentials for the rooms and clothes for the little ones.

Me: I hope that Anele will change after this and be that innocent girl she was before she got involved in the wrong crowd..

Him: Me too. I hope she changes for the better before she loses herself completely to vultures of this world.

We are disturbed by some guy, he looks pretty young I must say, well maybe a little bit older than me. He greets us and

opens the door, he holds the door open for us and we make our way in.

“Good morning My name is Sbusiso the manager. I would like to welcome you to Z&B restaurant. Let me show you around before the others arrive, you know what your duties are right”?

We shake our heads...

“Ntando you are going to be a waitress and Siza you will be our driver, we do deliveries in big companies and small take away outlets everyday. Our last driver has been transferred to work somewhere else. We have all kinds of food you can think of. From your African food, Italian dishes and to name a few. I hope you guys are hard workers, Nathi believes in you guys don't dissapoint her. She can be a very mean boss if she wants too and here we treat each other with respect. Am I making myself clear”?

We nod...

He shows us around. Siza was right, Nathi is the owner of this restaurant and it looks pretty big. The kitchen is to die for, all their equipment are sparkling clean even the kitchen tops. Wow, God I thank you. Who knew that one day I will be working and have a salary? God is amazing indeed.

v

Nathi

I am woken by a smell of bacon hitting my nostrils, I open my eyes and rub them then climb out of bed, I am naked and my baby is on fire. Bayanda really did tire me last night even my legs are wobbly but it was the best I've ever had Jesus is indeed Lord. I take the T-shirt that is in the basket and wear it,, at least it covers my butts and it actually looks like a dress. I think I will take it, I mean I love it. I see his push ins, i wear them and they are pretty big, I look like humpty dumpty, i chuckle. The door is slightly open hence the smell. I walk out and go to the bathroom and rinse my face and mouth

I look at myself in the mirror, I look like a hot mess. I chuckle as I remember last nights events, damn the freak in me was unleashed. It got unleash too soon though. I walk out and go to

the kitchen, he is busy on the stove. I spank his arse then I hug his waist from behind. He chuckles, how cute.

“Good morning love”

“Good morning babe. I thought you will still be sleeping”

He turns around and give me a perk on my lips. Ewwww.

I laugh...

Me: After last night's workout? I sure had to wake up and get ready to go home, it's Sunday after all.

Him: I was hoping that we will have lunch together babe but since your parents are around, I understand that you have be with them.

Me: Yeah. What are you making?

Him: Breakfast

Me: Again? I am not hungry.

He laughs...

Him: Trust me you will enjoy it. I've been practising babe.

Me: Hmmmm, I will just order in so long.

Him: No need. Oh and Sbusiso called, your friends made it to work.

Me: My friends?

Him: Those two people you asked me to hire.

Me: But they are not my friends babe. They are people that I am making their lives better.

Him: You have a good heart babe. God will surely bless you.

I huff...

Me: I am hungry.

Him: Almost done babe.

Me: You might as well warm last night's meat.

Him: And i'm done.

He pushes my plate towards me and boy the food looks appetizing. He takes his and sits opposite me. He winks at me and I turn black, I mean I can't be turning pink while i'm dark skinned it doesn't work like that.

Him: My freak.

Me: Shut up!

Him: I didn't know that you had that wild side in you. Last night was out of this world, damn babe you were on fire.

Me: It takes two to tango, you also outdid yourself.

Him: You made me.

I shrug...

We continue eating and he keeps on stealing glances at me and winks at me, I chuckle. We finish eating and he clears the table, I stand up and go and take a bath. I fill up the bathtub with water and pour in some lavender bubble bath and bath salts. I Take off his T-shirt and get in the bathtub, only a glass of wine

is missing I close my eyes and take it all in, some peace&happiness finally. I hope it stays like this forever.

√

Ntando

The day it's finally over, I am tired from standing all day but not that tired. As soon as I enter the room I take off my shoes and sit down, I need a bath and a good sleep. At least today it was not that busy, seeing that is Sunday. The stuff was friendly and very professional. The kids come inside the house and they look hungry, dirty and it looks like they were crying.

“Yini”? (What is it)

“Silambile” (we are hungry) Tsebo says.

Me: Didn't you guys eat?

Her: All day.

Me: Mara bengiyishiyile imali ye sinkwa mus. (But I left bread money)

Thando: Uyithethe u gogo(grandma took it)

Me: Njani?(How)

Her: Umuce u Kelo, umbuze ukuthy uyaphi wamtshela bese waithatha.(She took it by force. She asked Kelo where she was going and she told her, then grandma took it)

I can feel my blood boiling, how is this old woman? Yasis. I stand up and go to the main house. I throw myself in without knocking and I find her watching news and eating muffins with a cup of her coffee next to her. She gives me one look and you can see disgust in her almost wrinkled face.

“Why wenze lento oiyenzile gogo”? (Why did you do what you did) I yell.

“Don't raise your voice at me Ntando in my own house”

Me: Raise my voice, huh? Why did you take the bread money that I left for the kids?

Her: How is that any of your concern?

Me: Because that money was mine gogo and for the kids to buy bread! Why are you so cruel?

Her: Well miss “your money” let's just say that it was to buy myself a cold drink, I was thirsty.

Me: You took the money just to quench your thirst?! What about their stomachs, huh? They are fucking hungry!

Her: As long as you stay under my roof I will do whatever I want to you and your stupid siblings. I've been supporting you all your life and now you here throwing tantrums for a mere R50?

Me: That money is enough to buy bread for all of them! And don't you dare tell me that you were supporting us! You never cared nor supported us, you always insulted us and told us how useless we are. You've been abusing us especially me, you evil woman. I hate you. You ruined my life!

I am now in tears. I feel my cheek stinging she slapped me, this old witch slapped me.

Her: Don't you ever and I mean ever talk to me like I am your age mate! You deserved every insults I hurled your way including your siblings, you are all useless. Your mother clearly did rot her stomach by giving birth to y'all. Even your own mother left you. She knew that you were not gonna amount to anything and so are you siblings. In fact I want you all out of my yard as is in tomorrow morning before the cock crows!

Me: Oh please with great pleasure evil grandma! I hope you rot in hell!

Her: You think you better now that you are working? You even have some nerves to talk back at me! You know what, I want all the money that I supported you with and all those useless siblings of yours!

Me: You will never get the money! Not now not ever! I guarantee you about that, you will get it in hell and you don't have to worry about us! We will gladly leave your bloody fucken house full of evil spirits, I hope you sleep better at night. Goodbye old evil woman and may your bad deeds hunt you for the rest of your life!

Her: Get out of my house you fucken whore! Out before I lose it and smash your head against the wall.

I chuckle with tears running down my cheeks, I take her cup of coffee and pour her with it. She gasps. I walk out banging the door behind me, I break down at that instant. Why why? What did we do to deserve this? It's tearing me apart. I wipe my tears and go to our room.

“Start packing your things we are leaving”!

They don't dare ask any questions, they start taking all that they could. Damn you Anele, where the hell are you! I don't know where we going but we will find a place to sleep at tonight. Sazi comes in, he already have his bag pack with him. We look at what we used to be our "house" one last time. We had good and bad memories here but mostly bad we must go and create new memories. We are finally out of the yard, my grandmother is standing at the door looking at us, I shake my and we walk to the bus stop. I can't stop my tears from falling, at least we are finally out of this hell hole. Anele where are you? She won't even know where we will be staying, I will have to come back tomorrow to check her. Hoping for a better tomorrow. New beginnings. New memories. Siza is few steps away with the kids.

Nathi

It's Friday morning and the weather is looking good. This was the longest week ever with my mother constantly asking me for coffee every 2 hours. She would sometimes wake me up in the middle of the night, I am so over making coffee for her. Anyway today I am taking my parents to the mall, dad said he wanted some air he can't suffocate himself and kill himself with lazing around. He even complained about gaining weight, talk about being dramatic. Oh yah, me&Bayanda decided that Bayanda will manage the restaurant and I will stay at home. I won't really be staying home, I will have to manage the restaurant that I've turned into a public facility. Plus I've been neglecting it lately, he doesn't know that I have other business though. I did not want to tell him just yet maybe once we married, I will. Ntando&Siza are settling in very well at work and they are hard workers, so I've heard. I am so happy for the both of them, I pray that they change their lives for better and maybe further their studies. I walk out of my bedroom after my dad calling me for the 100th time, gosh this man. I find them waiting for me in

the garage, my mom was ready to hop in. We arrive at the mall and the first stop was at this other certain boutique, my mom wanted some dresses she saw them being advertise on the TV. She is taking her precious time and dad is getting impatient, well at least Bayanda is keeping me busy on WhatsApp.

“Wanna come over for a quickie”?

“You know i'm such a curser. You want the stuff to look at us otherwise”?

“I don't care about them. I want you and I miss you”

“I miss you too baby and I will see you soon”

“I know. You coming for that quickie right”?

“I will see. Gotta go i'm at the mall with the parents”

“As I forget about getting a quickie”

“Lol...I will make it up to you”

“Enjoy with the parents and don't let them exhaust you. I will hold your word about making it up to me”

I put my phone back in my bag and walk out, I wait for them by the door. Seems like my mother doesn't wanna leave this boutique at all, she's been fitting all these dresses and skirts here. 5 minutes later they come out mom is looking very mad at dad, she doesn't even wanna talk to him. I chuckle and we enter shops after shops after shops, my legs are killing me. I've been walking ever since.

“I'm hungry”

“Few more shops Nono then we will go and eat”

Me: Mama I am really hungry and I feel like I am about to faint.

Her: Just one more shop Nono and I promise you, we will go and eat.

Dad: You want to kill my daughter with hunger? I am also tired and my legs are not doing any justice for me.

Mom doesn't answer dad...

Dad: I am going to get myself something to eat at spur. You can continue with your door to door shopping, I don't wanna pass out at the mall. You will find me at spur if you are done.

He walks not even looking at my mother. I am not about to get caught in their business but all I know is that I am hungry.

Me: Mama I am hungry, we've been walking all day.

Her: Then go and join your father and leave me with my door to door shopping.

Me: What did dad do to you?

Her: He did nothing, I am just not in the mood for his tantrums.

Me: What tantrums did he throw?

Her: He did not want me fitting all the clothes that I liked at the boutique.

Me: I understand him just perfectly. Dad did nothing wrong, I shared the same sentiments with him hence I went out and leave you too. After you are calm you will find us at spur.

Her: Uyangishiya nawe? Be ngithy sizoshayelwa wu moya.(You leaving me too? I thought we were getting some fresh air)

Me: Is this what your fresh air means? Hopping from shops to shops? That was not part of the plan. You making this all about you. What about us? What about what me&dad want? I'm sure dad have some shops he needs to go too and so do I. This is supposed to be a family outing, not about you hopping

boutique after botique. We don't have enough time. We must also buy grocery and house essentials. I can always bring you here anytime you want to do your shopping just not today. Today we must just enjoy our outing then go and watch some movies.

Her: I guess I was too excited and did not consider you guys in all of this. I am sorry for being a drama Queen.

Me: I am not the one you need to apologise too.

She nods...

Her: Let's go then.

I help her carry her shopping bags and we head to spur. We look for dad and we find him already eating, he even ordered for us too. We sit down and I thank him, mom just nods. This is so awkward.

“Baba i'm sorry for how I dismissed you earlier on. It was not my intention, I guess I was over excited about coming here”

“I understand Thalitha. I'm also sorry”

They both break out in smile, well now that's what we call true love. I wish me&Bayanda can be like them.

v

Anele

I am chilling in Mabandla's(Blessed) lounge watching music on channel o. I've been staying here for the rest of the week, well that's because his wife went on a month vacation until then I am the woman of this house for now. I did not even dare try contacting Ntando, it's not like they need me anyway but I know that she is worried about me. I don't even know why does she boast about Nathi, making her as if she is God of some sort. She wants to help us only because she couldn't stand our house, it disgusted her, well it is disgusting really and I don't

like the fact that we all sleep in one place and the hunger was too much to bear. That's why i decided to befriend the so not good friends in my hood. I started sleeping with random old men for alcohol and good life, it is really not good it comes with great sacrifices. I met Mabandla at some club in town and we hit it off instantly and just then we became fuck buddies but deep down I am hoping for more than that. Currently I am enjoying my stay here, all I do is sleep&eat. Mabandla has a house helper and I don't think she likes me that much but I am not here for her, i'm here because of Mabandla. The bitter truth is that after the 3 weeks of this luxury I will have to go back to that trash, unfilthy shack filled with rats called a house, argh. I lie back on the couch and sip some wine, yes it's the madam's wine and it is pretty expensive. I then browse through Facebook, Mabandla bought me a phone an iPhone. The picture quality is superb, I have box braids now. I take some few pictures and upload them on Facebook. Now this is what I call life, I've even gained some weight. I am disturbed by the helper standing in front of me.

“Ufunani”? (What do you want) I snap at her.

“Sir asked me to tell you to pack your clothes and leave the madam is coming back tonight”.

I feel my heart beating abnormal.

Me: What? That's not possible. The madam is on a vacation and is set to come back in 3 weeks time.

Her: I am just passing a message I got from the sir. May I please take my leave?

I signal her with my hand to leave, this is not happening. Mabandla assured me that his wife will be away for a month, why is she coming back so soon? Wait, maybe Mabandla wants to bring another girlfriend of his, that is why he is chasing me away. Tough luck for him

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I am not going anywhere. I will not allow another girl to have Mabandla except for his wife, all hell will have to break loose. He better not try me, I am too ghetto. He won't like it when I channel it but then what was I expecting! Mabandla is a serial cheater and he doesn't even hide it, men. I gulp down the glass of wine and pour myself another one, Mabandla will know me tonight. I mean he even have some nerve to lie and told her

helper to tell me that his wife is coming, pshhh. He thinks that I am a fool.

v

Bayanda

I am sitting here at the office bored out of my mind, there's nothing to do here. Since I have no friends it is kinda hard for me to go by on a daily basis, plus Nathi is not here with me, she is my best friend now. My phone rings, I look at the screen and it was my mother I wonder what does she want, seeing that the last time I spoke to her we were not in good terms. I take a deep breath and answer.

“Hello”

“Hey Bays. How are you”?

Me: Good thanks and how are you?

Her: Good too. I was just checking up on you.

Me: I'm okay.

Her: I would also like to apologise for what transpired between us. I was at fault for lashing out at you, I had a stress.

Me: Hmm...

Her: Can you please come over tonight for supper?

Me: I can't I already have plans. Thank you for the invite, I will honour it next time.

Her: Very well then. Take care and I hope to see you soon.

Me: Goodbye.

I hang up...

Why is she being so kind to me all of a sudden? Something doesn't add and I remember the warning the inyanga&Aziza told me. Who knows, maybe she was planning to poison my food tonight and kill me. Uh uh no, I will not take any chances and people don't just change over night. She will have to prove it to me that she means every word she said. I need some fresh air. I grab my cars and exit the office locking it, I find Siza standing outside smoking, I stand next to him.

“Ola”

“Sure”

Me: Why are you standing here alone?

What a fuck up questions, I mean he is obviously smoking.

Him: Smoking.

Me: Are you settling in very well?

Him: Yes I am.

Me: That's good to hear. Let me go and grab some lunch.

Him: Can I tag along? I mean it's almost my lunch time as well, why not I tag with you.

Me: Alright. Let's go.

Him: Let me go and fetch my phone then we bounce.

I nod...

He comes back and we take off, KFC will do today. He looks like a cool dude, too bad he is younger than me. I'm sure he will blend in very well with Luyanda, they both seem to like things.

Me: What do you feel like eating?

Him: Whatever you having.

Me: I'm going to eat shit.

Him: I will eat too. It's not like we will die.

Me: You very weird dude.

Him: It takes one to see one.

I shake my head and we both chuckle, I think i'm gonna like this boy. We arrive at KFC and I order while he sits down, I look at him and shake my head chuckling alone.

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Anele

I decided to keep myself busy with cooking, I released Maria early because I did not want her to witness what will go down tonight. The door opens, I turn slowly to look thinking that it was Mabandla he knocked of early because he wants to make sure that I am gone, well he have another thi...I stopped on my tracks when I see a figure of a woman, I look at her starting from her shoes(stilettos). Then her full body(Jumpsuit) nor bad, at least he has a choice. Just then my gaze stopped in her face. My breathing becomes shallow, I am feeling hot all of a sudden and my palms become sweaty. It's Mabandla's wife in flash! Anger is very much visible in her face. She rakes my body from head to toe, at least I am wearing a summer dress just below the knees.

“Bitch who the hell are you and what are you doing in my house”?

I stare at her, I am lost for words. I thou...thou... I was jogged out from my thoughts by a stinging sensation on my cheek, my eyes become teary and I swallow the lump in my throat. She chuckles.

“Mabandla is really taking me for a Poe's. He have the audacity to bring his hoodrat drity tramp in my house?! Have sex with her on my bed, with my sheets? Baby girl, how old are you”?

I say nothing to her...

“Are you deaf? You better answer me when I talk to you baby girl. What are you doing with my husband? Didn't he tell you that he has a wife”?

I shake my head, tears are already rolling down my cheeks.

“Answer me dammit”! She roars and I jump a little. “Did he or did he not”?

Me: He di..d..did.

Her: And you continued putting your claws at him? You know what baby girl. You are not the first young girl he cheated on

me with. Before you there were others and I sorted them out and after you there will still be others. I am going to cripple you baby girl, you messed with a wrong woman's husband.

She pulls me by my braids, I lose balance and fall down. The braids are still painful, since I've done them recently. She drags my body across the floor, I am screaming and kicking but her grip on my braids is too tight.

“What the hell Zinhle! Let her go”! That's Mabandla's voice.

Zinhle chuckles...

Her: You want me to let her go? With pleasure.

She dragged my body by force and I hear the sliding door open, she picks me up. No no she is going to throw me off from the balcony.

“I'm sorry”

I find myself falling on the hard wood floor. I hear footsteps walking away and it was silence, I can't help it but cry. What was I thinking? I feel myself being yanked up, it's Mabandla. He puts on his shoulder.

“You don't listen Anele. I gave out an order and you did not follow it. I am going to teach you a little lesson you will never forget, after this I do not ever wanna see you ever again”.

I can detect anger in his voice, he puts me inside his car trunk and close it. I bang it and I hear the car moving, God please protect me.

34

Ntando

We found a 6 roomed house to rent in the hood 30 minutes away from work, the rent is a little bit steep but we need a place to stay. Since we working now it will be much easy and thanks God the house is fully furnished. Our duty is just to buy house essentials and clothes. Seeing the excitement in my siblings face really brought joy in my heart. No leaking roof, no rats crawling in our bodies at night, no noise, no cold, no torn blankets. This is luxury to us. Taking a bath with hot water, the house is kids friendly. Going to work not worrying about the kids eases my heart, a heavy burden has been lifted off my shoulders. I feel like a new person and we are doing great at work, Siza is more close to the boss lately not that i'm complaining, this boss seems like a good person. I haven't seen Nathi ever since we started working, I really wish to see her and thank her she has really helped me a lot, a true Angel. Today I asked a day off because I had to take Andile to the clinic, he's been complaining about cold. They gave him pills&medication, he was catching flue. After I came back from the clinci I decided

to spring clean the house, it is not that dirty but it has been vacant for few weeks, so obviously there is a little bit of start. It's been 4 days now staying in this house. I will also have to look for a new school for them in the meantime, the drive from my old hood is 2 hours away and of which will cost us a fortune in terms of transport. It's second term I know and it's late but they are fast learners they will catch up if not in the same pace in terms of learning. I take a chair and go and sit outside, the streets here are very busy and the music coming from the tarven at night it's the only thing that I don't like, I have no choice but to get used to it. It will be my weekend meal if not daily. I can't help it but think of Anele. I wonder where she is and if she is safe or what, not knowing where she is doesn't sit well with me. She is my sister I have to care for her even though she never listens to me, I vowed to look after her but the way she disrespects me it's totally not on. I can't even reprimand her, if I do she tells me where to get off. I have failed her, I have really failed her. Now, my biggest worry is that once she gets where we were staying and not find us, what is she going to do? I will have to go back there and look for

her again. I wonder why did my mom leave us behind, she left going to work and never came back leaving with Sanele who was only 8 months at that time. He was used to breast milk we

tried giving him tea&food, he would cry his lungs out. I had no choice but to go and ask to clean people's house just to get formula for him, that's when Siza stepped in and bought nappies for Sanele. They were pretty expensive and he will be left with no money to buy food, he was not getting much in his transporting goods for the community on the other hand he had to pay Bab'Madlala some money for using his bakkie. By the time he turned a year old we only bought one pack of nappies&formula. He started eating everything that we ate and drank rooibos tea, he is 6 years old now. It was not easy, I had it tough. I wonder if she misses us wherever she is. Is she still alive? As for our fathers? Don't they care about us? Don't they think about us wherever they are? I last saw my father when I was 15 years old and never again. I have my own father. Siza, Anele&Snikelelo share a father. Thando, Tsebo, Nqobile&Sanele all share a father. I had to grow up early, I never enjoyed my youth days. I'm 33 years old and I have absolutely nothing, no friends. No boyfriend, nothing. Hopefully this time around things will change for the better, I will have to start making friends and work will be the first place where I get a friend. I also wanna have a girls outing, PJ parties and all the stuff that include girls only. I hear someone greeting me, I look up and a woman is standing right in front of with a big smile, she is almost the same age as me if not older. I smile back at her.

“Hello I'm Pamela and I live right opposite you”

“My name is Ntando”

Her: Nice knowing you Ntando.

Me: Likewise.

Her: Can I join you?

Me: Of course. Let me go and get a chair for you.

Her: There's no need I will just sit here on the stoep. So, how are you finding my Kasi so far?

Me: It's a great hood no doubt about that but I don't really know it that well.

Her: Come let me take you on a tour.

Me: I wish I could but I can't leave my siblings alone.

“You can go I will watch over them Sisi” I hear Kelo's voice behind me.

Me: Are you sure?

Her: Yeap.

Me: Oh, okay then thank you.

Her: Hello Sisi, I am sorry for not greeting you.

Pamela: It's okay baby girl. It's very rare to find girls your age respecting their elders in this day&age. Keep it up and don't even think of befriending girls from this hood, be selective when it comes to choosing them.

Her: I hear you Sisi and thank you for alarming me.

Pamela: Let's take you on a tour Ntando.

We both stand up and walk out of the yard.

Me: Where are we going?

Her: To buy some Kotas and show you around.

I nod...

She seems like a nice woman.

v

Nathi

Today I decided to go and spend my night at Bayanda's I called him earlier and he told me that he is with Siza, they've become very close lately. Siza seems like a good boy, he will learn a lot from Bayanda and he seems goal oriented. In fact he should take the money he earns and go and further his studies to better his siblings life. I am happy for all of them and I also heard that they also got a house but they renting, finally some light in their life. If it's your time no one can stand against you, once God blesses you he blesses you beyond. He will take you out of shame to glory, just wait on him and believe that your time will come. One day your prayers will be answered, don't give up yet. My parents went to a lunch date, I decided to pamper them before they take off tomorrow, dad said he is worried about his garden not being taken care off. I will finally have my house to myself and no one will wake me up at 3am and ask me to make coffee for them or finish my ice cream. I will surely miss them with no doubt, especially my mom's cooking. My phone rings just then and it is a number I don't recognize, I wonder who it is. I answer anyway.

“Nathi speaking, Hello”

“Hey Nathi it's Sheila”

Shelia? The only Shelia I know was the one I was attending university with, she was the most popular girl at school and she never liked me

not even a little bit. Why is she calling me now all of a sudden? It's been almost 10 years since we last saw each other. Where did she even get my numbers, well I've never changed them but I know for a fact that she did not have my number.

Me: Sheila? What a surprise getting a call from you after 10 years.

Her: Don't flatter yourself you not special.

Me: Oh okay. So, why did you call me?

Her: We will be having a varsity reunion in 2 weeks time, I want you to come.

Me: A reunion? Who is organizing it?

Her: I am. Are you game or maybe you are scared that you have nothing to show or tell us after 10 years?

I chuckle...

Me: What does reunion mean to you?

Her: It means meeting up as varsity mates and talk about our achievements.

Me: You were always dumb, why am I not surprised by your answer. I'll pass, thank you.

Her: Well come on. I swear we won't mock you, i'm sure there will be others who have no achievements to share with us.

I laugh...

Me: As I said before, I will pass. Thank you for the invite though.

Her: Come one Nathi, you can't be even uptight till now.

Me: Where are you guys holding it?

Her: Z&B restaurant for a brunch then move to a park then after party at Club Venus.

Me: Z&B restaurant? As in Z&B?

Her: Yeah and I hear it's kinda

expensive, but dont worry I will buy you food if you can't afford.

Me: I will see you then Shelia and thanks for the invite.

Her: I was only doing you a favor, it's nothing big.

Me: Right. Bye.

Her: Toddles.

I hang up and laugh, Sheila will never change and here I was thinking that a reunion is for us as old varsity mates to catch up and talk about how life has been not bragging about what we have. Maybe we have different answers about it. I shake my head, this girl is really something else. She will never change, for her sake I hope she has achieved more than me&married too. She said she will buy food for me, at my own restaurant? Like, who says that? Honestly? Ai. To her we will always be in a competition, i'm too old to be entertaining such. I just wanna better the lives of others.

v

Anele

These fuckers dropped me off at my home's gate, Mabandla ordered them too. I hate him I hate him with all of my heart. He held me hostage for days, having sex with me repeatedly once he is done his friends also take turns with me. There was never a day off, I was not given food or water. They will have sex with me till I pass out, they never stopped. I felt so empty and used, I tried talking to him to let me go but all I could get were blows and kicks. I regret ever meeting him, he is a monster a fucken monster. What he did to will always scar me for the rest of my life, he made me hate sex. I hate it with my all and I hate men too. I've never ever in my life think that one day I will find myself in this painful situation, never. If only I listened to Ntando, I shouldn't have befriended Thabile and her friends. I've been warned about them by people about them but I never took it seriously, they are the reason I turned out like this. Well, it's no use blaming them now. What's done it's done but I don't think I will ever recover from this trauma, ever. I wipe my tears and limp inside the yard. I am even ashamed to show myself right now, Ntando will be very disappointed in me but I will have to brave on and face her. As I approach our room I can't help it but notice that it is too quiet for my liking, it's like no one is here. It's 19:30 and the kids are usually singing by this time but this evening it is very quiet and the lights are off. It just doesn't make sense. I open the door and switch on the light and I am met by a half empty room. Where the hell are they?

They can't really move out without telling me right? I mean it is only fair that they tell me. I walk out and go and check Siza's room it is empty, all of his clothes are gone. I knock at my grandma's door, she opens and looks at me from head to toe, she looks disgusted by my presence but I am not here for her.

“Where is Ntando”?

“They moved out days ago”

Me: What? Why?

I feel tears burning my eyes, it can't be.

Her: I chased them away and they left.

Me: How can they leave me behind? I thought we were a family?

Her: How can they leave you behind? Where were you? You were out there sucking married men's dick not giving a care, now that they left you blame them? I also want you out of my yard, you even smell sex.

Me: Whe...where am I supposed to go?

Her: I don't care, even if you go live in the street it's still okay. I just don't want you in my yard and just so you know, Ntando&Siza are now working a very well paying job. If only you were an obedient child and respected yourself, none of this would've happened. Look at you now, you have no one. You are all alone, bloody swine. Get out of my yard as in now! Start walking.

She slams the door in my face. I sink down on the floor and let it all out. I have no one and I have nowhere to go, I am doomed. I should've just accepted my homes situation, maybe none of this would've happened. Now that they are working, their are gonna live a good life without me in it. After all we went through, the hunger we've endured, they've finally made it and I am here with nothing or no one. I am all alone in this world. If only I can reverse time and right my wrongs, ask for

forgiveness, never strayed or dropped out of school I would've been far with life. I wish I could get a second chance and I swear I will be a better person than I am now, God I only ask you to please ease my burden. You know, maybe if my mother was here I would've turned out to be a better person. She is also another reason why I turned out the way I am, it is her doings. I let the tears flow freely, how did I change so fast? Life it's full of lessons you know, one way or the other you learn something from it. I close my eyes and take it all in, I replay every moment that took place in my life the good and the bad. By the looks of things the bad is dominating. Just then a song comes in my mind.

“I surrender all”

All to thee my bless&saver

I surrender all”

I can't stop crying, the song comes from deep within. All I ask for is a second chance just to do better, I know better now.

Bayanda

I better start with cooking before Nathi gets here. I don't usually cook but Nathi loves her meat and she will be mad at if she doesn't find it. I never knew that one day I will cook for a woman, it has never occurred in my mind. I was so used to Aziza and my cooking for me, not the other way around. I hear a hoot outside it can't be Nathi, she is too early. I peep through the window and see a car that I never saw before parked at the gate, with the way it is parking it will clearly indicates that whoever the driver is, want to come inside my yard. I walk up to the gate and wait for whoever it is to climb out of their car. The car looks like expensive, it has no number plates and the windows are tinted. The driver's door open and a gentleman I have never seen before, steps out of it. He looks clean and his suit suits him perfectly. He walks up to me, his walk is very much calculated. He walks like he is a king of some sort.

“Hello little brother”

I widened my eyes, little brother? I'm sure he got the wrong person, I don't have another big brother apart from Lwazi. I look at him and I see no resemblance of some sort between us, we look way to different.

“Little brother? I'm sorry but you have a got a wrong person, I am not your little brother”

Him: Bayanda Kenny Nkosi.

Me: Who are you and what do you want from me?

Him: As I said I am your big brother. Blood brother of yours.

Me: I don't know you and I have only one big brother his name is Lwazi.

He chuckles and fix his collar and look at the time in his watch, yasis he thinks he is all that and more. No homo but he is

handsome even Nathi can leave me for him, no doubt about that. Let's just say he is a handsome bastard but we not there.

Him: Soon enough everything will be revealed to you but now I need to ask a favor from you.

Me: You don't even know me and you already asking for favours? I don't even know your name, yet you here asking me for favours.

Him: I hate drama kings. You sound like a woman right now. As I was saying, I want you to give my helper's daughter a job at that restaurant of yours until I come back.

Me: I'm sorry to burst your bubbles but we are not hiring, we are already full. So, go and try somewhere else.

Him: You will give the job. I am now telling you no longer asking for a favor.

Me: You can't come where you come from and give me orders. You don't know me like that.

Him: You will hire her whether you like it or not. Oh and she also doesn't have a place to stay, I would really appreciate it if she stays with you until she settles.

Me: I don't have a place for her and I won't hire her, get that into your skull.

He turns on his heels going back to his car, phew. He opens the back doors and a girl steps out of it, she has her luggage with her and she is beautiful but her beauty doesn't surpasses Nathi's. Nathi will always be number one. She is wearing leggings&crop top with heels and she has an expensive weave. She doesn't look like she needs a job, what the hell is actually going on here? What fuckery is this? Just then Nathi's car parked just next to this man's car. A smile creeps out of my face as it parks, the girl smiles back, she actually thinks that I am smiling at her? Uh, uh,

Man: I guess my work here is done. I trust that you will treat her right and make sure that you hire her.

“Treat who right and hire who”? Nathi says. “Hey babe” she gives me a peck.

Him: And then who is she?

Her: How is that any of your business? The question here should be, Who the hell are you?

Him: How is that any of your business?

Her: Because you just gave my boyfriend an order and who the fuck is she?

Him: Her name is Tumelo and she will be staying with Bayanda for a time being and Bayanda will hire her at his restaurant.

Nathi chuckles...

Me: I told you that I will not do any of those two, which part did you not understand?

Him: There was nothing to understand there. Now, little brother be a good boy and take care of Tumelo. I gotta go, my flight will be departing in 45 minutes.

Nathi: Not so fast. I think you forgetting something lover boy.

Him: And that is?

Her: Your parcel that you came with and just so you know we are not hiring.

Him: You don't get to tell me that girly. You don't have any shares in that restaurant.

Nathi laughs...

Her: Either way that restaurant is my boyfriend's restaurant and you fucken big brother from hell don't get to give him orders, he worked so hard to get that restaurant you bloody swine with a hired suit. Fuck outta here.

Him: Girl don't test me! Don't fucken test my patient! Bayanda put your dog in a leash I don't wanna hurt her.

Me: Hurt who lover boy? I will show you your mother&father in their undergarments, do you hear me? Now fuck off and don't ever come back here.

Him: You will regret this.

Her: As long as you got the message loud&clear, now take your tramp and leave right now.

I am stunned. I don't know this other side of Nathi, I hope she is fronting. They gave each other stares, Nathi was unmoved. The man clicks his tongue rage very much visible in his eyes and turn back on his heels, signaling the girl with his finger to follow

her. The girls follows behind him like a lost puppy. Nathi folds her arms and watch them leave, once they were out of side she exhales.

“That was intense but at least I played a role of a brave woman, thanks to movies if it wasn't for them I would've probably peed on myself. Who was that anyway? He is sure as hell one scary father fucker

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argh”.

I laugh and put my hand on her shoulder and hold her overnight bag as we walk inside the house, she is one crazy woman.

Me: He said he was my brother.

Her: What? He must be out of his mind, you too handsome to have a brother like him. He is ugly.

Me: I noticed that. So, you saying that i'n handsome?

Her: Boy, haven't you taken your time, look yourself in the mirror and saw how handsome you are? You are flames.

I can't help it but blush, I don't wanna lose her. Not now not ever.

Her: I see you have not started with cooking.

Me: I did not think that you will arrive this early. We can order in if you want too.

Her: You cooking I will keep you company.

Me: I don't think I will be able to cook with you starring me.

She chuckles...

Her: Pretend as if I am not here. I will only take pictures of you and upload them on Instagram.

Me: You wouldn't dare.

Her: Try me lover boy.

Me: Fine. You can make yourself something to eat so long.

She stands up and goes straight to the fridge. She comes back with a cake, she cuts 2 big slices. I shake my head, this woman and food.

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Anele

I am on my way with police going to Mabandla's house. I've opened a case for rape for him, he will have to pay for what he did. At least I haven't took a bath, the rape evidence is pretty

much visible and my body as a whole is not looking good. I want him to rot in hell. The gate to his yard slide open, we drive in and I swallow hard when I see Zinhle standing at the door drinking wine. We climb out of the car with the two policemen and walk to her.

“Evening ma'am. I'm detective Ngobese and this is detective Zuma. Is Mabandla home”?

“He is not. Why are you looking for him, if I may ask”?

Zuma: This young girl here has opened a case of rape for him.

Her: Oh, really?

He nods...

Her: Well detective this girl here was having an affair with my husband. In fact she was staying here in my house the moment she heard that I am going on a vacation. Now she cries rape?

She opened her legs willingly for a married man, my husband did not put a gun on her forehead.

I feel tears threatening my eyes.

Zuma: Were you having an affair with her husband?

I nod...

Him: For how long?

Me: 5...5 months.

Ngobose: I think our work here is done. You were having an affair with a married man. You slept with him because you guys were dating, unfortunately there is nothing we can do. Thank you for your time Mrs.

Zinhle: Only a pleasure Mr officer.

She looks at me with disgust and heads back inside the house, closing her door.

Zuma: Why did you lie about being raped?

I continue walking without answering him. How could these police be so heartless? But then it's Pamela's word against mine, this was all just a waste of time. I should've saved myself time. What was I thinking? I am such a fool. My life is over. I cry silently as the police drive me home. I wish I can just die you know, I made the bed myself so I might as well lie on it. Argh, but one day Mabandla will reap what he sow. This is a lesson I will never forget in my whole entire life, it will a scar that I will have to carry all my life. Sometimes we should listen to our elders when they reprimand us, warning us about stuff because they've through that route and they know better. If only I listened, if only.

v

Nathi

Bayanda is done cooking and he is now dishing up for us. He has cooked Pap, gravy and fried chicken, I had to help with the chicken though. He finish dishing up, he gives me my plate and I go and sit in the lounge. I enjoy eating while watching TV. He joins me.

“So babe, there's this other girl that I was attending at university. She invited me to a varsity reunion”

“When”?

Me: In 2 weeks time from now.

Him: We will be also hosting a varsity reunion. Is it the one you talking about or it's a different one?

Me: I don't know but brunch will be held a the restaurant.

Him: I think it is.

Me: What's the name of the person who booked the venue?

Him: Sheila and she said I must be considerate with the booking fee because there also those who have not achieved anything yet, in fact she said a particular person. She didn't give out his/her name though.

I laugh...

Me: Yeap. It is definitely our varsity reunion and I am that one particular person.

Him: I don't follow.

Me: I always knew that you were slow but not like this, i'm kidding. Well, she said she will buy me brunch at my own restaurant.

He laughs...

Him: She said what?

Me: Exactly that babe and I was like duh, how can you buy the owner of the restaurant brunch? It doesn't make any sense.

Him: I guess she will be in for the biggest surprise of her life. I wish I could be there to see her face when she learns that you are the owner.

Me: Me too and I hope that she has achieved more than me.

Him: I doubt she is. I mean she complains about booking fee, she is clearly broke.

Me: Cancel her booking fee, brunch will be on the house.

Him: On it.

Me: I love you.

Him: I love you too.

Me: Now can I please get a foot massage? My feet are killing me.

Him: Here we go again with the abuse.

Me: Come on baby, please or else I am going home.

Him: You wouldn't dare.

Me: I know. My feet please.

He growls and picks up my legs and place them an top of his thighs, he starts massaging them. I moan and he stops.

Him: Stop doing that babe.

Me: I can't help it. It feels nice.

I smile...

Him: Please behave or else I will reap that jumpsuit of you.

I chuckle and shake my head.

Me: Fine! I will stop it but you owe me.

Him: Yeah right. I owe you everyday it's nothing new.

Me: Whatever.

He shakes his head, I think he needs a hair cut. I rake my fingers in his hair and yuh, wow.

Him: I will get it tomorrow.

Me: I never said anything babe.

Him: I know you babe that's your way of telling me to go and cut.

Me: You got me there. Now back to your job.

Him: Yes madam.

I chuckle...

v

Ntando

As soon as I arrive at my grandmother's a police van parks also, I wonder what do they want. I stand at the gate just to see what's going on, the door of the passengers opens and Anele climbs out. She dates police now? When she is near me I can't help it but see the state she is in. She looks like a massive mess and looks so souless I run up to her and embrace her. She cries in my arms letting all out.

“I...I am so sorry sis. I'm sorry”

“It's fine Anele, I am here now. I am here to take you home. I thank God that your are back in one piece.

36

Phindile

All of my plans of destroying Bayanda are failing dismally. Even Luyanda's girlfriend's brother failed to do just one simple mission, yet he was portrayed streetwise(clever). Boy oh boy he failed dismally. I am taking jabs left right and center, I don't know what's going on really. Luyanda comes into my bedroom without knocking, this boy lacks manners I tell you.

“Mom Thato is here to see you. Why would Thato wanna see you? You do not know that he is dangerous right”?

Dangerous? Who is he fucken kidding! That boy it's a girl, a teenage girl for that matter, nonsense.

“Tell him that I will be with him shortly”

Him: You still did not answer my question.

Me: I don't answer to you. Now leave my bedroom.

Him: I will get to the bottom of this mom, I promise you.

Me: Whatever suits you.

He clicks his tongue and walk out, argh. I stand up and follow after him. I find Thato drinking juice, the very same juice that I bought with my money.

Me: Follow me.

I walk straight to the garden and he follows after me.

Him: I want my money.

Me: What money?

Him: For the mission that you sent me to do.

Me: But it failed dismally. So I don't owe you any money.

Him: Give me my money and I will leave you alone. If not. I will go and tell Bayanda that you the one who sent me.

Me: You wouldn't dare me. Try me and you will kiss your family goodbye.

He chuckles...

Him: You don't scare and just so you know I know everything.

Me: What do you know? You don't know anything about me.

Him: Stop fooling yourself. I know that both your sons are not Vusi's. I know that you killed Vusi because he was so close to finding the truth, I know a lot about you.

Me: You piece of shit! I will give your damn money and stay the fuck out of my life.

Him: Thought as much. Should anything happen to me, consider yourself dead. I will be waiting.

Me: It's funny how you threaten me but couldn't even get to Bayanda to do what you asked him to do.

Him: It was gonna be easy for Bayanda to do what I asked him to do. He was gonna give in until that girlfriend of his came to his rescue.

Me: Oh, the girlfriend it's an obstacle?

Him: Yes and it wouldn't be wise of you to go after her. Don't even think about it and to tell you the truth Bayanda is happy with that girl. He brings out thw best in him.

Me: Right.

Him: Don't go after her, she's been through a rough patch. Something happens to her I will kill your mother, one call to the hospital and she is gone. I will be expecting my money before this day ends.

He winks at me and walks away whistling.

My heart is beating out of my chest. This guy knows a lot about me, I underestimated him. Now I have no options, nothing. I guess I will just have to wait for Skhumbuzo's plan. I am running out of time he better come through for me. This girl it's gonna be a problem and now I've been warned not to go near her, I will have to meet her and see her. I want to see what is it that Bayanda sees in her.

v

Ntando

Anele told me what happened to her. I am so livid right now at this guy, how could he do such a cruel thing? This is pure devil himself and I am so disappointed at the police, they've failed to do their job. Even if they were dating he had no right to rape her. He hasn't given him the consent. Anele is so traumatised, she's busy screaming in her sleep. Siza is not even entertaining her, he is disappointed at her I must say. What was Anele doing dating a married man anyway? I have never dated one not that they found me attractive though, let's just say I never took care of myself until now. I was always in my baggy repeated clothes and coarse hair. I sit next to her, I gave her sleeping tablets and

once again I did not go to work. I am pretty much sure that they will fire me now. Not even a month working but I already have 2 absents, it's a bad record but then what choice do I have? I have siblings that needs me and I can't really leave Anele in the state she is in. What if she commits suicide? As much as she is rebilous she didn't deserve being raped. She needs me more than ever right now. If it means losing my job then let it be it, at least I reported. Why can't things just go well for me just once? Why is my happiness short lived?

“Why are you crying”? Kelo ask me.

I wipe my tears and fake a smile.

Me: I'm just worried about Anele that's all.

Her: Why are you even bothering yourself about her?

Me: Because she is my sister. Your sister.

Her: My sister? I don't have a selfish sister like her! She is selfish and all she thinks about it's herself.

Me: Don't talk like that Kelo. Can't you see that she is not looking good.

Her: So what? She brought this upon herself! She never listened to you and now you still have to care about her after everything she has put you through? You stopped living your life because of us! The least she could've done was to respect you! We always heard her talking to you the way she wanted and you would allow her. You never stood your ground, you allowed her to walk all over you! She never cared about us

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she never did! I hate her. Now that things have turned south for her all of a sudden she remembered that she has a family? If she wasn't raped, was she still going to remember that she has a family? Would she? I'm sure she was enjoying herself wherever she was, not thinking about us.

Me: Kelo shut up. That's enough! Anele is going through so much right now, the least you could do is to be considerate and put yourself in her shoes?

Her: What shoes? The shoes of sleeping with married man? The shoes of sleeping with different men for alcohol? The shoes of disrespect? The shoes of her stinking attitude towards others? What shoes, huh? I will never put myself in her shoes. Not now. Not ever! You can put yourself in her shoes just don't count me in. She has disrespected you a lot of times. She was supposed to help you and Siza with taking care of us, but no all she ever thought about was alcohol.

Me: Kelo!

Her: I will leave but know that I am not going to play happy family with her just because she's going "through a lot". She was never happy with us being her being family. She was ashamed of our home situation back then, she wished that we were never her family but then again she had no choice but to stay with us because we don't choose family. I also hope that she is on concentrative for her own sake.

She wiped her tears and walked out. I never thought about pregnancy, she wouldn't dare get pregnant for a married man. I let my tears fall, everything she said was true. I look at Anele and I can hear her sniffing, she heard everything that Kelo said. This was my first time hearing Kelo talk like that, she was always the kid who always bottled up her feelings. I guess she was fed up. I hope after what Anele went through she will be a better person than who she was before. She owes us that much at least. I stand up and go and look for Kelo, I find her sitting under the shade watching the little ones play. I sit next to her and not say anything.

v

Bayanda

Nathi&I decided to walk to Zorro's chesa nyama just to chill and unwind a little bit. Zorro's place is full of shady people and all the money spenders of the hood. It's a pub also and weekends it is forever packed. We arrive at Zorro's and look for a spot to chill and we find one just near the braai area, the music is not too loud this side and it's not packed like the other areas. I tell Nathi to sit while I go and buy some meat. I bump into Sizwe he is carrying a carry pack, we look at each other without saying anything.

“Trouble in paradise”

“Meaning”?

Him: Nothing.

I nod and walk away. What went wrong with Sizwe? Ai. I buy the meat&wors and 6 pack of Caribbean twist for Nathi and 6 pack of Heineken for myself. I walk back and once again I bump into Sizwe this time around he is with his cousin. Actually he bumped into me deliberately I must say. I shake my head and

get to where Nathi is. I put the beers on top of the table and spice the meat.

“This place look like lots of fun”

“Yeah it is especially weekends”

Her: You used to come here every weekend?

Me: Maybe 2 weekends in a month.

Her: I never heard you talking of friends, you don't have any?

Me: I used to have a friend.

Her: Then what happened to you two?

Me: Let's just say we grew apart.

Her: Oh okay. Do you miss him sometimes?

Me: Nope I don't.

She nods and her eyes wonder around.

Her: Why are those girls looking at us like that?

Me: What girls?

I know exactly who she is talking about.

Her: Those girls over there.

She points at them talk about being fearless. I turn to look and as I predicted it's Gugu my ex back in highschool.

Me: That's my ex from high school and her friends.

Her: No wonder the looks they giving and I think they are coming here, great just great.

Me: Don't mind them they not worth it.

Her: I know babe.

I continue spicing the meat when they stand right next to Nathi.

“Fancy seeing you here Bayanda. I was wondering where you were”

Silence...

Her: I miss you Bayanda. I miss what we had together, I mean we had a good thing going. Don't you miss us?

Nathi chuckles...

Her: I am so sorry I am just laughing at this joke, don't mind me.

Gugu: As I was say...

Nathi chuckles again...

Gugu: Do you mind?

Her: Mind what?

Gugu: I am trying to talk to Bayanda here.

Her: Go ahead it's not as if like I am standing in your way, geez.

Gugu: You are with your chuckling!

Her: Girl keep it down. If that's how you talk to your friends then you don't have to talk to me like that.

Gugu: Uzoyenzani(what will you do) cheese girl?

Her: Ngizoku bhukudisa ngegazi lakho mina. (I will make you swim in your own blood)

I look at her in total awe. She is feisty man.

Gugu: You understand Zulu? (You know Zulu)

Her: Ucabangani wena?(what do you think)

Gugu: I thought thought.

Her: I nyot nyot, nyot nonsense. Now if you don't mind I have jokes to laugh at here.

Gugu: Are you letting her talk to me like that Bayanda?

Me: Yes. What do you want me to do?

Her: Mkhuzi(Reprimand her)

Me: Reprimand my woman over an ex? Are you insane? Enhlek
vaya la(Leave)

Her: Oh wow Unbelievable. You Bayanda telling me Gugu to
leave? Your highschool first love?

Me: Yoh hhayi Gugu. Yes I am telling you and you can't keep on
telling me about highschool, it's been over 2 decades since we
finished highschool so please just leave the past in the past. We
did not come here for you, we came here to enjoy ourselves
not to have you hovering around us.

Her: Wow but I was your first.

Me: Yes but definitely not my last. This woman you see sitting
here it's my last. My presence&future, as for you you have no
space in my life. Can you please excuse us Gugu?

I see tears forming in her eyes. What was she expecting me to do? Jump at her? Geez some woman.

Nathi: My man has spoken, Jonnie Walker.

Gugu clicks her tongue and walks away. "Bitch" she mumbles.

Nathi: I heard that Mdeed.

I look at her...

Her: Slippery of the tongue babe.

Me: It better be.

Her: That was such a turn on babe. Thank you for standing up for me.

Me: For you I can even stand mountains. This is what we call united, we are one. We got each others backs. It's sexy right?

She chuckles...

Her: Very sexy. Should I expect more of her kind?

Me: Nope that was the last of her kind.

Her: I love you.

Me: I love you too.

I take the meat and go to give it to the guys who braais meat to braai it for me. I can't leave Nathi sitting alone I saw a few men eyeing her, they must know that she is with me.

Nathi

Today is the day of the reunion, I am so ready for Sheila. I can't wait to see her reaction once she sees me. I want to make a grand entrance, I'll get there few minutes after everyone is settled. I decided to get my hair done, I have large box braids on my head they pretty heavy I must say, yasis my neck is taking strain. I also have some ombre nails and today I decided to go all facebeat, from the shiya to nose what what. All that is missing now it's something to wear, I need to look the part but I don't know what to wear. I decided to call Bayanda to come over, his input will be very much appreciated right now. My bed is full of clothes, I am undecided. I throw myself on top of them defeated. I don't want to go overboard but I need to look the part. I can hear Bayanda's voice calling my name downstairs, why is he even making noise. I keep quiet and play with my names.

“You sure as hell made your room miss”

He slurps on top of me and kisses me.

“I don't know what to wear”

Him: You can wear me baby.

I roll my eyes...

Me: I'm being for real baby, the reunion is starting in an hour time from now.

Him: Why am I here?

Me: I need your help with choosing an outfit.

Him: So, this is you admitting that I have a good taste when it comes to choosing outfits?

Me: No. I just want your help.

Him: I am not going to help you then not unless you admit that you trust me when it comes to outfit choosing.

Me: Talk about blackmail. I trust you baby that's why I called you mus.

He laughs...

Him: You should hire me as your stylist. You sometimes wear like an old woman.

Me: Do you blame though babe? I mean I have to hide all my assets to these men out there, not unless you would rather want me wear sexy clothes. Plus I have this other short that I wanted to wear, it exposes my thighs and my buttocks just a little bit.

Him: Angeke ulinge Nathi. Yabona lapho abakithi bangama ngezinyawo babaze u mhlolo(You wouldn't dare. You see then my ancestors will stand on their feet)

I laugh...

Me: How would they do that? Abangazi mus.(they don't know me)

Him: Bakithi ba slem phela.(My ancestors are clever)

Me: Right.

I look at the time and I have like 30 minutes left to get ready. I sigh, Bayanda gets off me and start rampaging through my clothes. I hope he finds something decent for me to wear.

"Nazo ke baby" (here)

I look at the boyfriend jean and overlapping T-shirt with block heels not bad I must say.

Me: Thank you baby.

Him: This is a simple outfit but beautiful. Did I tell you that the braids suit you?

I shake my head...

Him: I am a terrible boyfriend. The braids look good on you baby, you are beautiful.

Me: Thank you bestie.

Him: You welcome little sis.

We both laugh and I put on the clothes, he doesn't even dare move his eyes away from me.

Him: Ngakhetha la ai suka madoda.(I've chosen well here)

He whistles...

I can't help it but blush. Geez this man of mine nina he is the best of the best.

Me: Ai cha shuthy uyakwazi ukuthatha isthombe bhuti.(This means you know how to take a picture brother)

Him: I guess that will be my hobby from now on.

Me; What hobby?

Him: Capturing your moments.

Me: And here I was thinking that you are my personal photographer.

Him: Then that means you should start paying for my services.

Me: Yes sir. Let's go.

Him: You look beautiful baby.

Me: I know baby and thank you.

Him: Hop on my back.

Me: What? We are going to fall.

Him: Do you trust me?

Me: Of course I do.

Him: Then hop on and don't worry you won't fall. You are safe with me.

I chuckle and hop on his back.

Him: Close your eyes if you have too.

Me: I wanna see everything so I'll keep them open.

Him: Very well then. Hang on baby.

He jogs as descends the stairs, I close my eyes and bury my face on his back hold on to his neck for dear life. As soon as we got to the garage he puts me down. I sigh and

shake my head.

Me: Never ever again.

Him: As long as you are with me never say that.

Yeah right...

v

Anele

The past 2 weeks have been really hard for me I won't lie. I've been having sleepless nights, if I do sleep I will cry in my sleep. I've even refused going to counselling, what good will it do me? Nothing. Then there's Kelo. Sigh. Her words are still stuck in my mind, for someone her age she sure as hell said a mouthful to last me and the pain in her voice when she said those words, goodness me. I couldn't help it but cry. My relationship with the siblings it's not okay, they hate me, I don't wanna get started on Siza. He hates me for real that one he ain't even pretending.

Ntando is the only one who appreciates my presence here. The first time when I arrived here with Ntando my heart was beating out of my chest. I was happy&sad at the same time, this house looks like a real home better than my grandmother's house. If Ntando didn't come and search for me I would be living in the streets now. I am thankful to her, she came through for me when I least expect it. I will now have to make it up to my siblings, to show them how truly sorry I am. I walk to the lounge where Kelo is plaiting Tsebo's hair. I sit down and play with my fingers, it's now or never.

“Kelo i'm so sorry for what I've put you guys through. I know what I did was wrong, how I treated and spoke to Ntando in front of you and the kids. I was supposed to lead by example but I failed to do it. I've learned my lesson the hard way. I know no amount of sorries can fix what I've put you guys through but I am willing to change. I want us to be family again like old times

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I wanna work on us. You guys are the only family I have. I've allowed friends to lead me astray, I did things that I am not proud of. If it was under different circumstances I would've made great choices. Now I want you not to live the life I was living, it is not a nice life at all. I know that it will take you a

while to forgive me and I understand you completely. I am so sorry again but I am willing to make us work. I will play my duty as a second mother to you guys. I will prove myself to you guys if it needs too”.

After saying those words I stand up and walk away. It's gonna be a long ride to win her over again, Kelo is stubborn. I hope she won't give me a hard time. One down and one more to go. Siza. Siza will not even give me a chance to talk, he will just ignore me but I will have to give up trying. I get to the kitchen and make food for the children. I haven't been feeling well for the past few days and certain foods makes me nauseas, I didn't even tell Ntando about it. I think it's the after effects of the trauma I've been through after all I am not yet fully healed from it.

v

Nathi

We get to the restaurant and cars have already filled up the parking space, great just great and now we have no where to park. Such is life though.

“Iyoh. It looks like every throwbank student is here”

“I can tell with the cars I see here or maybe some came in groups, you will never know”

Me: Maybe just maybe. Do you think the woman of the hour have arrived?

Him: I don't know baby and besides I don't know her.

Me: Yeah. Let's go in.

Just then my phone rings and it is Sheila calling, I roll my eyes and answer her and put the phone on loud speaker.

“Sheila”

“How long do your taxis take to get here”?

“What are you talking about”?

Her: You are an hour late Nathi or you scared to show yourself?
Wait, better yet stranded or lost. Why didn't you tell me? I was
gonna come and fetch you.

I chuckle...

Me: Do not worry Sheila I'll be there in 2 seconds.

Her: Right.

She hangs up...

Bayanda: Did she just said all of that?

Me: You heard it all baby.

Him: Let's get in then. Wait, let me text someone first.

He types something on his phone and we climb out of the car. He holds my hand and we walk to the restaurant, a white carpet has been laid out for me. Really now Bayanda? I look at him and he smiles and shrugs. I shake my head & chuckle this guy is so extra. He passes my hands over to Sbusiso who looks lavish in his three piece suit. I chuckle and give out my hand to me we walk inside the restaurant, as soon as we step in everyone stops and give us attention. The shock in their faces when they see me, priceless. I flash them a smile and wave my hand at them like a queen greeting her people. Sheila pushes through the crowd and she is more shocked than anyone else.

“Na...Nathi. Is...it's this really you”?

“In a flesh Sheila”

By the looks of things she looks nothing like what I've expected or had in mind. She looks too normal for someone who has achieved a lot.

Her: Yo...you look. I don't even know what to say.

Me: You can say that I look beautiful it's not a crime.

Her: Right. Urh...m welcome.

Me: Thank you

She doesn't even know what to say or react, I guess I really did take her by surprise.

“Why did they lay down the carpet for you as if you someone important or of royalty” that would be Zandi Sheila's side kick. At least she looks the part.

Me: That's because I am important baby.

Her: How?

Me: It doesn't matter just know that I am important especially since you are in my territory.

Shelia: Territory?

Me: Yes.

Her: So, what have you achieved so far Nathi? I mean you even had to bribe people to lay a white carpet for you. Who does that? That's call desperation.

I laugh...

Me: It worked didn't it?

Her: I guess.

Me: So, what are your achievements?

Her: Not to say that I am bragging or anything but I am a CFO at one of the biggest diamond company in the sphere. I own 2 cars and i'm renting a house, I also have 2 kids.

Me: And here I was thinking that you are owning a company but in actual fact you working someone? Someone actually pays to work for them? You get a notification from the bank that you have been paid? Seriously?

Her: At least I am getting paid and I can afford my lifestyle.

Zandi: What did you achieve Nathi? Apart from hiring people to lay out a carpet for you?

Me: A lot actually.

Her: A lot like what? Take me for example. I am a gynaecologist in one of the best private hospital in the city, I own a house in mountain view. I have 3 cars fully paid and I have a son

Me: At least you've achieved something but someone still pays you. You still wait for a bank notification.

Her: What have you achieved?

Me: Let's enjoy the reunion everyone and let's all catch up on what has been going on in our lives.

Sheila: Why are you running away from the question Zandi asked?

Me: Brunch is on me.

I attempt to walk away but she stops me. The throwbacks start making noise, clearly they also want to know, right? I mean who doesn't? But you guys know and they don't.

Me: First things first you having this reunion in my restaurant. Well, our restaurant since I co-own it with my boyfriend. I own a library, internet café, old age home and a few business here&there. I am about to franchise this restaurant. I own a house in blanceville and I have cars some are still at the garage. I pay people. I've achieved a lot guys. Anything else you wanna know?

They look at me in total shock. Mouths agape and eyes popped out, ncah nkosh the throwbacks are shocked.

Me: As I said brunch is on the house.

Zandi: You are lying Nathi. It's impossible for you to achieve more than us, you just lied. Imagine a who you owning a restaurant? This is a joke.

I chuckle...

Me: What's the name of this restaurant again?

Her: Z&B.

Me: What's my full name?

Her: No ways! It can't be.

Me: I'm the one who gave out an order that they must host you guys for free. I'm the one who said they must cancel the booking fee.

Her: Wow! But I was talking to a man over the phone.

Me: You were talking to my boyfriend.

Her: What's your boyfriend name?

Me: Haibo Cc, why?

Her: I just wanna confirm something.

Me: Bayanda. What was it that you wanted to confirm again?

Zandi: So the Z&B stands for your names. Zubenathi&Bayanda?

Me: Spot on.

I smile at them and wink.

Me: As I said brunch is on me. Enjoy.

I walk away I can hear them throwbacks talking amongst themselves. I get into the office and I find Bayanda playing soduku on his phone.

“How did it go”?

“Bomb shocking they will survive”

Him: Aren't you joining them?

Me: Nope. I'd rather be here than that side, they will end up asking me for favors.

He laughs...

Him: I don't think they will.

Me: Then you don't know people and I promise you that someone in their mind right now already sees me as their friend.

Him: Some look really old for their ages, no man.

I laugh

Him: You gonna go with them to the club?

Me: Nope. I've gave them what they wanted so it is done.

Him: Movie date night?

Me: My house. My treat. Be there at six thirty. What would you like to eat?

Him: I'll be there and you can cook anything.

I nod...

Him: Let me go and get us food.

He kisses my forehead and walk out...

Ntando

I am home tired as hell. Today was a busy day since it was Nathi's previous university reunion. Nathi's grand entrance was what highlighted the whole reunion, she looked beautiful. How I admire her, she is really a force to be reckon with. She motivates me to work extra hard and become something I life. I am just glad that few days from now we will be getting paid, I can't wait to spoil my siblings and possibly get myself some clothes. The kids are playing outside and Keko is keeping an eye on them. Anele is taking a nap Kelo said she is not feeling well and she has been complaining about a headache. I walk up to our room and I find her lying on her back with tears clouding her eyes, I lie next to her and not say anything. I will wait for her to say something first. Five minutes passed without exchanging words.

“Kelo tells me that you not feeling well”

She sits up right and wipe her tears then nods.

Me: What's wrong?

Her: I think I have bile plus i'm stressed.

Me: Then we need to get you stametta and get your tummy cleaned up and again stop stressing.

Her: How can I not stop stressing when I've been violated like this? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt vulnerable and weak? Have you ever cried till you ran out of tears and became numb to the pain they were inflicting on you? I know that I was wrong but I did not deserve that humiliation!

Me: It's okay Anele. We will find whoever did this to you and make them pay.

She chuckles...

Her: Don't even bother yourself this is a losing battle. You don't know this man Ntando, just let it go.

Me: But it's breaking you down Anele. You no longer a happy person.

Her: I will pull through. I...I will claim my life back and go back to school.

Me: I would like to believe that you will but you need professional help Anele.

Her: I've already cooked you can dish up for the others.

Me: You must get help Anele. So that you heal&move on from it all.

Her: I am fine. I don't need to talk to anyone Ntando, I will heal by myself.

Me: If you say so. Have you reached out to Kelo?

Her: She is still mad at me but I did talk to her, I hope she comes around.

Me: She will just give her time.

Her: I guess.

Me: Siza?

Her: He doesn't look my way. How will I even reach out to him? He hates me Ntando. His eyes shows it.

Me: I will talk to him on your behalf don't worry.

Her: I wish you luck. Can I please lie down for a few minutes I think the headache is coming back.

Me: Did you drink any painkillers?

Her: Yeah, I did and I think they are taking it's course now.

Me: Let me leave you to it then.

I stand up and walk away. Something is just not right with Anele, this can't be just a normal headache. I dish up for everyone and go and sit outside. I was supposed to go and see Pamela but she told me that she will be going to her boyfriend's house. Is times like this I wish that we had TV, it would've kept us busy but argh. I know that we had no TV back then but things are different now. Every time when they talk about certain shows at work, I have nothing to say to them. I feel so left out and I also need to get myself a phone with internet.

v

Sheila

I still can't believe it. Nathi has achieved more than me! The ugly duckling that she was in varsity has bloomed out beautiful, she is so beautiful. She is nothing like what she was in varsity it's like she took my varsity life and lived and I took hers. She is the current it girl. To think that I said some degrading words to her makes me shudder. When I saw her coming in I thought my eyes were deceiving me. I am back in my shack, honestly guys I lied. I am not successful. I am not a CFO of any company. I am a hairdresser, I make a living by plaiting people's hair. After varsity life took a complete turn for me, I don't know how it happened but it did. From being the "It girl" from highschool to some lowlife Kasi hairdresser. I don't own a car let alone a bike. My life is not fun, my parents don't want anything to do with me. They've even took my kids and staying with them, I am an unfit mother they said. I am not "unfit" I am just not a big fan of kids, both these kids are a mistake that I regret till this day. I've folded Siwe's clothes that I was wearing neatly. Siwe is the girl I

do laundry for and she pays me, she is only 18 but I am her slave. Even Zandi doesn't know that I live a low life, she knows that I've made it in life and I am soon to embark in my own company. Lies, the way I lie they just flow freely out of my mouth. The aim was to embarrass Nathi but the joke was me, yes a whole "Lmao" Hearing her talking like that something in me shifted. The hate I always had for her back in varsity it came back, now it was 5x than before. It's like she is better than me in all aspects. She was a A+ student at varsity. She was the teachers pet and she was dating the most handsome guy at varsity. I always availed myself to him, tried everything for him to notice me. I thought that it was just a phase but even after varsity it was like that. My love for him grew, I started stalking him. When I heard that he was getting married I completely lost it. I've never cried like that in my whole entire life, it's like a part of me was taken away. When I heard that he died on his wedding day my heart leapt with joy. God finally answered my prayers, as long as Nathi was miserable I was content with everything. His death really moved me, I even went to the funeral. Seeing Nathi cried at that graveyard a huge smile was filling my face

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looking at her in distress really made me happy. At least we were now even because we lost the person we both loved

wholeheartedly. I am also glad that he has no child with her. A knock comes through at my door disturbing me, i'm sure it's Siwe. I go and open and I find my boyfriend Sello leaning against the door frame. Sello is a married man, we have one child together Siyabulela who is 7 years old. He invites himself in and sits down on the bench, at least my room is neat he contributed towards it being like this.

“How are you”?

“Fine”

Him: Is that how you reply me now?

Me: I am sorry. I am just not in a good apace right now.

Him: How is that any of my business?

Me: It's not but I was just telling you.

Him: Where were you?

Me: Reunion I told you.

Him: I see. Are you double crossing me Sheila?

Me: What? No Sello. Why would I double cross you? I have kids that needs me.

Him: It better be because you know how I feel about people who double cross me.

Me: I know. What are you doing here anyway, aren't you supposed to be spending time with your wife&kids?

Him: I was supposed to but they went to visit Phumla. I was on my way going there to fetch them but I decided to stop by you first.

Me: I see.

Him: We need to talk.

Me: About what?

Him: I will call you this is for our son's good.

I hope he doesn't want to do what I am thinking right now.

Me: Why not talk about it now?

Him: I said I will call you, now I am rushing to fetch my wife.

Me: Oh, okay then I will wait for your call.

Him: Very good and don't go anywhere, I am watching you.

Me: Geez I am not your wife Sello. You can't tell me where to or where not to go.

Him: I hope I have made myself clear woman. I will see you and remove that shit on your head, it doesn't suit you.

He stands up and walks away. I bang the door and scream in frustration, Sello is a total control freak I wonder what I saw in him. Mabandla is even a much better man than him, argh. Now I have to cancel my plans of going to Zorro's for the after party. I am a regular there and tonight I will have to be there, I've already booked the place, well with Sello's money of course. I sit down in defeat even if I go he will know and he will punish me. This is messed up. I also wonder what is it that he wants to talk to me about. I hope he is not going to tell me that he wants to introduce Siya to his ancestors. I know that he is sick but he will be fine. Back to Nathi, what am I going to do with her? I can't accept defeat especially from her. I will have to outshine her come high or hell waters.

Bayanda

I let myself in Nathi's house and I find her busy in the kitchen. The table have been set, I walk up to her and hug her from behind.

“My personal human”

“My one&only”

Me: It smells nice up in here.

Her: You know how I roll baby.

Me: Should I help you with anything?

Her: No you can sit down and make yourself comfortable.

Me: But I want to help

Her: You can help by selecting movies while I go and take a quick shower.

Me: You smell fine though babe.

Her: I smell like spices with cooking oil.

Me: Still.

Her: After selecting the movies you can come and scrub my back.

Me: Now you talking, start jogging.

She chuckles and ascend the stairs. I shake my head and go to the TV room, uhh she has a TV room. My phone rings. I take it out of my pocket and It's Lwazi, I don't know when was the last time I spoke to him.

“Bro”

“Sup lil one”

Me: Grand, you?

Him: Grand poi. Enhlek yazini I am inviting you to come and have dinner with us tomorrow night.

I should've known that his mother will send him to talk to him.

Me: I already told your mother that I will be busy.

Him: I know but I am inviting you. Nolwandle will be here too and you know how fond she is of you. Please come for her sake

I sigh...

Me: I will come then just because of Nolwandle. What time?

Him:18:00 and don't mind Phindile. Ignore her at all cost, don't let her get to you.

Me: I will try.

Him: You can bring madam too, i'm sure the family wants to meet her.

Me: No. I can't come with her yet. I just...I will bring her next time I can't just hijack her.

Him: You right man. I will see you tomorrow.

Me: Sharp.

I hang up...

Nolwandle aunt Nozizwe's daughter. She is one bubbly person and she likes me because I listen to her gossips. She knows everyone's secrets that one. I hope Phindile won't be the one cooking or else I will not eat. I select the movies and head to where Nathi is. I find her lotioning her body, I walk up to her.

“Can I”?

“Suit yourself and no funny business”

Me: I will try not to.

Her: Yeah right. Your took your time.

Me: I was talking to my brother, he is inviting me to family dinner tomorrow.

Her: That's nice but you don't seem happy about it. Why is that?

Me: It's just that me and Phindile are not in good speaking terms.

Her: Who is Phindile?

Me: My mother.

Her: Oh, I hope you fix whatever differences you have or else the dinner will not be enjoyable.

Me: I wish it was that easy babe.

Her: Family can be pain in the arse.

Me: Yeah...

Just then my phone rings again it's Lwazi, what does he want now?

“Lwazi”

Him: Siviwe will be coming too.

My mood just dropped from 100-0 at that instant. Why is Siviwe coming?

Me: And you guys expect me to wine&dine with him?

Him: He is a changed man Bayanda.

Me: Changed? I don't think so.

Him: He says is a changed man and besides Aziza is no longer in the picture, so you are safe.

Me: I don't like the sound of this Lwazi. I really don't.

Him: I know man. I was just giving you heads up but do come and ignore him too like Phindile.

Me: I will try.

Him: After dinner leave don't even think of staying.

Me: Oh before I forget I want to ask you something. Do we have another brother? A brother who is older than you?

Him: A brother? No. Why?

Me: This other day some guy came to my house and told me that he was my big brother. He called me by all my names.

Him: I'm sure it was a chance taker.

Me: Thought as much. And I hate you.

Him: And nou?

Me: I did not get a quicke because of you.

He laughs...

Him: Hade man. I'm sure you will get a full snack later on. Plant a seed once eaten.

Me: Fuck you!

He chuckles and hangs up.

Lwazi is one stupid fool, I laugh and shake my head. I don't know tomorrow's dinner is going to unfold, I will have to try my outmost best to ignore Phindile&Siviwe. I will not let them ruin the dinner date, uh uh.

Phindile

I decided to invite almost everyone who is close by just to make Bayanda be at ease.

I know very well that he wasn't going to come it's gonna take me my all to gain his trust again. To make him see that I love him, play happy family with him. Shower him with motherly love, thinking about it makes me sick. I decided to also invite Siviwe, I know that they are enemies. Siviwe will be there one irritating him, actually poke him and I will reprimand Siviwe like a mother that I am to Bayanda. Uh uh, it's gonna be a long evening. Even if I wanted to poison him it wouldn't work, it will be epic fail because everyone will die. I've bought all the ingredients as requested by Nozizwe. She will be the one handling the cooking. The other family members are here, we are going to have dinner at the garage it will hold us all since it's big. I look at the time and it's only few minutes left before dinner starts, Siviwe&Bayanda are still not here. I know that Siviwe will come, I am just not sure about Bayanda. I hope he

comes though, in fact I wanted him to come with his girlfriend I wanna see her. At least she is not a gold digger from what I heard, it is said she owns half the restaurant that is owned by Bayanda. I go and change into more comfortable clothes, I look like an old woman right now. I get to the garage and I find everyone seated, I join in and sit down too. Siviwe arrives and he is not alone he is with a girl, argh. He greets and sits down.

“I've brought a long a plus one hope you don't mind”

“We do mind. You should've told us in advance. Now she is going to take Bayanda's seat”

Me: Nolwandle behave.

Her: I was just saying.

Me: You not even sure if Bayanda is coming.

Her: Whatever. Can we start eating now?

John: What's your girlfriend's name Siviwe?

Him: Penelope.

John: Lovely name she has. Where did you guys meet and for how long have you been seeing each other?

Me: Questions will be asked later now it's time for a feast.

Nolwandle: I will not eat until Bayanda gets here.

Penelope: Is this Bayanda a king of some sort?

Her: Who gave you the Permission to question me?

Sivi: Lwandle mind your mouth.

Her: Your girlfriend started first. You should also tell her.

Lwazi: Enough!

Sivi: And you? What's your story?

Him: Yhey Sivi ungangisukeli mfana(don't start with me)

Luyanda: The man of the moment is finally here.

Nolwandle stand up and jumps at Bayanda, these two are very close. I am surprised that he came because he was very adamant about not coming, I guess Lwazi managed to talk him to come. Now let us watch and see how this is going to unfold. I look at Sivi and I can see him tense up upon seeing Bayanda.

“Slow down kideo. Greetings everyone”

We all greet back.

Nolwandle: I knew that you are going to come but some others were very sure that you are not coming.

Him: Never mind them I am here now aren't I?

He browse around and all the chairs are occupied.

Nolwandle: You can sit on my chair bruh since some uninvited people decided to gate crush.

Him: Don't worry kideo I've brought myself a camping chair.

Her: You came prepared. I thought you were gonna bring your plus one with you.

Him: With too much evil hovering around I wouldn't want her contacting some.

Nolwandle laughs and claps her hands...

Her: You can say that again.

Him: Who cooked?

John: The family cooker obviously.

Him: Arh Aunt Nozizwe my favorite cooker. If I knew that you were the one cooking I would've brought along a container your food leaves you yearning for more.

She chuckles...

Her: Oh Bayanda. Thank you boy.

John: You've gained some kilos young man. Business going good?

Him: Yes it does uncle but my girlfriend also plays a very important role on my wellbeing.

John: Then why didn't you come with her?

Sivi: Because she is loose like all the other girls he has been with before. Especially Aziza, I wonder what happened to her.

Bayanda: As I said before uncle, there's too much evil lurking around and my girlfriend doesn't like evil. She is one humble&kind person. I will come with her next time.

Nozizwe: I would really like to meet her she sounds like a good girl.

Sivi: For sure she is a gold digger.

Luyanda: Hold it right there nigga. That girl can fund your whole entire life and give your Barbie a huge makeover and buy you a car.

Him: With Bayanda's money of course. After all he owns a restaurant.

Luyanda: But...argh never mind boy. That girl is way out of your league, she is not Aziza.

Okay, now this is not going according to the plan. It is going south very fast. The plan was for Sivi to stir Bayanda, he was supposed to make Bayanda angry or something but here is Bayanda all chilled out.

Bayanda: The food is getting cold. I'm sure we did not gather here to have a conversation, we gathered here to have dinner as a family. I stand to be corrected though.

John: That is exactly why we here. Let's all say grace and start eating.

They all close their eyes, I look at Bayanda and he is closing his too. I look at Sivi and he is looking at me, he shrugs and I shrug

too then he shakes his head. This is not happening. Amen. We all start eating and food taste good but I have lost appetite, I will just eat a small portion and leave the rest. Everyone seems to be enjoying the food, I keep on drinking my wine.

Bayanda: Hey girl what's your name?

I focus my attention on him and so is everyone else.

Her: Penelope.

Him: I see. So Penelope, are you the main or the side kick? If you are a side then bear in mind that there's more like you dating him.

Her: What?

Him: Exactly what I said. He can't keep his zip closed. If you doing it raw I will suggest that you go and get tested.

Nolwandle: It's a cruel world out there.

Sivi: Bayanda don't start what you can't finish.

Penelope: Is it all true? What he said about you? Am I your main or side?

She folds her arms...

Him: You my only one babe don't listen to him. He is still mad that I shagged his then girlfriend a couple of times.

Bayanda: You see? He is even proud of his fuckboy tendencies. Told you that he can't keep his zip closed and I can guarantee you that he has slept with some of your friends. He is male bitch!

Sivi completely lost it and started attacking Bayanda. What was supposed to be a family dinner turned out to be a disaster. John&Lwazi broke them apart. Bayanda clicks his tongue and looks at me with eyes full of hate.

Sivi: I will get you boy! This is not over. I will get you Bayanda!
No one dares touches me and gets away with it.

Lwazi: Uthinta yasemzini amagugu azokulandela.(You touch my
brother your burial will follow)

Bayanda: I'm sorry for ruining your dinner. That's my cue to
leave.

Nolwandle: I am leaving with you.

John: You are not going anywhere Nolwandle!

Her: Dad, the only reason I allowed to come was because of
Bayanda. If he leaves I also leave, he will drive me back home.
Goodbye.

She follows after Bayanda. Luyanda is just sitting here busy with his phone and Nozizwe is eating, while the rest are still shocked. I take Siviwe's arm and lead him inside the house.

Me: What the fuck was that?

Him: I was doing what you told me to do.

Me: I know but why did you lose it?

Him: Didn't you hear what he was said to me? All that shit he said to me flew out of your ears?

Me: We need another plan. We must come up with one fast.

Him: I think I will have to propose love to his girl and make her fall for me.

Me: Don't you even dare.

Him: Why not? I am handsome and every girl wants me. They don't resist me.

Me: She is not any girl. Luyanda told you.

Him: If she refuses then we will have to go with the other plan.

Me: But we don't know her friends. Does she even have any?

Him: We will find out. Bayanda really bruised my ego tonight, I have never been this embarrassed

Me: After finding her friends, what then?

Him: You will see.

Me: I don't like the sound of this, not even a little bit.

Him: It's nothing hectic. Let's just say I will do her good and that will break Bayanda.

I nod...

I don't know what is his plan but I hope it works.

Bayanda

I am dragging my feet about going to the dinner

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Nathi

I guess I fell asleep on the couch because I was woken up by Bayanda blowing air in my face. He likes doing this a lot. I pout and ignore him. Then he starts tickling me, I am trying so hard not to laugh but he ain't stopping anytime soon. I end up laughing and he sits next to me.

“How did it go”?

“Disaster”

Me: What happened?

Him: Apparently Phindile invited someone who I don't see eye to eye with. I think her plan was for Sivi to provoke me but instant I changed the gears.

Me: You provoked him and got your face bruised.

Him: It's just a minor punch. I want you to meet someone.

Me: Who is it?

Him: You will see her.

He stands up and disappears to the kitchen. He comes back with a beautiful short girl, she has this wide grin on her.

Him: Babe, this is my sister from another mother Nolwandle and Nolwandle this is my girlfriend Nathi.

Her: Lovely knowing you Nathi and I must say that you are truly beautiful.

Me: Thank you and so are you.

Her: My brother couldn't stop talking about you all the way from his home coming here. Did he tell you what happened?

Me: Yes he did and I am sure he said only the good things

Her: Like you don't have any flaw. Your house is beautiful I must comment about it. Seeing it from outside took my breath away and now that I am inside it it is more beautiful. Girl, you are the future. You are leadership.

I laugh...

Me: You guys can sit down.

Her: Thank you.

Me: Dessert? Because I know that you are not hungry.

Bayanda: I am hungry baby I don't know about Nolwandle but I am mos def hungry.

Me: Y'all haven't eaten?

Nolwandle: I did but I couldn't finish the food.

Bayanda: Me too. What have you cooked?

Me: I did not cook anything I ordered pizza but it will enough for all of us.

Him: As long as I will have something in my stomach then i'm good.

Nolwandle: I can't believe that Sivi stood that low. What was he hoping to achieve? I'm just glad that Lwazi puts him in his place. He thinks he is God's gift to human kind.

I laugh...

Me: What did this Sivi dude do exactly?

Her: He brought up the past about shagging Bayanda's then girlfriend Aziza.

Me: That's a low blow. Who still brags about shagging other people's girlfriends? He sounds immature if you ask me.

Bayanda: Very immature babe.

Nolwandle: I've been saying. He is such a bore.

I laugh...

Me: Let me go and dish up for you guys I'll be back.

They both nod...

I get to the kitchen and warm the pizza then dish up for all of us. My phone rings and it's Sheila, okay Sheila will be a bore now. What does she want? The last time I checked we weren't friends. I answer anyway.

“Sheila”

“Hey Nathi. What are you doing tomorrow”?

Me: I'll be at work. Why?

Her: I wanted us to go out and catch up. I know that I haven't been the best person but can we please meet up and Starr afresh?

Me: I am a very busy person. I will let you know when i'm free.

Her: I will be waiting.

Me: Bye.

I hang up. Imagine me having lunch with Sheila? I am desperate for friendship, geez she must let me breath. I walk to the lounge and give them their pizzas and sit down.

Nolwandle: I am just glad that Bayanda did not bring you along to the dinner.

Me: Why is that?

Her: Sivi was gonna be all over you. Flirting with you in front of Bayanda that's how he ended up getting in between Aziza's legs.

Me: I am not Aziza and I am in no position to flirt with any other guy besides Bayanda. I am not a loose girl. I am a one man woman, I respect myself and my boyfriend.

Her: I love you already. Me&you are gonna be best of buddies.

Bayanda: You are not going to be buddies with Nathi Nolwandle. Nathi is way older than you, all you need to do it's to find your peers and play with them.

Her: Oh Bayanda. I was just joking, let's just say she will be my best big sister.

Him: That's better.

Me: Who would've thought that one day I will have a little sister? This is great.

I don't know but this child gives me vibes, she is too forward for my liking. Her and my mother can chat all night long just not me though. As much as she is Bayanda's sister, I don't want her getting to attached or being close with me. By that I mean, she must never ever visit me not unless I ask Bayanda to invite her over. We finish eating with Nolwandle busy yapping, honestly I don't like people who talk a lot because they lie a lot.

Her: That was great Nathi, thank you.

Me: You most welcome.

Bayanda: And it's time I take you back home.

Her: I thought I will be spending the night here. I'm sure her bed is comfortable more than mine.

Him: Not by any chance. Let's go before your father calla me, I am not ready for his lecture I had a long night.

Her: What a bummer. I guess I will come and visit you soon Nathi.

Me: I would be glad to host you again. Babe you coming back, right?

Him: Yeah I am. I just need to go and drop Lwandle then go to my place and take some clothes.

Me: Alright I guess I will wait for you.

Nolwandle: And you don't want me spending the night here but you will? Oh wow Bayanda.

Him: That's because she's my woman. Let's go chatter box.

They both stood up and Nolwandle bid her farewell. I sit back down on the couch. This girl, uh uh. She seems like someone who asks for coffee talking about other people's secrets. Her mouth is working over time.

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Bayanda

The drive to Nolwandle's home is very fast. Actually I can't wait to drop her off, she has been talking ever since we left Nathi's house. She is already picturing girls outing and PJ parties with Nathi and some of her friends. I think she likes Nathi but I am pretty sure that Nathi doesn't like her to that extent of having pj parties with her. Her body language said it all and I don't blame her though, Nolwandle can be too much at times. Why did she have to tell Nathi about what transpired at the dinner? I also didn't like the fact that, she portrayed Nathi as this loose girl. I'm glad that Nathi cleared out the air. I don't wanna lose that girl, not ever. She is the best thing that has happened to me since like forever.

“I can't wait to tell my parents about Nathi. Why didn't you mention that she lives in a mansion and she is rich? Did you see her furniture? Let me not get started about her garden. I'm sure her parents left her the money. Imagine me and my friends holding a tea party at Nathi's? Yoh Bayanda they will start respecting me. I don't like the fact that you refused me to sleep over though and she seems like a nice woman”

Me: First things first. Nathi is not your friend for you to wanting to start sleepovers at her house. Number 2 she has worked so hard to achieve what she has, all that you saw there it's all her hard work. 3rdly you ain't telling your parents shit. Oh and lastly, next time mind how you conversate with Nathi you must have a filter and not say a lot.

Her: Geez too much rules Bayanda but I hear you.

Me: Good girl.

I drop her off and hoot at her before taking off. I drive straight to my house, I take my clothes and drive back to Nathi's house. I find her eating ribs, this girl. I put my bag down and join her.

Me: You don't like her right?

She turns and looks at me acting confused.

Her: What are you talking about?

Me: You know what i'm talking about. You don't right?

She nods...

Her: She is too much for my liking for a girl her age. She gives me weird vibes, how do you handle her? She talks a lot.

Me: I've learned to ignore her at all cost. She also irritated me at first but I eventually got used to her.

Her: I don't think I will get used to her. First impression counts. I hope you've told her to stay in her lane and mustn't think that I am her friend.

Me: I did tell her, don't worry you won't be seeing her anytime soon unless you decide to invite her over.

Her: I don't think I will ever invite her over. I'm sure she is going to tell her parents about me and how big is my house. Argh, typical chest kicked by a donkey.

I laugh...

Me: She sure can talk a lot.

Her: Sheila called me earlier on.

Me: What did she want?

Her: To meet up and catch up.

Me: Since when are you guys friends?

Her: We are not friends and I am not planning to be friends with her. You are my all in one.

Me: Who needs friends though? Friends are not to be trusted. They laugh with you but plotting for your downfall behind your back.

Her: Talking from experience?

Me: Yeah but I am over it now.

Her: I am glad. How is your family like? Apart from Phindile because you made it very clear that you don't like her.

Me: They are good people. Well

not all of them just a few of them and the rest are very bad people. They think that they better than all of us and we are a very big family.

Her: You don't choose family. Family chose you.

Me: You can say that. I only have a healthy relationship with Lwazi, Nolwandle, Luyanda and Aunt Nozizwe. The rest it's only

“hi. Hello” that's it. It's worse when we have family gatherings, everyone wants to do out do the other one. It becomes a competition. What about yours?

Her: I don't have a big family. I was adopted as you know, so it's just my parents, my sister Kat and Kat's kids. Other family members hardly visit and we never have family gatherings even on Christmas. They always sidelined us and we are very much content about it. I wish they can stay like that forever. Some of them don't even know that I now stay in my own house and achieved a lot, that's how ignorant they are.

Me: As long as you have people who loves you. All is good. When am I meeting your parents?

Her: Soon babe very soon. I don't think I want to meet yours anytime soon after the way you've spoke about them. Uh, uh.

Me: I know but one day you will have to meet them and they must know you. I am not saying that you must build a relationship with them, just get to know them that's it.

Her: I hear you babe. I hear you. Babe can you please come and base my scalp, it's itchy.

Me: Come where?

Her: To our bedroom, duh. Where else?

I chuckle...

I stand up and follow her. My phone beeps, I take it out of my pocket and it's a message from numbers that I do not recognize. I open it and it reads.

“I am coming for you Bayanda. I will hurt you where you least expect it. Brace yourself. I am your worst nightmare. Sivi”

I shake my head and put the phone back in my pocket. I don't have time for Sivi's games, his threats don't move me because I know that there is nothing he will do to me. There is nothing that he will hurt me with. I get to Nathi's room and I find her already sitting down on the mat with hairfood in her hand. I

shake my head and sit on top of the bed and start basing her scalp. I think the person who did her hair was rough, she has too much sores and it's her scalp is red. This person wanted to tear her skin for sho. She needs to unbraid, I will help her even. I finish basing her hair.

Me: Babe, isn't it painful?

Her: What babe?

Me: These braids.

Her: They are. I wanna remove them.

Me: Been saying and don't worry I will unbraid you babe I have all the time.

She chuckles...

Her: Thank you babe but we will unbraid tomorrow. Let's go and take a shower then we hit the sack.

Me: Right behind you.

I help her stand up. We both strip naked, I open the shower tap and we both get in. The water is very mild, mind calming I just do not wanna think much about Sivi's text. It will derail me from a shower quicke with my woman. I shake my head and take the soap and starts bathing Nathi. She returns the same gesture, she touches me and pinches my nipples. She nibbles my ear sending electric shock to my shaft and I am already erect just by her touch. Her hand moves all the way down to my shaft and she starts massaging it in circular motion. I groan as she continues stroking my shaft, she ups her pace her hand game is on point...

v

Anele

I can't believe it. I've been crying ever since I got back from the clinic in the afternoon. I look at the tests again and they are showing two lines, two fucking lines. I can't keep this baby, I really can't. She will be a constant reminder of how she was conceived. Worst part I do not even know the father of it, I can't bring an innocent soul into this cruel world. I won't be able to love it. It will be best I terminate plus no one knows that I am pregnant. It will be my own little secret that I will take to the grave. I hear footsteps coming towards the room, I take the tests and throw them underneath the bed and pretend to be sleeping. I hear the door opening.

“Anele wake up you've been sleeping ever since I got here. Food is ready. I do not want you dying of hunger. I do not wanna come back and wake you up agin” Ntando says.

I hear the door closing, I sit up right and quickly wipe my tears. I take a deep breath and walk out of the room, everyone is eating. I greet them and go straight to the kitchen. I take my food from the microwave the smell of pork hit my nostrils hard, it smells rotten I feel the urge of vomiting, 1...2...I quickly run to the bathroom and throw up everything. I hope no one saw me, I don't wanna raise any suspicions. I rinse my mouth and look at myself in the mirror, I swallow hard when I see Ntando standing behind me folding her arms. Her look is very condemning.

“How far are you and who is the father”?

Are the first words to fly out of her mouth. She knows. I hope she won't stop me from making my decision.

I shrug...

Her: Who?

How do I answer that? I don't know who it is? Will she believe me though?

41

Ntando

To say I am disappointed at Anele its an understatement. I am very angry at her. How could she be so careless? Couldn't she at least use contraceptives just to protect herself? Worst part she doesn't know who the father is, this is a disaster. Her carelessness cost her a baby who happens to be fatherless. Great just great. I slept with a heavy heart the day I found out that she is expecting, but there's something I don't understand. She said she is 3 months 3 weeks pregnant, meaning she's approaching 4 months and she doesn't know the father? That's impossible. It's either he is hiding him or argh, I don't know what to think. Or maybe the father is a married man, well that's what she specializes in mus causing another woman tears. I've been pleading with her to tell me who the father is or at least tell me who she suspects. She kept on repeating the broken record, I've given up on her. She said she is going to abort the baby, little did she know that it was already too late. She is going on 4 months and at this clinic they told her that they cannot perform abortion on her since going on her 3rd

trimester. She also went to these back street doctors but she came back shaking, she couldn't do it. She said what she saw traumatized her. Another girl died while aborting. I don't even know how to break these news to Siza&Kelo. I should've taken her for pregnancy test the time she told me that she's pregnant. This is embarrassing, I don't have a baby but Anele is about to have one. The family will surely have a field day about this, looking on the brighter side at least now I will be able to provide for her child. Imagine if we were still living at my grandmother's, it was gonna be a disaster. I wonder if she will ever love her child once she is born, will she be able to give it that motherly love? I pray she bonds with the baby before it's born. That will make things easy for us. It's payday today and I am so excited. I couldn't believe it when I received a notification that money has been proceed in my account. Seeing it reflect made me happy, at least I will not use all of it since I've been getting some tips at work. I will save some for Anele's baby. I have written down everything we will need Pamela will be the one accompanying me to the mall. I have asked her to since I have never been there before. I decide to go and check on Anele before I leave she has been on a foul mood ever since, she clearly hates this baby. She even wishes that she can miscarry somehow. I open the and I find her looking herself in the mirror tears streaming down her cheeks. I

take a deep breath and step inside. She doesn't even turn to look at me.

“I am going to the mall. Wanna come with just to clear your head from thinking too much”

She shakes her head...

Me: If you need anything do not hesitate to ask Kelo or one of the kids for help. I really don't like leaving you alone. I am scared that you might harm yourself in a way.

Her: I...I won't do anything stupid. I have hurt you guys a lot I do not want to hurt you again.

Me: Please don't.

She nods...

I walk out grabbing my bag on top of the kitchen counter. I bid my goodbyes to the kids. I find Pamela already waiting for me. She is actually standing outside a red golf, I walk up to her and greets her.

“Get in”

I get inside the and greet whoever is driving. The driver turns and boy oh boy he is drop dead gorgeous, it's like he just stepped out of a magazine cover. I have never a handsome man like him. Pamela is one lucky bastard, they don't make them like him anymore. He is the second handsome man after Bo Boris. Pamela gets in and he introduces the guy as Siviwe, he is her cousin. Gosh this guy is making me uncomfortable, he keeps on looking at me in the mirror then winks. Good look he is making me turn red, I look down. Kwesta Ngud' comes on and it's on full blast, I try my outmost best not to look at him. I lay my head in the window and swallow hard. This is gonna be one awkward ride.

“So Ntando, what do you do for a living”?

His voice good lord, it's a little bit hoarse. I compose myself before I answer.

“I'm a waitress at Z&B restaurant”

Him: I hear that they serve best African food there.

Me: They do.

Him: I will come by soon hopefully you will be on shift by then and I would appreciate it if you will be the one serving me.

I nod then chuckle...

Pamela: Sivi don't do that.

Him: What?

Her: You know. You are too grown for such, geez.

Do I sense jealous on Pamela or am I missing something? I shake my head.

v

Sheila

I am on my way home to my parents house. As I predicted Sello wants to introduce my sons to his ancestors, he has spoken to his wife and she said it's okay. If it was me I would've said No without thinking twice. How do you allow a woman who almost broke your marriage to introduce her sons to their husband's ancestors? It can never be me shame. Okay

okay maybe she knows the importance of culture. Falling pregnant for Sello at first was a mistake but for the second time I planned. I was sure as hell that his will divorce him but to my dismay she did not, she actually came and visited me after giving birth to Nqobile. She even congratulated me and bought some clothes for her, wuuuhh hhayi. On Sphumele? Yoh hhayi she half hated me and made sure that I have a bumpy ride pregnancy, her aim was for me to lose my son but unfortunately it didn't work. I knock and the door yanks open

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here standing before is my mother I greet her and make my way in. I find dad reading a newspaper, I greet him and sit down.

“Dad i'm here to talk to you”

“About what”?

He is not looking at me.

Me: Sello wants to do right by the kids.

He closes his newspaper and fold it nicely then place it nicely on top of the coffee table.

Him: Right? How right?

Me: He wants to pay the damages then introduce his children to his ancestors.

Him: He finally mans up. When does he want to do all of this?

Me: He said I should ask you for a date.

Him: I will have to talk to your uncles first then I will give you the date to give him.

Mom: When is he doing right by?

I swallow hard. My parents don't know that Sello is a married man, they have no idea. Now I have to lie to them I can't tell them the truth. My father will disown me and my mother will cease a fit, she will call me a homewrecker and the whole family will know that I broke another woman's marriage, of which it's not true. I tried but I didn't succeed.

Me: Possibly after introducing the children to his ancestors. He can't do everything all at once.

Her: Fair enough.

Dad: He better do right by you soon. He can't give you kids out of wedlock and not do right by you.

Me: He will dad. Now where are my kids?

Mom: They playing outside. It's been long since you last saw them, Sphumelele was asking about you yesterday.

Me: That's because you've prohibited me from coming here with no reason and you took them away from me.

Dad: It was for your own good Sheila. Do you still take your medication as instructed?

Me: Of course dad. Do you think I would be sitting here right now having a normal conversation?

Him: If you keep up like this I might give you your children back.

A huge smile creeps out of my lips.

Me: Really?

Dad: Yes for real.

Me: I would be very grateful yuh. I promise to take them.

“The crazy one decides to pop up for a visit” that's Angie my little sister. She is so annoying.

“Are you going to have your episodes today as usual”?

I just ignore her.

Mom: That's enough Angie. I will not allow you to make fun of Sheila's situation.

Her: I was just joking. Geez family loosen up.

Dad: Are we your age mates?

She swallows hard and shakes her head.

Him: Then do the right thing.

Her: I am sorry Sheila.

I nod...

Dad: You are excused!

She hurries to her room. I can hear my kids laughter all the way from the gate. They budge into the house and race to me, as soon as they get to me they both jump at me. I pick them up and place them on each of my laps kissing their foreheads.

“Hello babies”

“Hello mama”

Me: Benginikhumbule njani.(I was missing you guys)

Nqobile: Nathi mama(Us too)

Sphumelele: Uzosilanda?(You came to fetch us)

I sigh and kiss his cheek.

Me: Cha boy mara ngizonilanda kungakudala.(No boy but I will fetch you guys very soon)

Him: Uyathembisa?(Do you promise)

Me: Ya ngiyathembisa.

Nqobile: Usiphatheleni ke okumnandi?(what did you bring for us)

Me: I surprise guys.

They both giggle and clap their hands.

I will have to take my medication and be stable then I will take them. They are what makes me take my pills. If it wasn't for

them I would've prolly kill a lot of people. I have to be better mother just for them but first I need to deal with Nathi, I need to break her but I don't know how. She is also the reason why I turn out to be what I am. She made me this monster that I am, it all started in varsity. I allowed jealousy to feed of my heart, I allowed it and it got too much to a point of me turning to be a psycho. I was always fighting to be better than Nathi in academics but as per usual she would still come out at top, argh this girl.

v

Nathi

I decided to go to the mall since I was bored. Bayanda has a meeting with one of Zaza's restaurant, we heard that the restaurant is not doing well anymore. They losing lot of customers and some of their suppliers pulled out, it is bad. Zaza had to retrench some of her workers. Her restaurant is bigger than mine and 3 hours away from mine, it is somewhere in the northern suburb. Bayanda is meeting with her to negotiate a deal to sell us her restaurant and we will hire back her previous workers and possibly make her a manager. I hope he comes back with positive feedback, I already have an image of how it will look like. It's fascinating. Should Zaza agree to sell it to us, me&Bayanda are gonna go 50/50. I get to Woolworths and pick one of the trolleys, I am only here to buy snacks&toiletries. Then I will go and catch a movie or something. I am busy walking when my trolley bumps into another trolley, dammit. I look up and it is Zandi. She is with a young boy and her husband, I figure since they look cosy and loved up.

“Watch where you going Zubenathi”!

“Sorry Zandi”

She clicks her tongue then shoulder bumps me and walks away swaying her arse, I shake my head. Woman. You can never understand them, they don't even understand themselves. You can even ask them but still they don't understand. Eg...

“Who are we?

Women.

What do you want?

We don't know.

When do you want it?

We want it now"

How can they want something they don't know instantly? Ai. I buy all the things I wanted well I also added a few lingerie, pay for them and walk out. I pass by Mr price. I hear someone call

my name I turn to look and it is Ntando she is with some girl.
She waves her hand I wave back, she comes to me.

“Hey Nathi”

“Hello Ntando”

Her: Did you come alone or with bae?

Me: I came alone. I see that you have brought a friend along
with you.

Her: Yeah. At least now I have someone to talk to too.

Me: She seems like a good woman.

Her: She is. Where are you going after here?

Me: Was going to catch a movie. Why?

Her: I was hoping that we can go and grab some lunch. Hope I am not over stepping my boundaries.

I laugh...

Me: It's fine really. Let me buy what I came here for then pay and we can go.

Her: I will hold the line for you so long.

Me: Won't your friend mind? I mean she looks annoyed.

Her: She won't. She must understand that before her there was you and I trust you. You can handle her without even trying hard.

I chuckle...

Me: You give me so much credit. Go and hold the line for me then.

Her: Very well then and should she complain I will punch her.

I laugh grabbing everyone's attention. I shake my head and walk away before I embarrass myself even more. I pick some few t-shirts and dresses. Mr price&fashion world have beautiful dresses. Then go and join the cue, I really can't get in front of people who came before me. They will slaughter me alive. Ntando comes and take the clothes from and leave, I shake my head and step out of line and go and wait at the door. I see Ntando and her friend coming. This girl looks annoyed and by the looks of things she doesn't like me. It is signed, sealed&delivered. I really don't understand why some people don't like me especially women. I mean I am one friendly fucker, not that they will notice that though.

“Some people really like making others their slaves just because their blessers shower them with money” the friend comments. I am not about to entertain her. I have far more important things to worry about, like tomorrow's weather.

“Thank you Ntando I will pay you back”

Her: You welcome.

Me: Where are we having eating? I am so hungry.

Friend: Eating with who? Who said you joining us?

Ntando: I invited her.

Her: You did what? Didn't you think of giving me a heads up?
You just boycott me Ntando.

Me: I will go really. Ntando I do not wanna cause trouble for
you and your friend.

Her: You are not causing any trouble Nathi. Pamela here must
understand that before her there was you. Now we are all
going to be civil with each other and go and have some lunch.

Pamela: You can't force me to go and have lunch with her! 5 more minutes around her, I will surely puke. Let me just call Sivi to come and fetch me because it is pretty clear to me that you not coming with me.

Me: Are you okay baby girl? Are you catching fever or something? We can always get you something at a nearby pharmacy.

Her: Bitch! Ntando you will call me when you get back.

She clicks her tongue and walks away.

Me: People you call friends. Aren't you going to follow her?

Her: She is not my responsibility. Let's go and have some lunch and leave people who have stress.

We both laugh and walk to billy g. Why do women hate me?

Early this morning I received a call that my boutique has been broken into. Gosh these people never get tired of breaking in this boutique. This is the 6th time in 3 months, with the rate that this break in is going it will force me to close it. I am losing lot of money with all these repairs, money of which I don't have. I look at the damage they caused, this time around it is too much and it will cripple my bank account. I need to move fast with this Bayanda issue or else I will go bankrupt. I will have to close it until further notice. I take a deep sigh and walk of the boutique locking the door behind me. It doesn't even help that it is in the suburbs. I drive to my and as I approach my house I spot Siviwe's car, he has parked it right in front of my gate. I park mine after his and climb out of my car, he also does the same. We meet half way.

“You look stressed, what's up”?

I shake my head and open the small gate, we both walk inside the yard.

“My boutique has been broken into again”

Him: Close that useless boutique of yours. It is not generating money anyway.

Me: Don't start. What are you doing here anyway?

Him: Just came to check up on you.

Me: I am being serious Siviwe. You never come here unless there's something you want, juice?

Silence...

I look at him and I find him smiling like a retard, actually a boy inlove. Nc nc nc hope his girlfriend won't hinder our plan or else I will get her killed.

Me: Siviwe!

He snaps out of his thoughts.

Him: You were saying?

Me: What is going on?

Him: Where is that juice you were asking me if I want it?

Me: Siviwe.

Him: Fine. I saw her at the mall she has all the traits of what I can call a wife material. I wouldn't mind going to jail for her. Her smile is very beautiful and so is she.

Me: Who on earth are you talking about?

Him: Bayanda's girlfriend Phindile. I saw her and she looks like her status rubs people off the wrong way. She is a woman of liberty. Feisty but humble, I think I like her.

Me: Say what? Did you approach her?

Him: No I didn't. Pamela prohibited that from happening with her rants and I couldn't get to her.

Me: You back with Pamela again? Don't you ever learn? That girl is not good enough for you.

Him: She is the mother of my daughter Phindile.

Me: I take it you still fucking with her?

Him: That does not concern you. What I do with her it's none of your businesses Phindile.

Me: Yeah right. How is Bayanda's girlfriend related to Pamela?
What's the relationship between them?

Him: They seem to have a mutual friend.

Me: Mutual friend? You know her?

Him: Only her name and where she works. In fact she was charmed by me, this is gonna be easy than we thought. I will use my charm to lure Ntando in my trap, if I get her then it will be easy for me to get to Bayanda's girlfriend.

Me; Thought you said she is feisty! And how are you planning to do that exactly?

Him: She's feisty yes but with a lot of pursuit she will eventually give in and I strike.

Me: I don't know Siviwe I really don't know. I feel like you are gonna mess up the plan. What if you end up falling for her? I mean you already saw a trait of a wife material in her!

Him: Trust me Phindile. I got this and Lwazi will be involved in a way.

Me: How so? He made it very clear that he doesn't wanna be part of any of this shit.

Him: Leave everything to me. He won't be involved but he will be caught in the cross fire, plus he is very close with Bayanda. This can possibly end their brotherhood too. Bayanda will have no one in his corner then you can strike and everyone wins.

Me: It sounds like a plan. I don't know how you gonna go about it but I trust you. What are you going to win exactly?

Him: Bayanda's woman. She will be very miserable and possibly think of committing suicide because her love of her life has dumped her.

Me: She can always go to her family for comfort or this Ntando woman.

Him: Family yes but Ntando? Not by any chance. Ntando will be her biggest downfall, my bait.

All of a sudden I don't think I like this at all. It involves too many people and I sense a massive betrayal coming. After all this, what then? What if all this is going to be a waste of time? What if I am doing all of this for nothing? Let me rather not think of the negative right now but rather focus on the positive, I also hope for a positive feedback after all this shit is done and a massive breakthrough. Siviwe has always been sinister, he actually gets what he wants but with this one I am not sure. Well, he has never lost on anyone before, he is the perfect candidate for all of this. He will make it work. I pour both of us juice and we go and sit under the tree shade. I need him to break down his plan to me.

v

Nathi

“How is she”? I ask my mother as soon as I get home. She called me and told me that Kat is sick, she is actually bed sick. She can't do anything by herself, from what I hear she was complaining about stomach bug since from yesterday afternoon. They took her to a doctor but the doctor said they are not seeing anything out of the ordinary. They've brought her all kinds of medication but it was still the same. I am their last option. My mother leads me to her room, the smell of medication and possibly shit makes my stomach turn. The room smells awful, I cover my mouth and go to her. She looks gravely sick, she can die any moment.

“Mama I think it's time we consider other options”

Her: What other options Nono? Do not tell me about going and consult to a sangoma, you know I don't believe in those things. I am a Christian.

Me: I know that and this is not about you but it's about Kat. She needs help as soon as possible, we have no time to waste. She must live she has kids who still needs her.

Her: No this is not. I can't betray God like this Nathi. I can't, I will only pray for her and call my pastor to come and pray for her too.

“What's that smell? Did y'all kill a dog in the house”? ahha aunt Mary she is not my favourite but I like her.

Mom: Hello to you too Mary.

Her: Nathi long time Sisi. How have you been?

Me: Been good and yourself aunty?

Her: Me too. Jesus what on earth happened to Kat? She looks dead.

Me: Mom said she was complaining about stomach bug yesterday afternoon. They took her to a doctor but the doctor said there's nothing wrong with her.

Her: Nonsense. Pick up her up I know a very powerful sangoma who can help us.

Mom: Sangoma? Ewami umntwana akayi Lapho! (my child is not going there)

Mary: Nathi pick her up and let's go I'm sure she is not heavy, she looks too skinny.

I pick her up and wrap her with a blanket and follow aunty Mary behind. We get outside and she asks for my car keys, I hand it to them.

Her: She is your sister Nathi. I can't drive with her in my car she will leave her stinking smell. It will take me a week to get rid of

it and possibly waste my time of which I don't have, it's best she stinks yours.

I just nod and put Kat at the back, I sit with her while aunt Mary drives. We get to this secluded area

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there's only one hut and the rest of the place is full of grass. The hut looks beautiful. We park just at the door, I climb out of the car and takes Kat's body out.

“Mshiye la emnyango ubuyele emotweni angeke uze ukwazi ukungena la unenhliziyu emsulwa” (Leave her here at the door and get back inside the car, your have a pure heart)

Me: Angeke ngikwazi ukukwenza loko. I want to know what's wrong with her.

Mary: Just do as you are told by babu Dlokuvu. I will go in with her.

I nod and go back to the car. I open all the doors just to minimize the smell it is very unbearable but because she is my sister I had to bear the smell. I know that we are not in good terms but I can't desert her in times of need. My phone rings and it is bad himself.

“Baby”

Him: Hey love, how is she?

Me: She is not looking good. She is five to death, her sudden sickness baffles me. She just became worse over night, now we are here in this other hut of a sangoma to consult.

Him: I hope he heals her, I will also include her in my prayers.

Me: Thank you babe. How are you holding up?

Him: I am surviving love I have no choice.

Me: I miss you.

Him: I miss you too.

Me: Zaza is still refusing to sell us the restaurant?

Him: Not really. I think she is considering selling it to us but she is undecided.

Me: She is wasting time. I will call her and tell her that we no longer interested in buying her restaurant.

Him: Babe you don't mean that.

Me: I do.

Him: You sure?

Me: I'm joking love.

We talk for almost an hour and my aunt is not out yet, what is it exactly that they are doing? Could it be that she has something to do with this? Huh.uh no, she loves Kat like her own. After 2 hours she finally comes out looking traumatized, I wonder. what happened inside the hut.

Me: What's wrong with her?

Her: Stroke.

Me: Stroke? How.

Her: One of her friends pour it for her inside her beer. It was supposed to kill her within 5 hours but the Bembe ancestors are with her. Bab Dlokuvu will keep her here until she is fit enough to go home, she will pull through.

Me: Then why do you look traumatized?

Her: I saw some things that I was meant to see. I can't run away from it any longer, I will just have to accept it for my own sanity.

My heart is beating out of my chest, I am scared. I don't know why.

Me: Acc...accept what?

Her: My ancestral calling Nana. It's time or else I will lose everything that I have.

Me: Yuhhhhh ncane. You have a dlozi inside you?

Her: Yes. The powerful ancestor of the Mabena's.

Me: Huh? Accept it then if it will make you feel at ease. What if your ancestors are there ones preventing you from having a child? Maybe after you accepted it, you will conceive and possibly save your marriage.

Her: You growing up so fast nana and don't worry I decided to accept it. 3 days for now I am starting my journey.

Me: You gonna get initiated here?

Her: Nope. I've been shown the house where I am supposed to go to for my initiation.

Me: Shown by who?

Her: My ancestors in my dreams. I was even showed the clothes I am going to wear.

Me: So, you just don't go to any house. Your ancestors must guide you where to go?

Her: Yes they must.

Me: Wow. Are you going to tell the family?

Her: I will tell them once I have settled well at the initiation school.

Me: How are you going to cover your disappearance then?

Her: I have it all under control, let's go I need to think this through.

I nod...

We both get in the car and she drives off. Now we have to explain to my mother as to why we did not come back with her daughter. I pray that she understands that we are doing this for Kat not anyone else. All she must do is to pray for her to recover quickly. Then there's aunt Mary's saga! Who would've thought that the mighty aunt Mary will soon one day become a sangoma? Definitely no one at all but wow here she is about to embark on her journey, hmm...

v

Bayanda

I am done here at the office with the paper work and I'm about to start packing when my phone rings. It's a landline number.

“Bayanda hello”

“Hello Bayanda this is Zaza. I have decided to sell thw restaurant to yiy guys, I hope I to see you tomorrow to discuss a way forward”

Me: Thank you so much for getting back to me Zaza. I will keep in touch tomorrow.

Her: Okay bye.

She hangs up...

I pack my things when the window of my office opens and lights start flickering, I stand in the same position I was standing in and do not move. A drop of sweat drips down my forehead. I am so scared, I don't know what's going on. I close my eyes and pray our father with my heart. The light stops flicking and I can hear Aziza's laugh, I shoot my eyes open and there she is seated on the couch. It is only then I relax.

Me: You scared me Aziza, never ever do something like that ever again.

Her: Whatever. Why are you too relaxed?

Me: About what?

Her: About everything. Phindile is coming at you with full speed, she is now working with your enemy and I see 3 more people involved. I can't see their faces though. They are all out for blood, it is your duty to protect your relationship at all cost.

Me: Aziza please stop it with your nonsense. There is no threat in my relationship, I don't need all of this bullshit, hhayi.

Her: Still stubborn but behold the storm that is coming. I wish I can what will happen in future, how will your relationship end. Too bad I am only assigned to guard you and you must guard your woman.

Me: I don't have to listen to you. You are a ghost.

Her: I know but I have been assigned to guard you by your ancestors.

Me: Mxn. What killed you anyway?

Her: Accident.

Me: How?

Her: I drove us to a train and 2 of us died but one survived and she is in a coma, I don't think she will make it though. So long, find a way to protect your relationship.

Me: Fine Aziza I will do some searching.

Her: Perfect.

She vanishes. I shake my head. Where have you ever seen a ghost visiting a human and have a normal conversation? This is witchcraft on steroids. Okay, now I am worried for real. Who is this threat in my relationship? I will have to do some deep research, I won't allow anyone to be a threat in my relationship. Okay, where am I going to start? It can't be Siviwe because Nathi won't even look at his way. Then who?

Ntando

It's my off day today. I am walking with Pamela to buy Kota's at kota joint. She apologized about what transpired at the mall, she said she felt like Nathi will take her space as my best friend but I assured her that Nathi is not my friend she is my boss. That's where it ends. She mustn't worry about being replaced. She also said that Nathi has a stinking attitude and she wants people to bow down to her. If only she knew she wouldn't have said what she said. She judged her too soon. For the past couple of days all I was thinking about was Siviwe, he was a resident in my mind. I don't know how many times we got married in my head and having a lot of babies together, gosh I envisioned a bright future for the both of us. We end up not buying the Kotas but bunny chows. We sit down and eat.

“So, when are we getting you a boyfriend”?

“I don't want one. I want to focus on myself first”

Her: You lying I saw how you were looking at Siviwe the other day we went to the mall. You like him?

Me: What? No I don't I was just admiring him from a distance and besides he doesn't look like someone who goes for people like me.

Her: People like you?

Me: The underprivileged and he looks like a heart breaker my heart is very fragile.

She chuckles...

Her: He is worse than that but he is a sweet somebody once you get to know him.

Me: How is he your cousin?

Her: My grandmother and his grandmother share a mother.

Me: I see. Do you think he likes me?

The words flew out of my mouth before I can even block them.
I close my eyes.

Her: I don't know. Enough about Siviwe we are not here to talk about him, we are here to eat.

Me: Where's your boyfriend?

Her: He is at work.

Me: Is he the father of your son?

Her: Nope. We don't have a child together we are still trying for one.

Me: I pray that God blesses your womb with a child.

Her: Same here. Now we need to start operation get you a man.

Me: I told you that I don't want one.

Her: You do trust me and i'm sure it has turn into rusk that ish in between your legs. You need a mind blowing sex and a fucken explosive orgasim.

I am not comfortable with this talk. The rape experience made me hate sex, I don't think I am not ready to go down that route anytime soon. But what if Siviwe wants some? Whoa, we are not even dating why am I even thinking that he will be my first after 8 years of not being sexually active. Sighs. It's pretty much evident that I have not healed from it.

Her: Ntando did you hear what I said?

I snap out from it and nods.

Her: When are we starting with the operation then?

Me: I will let you know when i'm ready.

Her: Make it soon. I already have few potentials for you. With your thick body and light skin surely this potentials will bow down to you. Even Siviwe was taken by your beauty, imagine yourself with a complete makeover. Getting rid of all these clothes that make you look like an old woman. You need a new closet, clothes that will go with your age plus you have a great body. Think about it. I'm sure you don't wanna be seen as the girl next-door for him. If you want Siviwe to notice you tranaform yourself, let his eyes see only you and no one else. Not unless you are into him.

Me: Why must I change myself for a guy? Why not change for myself?

Her: It goes both ways babe. Don't you want to better yourself?

Me: I do wanna better myself.

Her: Then I am your girl, don't worry I promise to make you stand out and that boss of yours with her flat arse will be jealous of you. She will feel like you better than her now.

I chuckle...

Me: Don't flatter yourself. My boss doesn't really care about fashion&makeovers. She only cares about making money, me transforming myself won't make her jealous. She will give me a round of applause, she's gonna compliment me.

Her: Oh wow. I guess I judged her too soon but I still don't like her.

Me: And she doesn't care whether you do or not. Your existence doesn't mean anything to her, I am sure she has forgotten about your little alteration.

Her: You seem very fond of her judging with the way you defend her.

Me: I hold her highly.

Her: Let's hope it will remain like that in these coming days.

Me: What do you mean?

Her: I was just saying. Never mind me. So, when are we making you turn heads?

Me: You so wanna change me and it's not funny.

Her: That's because you are living your life now. You need to reclaim it fully, your life has changed and so must you.

Me; I guess you right babe. Let's do it weekend but I have to work on budget, I can't just spend recklessly.

Her: Don't Mrs price. Mr price has got you.

I laugh...

Me: Yeah right sister price.

We order another bunny chows and talk more about my full makeover.

v

Nathi

Being here at the office is kinda boring because I have nothing to do. All I do is just spin my chair around and sleep. Bayanda did all the paper work yesterday, we have days on when we do them. Right now he went to sign the deal for us with Zozo and he will not be coming to the office. I will drive to his house when I knock off. Kat is recovering very well, the inyanga really did help her and tomorrow Aunt Mary is going to her initiation house. She did not tell the family, only I know that and I must not tell anyone about it until she tells me too. A knock comes through at the door, I wonder who it is.

“Come in”

The door opens and a man steps in. I have never seen her before.

Him: Good day miss, is Bayanda available?

Me: Nope he isn't.

Him: What time will he be back.

Me: He is not coming to work today. You can come back tomorrow when he is around.

Him: I really want to see him it's an emergency.

Me: Then call him. Don't you have his numbers?

Him: I do have them.

Me: Then call him or you don't have Airtime?

Him: I do.

Me: Problem solve. It's either you call him or you come back tomorrow Mr...?

Him: Lubanzi Mbonani.

Me: Yes that. You may be excused.

Him: Can I at least take you out for lunch?

Me: No I don't go out on lunch with strangers.

He smirks and push his hands in his pockets

Him: Very well then miss. Sorry to bother you and I will see myself out.

Me: Thank you.

Him: Before I leave. Do you have a boyfriend?

Me: How is that any of your business?

Him: Don't shoot me I was just asking.

Me: If you don't have anything more to say, please leave.

Him: I will leave you but...argh never mind.

He winks at me and about to walk away when he turns again.

Me: What now? Or do you want me to call the security to come and escort you?

Him: That won't be necessary. One more question, is Ntando working today?

Me: No she is off.

Him: Thank you for your time.

He smirks one last time and walks out of my office. He is creepy, geez. Why was he looking for Bayanda anyway? He has

his numbers, why not call him? Some people though. I'm sure he also doesn't know why he was here, mxm. I log into Facebook and I am surprised to find a friend request from Sheila

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wuuhhh hair air. I delete her request and browse through my news feeds, nothing it's interesting. Only people who post the same joke over&over again, they lack creativity. What to do now? Lemme just play some games just to push time before I knock off.

v

Bayanda

After signing the deal I decided to drive straight to my old time friend Zain, he is a P.I. He comes highly recommended, I've seen some refuse. He has sent me his address. I ring the buzzer and his gate slides open. I drive in and park my car. I climb out of my car and he meets me half way. He looks fat, yohhh hhayi with a cigar in his mouth and a glass of whiskey in his hand. I guess he lives the upper life. He looks like those types that splashes money on alcohol and girls. We fist bump and he leads the way to his house. His house looks, urhm, simple it doesn't have enough furniture. He gestures me to sit and I do so.

“Anything to drink”?

“No, thank you”

Him: I was surprised to receive a call from you old mate.

Me: Yeah man, I need help. I want to investigate someone to me.

Him: Who?

Me: Siviwe. My cousin, you remember him?

Him: That boy who slept with all your girlfriends? He wants to sleep with another one?

Me: Yes, him. I am not sure. I just want you to find anything you can on him. Tail him, do whatever it takes. I want to know who he talks with, who he chills with. Everything man.

Him: Is he a threat maybe?

Me: I am not sure. That's why I want you to help me find out if he is or not.

Him: I will do so. Give me a week and I will give you something about him.

Me: Thanks man, I trust you. Now, you can pour that whiskey for me.

He chuckles and nods.

Him: Coming right up. How have you been by the way?

Me: Been good man and you?

Him: Fine man I just need a wife to complete my life.

Me: Then, why not get one?

Him: I just haven't found the one yet. They all after money.

Me: Go to the church and you will get yourself the one.

Him: Me&church don't mix, I will find one eventually or you can hook me up with one.

Me: I wish I could hook you up with one but my woman doesn't have any friends.

Him: A woman who doesn't have friends? That's a first. So, she doesn't do girls out and all those things that girls do?

Me: Yes. She prefers spending time with me if not then at work.

Him: I wish I saw her first.

Me: Thanks God you didn't. It's obvious that she was my forever, that's why you missed him.

He laughs...

Him: Now, let's find out what that fucker is up to.

Me: Please do.

I gulp down my whiskey and bid goodbye to Melusi. I trust he will come through for me.

v

Phindile

My phone beeps indicating a message and Melusi's name pop up on the screen. I open it and it reads.

“Your boy was here in my house he wants me to tail Siviwe and find out what he is up to. He seemed sincere, you know”

Dammit Bayanda! I clenched my phone tightly in my hand. I send a text back.

“Lie to him at all cost. I trust you will do so if you still want to see your son and have a relationship with him”

Yasis, this is not happening. I need a drink fast. I look for the glass of wine and it is not where I left it, I shake my head. I look for it everywhere and I do not find it. This is strange very strange. Something shatters on the floor causing me to jump and make my blood warm. I look down and it's my glass of wine. I look around the room with my heart beating out of my chest. The room suddenly feels cold, I run to the door, open it and runs out of my room. I get to the lounge and Luyanda is looking at me like I am crazy or something. I sit down and rock myself back&forth. I don't know what happened in my room, I am definitely not sleeping in it tonight, I am still shocked.

Nathi

Bayanda is behaving strange lately and he now answers his phone private. I wouldn't put it past him that he is cheating on, there is something more that is going on. He doesn't wanna talk to me though, he is pushing me away and that hurts a little bit. I won't lie. Relationships are supposed to be all about communicating, what's the use of being in one when there's no communication? Maybe I can help with whatever is troubling him if he can tell me what's going on, we are supposed to be one. Actually all of this started the time I told him that a Lubanzi was looking for him. He said he doesn't know anyone by that name, never had an encounter with a person by that name in his entire life. He asked me to describe him for him, I tried my level best describing him for him. He cursed and left me in his house. Now, I found that very strange. I think he knows this Lubanzi person and they have a business going on or they doing something shady, argh let me not stress much about him. He even stopped me going to the restaurant, he asked me to oversee the Zaza's one. I have to go and show the

contractors on how we want the restaurant to look like. We want it to look different than the main one, we want it to be more of a fast food joint since it is located in a busy location. Oh and he suggested that we also open a bottle store. I grab my laptop bag and the sketches and exit the house. I drive to Zaza's, it will be my first time seeing the place. Thanks God for GPS. As I am approaching the restaurant I see a woman maybe in her mid40s standing at the entrance, I guess this is Zaza. I make my way to her and we shake hands.

“Nathi”

“Zanele but known as Zaza. You look very young, I thought that I was meeting with someone my age or older than me”.

I laugh...

She has a funny sense of humor, I like her already. She leads me to one of the tables and we both sit down. this place is very good. We can even open a small butchery and a braai area, okay I think I am getting a little bit carried away over here, come down from that high tree Nathi.

Her: I'm glad that I finally met you. Your boyfriend speaks highly of you, you can tell that he loves you his eyes says it all and he knows how to capture a picture.

Me: Really? I am one lucky girl to score an all in one him.

Her: Very lucky. What makes me more happy is that you are both business minded, I like how you guys work together. He even told me that you the sole owner of Z&B.

I chuckle...

Me: He is indeed a woman.

Her: Hhey that's my son you talking about. I will hit you right now.

We both laugh.

Her: They will bring us food once we done here.

Me: Did Bayanda tell you exactly what the plan is?

Her: Yes he did. Truly speaking the offer seemed too good to be true, that's why I've been running around in circles with accepting the offer. After I spoke to my husband about it, he asked our eldest son to do a research about your restaurant, he came back with the truth. That's why I ended up agreeing to take the offer, the money is going to help me a lot. I will expand my guest house with some of it and save some for rainy days. You guys really helped me a lot and saved me from going bankrupt, soon I was gonna close down my guest house too but God sent you guys my way. I will forever be thankful to the both of you and may he bless you beyond.

Me: It is only a pleasure Ma and thank you.

She takes a tissue and wipe her tears.

Her: Sorry that you had to witness this. i'm just emotional and these are tears of joy.

I smile at her and wait for her to calm down.

Me: It's fine Ma.

Her: So, in terms of work stuff what are you going to do? Will you bring some of your workers here?

Me: No. We want to hire your previous employees and you as a manager, since you know this place more than anyone else.

Her: Really? I thought that your boyfriend was bribing me to sell him the restaurant.

I chuckle...

Me: No mama he was not bribing you. That was the deal actually.

Her: God is definitely showing off right now. I gladly take the manager offer and I will let some of my trusted employees to resume with work. Thank you for saving both my businesses.

Me: It's only a pleasure Ma. Yhey you've thanked me it's enough now, you will end up running out of thank yous.

She laughs...

Her: Now to meet with the constructors. Do you have all your plans with you?

I nod...

Her: I can't wait to see the renovations once all it's done. Let's go and meet them, show them the plan and they will start with the ball rolling.

Me: After you.

We both stand up and he leads me to the contractors. I greet them and I show them the designs, I hope they will do a remarkable Job.

v

Bayanda

Melusi haven't found anything yet on Siviwe. He hasn't made any moves regarding following Nathi or any other suspicious activities. That's unlike Siviwe but if it's like that, then I have nothing to worry about. When Nathi described to me that so called Lubanzi, I knew right there&then that it was Siviwe. I

wonder what he was doing at the restaurant, if he was really looking for me he was supposed to call me. On the other hand he asked if Ntando was at work that day, this means they are dating, right? At least that's a relief. Well, not entirely. Nathi is close to Ntando

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this means that Siviwe will use Ntando to get to Nathi. I hope he won't do such a stupid thing or else I will kill him. He better focus on his relationship with Ntando and leave Nathi alone. Nathi must also limit her starting a friendship from scratch with Ntando. How do I tell her though? It will look as if like I am controlling her. I rub my face with my hands. Not knowing what Siviwe's plan is doesn't sit well with me. Siviwe is not one to let things go easily, as long as Melusi continues tailing him he will let me know if there's anything suspicious. I decided to cook for Nathi to apologise for being cold for the past few days. I wish that I can tell her what's going on, if only it was that easy. My phone rings and it is Lwazi. I answer it, when Lwazi calls me something is definitely going on he never calls me to have a chat as brothers.

“Zweli. What's going on”?

“Eeh the old woman is losing it”

Me: What? How so?

Him: She claims that she is being hunted by some ghost. She doesn't even sleep in her room anymore.

Me: That's crazy. Hunted by a ghost? Why would a ghost hunt her? I'm sure it's one of the people she killed.

Him: Man, this is not funny. She is very traumatized. All she does is rock herself back&forth.

Me: Take her to a mental institution to join her kind.

Him: That was the plan but a friend of hers advised us not to take her anywhere. He will come and fetch her, he said she knows exactly what will help her.

Me: Is it? For sure it's one of her many boyfriend.

Him: Bayanda stop joking man.

Me: I will try and come by tomorrow.

Him: That would be too late. Thw boyfriend will be fetching her today.

Me: Such a bummer. Anyway, speedy recovery to her.

Him: Sure man. I will keep in touch.

I hang up...

Hhe who knew that Phindile will soon hike to madfontein? I wish she can hike for good and never come back. Such a witch. I knew that she was planning something sinister for me, it's no secret that she hates me. Why does she hate me again? Whatever it is that she is hating me for, it's actually huge. I can't wait to find out. For shoes being in madfontein will make her

confess. Obstacle removed, now I have nothing to worry about. Oh except for Siviwe. Wait, he is being followed by Melusi, I guess I am safe for now. I get done cooking and go and take a quick bath. Nathi comes in few minutes later looking tired.

“It smells nice in here and hello babe”

“Hey love”

I take her laptop bag and put it on the kitchen counter, I kiss her and she pulls out. Women!

Her: What did you cook?

Me: A meal fit for a Queen.

Her: What changed? You were so cold towards me for the past few days.

Me: I know baby and I am very sorry. I was going through some personal stuff.

Her: Personal stuff? Either way you were supposed to talk to me. Relationships are all about communication, if you can't tell me your problems now then how about once we married? We are supposed to be one Bayanda, we are supposed to be united. I understand that we are not married but you should at least tell me what's troubling you, not for you to give a cold shoulder.

I sigh...

She is right. I was only trying to protect her by not telling her things and besides I was not sure about any of my suspicions. I take her hands.

Me: I know baby and I am so sorry for giving you a cold shoulder. I know that what I did can't be justified but I am so sorry, I was only protecting you.

Her: Protecting me from what exactly?

Me: From Phindile She is one evil woman. I have a feeling that she was planning something sinister before she went to madfontein. The point is I am so sorry for shutting you out, from now on I promise to tell you everything. I am sorry Sthandwa sami, please forgive me.

Her: Let me go and bath I will probably come back with a clear mind. Right now, my mind is ringing like crazy.

I let go of her hands and I watch her go away. I set the table and dish up for the both of us. I am going to spoil my woman.

v

Phindile

Skhumbuzo enters his room, he has a plate of food in his hands. I am feeling much better now than when I was at my house. I fell like I was go crazy, I mean I was even hunted by a ghost. The house felt so cold. Skhumbuzo will send his traditional healer to cleanse my house, it feels hunted. Actually i'm the one who was hunted at that house, these witches have started with their bewitching game. I will get them one by one. He place the food on top of me and sit down, he looks at me for and shakes his head.

“What”?

“What exactly happened to you? You looked so out of space”

Me: It's those witches from my street they've started with their jealousy.

Him: I see. I think we need to put the plan in motion before you go crazy for real.

Me: Don't disrespect me like that Skhumbuzo.

Him: Can't you take a joke? Lossen up Phindile. That boy will be here in no time.

Me: You called him? But why?

Him: Because you are half mad that's why! then a knock comes through at the door, "Come on in" Skhimbuzo yells. Siviwe shows up with another girl, can't this guy just be single for once.

Him: Hhe Maphindi's zidlani?(what's going on)

Her: Nothing I can't handle.

Him: Rumour is out that you've lost your sanity. How did you get it back? Your sanity of course.

Skhumbuzo: We are not here for small talks we have a business to talk about. Siviwe can your girlfriend please excuse us.

The girl just folds her arms and stands next to Siviwe. She thinks that she's the best, if only she knew that she was side chic number 100/

Me: Get out...

I tell her gritting my teeth. She quickly hurries out of the room, Siviwe closed the door after she went out.

Him: What's the plan?

Skhimbuzo: Get Ntando on board make sure that she falls deeply inlove with you. Inlove with you to a point that when you ask her to do something for you, she does so without asking any questions.

Me: He will need to use a love potion for her. That's the only way.

Skhumbuzo: And you must stop going to the restaurant and stop this thing of yours of stalking her. One day you will be caught. We need to make this work, we have only a month to make this work only a month.

Me: What if it takes more than a month to work?

Him: Then the truth will come out. We need this huge distraction, it will keep that bloody fool from leaking that information until we find a way to take him out.

Sivi: I am ready when you ready guys. I will give Ntando a call and ask her to go on a date with me tomorrow. I hope Pamela is done with the transformation that she was giving her. All I want is to see Bayanda broken, nothing will give me joy than seeing him break down.

Me: You've involved that bitch too? Do you want to ruin this plan for us?

Him: Why would I wanna ruin your plan? I too want to destroy Bayanda. We are all in the same page. Pamela is gonna come in handy, what she need to do now is to apologise to Nathi. The question is, are you ready to betray Zweli?

I stay silence for a few minutes. Do I? Of course I do. He doesn't know that i'm part of this. I will also act surprised, haibo.

Me: I'll live with it and it's not like he knows that i'm part of the plan.

Him: Good.

I hope I am making the right decision.

45

Ntando

Anele is done giving me a Face beat. Her hands are magic I must give it to her. I look so beautiful right now, the sudden transformation of mine took a lot of people by surprise. I now wear weaves, something I hated with my all but here I am today wearing one. Siviwe is taking me out today. Pamela really came through for me with this transformation plan of hers. U don't know what to wear he did not tell me exactly say where we going, he just said we going out I must be ready at 18:00, he will come and pick me up. I even knocked off early today at work. I needed to prepare myself, I want Siviwe to be the only woman he looks at tonight. I look at the clock on the watch mounted on the wall and the time is 17:30pm. I am left with only 30 minutes to get done. Anele is slowly but surely being her bubbly self again and Siza is also warming up to her. Everything is going well for all us, I wish it can stay like this forever. The door flies open and Anele comes in, she has a plate full of bread with lot of mayonnaise&Tomato sauce, yuck.

That's her favorite meal. What a disgusting combination that is, sies.

“You still not dressed? Why are you not done or you having second thoughts”?

She asks as she sits down. She looks so big and her feet are swollen, she is always walking barefooted or wear socks.

Me: I don't know what to wear. I am conflicted between these 3 outfits.

Her: Where are you guys going exactly?

Me: He did not say where we going, he just told me to be ready he will pick me up at 18:00pm.

Her: If only you knew where you were going but worry not I will choose an outfit for you. An outfit that will suit all occasions.

Me: Blow me away Little sister.

She picks for me a black pencil skirt, white vest and a cardigan, topping my outfit with black block heels.

Her: Now this outfit suit all of occasions. It gets you anywhere.

Me: Thank you sis.

Her: Is this Siviwe guy your boyfriend or he is still asking you or you just friends?

Me: I don't know. I am about to find out tonight.

Her: What are you hoping for?

Me: I hope that he makes us official. To think that I have given up on love, this might be a start to great things.

Her: What I can tell you is that take it slow. Get to know this man first, don't be like me and rush things. I am happy for you though, you finally letting loose and gaining your life back. All thanks to Pamela.

I chuckle...

Me: Yeah, all thanks to her.

Her: Finish up you only left with few minutes.

Me: Right.

I stand up from the bed and wear my outfit. I look at myself one last time and damn, I look fine.

Her: When he comes I wanna see him just in case something happens to you he will be the first suspect.

Me: He is such a Darling nothing will happen to me. Actually I think I am more safe when I am with him.

Her: Let's hope you right for your own sake.

A car hoots outside, I peep through the window and I see his car. I grab my sling back on top of the bed and walk to his car, Anele was right behind me. Siviwe steps out of his car, he has a bunch of roses in his hands. Talk about a romantic man. He hugs me as soon as he gets to me, I hug him back. He gives Anele the flowers who doesn't look impressed, she takes them.

Her: Be safe

No thank you no nothing. She walks back inside the yard.
Pregnant people and their hormones.

“You look beautiful” he compliments.

“Thank you”

I am already pink. He opens the door for me, I get in and closes it then jogs to his side. He gets in and roar the engine to life.

He winks at me and off he drives. He keeps on stealing glances at me every now&then, uh uh.

v

Nathi

Okay, Bayanda is going to be the death of I swear. I thought that after what he told me yesterday things were gonna change

made they went from bad to worse. Last night I overheard him on the phone telling a Melusi to keep on following "him" and never lose him, he must tail him all night if he has to because he pays him, I don't even know who this him is, actually I don't know anything. Bayanda is very secretive but that shit ends right after he finishes bathing. He will tell me exactly what is going on. I keep myself busy with my phone while waiting for him to finish bathing. Few minutes later he joins me, he smells fresh.

“What's going on Bayanda”? I ask him.

“What are you talking about”?

Me: Everything. The secret calls and late night calls. Who are you paying and why are you paying him?

Him: You listening in on my conversations now Nathi?

Me: I was not listening in. Your phone's volume was up and you know how quiet it becomes at night.

Him: No one important.

Me: No one important? Yet you pay him to tail someone for you. Who do you want be tailed?

Him: Let it go Nathi. As I said it's nothing important.

I shake my head and get up from the couch, I take my bag along with me.

Him: Whoa whoa Nathi, where are you going?

Me: To my house. When you are ready to tell me what's going on, you know where to find me.

I pull down my dress and I am about to walk out of his house when he speaks. "Wait. I will tell you everything just don't go" I look back at him and he nods.

Me: Talk.

Him: Let's sit down please.

Me: No I'd rather stand. What's going on?

Him: Okay okay fine. My ex girlfriend have been visiting me lately, before you go ballistic she is a ghost. She comes to me as a spirit.

I furrow my brow...

Him: So, she has been warning me about our relationship being on threat. She said a huge storm is coming to test our relationship. She said after the storm has passed, she wonders if our relationship will still be standing.

Me: What could possibly end our relationship and how sure are you that she is telling the truth?

Him: Well

Phindile. Phindile is the first one to ruin our relationship, then Siviwe is also a possible threat to our relationship.

Me: Siviwe? Who is Siviwe?

Him: The man you said came looking for me with a name Lubanzi. That's not his real name. His real name is Siviwe he is my cousin.

Me: How exactly are they going to ruin our relationship?

Him: That too I don't know. That's why I've asked Zain to follow him and he told me that there hasn't been any movement from him. He only goes out if wants something at the shop. He is forever indoors and now Zain wants to call off the tailing.

I chuckle...

Me: And you believe him? You actually believe that he is telling the truth?

Him: Of course. He is an old friend of mine and I trust him, he never disappoints.

Me: He is playing with you. It's either someone pays him to feed you wrong information or he is actually friends with this Siviwe. After all he is an old friend and of which you remembered him when you needed his help, clearly he doesn't take you serious. Call him and tell him to call off the tailing.

Him: Call him? Why must I? He must keep on tailing him. We must always know what he is planning and be ready for his strike. Zain is very much recommended he can never lie to me, I pay him.

Me: Money. Money. Money. Call him and tell him that the tailing is off Bayanda. You too trusting, ai.

Him: Then we will not know what he is planning.

Me: I have a plan just call him. That way if he strikes and destroy our relationship, then we will know that he is the reason behind it. We can always make it work again.

Him: I don't know Nathi. I really don't know.

Me: Make that call and we will find a way forward. We are in this together and we will conquer whatever will be thrown our away. We will pass the storm even it will bruise the both of us, separate us but we will find each other and fall inlove with each other all over again. The main goal now is to prevent the storm from happening and save our relationship at all cost. Now call Zain and tell him to halt with the tailing, he is two timing you I can feel it. I will call one of my uncle, he knows people that know people.

He just stares at me blankly and blinks, I guess he is still shocked. He did not expect me to say this but whatever happens from heroine going forward, I am ready for whatever is coming. I will not let anyone destroy my relationship with Bayanda, I will go down fighting for it. Well, that's if Bayanda is also willing to fight to save it I can't do it alone. He takes out his

phone from his pocket and dials Zain's number, he puts the phone on loudspeaker. Zain answers on the 3rd ring.

“Man B”

“Sho man. You can halt with the tailing”

Him: Are you sure man?

Bayanda: Yeah man. It's all a waste of time because you not finding anything suspicious on him, so let's just let it go. Thank you for your help and I will deposit the remaining out before the night ends.

Him: What changed?

Bayanda: Isn't that what you wanted? I am giving you what you want Melusi. Halt the tailing and it was nice doing businesswoman with you, bye.

He hangs up and he looks at me then smile.

Him: That went well. Are you sure about all that you've said? Are you willing to fight with me side by side to save our relationship from this coming storm?

Me: All the time. I need to call my uncle but first things first I want him to look up this Melusi person. We are in this together.

Him: I love you and I am glad that I told you this. It was eating me slowly.

Me: You had no choice babe. I love you too.

We hug and he gives me a perk on my lips...I am ready but paryere is the biggest weapon to overcome this storm.

Him: I am going to give you all the O's that are out there in the world.

I chuckle...

He lifts me up, I wrap my legs around his waist. This right here is my sanctuary.

v

Phindile

My phone rings and it is Melusi. What does he want now? I answer his call, before I can even greet him he blurts...

“Bayanda told me to call off the tailing on Melusi”

“That's good news isn't it”?

Him: I don't Phindile. Just this he was very adamant for me to follow Melusi and this evening it's a different tune.

Me: Maybe he saw that all of this was all waste of time. Not having information is really boring, we should be glad that he is finally backing off.

Him: This is not right at all. Something is going on and I am scared on your behalf.

Me: Don't be. This better be the last time you contact me.

Him: When am I meeting my son Phindile?

Me: When I say so. Goodbye.

I hang up before he can speak any further. Since Bayanda decided to back off this is going to go smoothly. I laugh and shake my head. I always win and I have everyone eating at the palm of my hands, Bayanda is soon next. I wonder how Siviwe's date is going, he better not bring Nathi's name in that date and ruin his chances. He is fucken obsessed with Nathi and it's disgusting. I am still at Skhumbuzo's.

v

Ntando

This date is all a waste of time. Siviwe is constantly busy on his phone with God knows doing what. It's like I came to a date alone, once we converse Nathi's names always escape his lips.

If I didn't know any better I would say that he wants him but with the way he is asking about him, it's like his looking for some information and I am not about to give him any. I mean, I don't know anything about Nathi except for what she wants us to see. Oh and we are at Zorro's chisa nyama, wuhhh hhayi this is definitely not my scene or kind of vibe. People here look untidy, girls with colourless leggings and dirty crop tops&vest. Dirty hair and dirty sneakers, they don't look appetising or maybe it's because I have never been to a place like this before? Maybe it's that. The men here look scary and a group share one cigarettes and drink from the same bottle, hygiene dololo.

“So, how did Nathi&Bayanda meet? Do you think they make a good couple?”

“I think it's time to go”

Him: But we just got here and my friends are on their way here.

Me: After too much observation, I just realized that this is not my kind of scene. It seems so, I don't even know how to put it. Take me home please.

Him: I'm the one who invited you here. We will leave when I say so, now pretend as if like you enjoying yourself. I am going to get you something that will ease your uptight self.

He stands up and winks at me. I look around and it seems like people are enjoying themselves, ai. This is definitely not my scene. He comes back with a glass of cocktail, he places in front of me.

Him: Mojito for you madam. Enjoy.

I give him a fake smile and take a sip of my Mojito, boy oh boy it tastes so nice. A group of guys&girls soon joins us and before I know it, I am already letting loose.

46

Nathi

Today I am meeting up with my uncle. He just came back from his business trip in Spain, I asked him to come over to my house. I appreciate the fact before starting anywhere else he came straight to meet up with me plus it's been long since I last saw him. I have to go and fetch him at the airport. I pass by checkers liquor and buy him his favorite bottle, bisquit. Wow, shit is expensive. Why don't he just drink Russian bear or sminorff vodka? Plus they all have flavors now. I've already cooked him his favorite meal(Dumpling&beef stew), that's if it's still his favorite. I drive to the airport, I have to get there before him. He is very dramatic. Now, ether's something weird that is happening. I feel like there's someone following me or maybe I am just over thinking things. I see him coming out at the entrance, he still looks the same, nothing has changed and I run up to him. As soon as he sees me he drops his bags and welcome me in his arms. He spins me around.

“Look at you all grown up. You even glowing, are you pregnant”

I laugh...

“Nice to see you too uncle. Let me get your bags”

Him: Leave them my guards will take care of them. How have you been?

Me: Been good uncle. Life is actually good for me, I am so happy to see you.

Him: Not like I am seeing you. Where's the hired car or we using a cab? I can really use with some showering. Do you know any nearby guest house?

I laugh...

Me: We are using my car and you will be spending the night at my house, with your guards of course.

Him: You have a car and a house?

Me: Yes uncle. Let's go.

His guards put the his bags in the boot and we all get in.

Him: Is this your car? Can we pass by the liquor I need some cognac&cigars.

Me: Don't worry I have everything that you like and yes this is my car.

He scoffs...

Him: Who are you child? Actually you will tell me everything once we get to your house. I hope is not one of those noisy kasis.

Me: Some jazz?

Him: Whatever you want to talk to me about must be really huge.

I laugh...

I hope he comes through for me but I know he will.

v

Ntando

I never knew that I can love someone like I love Siviwe. He is all I think about, nothing makes sense to me anymore. If a day passes without him calling me I get mad, that's how much I love him. His sex game, hhayi i'm not sure. I don't think I am attracted to him sexually I just love him, once he initiates sex I get sick instantly that's how much I hate it but I do sleep with him, he's my boyfriend after all. Today I am going to spend the night at his place apparently he has something to discuss with me. Wait, he actually wants my help in fulfilling his desire to get back at someone. I did not waste anymore time, I agreed right there&then that's how much I love him. Even if he can tell me to burn my siblings in this house or kill Nathi, I will do so because I love him to such extent that I will lay my life down for him. I am done cooking, I am about to take a bath and wait for Siviwe to come and fetch me.

“Will you be joining us for movie night? You haven't forgotten that it's your turn to pick movies tonight”

“I am so sorry baby. I will not be sleeping here tonight, I will choose tomorrow night. I promise”

Kelo: You going to sleep over at your boyfriend's house again?

Me: Yes. Is there a problem?

Her: Nope, I was just asking.

Me: Very good then.

Her: What's the deal between him&Pamela?

Me: They are cousins.

Her: And you believe that rubbish? You can't even tell when people are using you. Pamela is using you for reasons only known to her and so is Siviwe. Open your eyes Ntandokazi!

Me: And since when are you an expert? Kelo you should learn to mind your own and you have no business talking about Pamela&Siviwe like that. They both play a very important role in my life.

She chuckles...

Her: You are so naive Ntando. I hope that whatever this game you playing with your newly found friend&lover by the time it ends, you will still have your family and your job since those two things don't play a very "important role" in your life currently.

I gave her one hot back hand slap. She held her cheek and chuckles.

Her: You can backhand slap if you want but I am telling you the truth. Be careful of who you associate yourself with. Don't lose yourself trying to fit in where you are not wanted, pshhhh. You are clearly walking in Anele's footsteps, the only difference is that you are used to hurt other people. Old as you are you are stupid! Stupid! Stupid!

She clicks her tongue and walks away banging the door behind me causing me to jump. Dammit Kelo, how dare you! You don't know Pamela&Siviwe like I do. Pamela helped me rediscover myself and Siviwe saw me fit to be his girlfriend. So, Kelo don't

know what she is talking about. As for work? Arh arh arh, these two people actually helped me in a way that nobody have. I have been slacking lately not that I need the job though, Siviwe will support me. I am going to quit tomorrow and who knows maybe I might move in with Siviwe.

Kelo just ruined my mood, argh this child. My phone rings and Siviwe's name flash on the screen and all of a sudden my mood is back, the smile that's creeping out of my mouth right now. Good Lord.

“Baby”

“Hey, have you cooked”?

Me: Yes I have. Why?

Him: Can you bring some I am lazy to cook.

Me: Will do. What time are you fetching me?

Him: I will not be fetching you. You will take a taxi, you know where I stay. Be here before 18:00.

Me: I will. Bye.

Him: Sho.

Me: I love you.

Him: I know. See you when you get here.

He hangs up. I put the phone on my chest and blush, this guy.

v

Nathi

My uncle and his goons are done eating

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now they are digesting the food with some bisquit. The way he complimented me, yuhhhh I swear he thought that this was one of the Top billing houses. Talk about exxageration. I pour myself a glass of wine and join them.

Uncle: So, what is it that you wanted to talk to me about, it sounded so important when you were skyping me.

Me: I want to ask you for a favour.

Him: Who are we slitting their throat? You know my wife fjuystiffe when it comes to such.h

Me: We not slitting anyone throats and I know that Anthea is such a baddest throat slitter. I want you to help me look up on someone by the name Melusi Zain Mpande, a very well known P.I around town.

Him: Melusi? The only Melusi who is a P.I I know was my rival in the diamonds world a long time ago. I defeated him, he ran away and never to be heard of again. I guess he worked his butt off and resorted to being a P.I, he was good with finding information that one.

Me: I take it this is going to be easy since you've had an encounter with him a couple of times. I want you to find me everything about him. His family, who he is working for. Anything uncle that I will against him.

Him: Before we go even further. Why do you want information about him?

Me: Because he and his associates are trying to ruin my relationship with my boyfriend. My boyfriend hired him to tail someone for him and kept on telling him that there were no

movements on this person, I think someone else was paying him to feed Bayanda with false information.

Him: You have a boyfriend? Hau Nathi. Why am I not surprised? He always loved double crossing people, he loves money.

Me: I am turning 30 in a months time uncle and yes I have a boyfriend. So, are you going to help me?

Him: With no doubt chana. Do you love this guy?

Me: A lot uncle.

Him: Then let's get to work plus it's been a while since I've been on the field.

Me: That's because you keep on making a squad with Anthea.

He laugh...

Him: We expanding as God said. Now chana I am going to help you. We will find each and every person he is connected with, find every information about them too. I am not about to sit and do nothing. You once lost Obakeng, I will not allow you to lose this guy that you love because I can tell that he is your sanity. Your happiness comes first. You lost a loved one once and I saw how that broke you. I will not allow that to happen again, you deserve all the happiness in the world. Matter of fact I wanna meet this young lad, I will have to do a back ground check on him.

Me: Thank you thank you so much uncle. I appreciate it a lot. There's no need for you to do a background check on Bayanda, he is clean.

Him: He may be clean but is his family clean? Is his family to be trusted? How is his relationship with his family? I need to know every single detail about him.

Me: If you put it like that then yes you will and you will also meet him when the time is right.

Him: When is the right time? I want to meet him tomorrow before I leave. I think we have a lot to discuss with this young man. Set us a brunch for us tomorrow and he will be the one paying.

Me: I will get right on it uncle and thank you once again.

Him: He must also buy me a bisquit&cigars.

Me: Iyohhh. Anyway, how is Anthea?

Him: She is good hey. You should stop by sometimes, i'm sure she misses you too.

Me: Does she ever miss anyone except Lorna?

He chuckles...

Him: Now that woman really did take away my wife from me.

Me: I love their sisterhood. I wish I can have one like theirs too but I don't have any fiends.

Him: You better start making friends. I'm sure Anthea&Lorna wouldn't mind you visiting them. I think a girls outing will do you good. You need it.

Me: I will set up a date with them after this whole thing is over. So, how long must we wait till I get the information?

Him: Give me a week and I will give a file that contains his information. After getting it, what are you going to do with it?

Okay, I did not think about what I will do with the information once I get it, maybe Bayanda will know what to do with it.

Me: I will give it to Bayanda. He will know what to do with the information.

Him: Very well then.

And Melusi won't see this coming. I like the fact that we will finally find his associates too, this is gonna be fun. I excuse myself and go and call Bayanda

v

Bayanda

I am woken by my phone ringing, a nap turned into a sleep. I raked my hand on the couch looking for it, I find it and I answer it. I did not even check who is calling.

“Hello”

“Hey babe. Did I wake you up”?

Me: Yes but I was about to wake up when you called.

She chuckles...

Her: Liar.

Me: Mxm. How are things over the with your uncle!

Her: Good love, he has agreed to help us and the good news is that, he knows Melusi from way back.

Me: What? Are you being for real babe?

Her: Yes love.

Me: That's good news. Thank you so much baby for coming through for me.

Her: You should thank my uncle not me. Speaking of him. You guys are meeting for brunch tomorrow and you will be paying, it would also be a good gesture if you bring along bisquit&cigars.

Me: What? That's too soon baby.

Her: I told him but he did not wanna hear it. He threatened that he won't help us if you refuse.

Me: Such blackmail, damn. First things first. Is he strict?

Her: Not at all. He is such a friendly human being.

Me: Where does he want to go?

Her: He did not say baby but wherever you taking him, the food must be top notch.

Me: Then our restaurant it is then plus IR's safe.

She laughs...

We talk until she hangs up.

Why would Nathi's uncle want to meet me so soon? Or maybe he want to grill me with questions, like asking me what are my intentions with Nathi? I don't know what to expect. To tell you the truth, Nathi's family will be the first family out of all the girls I've dated I will be meeting with. I have never met any of their families but they met mine and what happened? They all ended up in bed with Siviwe. Hhayi. Let me not dwell too much on it, I wish Nathi's uncle can also find information on Phindile&Siviwe. Never in my life have I thought that one day, I will have people investigating other people for me on my behalf. I'm shooket. As the saying goes, “never say never”. Life it's a game of chess. I don't know how but it is one.

Snikelelo

I am not normal like any other child in this family of mine. I am what you call the “special” child. I can see things before they can even happen. I saw Anele's rape situation before it happened, if I knew when it was gonna happen I would've prevented it from happening. Then there's Ntando, I fear for her. I have seen her future and it doesn't look good at all. She is going to lose everything so fast that she won't see it coming, she is gambling with her life and she doesn't know it. By the time the muti/love potion wears off, it will be too late for her because all will be left for her will only be regrets®rets. I really want to reach out to her and talk to her but I can't since she has been given love potion, what I say to her will only be a waste of words to her. I wish that I had someone to guide me through this journey, I don't really know how to go about with it. It stresses me. I wish I had someone to talk too, I feel so lonely. I have no one. Then there's this Nathi&Bayanda's issue, their relationship is in great danger. No matter how much they try to prevent it the storm will come whether they like it or not,

this is written in their destiny. There's no escape from the storm. Ntando will be her downfall. She will betray her without even thinking twice, she can do anything for this Siviwe even if it means putting her family in danger. I don't know how Nathi&Bayanda's relationship will survive after this, but there will be calm after the storm and they will find each other and fall inlove again but it will be a mission. Bayanda will be the one who feels more betrayed than Nathi but with the information&secrets that will be revealed to them, all will go back to normal plus there's something that will bring them more closer and their bond will manifest in so many ways. After all they are made for each other, their fate is written in the stars. I wish I can help them with preventing it but it will be futile, the storm was bound to come sooner or later. What I am not sure of, is how their relationship will break apart. Nathi is a very kind&humble person, she doesn't deserve any of this. She deserves all the happiness in the world. Then there's another vision that keeps appearing every time I try to take a nap, especially in the afternoon. I see a woman's figure but not the face. She keeps on calling her kids while lying down with her legs bended, her voice carries so much pain. Everytime I try to reach out to her she disappears and I always wake up with a pain in my heart. A part of me feels like I know this person, her cries pierce right through my heart. It's like we had a strong bond before but I don't know how or when. The dream always

leave me in distress. After my encounter with Ntando, I knew right there&then that she is no longer the Ntando I know. She was a completely different person, Pamela befriended Ntando with a reason. She didn't befriend her because she wants to be reak friends with her, she came with a mission but her plan will get her in a very hurtful situation. She will feel like God is punishing her for all the evil things she did, she has hurt a lot people. I am taking a walk to the park lost in my thoughts when all of a sudden I feel this strong presence behind me, I tense up and stand still and turn back slowly but I find no one. I relax, take a deep breath and continue walking. The park is full of children playing, they all look happy like nothing matters in the world. Why can't I just be like them and lead a normal life. You know what I find strange about these visions? Is that they never happened in my grandmother's house. They only came when I sleep in someone else's and not there. I can't help it but actually think that my grandmother knew about my gift and somehow tried tampering with it, argh I am just over thinking things.

Anele

When I arrived in Siviwe's house he was not around, luckily for me I know where he puts his house keys. I lift up the stone that was near the door and take it out, I open the door and the house looks like a mess. Almost forgot that he was untidy bastard, he doesn't like cleaning. I put his food in the warmer go to his room to put my bag. Soon as I open the door and steps inside his bedroom, sex smell fills up the entire room and the made is not made. I try to push the thought at the back of my mind that he was having sex with someone in this room, I do not wanna believe it. Maybe he was Masterbating, yes that explains it. I go on detective and look for something that will give him out. I find nothing out of the ordinary, good. Now I am sure that he was indeed masturbating. I get done cleaning his room and head to the lounge. There are beer bottles and cigarette butts on the floor, was there a party or what? I start cleaning up and I stumble upon a bra, I pick it up and chuckle. I

look at it, it looks familiar but I am just not where I saw it, or maybe it was at some shop? Uh uh, it can't be. There's someone that has a bra exactly like this one, but who? I shake off those thoughts and continue cleaning the mess. I place the bra on top of the couch

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when I hear someone clearing their throat. I turn to look and it was one of Siviwe's friend, I forgot his name.

“Sure. I only came here to get this”

He takes the bra and shoves it in his pocket.

“Don't burn in the fire. Leave while you still can”.

Me: And then?

Him: You look like a good woman&clever too. Walk away while you still can.

Me: And who are you to tell me what to do? Do I look like I need your advice or something?

Him: I am just warning you. Walk away while you still can, don't degrade yourself like this. You don't deserve any of this.

Me: Hhayi Voetsek! Hamba la and uyeke lento yakho yomiletha izifebe zakho la(Leave and stop this thing of yours of bringing your floozies here)

He chuckles...

Him: He finally got to you. You are doomed! If only you knew that truth, nc nc nc. I pity you.

He walks away...

Nxa, who does he think he is coming here with such nonsense? I continue cleaning when I feel hands holding my waist, I take a deep breath.

“Ubuyaphi”? (where do you come from)

Him: How is that any of your business?

He let's go of my waist. I turn and look at him, he looks pissed I must say. I fold my arms and look at him.

Me: Because you asked me to come and I find you not at home. What did you expect me to do? On top of it all I find your house upside down. You were throwing a party? Another thing you allow your friends to sleep with their girlfriends in your house?

Him: Did you bring me the food?

I sigh...

Me: Yes, I did.

Him: I'll go and take a quick bath then come back and eat.

Me: Really Bayanda?

Him: Did you come here for me or you came here to question me?

Me: I am your girlfriend in case you have forgotten. I have a right to ask questions.

Him: It's not cute. It's annoying. What I do in my house, with who is none of your business, am I clear?

He looks at me straight in the eyes. By the look of it, he is angry.

I swallow hard&nod...

Him: Speak up!

I jump...

Me: Ye...yes.

Him: Good girl. Now, let me go&bath.

Me: Can I come and join you? We will be saving water after all.

Him: No.

Me: Bu...but.

Honestly I did not know what to say, I am lost for words. Are relationships supposed to be like this? Geez, it's hektik outchea. I guess this is what they call true love.

Him: But what?

Me: Nothing.

Him: Thought as much. I wanna find my food ready once i'm done bathing.

I nod...

This is just, uh uh no man. I finish cleaning and I warm up his food and watch TV. He comes and sit down.

Him: My food.

Me: It's in the kitchen.

Him: Go&fetch my food woman.

Me: No. I am catching up on the kardashian's.

Him: Ntando.

He banged the table and I jump.

Me: So...sorry baby I will go and fetch your food.

I quickly stand up and try walking past him. He pulls me by my hand and I find myself sitting on his lap. He lifts up my chin making me to look at him straight in the eyes.

Him: I don't know the disrespect come from all of a sudden. I will kill you right here right now and no one will ever find you, then I will go after all your siblings. I will kill the boys and sell the girls or better yet make one of the my sex buddy. Next time when you disrespect me think about what I said. Now, be a good a girl that you are and no one will die. Am I making myself clear?

I nod...

The way he looks at me draws me closer to her, I actually melt in his eyes.

Me: You made yourself clear baby. I am sorry for disrespecting you like I did.

Him: Good. Go&fetch my food. You&I have a lot to plan

He winks at me and I find myself blushing. I get up on of him and go and fetch his food, I give to him.

Him: Aren't you eating with me?

Me: I have eaten, thank you.

Him: No. You are not, now eat.

He smiles...

I give him a nod and start eating, well I am not I am just admiring this fine creature sitting next to me.

v

Nathi

Having my uncle around is really fun. The way he cracks his Savannah dry jokes, mxm. Anthea and her kids got themselves a Trevor Gumbi out here. Uncle told his guards to be comfortable and let loose, nothing will happen here. We are now watching news, they are but I am busy on WhatsApp chatting with Bayanda, he is making me feel like a highschool teenager. As I am busy chatting with Bayanda my phone rings. I look at the screen and Ntando's name flash on the screen, I wonder what she wants this late, I answer anyway.

“Ntando”

“Hey, hope I did not catch you on a bad time”

Me: You did. You have 3 minutes, my uncle is around.

Her: Let me make it fast then. So, There's this friend of mine she's throwing a mini braai and we were asked to bring partners. Do you mind coming with me?

Me: I don't do braais Ntando not unless it's with family.

Her: Please Nathi. You are the only person I know&trust.

Me: Why don't you take that friend of yours with you? I'm sure she wouldn't mind coming with you.

Her: She won't be around, she has a family matter to attend to.

Me: Let me think about. I will get back to you.

Her: I knew that I can always count on you and it's on the 22nd
So, clear your schedule. I will hear from you then. Bye.

She hangs up before I can even answer her, okay. Now, that was off. Ntando&braais? Ntando is not the type who likes things, why the sudden change? She has been acting very weird lately or maybe she is trying out new things, but braais? Who is that friend anyway. Hhayi.

Uncle: You look troubled.

Me: I just received a call from this other girl who works for me. She was inviting me to a braai, a friend of hers is hosting.

Him: Then why don't you go?

Me: Something is off malume. Ntando is not the type who likes mingling with people, this is all weird.

Him: Maybe she is coming out of her shell. She is trying something new.

Me: Still. I have a bad feeling about all of this. My guts is warning me.

Him: Then don't go. Tell her that you can't make it then.

Me: I don't know.

Him: If it will put your heart at ease, we will put a tracker on your phone and plant a chirp on your hair.

Me: That might work but something is off about Ntando.

Him: We can look her up if you don't mind.

Me: Let's deal with Melusi first.

He nods...

Something is just not right. I can't ignore my gut feeling, I can't. I don't think I will go with her, she will have to forgive me.

Bayanda

I am meeting up with Nathi's uncle today and to tell you the truth I am nervous. I don't know what to expect, I wonder if he will like me or what. What are we going to talk about? I'm sure he will grill me with questions. I have on my casual clothes and sneakers. I take my car keys and drive to the restaurant. Lil Wayne's Carter III album is keeping me company. I get to the restaurant and head straight to the office, to gather myself. I receive a text from Nathi telling me that they'll be here in 20 minutes. Iyoh, that was fast. I open my table drawer and take out my Gordon's. I take 2 sips and walk out, I sit down near the window. I wanna see Nathi's car. After 10 minutes of waiting, I see Nathi's car pulling up in the parking lot. I wipe my sweaty hands with my jean and take a deep breath. They step out of the car, I guess his uncle is the one with a walking cane. He looks like a gangster, a retired one that is. The other 2 guys he is with, I guess are his bodyguards. They all walk in...Nathi scans the room until her eyes land where i'm sitting. She smiles and I smile back, she whispers something to her uncle and points

towards my table. I swallow hard as I see him looking towards my table, he is not even smiling. He turns to Nathi and whispers back then he approaches my table, my knee is shaking underneath the table. Thanks God he won't notice. Nathi mouths "good luck" as she heads to the office. Now, I don't know whether to stand up and welcome him or just remain seated. Argh fuck it. I stand up as he is now standing before me. I stretch out my hand and he just looks at it, clicking his tongue in the process. I sit back down embarrassed. He sits too, his guards stand in each side. They look scary, geez.

“What is your story with my niece”?

“I...we...I...” he injects.

Him: Talk dammit.

Me: We are dating. She is my girlfriend.

Him: Your intentions with her?

Me: I...I wanna marry her and live my happily ever with her.

Him: Is that what she want?

Huh? What kind of a question is this now? Maybe she does, maybe she doesn't.

Him: Answer the question, son.

Me: Honestly I don't know.

Him: What is is that you don't know?

Me: That she wants what I want about us.

Him: You guys don't talk about such? Then what the hell are you talking about?

I do not answer...

Him: Are you nervous by nature or is my presence intimidating you?

Yes, yes it is but I can't answer him like that. I have to answer him in a respectable manner, if there's such.

Me: I highly respect you sir.

He chuckles...

Him: This boy. You are failing to answer just one question. You don't deserve my niece, you are just not right for her. She needs someone who is strong and can fight for her, can you do that? I mean, you can't even hold a decent conversation with me.

Oh wow, this man. He is so blant and very much cruel, how can he say such? I deserve Nathi, no one else does but me. Wait, he even labeled me weak, mxm bitch arse oldie punk. I look down,

honestly I have no come back from this maybe I am weak. Maar no man, Nathi deserves me.

Me: With all due respect sir. I love Nathi and I know that she loves me too. Like heck, I can even exchange my life for hers. That's how much I love her. I will even fight for her.

He chuckles...

Him: Young man. You live in a world of fairytales. Don't bother answering me back, you wasting my time. Nathi really wasted her time with you, yasis.

I swallow hard and look at him with anger building up inside me. Then he does the unthinkable, He burst out with laughter, like serious laughter guys earning us attention from the customers.

Him: You should've seen yourself young man. I'm sure you were ready to shit on yourself, I was just pulling your leg.

I take a deep breath and chuckle. This man almost gave me a heart attack.

Me: You almost gave me a heart attack, yoh.

Him: You are Nathi's sanity&happiness. I approve of you but should you by any chance hurt her, my wife will slit your throat without thinking twice. I'm Mandla by the way.

He stretches his hand and I do the same with mine, we shake hands.

Him: What is your story with Melusi? How do you know him?

Me: Can we talk over a meal, I am kinda starving.

Him: Guards. Sit down we are about to eat and I take it the food will be mouth watering. My niece did tell me that you also the co-owner of this restaurant, I am very impressed.

They both sit down and I call one of the waiters, phew at least he approves even though he was a bit harsh in the begin. His approval means a great start, can't wait for the rest of the family to approve of me.

v

Anele

I go and join Kelo under the tree shade. The kids are watching TV. She looks to be far away in thoughts, since Ntando is her inlove phase she hardly has time to spend with the kids and Kelo. That is why I decided to step in and take my duties as a deputy parent. It's not easy yhu, my moods are all over. One minute i'm happy and the next minute I am angry then a crying

mess, argh this pregnancy is draining me and I eat a lot. I give her the plate I had full of cheese&mayonnaise with bread.

“This will cheer you up, it always cheers me up when i'm down. Try it”.

She looks at the food with disgust then me.

Me: What? Just eat it will cheer you up.

She laughs...

Her: You really eat this? This combination is disgusting, yasis.

Me: It is not Kelo. It tastes so heavenly.

Her: I will pass, thank you.

Me: You are missing out.

Her: I'd rather miss out. How are you feeling? With this pregnancy and all.

Me: I feel good but tired at times. This child is making me lazy yuh and my feet are always swollen. Look at me, I am 4 months pregnant but my tummy says otherwise.

She chuckles...

Her: You carrying twins that's why.

I choke on my special combination and she brushes my back while chuckling.

Her: Let me go and get you water.

She stands up and walks away. Pregnant with twins? Lord Jesus, what am I going to do with two babies? I know that I was

rebellious and a few women shed tears because of me, maar no man. Pregnant with twins

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worst of all they are fatherless. Jesus is Lord, I swear. Hhayi maaen for sho Kelo is playing games with me, she better be, erhh. Kelo comes back and she hands me the glass of water, I take it and gulp it down one time.

Me: You are joking about the twins thing right? You are just trying to scare me, to tell you the truth. It worked lil sis. Good job.

Her: I was not Joking, I was telling you the truth. You are carrying twins, the sooner you accept that the better for us all.

Me: This is one stupid joke I have ever heard, even if I was carrying twins. How would you know?

Her: I saw it in my dreams.

I laugh...

She just looks at me plain blank.

Her: I am serious Anele. I have a gift of seeing things. Things that will happen in future.

Me: Are you like a prophet?

She nods...

Me: Wh...ho...wh...oh, wow. Are you sure about this Kelo? I mean, this is huge.

Her: I am sure, I just need someone to guide me you know.

Me: Don't worry I will take you to church, they will clearly reveal everything for you. You are going to help a lot of people.

Her: I guess.

Me: What does our future look like? Will I get married to a white rich man?

She laughs...

Her: Nope. You will get married to the father of your babies.

Me: What? I don't even know him Kelo.

Her: You do.

Me: I do? Really?

Her: Your married boyfriend.

Me: Mabandla?

Her: Yes, him.

Me: Erh...oh look, there comes Pamela.

The perks of staying in a corner house plus the tree that is near the fence, you get to see everyone. It can be annoying during the weekends though.

Her: Tell her not step inside this yard. I despise snakes, don't allow her inside this yard. Stop her because if I do, it won't be nice.

Me: But why? She is Ntando's friend.

Her: No. She is a snake, she has put Ntando in a very comprising situation. She has given our sister to the devil on a silver platter, I hate her. Can't wait for her sins to catch up with her.

I look at her and I can see that she is serious. I stand up and go and lock the gate and wait for her to reach me.

“Hawu Anele. Why are you locking the gate”?

“Yoh hhayi Sisi. You are not allowed here”

Her: Since when?

Me: Since now. Turn back and don't ever come back here.

Her: What did I do now? I just came to check up on you guys since Ntando is at work.

Me: Hha.ah no. Hamba Pamela hamba.(leave)

Her: But why? Why did I do?

“Leave her at that gate and let's go inside the house. Nxa” Kelo calls out.

I click my tongue and walk away, leaving her standing at the gate surprised. Something is going on and Kelo will answer that for me, she must tell me the truth. Her sudden hate for Pamela is very questionable. I shake my head. I find her drinking water.

Her: Sit down, I will tell you everything maybe you will be the one who can help your sister and talk her out from her evil that she is yet to do.

This is very interesting...

v

Nathi

3 hours later they are still at it. I wonder what is it that they are talking about. Looking at their faces, it's something serious or maybe they are talking about my delegation, argh. That's too soon but it would be nice though. A knock comes through at the door, dragging me out from my thoughts.

“Come in”

The door opens, I look up to see who it is and it is Ntando, ai. What does she want now? I hope she is not here to ask me about going with her because I am not. I have made up my mind and there is nothing she can do to change it.

Her: Am I disturbing?

Me: Yes you are. Can I help you?

Her: Urhm, yeah. About what I asked you. Did you think about it?

Me: Oh yes, I did and I can't go with you.

Her: Why? Come on Nathi, it will be fun.

Me: I said no and besides on that day, my little sister will be coming back from her ancestral calling. I have to there.

Her: You making a excuse of not going with me? Wow Nathi wow.

Me: It's not an excuse. I am telling you the truth, you can even ask my uncle.

Her: You turning me down?

Me: If that's how you view it, then yes I am declining the offer.

Her: But why?

Me: Because I do not want to go with you. Just drop it.

Her: It's gonna be fun Nathi.

Me: What is your friend's name again?

She stays silence for a few seconds and answers after a shallow exhale. I'm sure she thinks that I didn't hear her, ai.

Her: It's Boitumelo. Yes, Boitumelo. She is such a lovely soul.

Me: Can I ask you for a favour?

Her: Yes boss. What's up?

Me: Can we please stick to work relationship. Me being your boss and you my worker, can we not cross boundaries?

Her: I am not crossing boundaries. It was gonna be harmless fun, you know what? I will leave you to think about.

Me: There's nothing to think about. I am not going with you. Get that into your brain under that Peruvian of yours.

Her: I will be waiting.

Me: Geez, you sound like a psycho. What exactly happened to you? You just change over night.

Her: Nothing happened to me. I've finally discovered myself.

Me: Okay Ntando. You made yourself clear. You can see yourself out, you know the door.

Her: Think hard about it.

She flashes me a smile and walks out of my office. Ntando is acting very strange, that is not the Ntando I know. This new

one is showing me flames, her work records don't look good. She is slacking too much. I must take action, sigh.

“Who the hell is that rude piece of shit”?

Me: That's Ntando malume, one of our workers and the girl who invited me to hers friend party.

Him: I don't trust her. Give her a paid leave and while you at it please give me her details, I wanna know who she works with.

Me: Ntando doesn't work for anyone uncle. She had a tough upbringing.

Him: I don't care! Just give me the damn details. Seems like there are lot of people who are gunning for your kindness if not kindness, most defiantly your relationship. We need to move.

Me: Uncle are your sure about this?

Him: Don't question me just do as I say and please give me a picture of her, she smells like trouble and I don't have a heart for trouble people. We have to start digging now before it's too late.

I am about to say something when I remembered that he said, I must not question him.

Me: Right on it uncle.

He takes out his phone and dials someone.

“I will send you some pictures of people I want you to tail for me. Investigate them, I am giving you a week”

He hangs up...

Him: I think I'll be here a little longer than I have planned. You did a good job by calling me, now let's roll.

Did he just say a little bit longer? There goes my freedom. I look at him and sigh.

Him: Don't worry you will still see your boyfriend at anytime you want, just not when I am around. I don't wanna bump into another man in the kitchen when I make coffee.

I blink and look at him. Is this man serious, right now? Well, as long as he will help me save my relationship then he can stay for as long as he likes.

49

Anele

I am woken up by Ntando shaking me roughly and screaming my name. Ahhh, she finally decided to come back home after 3 weeks of not being around. I open my eyes and wake up. I sit on my butt and look at her.

“Who do you think you are turning Pamela away”?

I just look at her. If only she knew how tired&mad I am, she wouldn't be doing this with me. She wouldn't.

Her: I am talking to you Anele.

Me: Are you really asking me about something that happened 3 weeks ago? Are you being for real Ntando.

Her: It doesn't matter when it happened but it happened. So, why?

Me: That's because she is not our friend, which means we have nothing to talk about with her.

Her: Either way you had no right whatsoever.

Me: Argh. Whatever maarn Ntando. Can I go back to sleep now? I am so tired.

Her: Sleep really? That's all you ever do instead of going to look for the father of that bastard that you carrying.

I chuckle and shake my head, I absolutely have no time to entertain her.

Her: Am I talking to myself you bitch?

Me: Am I your bitch? Even if I am a bitch at least I did not date the father of my friend's child, like you.

Her: What did you just say?

Me: Exactly what I said. You are so stupid Ntando! Pamela has a child with your so called boyfriend and they still sleeping together behind your back, wait. What do I know? I mean I don't even know the father of this bastard i'm carrying.

Her: Why are you lying Anele? Why are you fucking lying you bitter hippo? Siviwe is always with me if not at work.

I chuckle...

Me: I guess she also works Pamela's vagina too since they work "late nights" together.

Her: You don't have to lie about them if you don't like them. You don't know anything about them, so go and look for that fatherless thing you carrying.

Me: Whatever grandma.

Her: What did you just say?

“And then what's with all the noise? I can hear you guys all the way from the gate” Siza says stepping into the room.

Me: Ask your dramatic sister here. She started it

Him: Why am I not surprised. What did this Siviwe boy feed you? Whatever it is, it is making you insane. Why did you quit your job?

Her: Siviwe didn't feed me anything but then again, you wouldn't know that because you don't even have a girlfriend. You've never dated Siza and you've never been inlove, you are just the same as Anele, so shush. I don't need that job, Nathi annoys me.

I laugh...

The very same Nathi who helped her by bettering our lives? The very same Nathi who gave her a job? Whatever love portion Siviwe fed her is working overtime. Turning her back on someone who has helped her without wanting something in return? I can't wait for the day, when all of this is over. She will be left all alone, with no one else in her corner.

Him: Mxm nonsense. Anyway, Anele wanna come along with me and the kids to the mall?

Me: Do you even have to ask? I can't be around a betrayer right now, let's go.

I get off bed with Siza's help of course.

Him: You damn heavy. Are you sure you nor carrying twins?

I give him a death stare...

Ntando: Oh, she is carrying two fatherless bastards. I wish she can die while giving birth, bloody hoe.

Without thinking twice my hand have already made a contact with her cheek. I have tolerated her insults, now she has gone too far. Wishing that I die while giving birth? That's cruelty on another level How dare she? I look at her holding her cheek in disbelief.

Me: Don't you ever and I mean ever utter such nonsense to me. Don't think that just because you are older than me, I will allow you to walk all over me. Unganginyeli mina Ntando. Nxa.

Her: Wenzani Anele?

Sazi: Let's go Anele before you kill someone.

I give her a death and walk away clicking my tongue. How dare she? I should've kicked that love portion out of her system. She is lucky that Kelo is at church. Oh, yes Kelo is attending at

harvest international church. She spends most of her time there, at least now she has someone who will guide her. I pray that she comes out more matured and understanding her gift, maybe just maybe she can help Ntando before things get out of hand. Nathi doesn't deserve what Ntando is planning for her, such sinister act. Sies. I hope her plans fails, argh. As soon as I am at the gate a taxi has already parked, I chuckle. Siza clearly told the driver to come and fetch me, this brother of mine cares about after all. I get in and the taxi drives off.

v

Phindile

Someone is out for my blood and I don't know who it is. I am standing on a strand of hair, one mistake I fall and I will fall hard. I've asked Melusi to find out who has it in for me but he turned me down. He doesn't want to help me, it's shocking to because he never said no to me, this is a first. Then there's Siviwe, his plan is going west so fast, it has no brakes none whatsoever. He is actually derailing from the actual plan, because Nathi doesn't wanna comply. About what I also don't know. Sakhile has layed low too because he too is being the investigated, by the looks of things if he goes down I also go down. I wonder who is investigating about me and how much did they find out about me. I mean, I have done so hectic stuff. Killing my husband then Bayanda's mother, his 3 year old little sister. Lying to Luyanda&Zweli about who their fathers are. It's a lot, It will be enough to put me in jail for a long time. I should've stopped while I had time, it's too late now, I am in too deep. There's no turning back. I thought that it was gonna be easy bringing Bayanda down but it's not. It's draining actually. Seems like I underestimated his girlfriend, I took her lightly. I guess is true when they say dynamite comes in small packages, she is one. I've also called in some of my contacts to look her up for me but they all come up with nothing. It's frustrating. Zweli&Luyanda are going to one of Zweli's friend welcoming house party. At least I will get time to be alone and go through the plan all over again, but it will be hard without

my men working for me. Jesus. As I am in my thoughts, my phone beeps and it's a message from a number I don't know. I open it and it reads as follows

★Your bed is ready for you in prison. You might also want to save up a lot because you will be there for the rest of your life. With the evidence we have on you, you are dead. Your life is over Phindile. Your sons deserve a better mother than you. You are rotten, and your inmate Yeshua will be waiting for you, wifey. You might want to look her up and familiarise yourself with her. See you on the flip side, M. ★

I read it over and over again trying to find out who it might be from, but it's blank. No one crosses my mind. I try calling the number and it doesn't go through, dammit. Who the hell are you M? What do you want from me? Just then my phone rings and it is Skhubmbuzo

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maybe he has something for me.

“Skhumbuzo”

“Shit has just hit the fan. It's over for the both of us. Can my son know me before we go to jail”

Me; What? Who said we are going to jail?

Him: Didn't you get an SMS?

Me: No, I didn't maybe I am yet to receive one. If it happens that you go to jail, don't involve me.

He chuckles...

Him: You don't get it do you? We are busted. These fuckers know everything and they know about your fake identity, they know everything. We are all going down. Can I at least spend the remaining time getting to know my son.

Me: Your son? You will not know him, not when things are like this. We should wait for the dust to settle then you will meet him.

Him: Meet him? You've been saying that for the past 34 years, I am done. If I do not meet my son, then I am turning myself in. Goodbye Phindile.

He hangs up before I can even talk. He can't do me like this, we've come to far for him to do me like this. I try calling him and his phone rings unanswered. Damn it Skhumbuzo! I grab my car keys and go straight to my car. Skhumbuzo can't sell me out, he has to die.

v

Ntando

After that mini incident with Anele I decided to keep myself busy by cooking. These kids no longer respects me, I will have to instill some respect in them. How dare Anele slaps me? If she wasn't pregnant I would've beat her arse, pshhh. Anyway today I was supposed to go to Azola's baby shower then later the after party. Azola is Pamela's friend but I decided not to go because somehow Nathi is going to be there. I do not want her to see me there And about that ancestral calling she wasn't lying, one of my ex colleagues confirmed it for me. I might not be there but someone is going to do the job for me, Pamela will have to be there but not noticeable. Luckily for me Azola has many friends and family members, it's gonna be simple. My phone rings and it is Siviwe, what does he want now? I told him not to call him until the job has been done.

“Yes”

“Is your person still on for today”?

Me: Yes, she is.

Him: Do you trust her?

Me: With my life.

Him: I was just making sure.

Me: Sharp.

I hang up...

Okay, okay, I still don't know what his exact plan is with Nathi but I am playing along with it. He needs me and I also need him. I hope he won't sleep with her because I will kill Nathi myself and Siviwe too. Ai.

v

Nathi

Katlego has invited me to her friend's baby shower. She is doing a whole lot better and she is no longer drinking, she is trying to better her life and her kids life She is now working at PnP, I am so happy for her. The plan is not to stay for long, I couldn't say no to her as much as we do not get along, we are trying to mend our relationship she is still my sister and besides Nhlamulo will also be there. Nhlamulo is my favourite cousin and she is one bubbly person, she understands me very well. My uncle is leaving today and he has gathered all the information he needed, now I am waiting for him to send me the files. He will courier them to me just in case he has people following him. I am so thankful to him, he has helped me a lot. I've asked Bayanda to accompany me but he is meeting up with his cousin Jason, who has recently come back from Spain. I think I also need to go abroad and unwind with Bayanda of course, maybe we will make a mini us there. I chuckle, just by thinking about it. The baby shower will be at Sands gardens in

Jersey view, I set up my GPS and drive there. Nhlamulo has given me the address. I brought a gift along, I don't want to go there empty handed. Joyous celebration is keeping me company, my phone rings and it's Bayanda, I answer it. Wuuhhh, before y'all kill me I have a earpiece on, thank you.

“Baby”

“Hey love. Are you there yet”?

Me: I am almost there. Miss me?

Him: How can I not?

Me: I told you to come with me and you said no.

Him: And you know why. Enjoy yourself my love, I love you.

Me: I love you too.

I hang up...

I get to the garden and there are cars already parked. It seems like there are many people here, I park mine and text Nhlamulo that I have arrived. She shows up after 5 minutes looking so beautiful. I open the door and step out of my car, I meet her half way and we hug.

Her: I am so glad that you here. Katlego is running a little bit late she is still caught up at work, please follow me.

I hand her the gift and follow behind her, greeting people here&there.

Her: Do not accept any drinks or food from strangers, I will be the one serving you.

Me: Thank you babe.

We get to where her friends are seated, I greet her friends and she offers me a glass of wine and walk away. I take the glass of wine and walk around marveling this garden. I am about to take a sip when someone bumps to me. The glass slips out of my hand and it falls, luckily it has fall on the grass. The girl apologizes and picks up the empty glass, I nod at her. I look at the grass and I see some bubbles made by the wine. What kind of wine is this? If it makes bubbles from the grass, imagine what it will do to the stomach, yuh. That girl has really saved me.

“There you are” Nhlamulo says appearing from behind me.

Her: The baby shower is about to start. Where is your glass for toasting?

Me: It fell and the wine filled up the grass making bubbles of which was strange. What's the name of that wine, anyway.

Her: It's a special wine. I will get you another one.

Me: You don't have too. I am not in the mood to drink.

Her: Very well then. Let's go.

We walk to the mini hall and we all get seated the themes was blue&black. Azola looks so beautiful, she is slaying this pregnancy. The speeches went on&on, I am so bored. Katlego is not here, yet. Nhlamulo gives me some of the cupcakes that they were busy with. She is a chef by the way. They look mouthwatering, I must say. I take a bite and they taste so heavenly...she passes the tray along. After eating I am leaving, it won't be disrespectful but I will come up with a plan. I can't let the meat go to waste!

50

Bayanda

I've been trying to call Nathi since last night and her phone puts me through voicemail. I find it rather strange, Nathi never switches off her phone. The last time I spoke to her was when she said, she is going to drop off her cousin at south beach. That was the last time I spoke to her, I hope she is fine wherever she is. I am so worried about her. I have a feeling that something bad happened to her, I hope i'm wrong though. Today I am supposed to meet up with Zaza, we need to go through the menus and discuss the prices. I don't think I will make it, so I text her cancelling the meeting. I need to find Nathi. I take my car keys and drive to Sands gardens, maybe I might get some lead about her whereabouts. I get there and I find the gates locked, sighs. I am defeated. I decided to call her uncle, maybe she might know where she went. He answers on the 4th ring.

“Son”

“Hi Malume. When last did you talk to Nathi”?

Him: Yesterday around 15:00. Why? Is everything okay?

Me: I don't know Baba. I've been trying to call her but with no avail, I thought that maybe she called you.

Him: She did not. The last time you spoke to her, how did she sounded like and what did she say?

Me: She sounded normal and she said that she is taking her cousin home.

Him: Did she mention the name?

Me: Nope. She didn't.

Him: I will call you back. Go and wait for her at her house for so long.

Me: Okay baba. Please find her.

Him: Don't worry son, I will.

I hang up and rub my hands on my face. Nathi. Where are you? I lean back on my seat and close my eyes. If only I got the cousin's names, i'm sure her uncle would've found her. This is messed up!

v

Nathi

I wake up with a very heavy headache. I can't help it but feel some soreness in my vagina. I open my eyes fully and I am not familiar with this room. Where am I? What happened? How did I get here? Ouch, the headache is not making any justice for me. I try to think back about what happened or how I got here but nothing. All I remember is that I was at the baby shower, I did not even eat because they had braaid pork, I am allergic to it. Then I drove Nhlamulo home. After then, I don't know what happened. Here I am now waking up in a strangers room with a mother of all headaches. I'm sure Bayanda is very worried about me, this is bad. I help myself out of bed. My vagina is really on fire. I look on the floor and there are used condoms, I don't even know how many are they. They all have semen in them. Tears filled my eyes, not knowing what happened really breaks my heart. I look for my dress and I find it near the door. I pick it up and wear it, I can't find my underwear. Tears are already streaming down my cheeks. Who can do such to me? Never in my life have I been reckless, I slept with a stranger. I am hurt and very much broken. I walk out of this room feeling ashamed of myself. What happened? Is the question ringing through my mind. The house is a 4 roomed house, I can tell by

the rooms. Loud music is bumping from the lounge, I stop and take a look and there is a guy and a girl making out on the couch. I wipe my tears and quickly walk out of the house banging the door. Thanks God, my car is here. I look for my car keys and I can't see them, where on earth could they be. More tears stream out of my eyes, the kitchen door opens and the guy comes out naked. He throws me my cars and head back inside the house. I open it, roaring the engine to life and drive off. I wonder what time is it, by the look of things it's already in the afternoon. I look for my bag and it is still where I left it, I open it and everything is still intact except for my phone.

Where the hell is my phone?! As soon as I make a stop at the garage, I search for my phone and I find it under my car seat, uh uh and it's off. I switch it on and messages come flooding in, the first person I call is Bayanda. His phone rings unanswered, I try calling him 3x times. Oh, almost forgot that he is meeting with Zaza. I step out of my the car and go to the toilet, I wash my face and look at myself in the mirror. I am disgusted by my reflection. I feel so cheap&used. How will Bayanda look at me after this? He will clearly think otherwise of me. Not unless I don't tell him, yes I will not tell him. I will go with this secret to my grave. This will break him apart, how will he look at me once he finds out about this? He will be so shuttered. I hope there is no video of me having sex out there, that will really break me apart. I will not be able to face the world or look at

myself in the mirror again, I hope the stranger was matured enough not to record it. I so hate myself right now. Fresh tears make way again and I welcome them, I am not ready to face him. I will get to my house and scrub this dirt off me then take a nap and I will call him once I feel better. I wash my face again and walk out...everyone is now looking at me, of which is strange because the time I entered no one was looking at me. I look at myself to see if I have something in me but I see none, maybe they can tell that I have disgraced myself and shamed my boyfriend or maybe they can see that I had sex with a stranger. I shake off those thoughts and head to my car when I hear some girls chuckle looking at me, I look at them and get into my car. I drive off slowly, maybe something will come up and I will remember what happened. I switch off my phone and continue driving with tears streaming down my face, it was useless washing it because once I think about this, they come out fresh. A part of me wishes that I shouldn't have went to that baby shower, I would have not been going through right now. It's saddening&heartbreaking. This is all my fault, I guess I deserved it, right? Sigh. As I am approaching my house, I notice that my gate is slightly open. He is here, I can't face him. I drive off very fast not wanting him to see me, I will come back later. I park my car at the park and lie back on the seat, my head is so heavy I even smell like sex, this is bad. What if this is the storm that Bayanda was talking about? What if this is the test that is

set to test our relationship? Once he find out about it this there is no coming back from it. Our relationship is doomed, we might as well forget about fixing it. Whoa

that's a big "if" he knows. I pray this doesn't reach his ears, I don't know how I will look at him once he find out. Let's say he forgives me. Will our relationship still be the same? Will it, huh? I don't think it will be. This is bad.

v

Ntando

I keep on replaying the video. I am with Pamela&Nhlamulo who are busy drinking beers, we are at Nhlamulo's house. Someone

posted this video on facebook&twitter, the views and the comments, iyoh. They are praising her, especially when she is doing woman on top. Well, only a few are against the video but as for the rest, wawini. This video makes me angry, it makes my blood boil. Siviwe has never fucked me like he fucks her, he has never muffed me like she does with her. He never made my legs vibrate like hers. Yes, I did say that I hate sex but this. This video that I am watching right now, makes me feel somehow. Her digging her nails in his skin and him thrusting and groaning on top of her is all new to me. When she rides him, good lord I don't even ride him because I don't know how to but here she is being a cow girl and her arse slapping. His groans, her moans, arhhhhh! I scream in frustration and throw my phone against the wall!

“What is it Ntando”? Nhlamulo ask

I ignore her and scream in frustration, while pacing up&down.

Me: He never does half of the things he is doing with her. We've never had passionate sex like he is with her! This sex carries so much emotions, the styles she does. When she stretches her legs, good Lord!

Nhlamulo: Who are you talking about?

Me: Nathi&Siviwe's sex tape.

Pamela: Siviwe? I thought I heard her calling Lwazi's name not Siviwe's.

Nhlamulo: I heard her too. Why think that it's Siviwe?

Me: The tattoos in his body.

Her: Him&Lwazi have the same tattoos. They are so close like brothers.

Me: They may have the same tattoos and all but that's Siviwe. I am sure of it.

Pamela: I would've figured that it was Siviwe but it's not him. It must be Lwazi. Siviwe doesn't give strokes like that.

I stop pacing up&down and look at her.

Me: Askies? What did you just say?

They both look at each other and they are communicating with their eyes.

Her: Well, a friend of mine once showed us a video of her&siviwe making love. It was nothing like what we just saw here, this is right here is real love making full of passion. I am so jealous.

Me: So, I should relax? Anyway, how did she end up with Lwazi in bed?

Nhlamulo: She had too many to drink at the baby shower and she started flirting with Lwazi, they ended up leaving together.

Me: I thought you said, she was drinking juice.

Her: Yes, she was.

Pamela: What was in that juice Anyway? I have ever been so horny like that in my whole entire life, my punza was heating up iyoh. It needed some cooling down my boyfriend was not there.

Her: I wish I knew what was in it too.

I leave them talking and I pick up my phone. The screen has cracked but it is very much intact. I watch the video one last time, I wanna see who is this guy that is fucking Nathi exactly. I am pretty sure that it is Siviwe, why would he do me like this? After all I have done for him? Is this the thanks I get? But then it is said that is not him, I mean whoever the person is hiding his face only Nathi's is visible. What a whore she is, miss high&mighty. Who knew that one day you will be caught up in such situations? This will taint your reputation and image. Not even your money can save you now, bloody rich porn star. At

least the world will see you for the whore that you are. I chuckle. Life is good!

v

Nathi

As the sun is now setting I decided to drive to my house maybe he is gone. My eyes are so swollen and red, I am a mess. As soon as I approach my house, the gate is closed and the lights are off which means that he left. I sigh and open the gate then drive in and park my car. I step out and fiddle with my bag looking for my house keys, I find them. I open and make my way inside while locking the door. I switch on the kitchen light and walk to my room, I need a real shower. As soon as I open

the door in my bedroom, I am met by a smell of alcohol&cigarette. My heart start beating out of my chest, who could this be? I can say that it's Bayanda but he doesn't smoke then who is it? I swallow hard and stand near the door.

“Switch on the lights”

That's Bayanda's voice it is hoarse, like he has been crying.

I switch it on and I see him sitting on the bed without his T-shirt on. He looks drunk, I mean he has a bottle of Gordon's in his hand, his eyes are blood shot red. I swallow hard, does he know?

Him: Where have you been?

He takes a big swig of his Gordon's.

Me: I...I...I was at Nhlamulo's.

He chuckles...

I am already in tears, ishUUU he looks pretty mad. He is angry with veins out.

Him: I will ask you again. Where were you?

I shake my head while crying.

Him: Oh, you can't talk now?!

Me: I...I told you.

Him: Told me?! The very same Nhlamulo who said she was not with you, she last saw you 5 years ago.

Me: S...sh...sh...she said that?

Him: Yes dammit! Your Uncle called her and she told him that, even Katlego doesn't remember inviting you to a baby shower! You Lied about the baby shower, just so you can cheat on me?!

He roars...

I shake my head crying. How can they do this to me. How can they?

Him: What is it that I am not doing for you, huh? Is my love not enough for you? Don't I give you enough sex? Why are not satisfied with me? Where do I lack, please tell me!

I shake my head. I am speechless. I don't even know how to explain myself because I too dont know what happened. I am a victim of circumstances.

Him: Why are you hurting me like this Nathi? I love you. I gave you my all and you break me like this! You fucken shamed me and to think I was ready to make you my wife. Little did I know

that I was going to marry a hoe, thank you for revealing your truself to me. I applaud your bravery.

Me: I...am...so...rry.

Him: With my brother Nathi! Out of all the guys you are cheating on me with my brother! Do you imagine the betrayal? Hearing you moaning his name and asking him to go deeper&faster. I was gonna understand maybe if you were drugged but you were sober, you slept with my brother willingly.

His brother? How? Which one? This is all messed up!

Me: I am sorry. I...I don't know what happened. I swear, I don't know.

He attempts to slap me but he stops himself and tears run down his cheeks, he is broken. He throws me his phone.

Him: Watch that!

I press play and it is a video of me having sex with this stranger, his brother. I cover my mouth with my hand as a loud sob escapes my mouth. Who could do this to me? I go down with my back on the wall, I sit flat on the mat and shake my head. I am ashamed of myself. All of this doesn't make sense. I feel so lost.

Him: I can't do this with you anymore. I...I need some time alone.

He walks out banging the door behind him, I bring my knees to my chest and hug them with my arms and cry. My life is over is no coming back from this and once again love has failed me. I just lost a man who loved with his all, this betrayal cuts deep. It hurts, my heart is bleeding tears!

51

Bayanda

Never in my life have I thought that a woman who I truly loved and gave my all to can do me like this. My previous girlfriends, did me bad but it has never affected me like this. I am beyond broken, my heart is aching. How could Nathi do this to me? I thought she was different but she is just like them. Why can't I get a good woman? A woman who will love me and not break my heart. What hurt the most is the fact, there is a sex tape of her. How does one forgive that? Maybe if there was no video, I would've forgiven her because I wouldn't have known what happened. I'm also sure that she would have not told me, she would've just kept quiet. This is betrayal on another level, it's unbelievable. Wait, the last time I checked Nathi don't know my brothers, that's what she told me. Not unless she lied. That bitch fucken lied about not knowing them. I am just glad that I've never introduced her to my family. Imagine the shame I would've put them through? Nathi is selfish. She has this good girl act going on, knowing very well that she is evil. She is a snake in a human form. I don't even wanna get started on

Lwazi! I thought that we were cool, he is my blood brother for Christ sake. How Can he sleep with my woman? Worst part he knows her, I once showed him her pictures. That fucker saw an opportunity and persuaded her. The hoe fell for his sweet words, I chuckle. My brother, my very own blood brother sleeping with my girl. If it was a stranger, it wasn't gonna hurt like how it is now. It hurts because she slept with my brother. That fucker even hid his face, he only showed Nathi's face, talk about being spiteful. He has fucken shamed her and her reputation has been ruined, that's the bitter truth of it all. The disgusting thing about all of this, is that they've recorded a sex tape. I'm sure they made it for memories but somehow it fell into wrong hands and got leaked. Nolwandle is the one who actually sent me the video. As soon as I saw Nathi's face my blood boiled. I couldn't believe it. I was shocked moreover confused, I needed answers. How do they know each other? When did they started dating? I mean Nathi was forever with me if not at work. Not unless they were meeting secretly without anyone knowing. I chuckle. The joke is on me, No wait, I am the joke. I mean everyone in the world has seen my girlfriend with my brother having sex. Clearly Nathi never loved me, she used me for her own benefits. Bitch. I drive straight home, I need answers and I need them now! I drive straight to Phindile's house. Lwazi is gonna regret double crossing me, i will kill him with my bare hands. He will die by my hands. I

finally arrived in Phindile's house. Right after I've parked my car, I am making my way to the house calling his name. I bump into Phindile in the kitchen, I just look at her and push her aside. I call Lwazi's name and he is not answering, dammit!

“Where is he Phindile? Where is that evil son of yours, huh”?

“What are you talking about? You are not making sense Bayanda! What the hell is going on”?

Me: Where is he? Where is Lwazi? I need to get answers from him.

Her: Answers? Answers for what? What happened Bayanda, talk to me.

I give her a death stare and click my tongue while walking away. I can hear her footsteps behind me. I head straight to his room outside and his door is slightly open, bastard. I chuckle, he thought that I wouldn't find him. I push his door open and he is not around! That son of a bitch ran away from me. Something

caught my attention on top of his bed, I walk closer just to confirm if it is what I think it is. And yep, it is. Here on top of his bed is Nathi's underwear, I know it because I was the one who bought it for her. The level of disrespect! She allows my brother to undress her the very same underwear I bought her? She went to him with the same underwear that I bought for her. The cruelty of it all. Her heart is evil. I scream in frustration and before I know it, I am wrecking havoc in Lwazi's room, I am turning it upside down. He will know me today! He will fucken know me. He can run but he can never hide. I will find him, come high or hell waters. Phindile is busy pleading with me to stop, never!

v

Anele

I still can't believe it. A whole business woman having a sex tape? Claps once! Who would want to ruin her reputation like this? People are so cruel out there, how do you do such to another human being? It's disgusting and degrading really. This video has done did ruining her reputation. How will she bounce back from this humiliation? How? Even if she recover, she will no longer be the same. This is heart breaking, it's sad. I really do want to believe that Ntando had nothing to do with it but i'm failing too. I mean, judging by the way she replies rubbish in some comments, she is really enjoying this. Heartless piece of shit! I don't even think that, she will even go back to work. How could she? I shake my head. I hope her family doesn't turn their backs on her, she need them more than even. She has no one. But, I do not believe that Nathi slept with this person willingly and I am sure that she didn't know that, that bastard was recording a video of them having sex. It makes me more angry because, this coward of a man hid his face and only showed Nathi's. I'm sure she was drugged. Nathi doesn't look like the type who sleeps around, she respects herself. Above it all, I hope that her boyfriend will be with her every step of the way. He will need to be strong for her, I know it won't be easy but he will have to. I pray that she survives this. Such a humble

soul, she is. I admit that I used to hate her at first, but not anymore. She has proved me wrong. This has jealously written all over it. Someone has it in for her, if only this Lwazi bastard didn't hide his face, geez. Kelo comes in disturbing me from my thoughts.

“Don't over think. You will stress the babies”

Me: Its just unbelievable and shocking. I can't help but think about her. I'm sure she is broken beyond repair wherever she is, this is bad. My heart bleeds for her. Who would do such a thing?

Her: God will see her through and what people must keep in mind is that, she will no longer be the same Nathi that everyone knew. This unfortunate event

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really hit her bad. Ntando's boyfriend orchestrated all of this and she fell for it, dragging more people in the plan. People who envy her life.

Me: It seems like you know a lot. Why don't we just expose these people? Let's let the world know how cruel they are. They must pay.

Her: Provide me with some evidence and we will expose them. We can't just expose people without any solid proof, they will charge us with deformation of character.

Me: It just frustrates me that there's nothing I can do to help her. I hate Ntando I hate her. She is dead to me.

Her: She is still your sister. She was once there for you.

Me: Yes, she was once there for me but I will not be there for her. She did all of this because of jealousy and that love portion added on top of it. Ntando has turned into something else. Someone we don't recognize.

Her: True hey. She allowed jealousy and that nonsense boyfriend of hers to play games with her mind. Nathi will be alright, she will be.

I nod...

I pray for her healing. For her broken heart to be mended. I pray that after all this is over, she will soldier on and soar high like an eagle. I want her to become victorious. The good thing about this is that, it would've been forgotten in a week.

v

Nathi

I feel so empty. I am souless and cold. I am busy cracking my head trying to remember what happened, nothing pops. I am more hurt of the fact that Bayanda concluded everything without hearing the side of my story. I am shocked that, he of all people sees me as a hoe and that I am cheating on him. It clearly shows that, he doesn't know me, he really doesn't because if he did then he would know that, I would never hurt him deliberately. Not once did I give him the benefit of a doubt that I love him. I've showed him. He knew that he was the only one for me, for him to conclude that I cheated on him. Really baffles me. It breaks my heart. I would understand if it was someone else but it was the man who stole my heart. The man who made me give love a chance again, the very same man who worshipped the ground I walked on. He did not think twice, he just upped&left. Never in my life did I think that I will be having a sex video, my heart is in thorns. How will I face people after this? How? My parents? How will I face them? I have disappointed them, i'm sure they don't want anything to do with me. I don't think I will ever be the same again. I am bruised, my heart is in pieces. I need something to help me numb the pain, to make all of this heartache that I am feeling right now to disappear. It hurts, it hurts so deep. The hole is too deep. How can Nhlamulo do me like this? I thought she loved me, I thought she was genuine with me but I was wrong. She hates me. It seems like she always had, she was pretending all

along. I trusted her deeply, she knew my deep dark secrets. I thought she was real with me and boy was I wrong, yes please I was wrong. I also can't believe that Katlego is in this too. After everything I have done for her, I saved her life the time she was five to death. I helped her and this is the thanks I get, after everything I've done for her? God, this kind heart of mine will be the death of me. Why, would they tarnish my image like this? I'm sure my enemies are happy about all of this. This saga happening right now, is my biggest setback ever. This moment right now, it's my lowest. What did I ever do for them to hurt me like this? I am such a fool. I am such a hoe. Obakeng must be turning in his grave, or maybe I just don't deserve love. I deserve to experience pain, just when I think things are looking up they all crumble down so quickly. I do not deserve all of this. Why can't I just be happy for once? Why? Or is too much to ask? Or maybe you find pleasure in seeing me hurt? God are you even there? Do you hate me that much? What did I do to you? Tell me so I can do right by you. If you are selling happiness then tell me, how much is it? How much is your happiness? I can't even smile. You've let me down God! Why did I have to go through such trauma? Mxm. I wipe my tears and I look at the half bottle of Gordon's. I crawl and take it and take one big swig, my heart is still heavy. I don't know how I am going to move past this. I foresee isolation again, depression. I foresee my old self again before I opened up my

heart for love again. Love is really not for me. After all this is over, where will I start with picking up the pieces of my life? I am so ashamed of myself. I don't even want the world to see me, I no longer wanna be part of it. It's jabs are painful and hard. I am wounded. I take another big swig, the pain is still there. I hope by the time the Gordon's finishes, the heartache that I am feeling right now will be gone. I guess it's true when they say, the biggest betrayal comes from family. I wonder how my parents are feeling, they must be really disappointed at me. The golden egg has disappointed them and made them a laughing stock in the whole township. They must be very disappointed in me, I don't blame them though. I would be too if I was them. I have really shamed the Bembe's. Can't I just at least get a clue of what happened or show me the face of this man at least. This is the scar I will carry for the rest of my life. Now the biggest question is; will I be able to love again? The events keeps on playing in my mind, I have no tears left to cry anymore. I've exhausted them. A part of me is gone, I am no longer complete.

Bayanda

I went to the nearest tarven and bought myself a bottle. It is said that men don't cry, but here I am chocking on my own tears. My heart is broken, I have failed as a man. I thought that maybe it was all just a lie but after seeing Nathi's underwear, I can tell that it's true. I chuckle, taking another big swig of my bottle. I am sitting in my car waiting for Lwazi, I can't believe that I've been played like this. I suspected nothing. These people are good in hiding things. I see him&Luyanda approaching the house laughing. I step out of my car and rush to him and throw one punch. He looks at me in total awe.

“WTF dude”?

“How dare you Lwazi? How dare you sleep with my woman”?

I wait no answer from him, I start attacking him blowing punch after punch. People are now watching us. Luyanda tries breaking us apart but I am not having any of it. I am going to kill this mother fucker! I feel someone with big hands yanking me up. I try to break loose but his grip is too tight, I have no choice but to give up. I look at bloody Lwazi and he is sitting there on the floor, his eyes red from anger. Luyanda helps him stand up shaking his head in the process.

Luyanda: Why?

Me: This fucker here slept with my girlfriend! My own fucken blood brother!

People gasp and Lwazi chuckles.

Luyanda: Which girl? When?

Me: Ask him he knows and he even had the audicity to record a video of them! What did I ever to do him, huh? What!

Lwazi: Nc nc nc. I thought you knew me better than this. Thought you knew me to point t of knowing that I would never hurt you intentionally, I guess I was wrong. Just so you know. I did not sleep with your woman and I have never met her. I hope you find the culprit whoever it is. Take care little brother and thank you for showing how little you trust me.

He shakes his head and walk away. Luyanda gives me a pissing, disappointed look.

Him: I don't believe you Bayanda. I never thought I would see the day, you turning out to be something you not. Go and cool down then think things through, coz you are definitely not yourself. I hope you find the culprit, I am so disappointed in you. You should be interrogating your woman.

He walks away and I am left defeated!

Phindile

After that free show that Bayanda gave us, I quickly rushed to Lwazi's room to look for Nathi's panty that I planted in Lwazi's room. I did not think that Siviwe was going to pull this off, he really surprised me. I've underestimated him, I did not see this one coming at all. I have never seen Bayanda so broken before, never in my life. He must really love this girl with everything in him. I chuckle and shake my head, this is the breakdown I've always wanted it's time I step in and be on his side, like a loving mother that I am, then I break him to a point of no return and suicide will be his only way out. Lwazi, i'm sorry that he is caught up in all of this but I had to do what I had to do. As long as he doesn't know that I have a hand in all of this, then i'm good. I don't even know how Siviwe managed to make the girl call Lwazi's name, he is the best. I am impressed. He even got the same tattoos as Lwazi, he is a mastermind of this game. Lwazi barges in his room as I am busy looking for Nathi's panty.

“What are you doing in my room”?

He roars causing me to jump, dammit.

“Geez Lwazi. You scared me”

Him: I asked! What the hell are you doing in my room Phindile and why is it upside down?

His eyes are cold, I have never seen him like this before. I am actually shocked.

Me: I was trying to clean it up. Bayanda did all of this, I don't even know how he got in here. I mean your door is always locked, I guess he broke it.

Luyanda: Broke it? This door doesn't look broken it doesn't look like it was forced open, someone opened the door and in this case it is you. You are the only one who has the key to Lwazi's room.

I didn't even hear him coming in.

Me: Maybe he took the time he was asking for you. I may have the keys but I never open Lwazi's room.

Zweli: Bullshit! Phindile tell me what happened, i'm sure you do not wanna see this dark side of mine. Talk!

Luyanda: Calm down bro, i'm sure there's a logical explanation for all of this.

Him: Don't start with me Luyanda. Bayanda can't just change overnight, he never reacts to situations before he finds out the reason behind them.

Me: Well in this case he did not find a reason. He saw a video of his girlfriend being fucked by you! How do you think that made him feel, huh? How? He feels betrayed. I am even embarrassed to call you my son right now!

He chuckles...

Luyanda: That's Bayanda's girlfriend? A whole business woman, miss know my worth? That woman can ride, she is a freak! He sure knows how to picks them or maybe it's pure bad luck. I mean all of his girlfriends sleep with his family members, they are all whores. Wait, that guy there can't be Lwazi. I was with Lwazi the whole of last night and this morning, there is no way that it was Lwazi.

Me: Well, why does that man have a same tattoo as Lwazi's huh, why?

Him: Because someone is out to get him. Someone is framing him!

Lwazi: Is this what you were looking for Phindile?

He lifts up the panty and looks at me with his cold eyes.

Me: What? No. Why would I look for your girlfriend's underwear?

Him: Are you fooling me or yourself Phindile?

Me: What are you talking about Lwazi?

Him: What did you do? Who are you working with? How did this end up in my room? What game are you trying to play Phindile?

He asks approaching me slowly with the panty in his hand. I swallow hard and step back, I don't know what he is thinking right now.

Me: Lwazi stop asking me nonsense. I don't know what you talking about!

Luyanda: Lwazi calm down man. Don't go to that dark place of yours, let's take a walk so that you will calm down.

Dark place? What is Luyanda talking about? Lwazi is my son, I mean I must know what's going on in his life. I am not an ignorant mother. As I am busy battling with my mind, I feel a strong hand gripping my neck real tight. I find myself being lifted up my legs floating in the air, I try removing Lwazi's hand on my neck but it is no use. He is strong, he tightens his grip. I shoot my eyes open I can feel my soul slowly but surely leaving my body. I can hear Luyanda begging him to let me go, I am getting weaker&weaker as he tightens his grip tight this time around. I fly across the room and my body come in contact with the wall. I feel my bones breaking and I cry in pain, my neck it's still painful. This is not my son, I don't know this person standing in front of me at all. I rub my neck while looking at him, he is mad very mad. I can't help but notice that his eyes are dark now. He clicks his tongue and walk away, Luyanda follows after him. I am left all alone in his room crying, my body is really in pain. I did not expect the turn of events to be like this, I almost died in the hands of my son. My own son that I gave birth too. Imagine if I told him the truth, I would prolly be dead by now or hospitalized.

Bayanda

After leaving Phindile's house I drove to the nearest bottle store, I need to drink down my sorrows. It never occurred to me that one day I will get it down with Lwazi my own brother, that I will lay my hands on him. It's surprising. Lwazi says that he has never met nor seen Nathi ever, but they were sleeping together. Lwazi is the only person I know with that tattoo and Nathi had to confirm it by calling his name during their love making session. She showed no regrets whatsoever, she was enjoying it. She was actually giving him full access, hoe. I chuckle, i'm a big fool. I need to drink and stop thinking about all of this, it is messing up with my mind. I am getting drunk now, I can feel it in my bones. All of a sudden I feel a cold breeze hitting my skin, I know the feeling very well, I know exactly who it is. The only difference about this breeze is that it is strong, it's even harsh and it's cutting my skin. By the look of things no one is noticing what is happening to me, absolutely

no one. What does she want now? She must give me a break! I am sent flying outside and hit hard with my body on the floor breaking a few bones in the process. The leaves rattles creating massive noise, she is angry very angry!

“Fix this before she leaves you for good Bayanda! Fix it or I will have you killed. I am so disappointed in you haven't I warned you”?

I keep quiet and not answer her. I am already sober. Why didn't she prevent shit like this from happening? I mean she warned me about it, right? She was supposed to stop it. She is a useless ghost and now she is here giving me orders. Who does she think she is? She better leave me the hell alone.

Her: Fix this mess. Get justice for your woman, find out who the real culprit is. Reach out to Nathi's uncle, you will have to work together. He has the information.

Me: I don't want anything to do with that family! Nothing, do you you hear me? Nothing! Now leave.

Her: You need them and they need you. I will be back.

Me: Don't come back! You've failed to stop this mess from happening, you knew and you did nothing about it. Leave me alone Aziza! Just leave me alone and don't you ever come back!

I am now crying. How dare she? She failed to prevent this from happening, she fucken failed! I hate her. I hate everyone who has a hand in this. I force myself to stand up and I stugger back to the tarven, I get settled and order another round of Heineken.

v

Nathi

I'm still in the clothes that I was in for the past 2 days. I have no strength to go and take a bath, I smell sour. I don't even have appetite. My phone is still off and Bayanda hasn't come to check up on me, I guess he is really angry at me. I've shamed him. I get up from the floor with a pounding headache, it's just after 17:00 in the evening. I can't go back to that person I was back then, who found comfort in the bottle. I wish that Sindi was here, she would've known what to do or tell me where to go from here. I need to pick myself up again and I am definitely not going out there to face the world. I won't let this break me down, I am empty yes but I will not allow the devil to feed on my fears&tears I won't. I need to pick up my crown, I am not a victim. I am a survivor. I walk to my bathroom and fill the bathtub with water and put all the ointments. I take off my dress and get inside the bathtub, I scrub off the sex smell with tears pouring out of my face. I don't care about the pains that i'm feeling right now. I care about Bayanda not giving a fuck about me. You know what's more funny, is that he was warned about this, he knew that the test of our relationship was going to come. Or did he turn a blind eye to all of the warnings he was given? Actually it is his fault that I am here, it's his cruel

family that put me in this position. They used me to hurt him, well it's not entirely their fault because my own family have a hand in this too. It's not my fault that I am successful and young, I've worked so hard to be where I am and I have never been to proud about it. I have never made them feel less of being humans, never. I treated all of them equally. I never saw myself better than them. I've even tried taking Nhlamulo to college to further her studies since her matric result were not that good, but what did I get? A slap in the face. It was said that just because I have money, I am looking down upon them and I am trying to show them that I am really rich and they are nothing. 2 days before my wedding day, they requested a lump some of money. I told them that I have to talk to Obakeng first, after all we were one. Yoh, the insults I got, wow! Anyway, I get out of the water since the water is getting cold. I wrap a towel around my body and look at myself in the mirror, I don't like what i'm seeing. Wait I should've just gone to the clinic to get tested but I can't handle the stares. People will be looking at me somehow, they will point fingers at me and pity me. It's embarrassing really. I mean, I can't avoid their stares after all. All I need to do right now is to go somewhere and lie low until all of this is over. Maybe being away for a while will do me good and I might remember something about what happened. I will have to find the best IT technician in the country who can trace for me, who actually posted the video. The real culprit, the

starter of this whole saga. The person who has shamed me like this, I need to regroup and find myself again before I can face the whole world again. I take my laptop and log in to Facebook, I hide my active status. My notifications are insane and my wall is full of posts, pervets have left their numbers some are even claiming to be porn star agents in my inbox. My cousins are having a filled day about all of this. It's actually shocking, Katlego is in too. Why am I not surprised? Some comments are heart breaking & mean and I am shocked to see Ntando's comment under one of the posts, a whole Ntando. The person I've done a lot for...

★The biggest porn star to have hit our phone screens in a long time. A whole business woman opening legs for another man, what a whore she is! She acts all humble and kind but she is a devil's agent who has lot of money. A whole fucken hoe, who sleeps with her boyfriend's brother anyway? If that's not first degree of whoring, then I don't know what is. Once a hoe always a hoe. I'm sure she also killed her ex husband just to claim the money. She is that heartless!★

I chuckle with tears pouring down my cheeks, after reading the comment, so much hate and name calling. This is the thanks I get for helping her? Wow, okay. I'm sure Nhlamulo told her about Obakeng because I don't remember telling Ntando about him. So, they are convinced that I kill Obakeng, how sweet! Since when are they friends anyway? These people have it all out for me. After reading the bashing comments, I deactivated my Facebook account and close my laptop. I start packing a few of my clothes, tonight I will book a hotel then tomorrow I will go to rent an apartment for few days. I need to be alone for a while, I am tired of cying. I wheel my suitcase out and switch off all the lights in the house, I load my suitcase in the car and I drive off. Tears are really starting to befriend me and I hate it. I left my phone behind, I do not want anyone contacting me. It's not like they will miss me anyway. Before I could even get far, I turned my car around and drive back to my house. I park the car and walk inside the house, I get into my room. I switch on my phone and request an uber. I switch off my phone and walk out. The uber arrives, I get in and the driver is busy looking at me, nonsense.

Me: Stop starring just drive.

He nods and drives away...

Bayanda

It's been 2 weeks now ever since Nathi's sex tape and things have cooled down. I haven't even tried keeping in contact with her, I am ashamed of how I handled things. I acted without thinking and I am pretty sure that she doesn't want anything to do with me. I don't blame her though, I mean I've left her at lowest, where she needed me the most, but how was I to be there for her when the whole have seen her nakedness? It was embarrassing for me as a man. Where do I start fixing this? It's all messed up. The last time I saw her, I said some mean words to her. I've insulted her, words cut deeper to tell you the truth. Then there's Lwazi, he doesn't want anything to do with me and Phindile. Few days later I saw photos from the party where they were invited with Luyanda. He was with his girlfriend, he was not with Nathi. I tried reaching out to him to try and apologize but he gave me a cold shoulder, I deserved it. Phindile&I decided to give our mother to son relationship chance again. She is trying her outmost best to make it work, her efforts are noticeable. Now, I am on a mission of finding out

the man in that sex tape. It can't be Siviwe because he doesn't have any tattoos. I will have to find the culprit. After 2 weeks of not reporting to work, I decided to go and check how it's going and if everything is in place. I take my car keys and drive to the restaurant. I get there and business is booming as normal. I thought that after Nathi's video will no longer come, I was wrong. Here they are, it's a full house plus it's month end. Sbusiso is really doing a good job, I must give him a raise. I walk in the office and I find him busy with files, I greet him and sit down.

“Welcome back boss”

“Thanks young man. How are things”?

Him: All good boss. The restaurant was really slow after your...urhm, Nathi's you know mus. Very soon it picked up again, I guess people can't leave without our food and exceptional service that we offer.

I nod...

The restaurant is doing fine without me&Nathi. That's good, I wonder when last was she here.

Me: That's good to hear. Did Nathi come by ever since the saga?

Him: Nope and her phone has been off ever since. We've been trying to call her and you were not answering your phone too.

Me: Sorry for putting you through this, I know that it's a lot of burden but I am very thankful for your help. You deserve a raise and so are the other staff members, good job.

He nods and shows his biggest smile. He looks proud&happy.

Me: I guess you don't need me you have it all under control and that's good. I need to go and see someone, I will probably stop by sometime.

I stand and fist bump with him and walk out of the restaurant. I get into my car, I take my phone and going to gallery. She looks

so beautiful and innocent. I am not functioning without her, there's a big void in my life right now. Her space is noticeable, I can't imagine life without her. I will have to fix this, I have too. I wipe the tear that was coming out of my eye, a grown up man like me who never shed a tear in his entire existence, shed lots of them for the past 2 weeks. Never in my life did I think that I will cry, especially for a woman. I guess it's true when they say, "never say never" I continue scrolling through our pictures, we look so happy together and that video had to erase the good memories we shared. I find myself giggling alone. I miss her, I must find her. I know that it won't be easy but I won't give up until she is back in my life again.

v

Ntando

Siviwe have been really distant lately and so is Pamela. All of a sudden, he was working abnormal hours. He would go out early in the morning and come back late around 21:00, he doesn't even touch me anymore. He is forever tired. I don't know where I went wrong with him, he is so cold and it's like I disgust him or something. Hhayi ke

Pamela's kids are always sick lately, the only person who becomes available for me it's Nhlamulo. She is always available, we have become best of friends. I am meeting with her at Joe's, she texts me that she is already at Joe's. It's a 5 minutes walk from Siviwe's house to Joe's. I get there and I find her sitting, I walk up to her. As soon as she sees me she stands up, we share a hug and we both seat down. She doesn't look comfortable, her eyes are wandering around.

“Are you okay? I mean you don't look comfortable”

“Oh, no i'm fine. Just had a little fight with my boyfriend that's all”

She is lying, I can tell from her eyes.

Me: If you say so then. I thought that you said Pamela will be joining us.

Her: That's what she said. Let's order so long, i'm sure she is on her way.

I nod...

She calls one of the waiters and orders 2 mojito for us. Mojito have become my favorite drink, at all times.

Her: How are things between you&Siviwe?

Me: Not good, I think he is cheating on me.

Her: What? That doesn't sound like Siviwe. Why think that?

Me: It's the way he is behaving lately, he is so cold&distant. It's like he fell out of love with me. He doesn't even touch me let alone make love to me.

Her: That's hectic. Did you try talking to him?

Me: Yes and he always tells me the same thing. He is working over time, I mean even on weekends. What do you call that?

Her: I wouldn't call it anything. Honestly, I don't know what I will call it. Talk to him again. Buy the best lingerie and seduce him, you know your man's soft spot. Focus on it and he won't resist you.

Me: That's also an idea but I am on my periods, disaster.

Her: Hard luck then but you will be fine. Talk to him and hear what he says, he must tell you something.

I nod...

She thinks that it's easy to just talk to Siviwe, hhe nigga can't even stand my presence that's how much I disgust him. I swallow the lump that is already falling in my throat, it hurts I won't lie. He doesn't even eat this food that I have cooked. At least if he can communicate with me and tell me what's going on. I feel hands holding mine, I've even forgotten that I am with someone. I clear my throat and wipe my tears, I didn't even notice that I was crying. She hands me a tissue and I wipe my tears.

Me: Sorry for breaking down in front of you, it's just that it hurts. Let me go home and rest.

I stand up but she stops me...

Her: No don't go to your house. Let's drink our Mojito's and we will go to the mall, you need to unwind and forget about your problems for a little while.

Me: Argh, here it's fine. We can still unwind here, cheers.

We cling our glasses and we laugh...

v

Bayanda

I get to Nathi's house and knock at her door, there is no response. It took me a lot of courage to come here. I take out my keys from my pocket and unlock the door and I step in, the house looks empty. It's like no one has been here for a whole judging by the dust on top of these surfaces. I ascend the stairs and go to her room, I switch on the light and there room is as how as I've left it. Well, except for the empty bottle of Gordon's

on the floor. Her phone is on top of her bed, I guess she went to the shops she will be back. I walk out of her room and go to the garage, all her cars here. Where could she possibly be? I've looked for her all over and there is no sign of her, damn it where are you!! I sit down on the couch and dial Nathi's uncle, I hope he won't insult me.

“Hello Taima. Is Nathi with you there”?

“No son. We have been trying to call her and her phone is off. Heard anything”?

Me: No not yet but I will try and do some follow ups.

Him: Please do. We need her home safe, if you need some help call me.

Me: Will do Taima. Sharp.

I hang up and take a deep sigh... It's bad. I hope you are safe wherever you are Nathi, I pray for your safety and to God to protect you.

54

Nathi

Taking a break from everything else and try claiming my life back, it's been a bliss. I am so content with everything right now. I've finally forgiven myself for what I went through, after all it was not my fault. It was hard at first to move on, at least people from here at ocean view don't know anything about the video. They wouldn't know though because everyone is minding their own business, it is one of the quiet places ever. You hardly hear dogs barking, that's how quiet it is. Their mall is forever empty even the shops are too, you do in&out. No long ques and bumping into one another, it's s breath of fresh air. This will be my new hiding place or when I need to unwind, I will definitely come here. I am buying it too. One thing you must know is that, I am no longer that kind Nathi that I was before this happened but I am still humble though. Just that I will no longer be tolerating nonsense from anyone. From now on going forward I am doing me, I come first before others. People have taken advantage for far too long and that stops now. A lot people will hate me and it will still be fine because I

couldn't care less about them, but I care about Bayanda. After everything that has happened I still love him. I'm just not sure if he still does love me too, thinks about me everyday like I do with him or he has moved on, that would really hurt me, I won't lie. I tried forgetting about him, I tried but I've failed. if happen that he has not moved and still wants me back, I will make him sweat and give him a hard time until he is on a verge of giving up. Then I will forgive him. He will have to earn my love again. I went to a doctor to get tested and she found traces of flunitrazepam(Ryphol) in my system, I was indeed drugged and she told me the side effects of it all. Not remembering anything it's on top of the list. It can also cause seizures, breathing difficulties, death and can result into nausea. I am just glad that I did not die or have any seizure. I am also clean, no STIs. No HIV I am thankful but I am expecting, I'm 3 months pregnant and you know who the father is. Well, I doubt he will believe me if I tell him that I am pregnant and he is the father. And the good news is that I've also find out the person who who posted the video, it's the same fucker who raped me. He thought that he was invincible right, he thought that he would never be found but then God was like, "not with my child" well he has just dug himself his grave. I am very thankful for Malcom, he really came through for me and he also made an exception and find some information about him. All I can say is that, he will be sentenced should this information lands in the hands of police.

That would be too easy though, I want him to suffer and so are his gang mates. They must all feel my wrath. I stand by the window and look at the beautiful view, the trees look lively and so is the weather. It's spring after all. I am planning my grand come back, I wanna shock a lot of people especially those who thought I was down&out. Those who were rejoicing in my mystery. I need to call my uncle and find out how everyone at home is holding up, especially my parents. I feel bad that I left without saying anything to them. I'm sure my mother blames herself, she feels like she has failed me. I need to assure her that I am doing just fine she must not worry herself about me, I needed this gateway. I take my phone and call my uncle, I bought those small phones that make/receive calls and sending smses. Before I left I wrote my uncle's number on a piece of paper, I wonder how he is feeling about all of this. Knowing him he is turning the whole of south Africa upsidedown, that's how dramatic he is. I am about to hang up when he answers...

“Hello” Anthea answers.

I take a deep breath, at least she won't shout at me.

“Hello anyone there? Listen here whoever you are. Stop calling this phone if you know what's good for you, or maybe you were calling thinking that my husband is alone? Well baby, you are talking to the wife! I will find you and once I do I will slit your...”

I chuckle cutting her short.

Me: Haibo Ant. Is my uncle cheating on you?

Her: Wh...Nathi is that you? Damn it maarn.

I chuckle...

Me: Yes it's me.

Her: Where the hell are you? Do you have any idea what you've put parents through? Your mother's high blood it's sky rocketing and your father he is not good also health wise, he has lost too much weight. Your parents are worried sick about you.

I take a deep breath...

Me: Is my uncle around?

Her: Here he comes, hold on.

I hear some shuffling...

Him: Nathi where the hell are you? Are you okay? Do you know how worried sick we were about you?! We are losing sleep because of not knowing where you are. Your parents are sick and that young man is not looking good. He has been calling me almost everyday asking if I have heard from you. Come back home! I want you here before midnight, I don't care where you are but I want you back tonight!

Me: Okay I will come back tonight, just don't tell Bayanda.

Him: I want you here Nathi! Hope I made myself clear.

He doesn't wait for me to answer him, he hangs up. Geez this man. I throw my phone on top of the bed and breathed out, I guess no grand entrance for me. I will have to ubee straight to my parents house, I feel bad about what I heard considering their health, ai. I hope it's not that bad.

v

Anele

I am at the mall with Kelo, in fact Siza is the one who suggested that we come here. He offered to look after the kids, he also gave us his card to use. In fact I am going to use it to buy baby

essentials and few dresses for myself. Ntando's Facebook posts lately are very disturbing, it seems like she is going through a lot, I tried reaching out to her and she told me to focus on finding the real father of my bastards. I gave up and stopped reaching out to her her sould've just accepted my gesture or else she will find herself with no one. Our first stop is at earth child

Advertisement

we buy all the clothes then we go to Mr price. I choose some few dresses for me&Kelo and some clothes for the kids and I buy Siza some shorts, chinos and t-shirts. He never busy clothes this, he can come and buy the underwear himself. I am not doing that. We pay and we go to KFC, I know that a lot of you don't like the group but it is me favorite, I can even eat 10 of them and want more. That's how much I like it. We settle for streetwise 5, we eat having little chats here&there, I pray that she doesn't switch to Bible talks and church. She is devoted to those two, she did not even wanna come with me here at the mall because she can't afford to miss Bible studies. I had to bribe her by cooking for her this week. Talk about abuse, she clearly doesn't care about my situation. We are busy eating when I spot Pamela&Siviwe acting all lovey dovey, holding hands and kissing. I chuckle and shake my head, I take out my phone and take pictures of them and a video. Kelo doesn't even

notice what is going on, i'm sure she is busy with her church mates on WhatsApp. Poor Ntando. She is so in the dark, these people really used her and now I take it they are done with her. Nc nc nc, I will have to light up her room. Argh, or not. I excuse myself and go to the ladies restroom. I do my thing, this is the most annoying thing in this pregnancy having to constantly going to the loo, it's annoying. Period! I wash my hands and walk out when I bump into someone, I look up and it is Mabandla. My hands start sweating and my breathing becomes abnormal. I try to contain myself and act tough but deep down I am breaking down. I stare at him and he moves his eyes to my tummy

“Who is the father and how far are you”?

Talk about being rude. He doesn't even greet and he is already bombing me with questions, who the hell does he think he is? I keep quiet and attempt to walk but he grabs me by my arm, I look at his hand then at him.

“I've asked you a question Anele. Answer me woman”

Me: Maybe it's one of your many friends who had fun with me in your presence months ago.

Him: So, you don't know who the father is? There might be a possibility that I am the father, right? If I am then I want to be part of his/her life. I wanna be present.

I chuckle...

Me: And you think I will tell you once I give birth? You must be out of your damn mind! Even if you are the father I will not allow you to be part of my babies life! You've put me through all. You've made me disgust and hate myself, you've ruined me. I never got justice from what happened to me but instead I was blamed and called names! I hate you Mabandla and I don't want anything to do with you. Now let my hand go before I scream and avert eyes to ourselves.

Him: Babies? How many babies are you talking about?

Unbelievable! That's all he heard out of all the mouthful I just said? Wow! Talk about being ignorant!

Me: Let go of me Mabandla!

Him: Don't deny me the chance of being part of my babies life. You know how much I always wanted a child Anele, just don't rob me the chance of being a father. I am sorry for everything I put you through, please just don't shut me out. Let me be with you every step of the way we can even co-parent.

Me: I will think about it.

Him: Thank you and I miss you.

Me: Good-bye Mabandla.

I retract my hand from his grip and walk back to where I was sitting, I am no longer in the mood for anything I just need to lie down. I take my bag and walk out without telling Kelo, she will follow after me. I need some ice cream.

v

Bayanda

Phindile invited me over for some dinner. It feels weird without Lwazi and Luyanda is not fun too. Ever since Zweli left he has become something else, the tension is too thick. It doesn't feel like good old times where we shared jokes and stories as a family. That warmth&love we always spread in this house is no more. It is now cold&somber. All of this shit feels forced and it's killing my vibe honestly. I am not even in the mood for food, not knowing where Nathi is, is adding to everything I am currently going to through, I am not complete without her. A chunk of me is missing and all of this feels wrong!

“Is everything okay Son? I mean you jarfly touch your food and it's getting cold”

“I am fine and I am not really hungry”

Her: You have to eat something Bayanda. Look at you, you've lost some weight. I only have your best interest at heart.

Luyanda: Do you even care if your other son has eaten or what? Do you even know where he is or if he is warm? Don't you have his best interests at heart, huh? Stop this fake caring act you trying to do it doesn't suit you.

Her: Luyanda I am still your mother and you will talk to me with respect, I am not your peer, am I clear?

He laughs just once...

Him: Respect? Respect is earned Phindile! You know what, I am done with this fake love you showing us especially Bayanda. It's disgusting. I am no longer hungry, i'm sure you've poisoned the food you evil woman. Enjoy the rest of your cold dinner, excuse me.

He stands and walk to his room Phindile calling after him. I hear his door banging, damn. I never thought he had it in him to spew such to his mother, phela he was her most beloved son. That table have turned. I also stand up and walk out without bidding my goodbye to Phindile. Well, what Luyanda said was true. Phindile never really loved me, she was actually pretending. All the signs were there but I turned a blind eye to it all. Fake love my foot.

v

Nathi

The uber drops me off at my parents house. It's just after 20:00 and I know that my parents are prolly watching generations, I wonder how they will welcome me. I mean I've shamed them but they are still my parents I regardless. I take a deep breath and walk inside the yard Wheeling my suitcase, at least the gossipers are in their houses. It's now or never. I knock twice and the door yanks open, it's Innocentia. She is dumb struck, she is shocked, I don't blame her though, I would too if it was me.

“Who is that Inno”?

Innocentia is still shocked erh or maybe she froze. I push her aside and make my way to the lounge, as soon as she sees me her eyes gets filled with tears.

“Nathi wuwe lo ngempela ntombazana yami” (is this really you my daughter)

I nod and run to her, I embrace her and allow my tears to flow.

“I am so sorry mama. I am truly sorry”

Her: It's fine Nono as long as you are home. I thank God that you are home safe and in one piece, that's all that matters.

I just cry in her chest...

“Oh, thank you God my daughter is home. Thank you for answering our prayers”

I feel his arm on my back hushing me.

Me: I...I am sorry for embarrassing&shaming you guys.

Dad: It's all in the past Nono, forgive me yourself.

I needed this. I needed to hear my parents comforting words.

55

Nathi

I am woken up by Anthea calling my name, geez she is literally screaming. What is she doing here so early anyway? Oh sh*t! My uncle is here too, I leapt out of bed and open the door I bump into her on my way out.

“Slow down tiger”

“Slow down? Do you want your husband to kill me, you know how he hates people who wakes up before 07:00”

Her: Chill out. He ain't here, he is attending a meeting.

Me: That's better. What are you doing here anyway?

I push her aside and go and rinse my face.

Her: I came to to see if you are really home, your uncle's orders not mine.

Me: Unbelievable! Your husband is something else, yuhh.

Her: How are you honestly?

Me: I am better now, the me time really helped me a lot.

Her: I can tell. Now that you are home let me go and catch some breakfast with Lorna.

Me: And why am I not invited?

Her: I was gonna invite you but I just realized something. Love you niece and nice cut by the way, the blue suits you.

Me: Love you too Anthea.

She kisses my cheek and walk out. I go to the lounge and my parents are not here, I wonder where are they. There's a note on the fridge.

★Went to town with the kids, we will see you when we come back★

Oh well, now what to do. I make myself food and watch TV. The house is clean, there's nothing to do here. My phone rings and it is my uncle.

“Malume”

Him: Meet me for lunch at Joe's at 13:00pm sharp.

Me: Okay.

Him: Wait, let me rather come there.

Me: Nah, I'll meet you at Joe's.

Him: Are you sure? I mean after your video and all.

Me: It's fine really. I am over that and besides one way or the other I was bound to go out. I don't care about people, especially those who have sex together. I'm sure some wished that they were me if not their spouses woman.

Him: Too much info Nathi!

Me: Sorry uncle, I just got carried away. See you at 13:00.

Him: Noticed. See you then.

I hang up and continue watching TV. I hear some footsteps and laughter, oh that must be Kat. I stop eating and look at the door, I cross my legs and fold my arms. She stops on her tracks and parts her lips and shoot up her eyes. She looks good, I

guess my mini downfall made her glow, well her glow is short lived though.

Her: Ah...wh...ho...

She can't even utter one simple line.

Me: What? You just saw a ghost? OMG, are you shocked to see me? Unbelievable right?

Me: It's not that. It's just that I am surprised and happy to see you. I am glad that you are still intact, you look beautiful by the way. I am happy to see you.

Me: Can't say the same about you though and I am back for good. You can start alerting your crew.

Her: What do you mean? What crew are you talking about?

Me: Argh, never mind me and it's nice to be back home.
Welcome home Zubenathi, it was gonna be nice if you threw
me a welcome back party Enjoy your day, I will see you later.
I am meeting with your uncle

Her: You going out? Haven't you embarrassed the family
enough with your porn star video?

I chuckle...

Me: Did they tell you that they are embarrassed?

Her: Not in so many words but you did shame us. We were a
laughing stock in the community!

Me: Why are you so worked up?

Her: Because you have shamed us Nathi!

Me: How have I shamed you? That was me on that video and heck, i'm sure I ride better than you. You should come to me for tips maybe your boyfriends will last, miss “shamed/embarrassed us” As if you are perfect mxm. Lovely dress by the way.

I pat her shoulder and walk away smiling. I get into the room that I am sharing with Innocentia&Zimbini. I throw myself in the bed with my legs dangling, Kat must not dare me, iyoh. I look at the time and it's just after 09:00am, enough time for me to sleep before my parents come back.

v

Phindile

My life has been miserable lately, nothing ever works out for me. All of my kids are angry at me, some of my family members don't want anything to do with me. Skhumbuzo has gone AWOL, his phone is off I wonder where did he go. He always tells me when he is going somewhere, I hope nothing bad happened to him. Siviwe has gone back to his baby mama, leaving that poor girl in his house all the time. All in all I am alone, I have no one. Not so long ago I had people who could literally lick the ground for me to walk on, bow down to the site of my presence. They would shield me from the sun and all other harsh stuff, but now those people are nowhere to be found. I need to do a family gathering just to have a sense of belonging, right now I am totally lost. My phone rings disturbing me from my thoughts and it's a land line number, I wonder who it is. I answer anyway...

“Phindile”

“Skhumbuzo. Oh God, I am glad to hear your voice I was so worried about you”

Him: I am handing myself over to the police. My skeletons are emerging in all angles, I am going to hand myself over and confess my deed to the police.

Me: What?! You can't do that Skhumbuzo! You are going to throw me under the bus? The mother of your son? Don't do it Skhumbuzo. We have come to far to give up now.

Him: I'm sorry but it's the best for me. Rather them hear it from a horses mouth, maybe I might get a lighter sentence.

Me: Skhumbuzo I am begging you. Don't do this. Okay okay, I will set up a date with your son. Is that what you want, right? I can make it happen just don't do anything stupid.

Him: I don't care anymore about knowing my son. I've begged you and you did not want me to meet him, now I no longer wanna meet him. I'm sure you will tell him about me. Goodbye Phindile.

Me: Skhumbuzo Skhu...(he hangs up)

Damn you Skhumbuzo! I throw my phone against the wall and scream, I will not let Skhumbuzo throw me under the bus. He will have to die, he must be silenced for good. I cannot afford to go to jail I wouldn't survive, I heard awful stories about jails. Is not a nice place at all. They kill each other over a meal, no no no. I do not wanna experience that. I just need to find in which station he is in and I will send some boys to kill him. Dammit wena Skhumbuzo, you weakling!

v

Unknown location

She coughs and gasp for air. Her head feels heavy and throat dry

she manages to open her eyes but her sight is still blur. She is confused, she doesn't know where she is or what's going on. Her legs are chained but her hands are free. She opens her eyes fully now and take in all of her surroundings, she is unfamiliar with this place. It's a one room with only a bed that she is sleeping on and 2 chairs, plus a computer table and a laptop and telephone on top of the table. 2 coffee mugs just behind the laptop, one has a lipstick in it. She sits upright and the chains shackles.

“My kids. Where are my kids? Where am I? What happened to me”?

She is asking herself questions and nothing is making sense, she doesn't remember anything. She leans her head on the wall. She hears voices outside and she goes back to the way she was sleeping. The door creaks open and two people get in laughing, a male and a female. They place the doggy bags on top of the table and laugh sitting down.

Woman: I can't wait for tomorrow.

Man: What's happening tomorrow?

Woman: Don't tell me that you've forgotten. It's Busi&Menzi's vows renewal.

Man: I can't believe that they've been married for 24 years!
Menzi is one patient man, how do you marry such a loud mouth like Busi?

Laughter...

Woman: Tell me about it. I wonder how is she happy without her daughter, she's living life like it's normal.

Man: She has a daughter?

Woman: Yes. I last saw her daughter when she was 6 years old.

Man: What about her?

He asks pointing at the woman...

Woman: I don't know. All I know is that she is Bheki's crush or whatever from highschool.

Man: What exactly is that he wants from her? He has been keeping here for months now.

Woman: I wish I knew. Do you think she is hungry?

Man: Yes she is very hungry.

Woman: If only she can wake up. She's been out of it for months, at least she is breathing. There's still hope, right?

Man: Of her waking up? I pray for that everyday.

Woman: Me too. I think we should just untie her legs, what's the use of tying her legs? She is as good as dead.

The woman takes the key and unlocks the chain from the other woman's legs.

Woman: Now that's more like it. Let's eat so that we can knock off, I am tired.

Man: Why don't we work double then tomorrow we won't come in. I mean, we will have enough time to prepare.

Woman: You right. How are you coming along with finding your son?

Man: It's a dead end. I've given up.

Woman: Bummer.

They continue talking randomly...

The other woman smiled to herself, some light finally. Her plan is to run away, to where she doesn't know. Bheki is very ruthless and he doesn't think twice before killing you. Or maybe she can just talk to these people, they sound like good people. Well, she can't risk with her life, now can she? She wants to go to his kids.

v

Skhumbuzo

This man standing before me is very intimidating and scary. He kidnapped me in my house, he actually threatened me. He

questioned me and I told him everything I know about Phindile. He even forced me to call Phindile and tell her that I am handing myself over to the police. He assured me that I will be protected at all cost.

Him: You can stay here until Phindile is behind bars. I know that she was going to send boys to kill you, once she finds out in which police station you are in just to silence you.

I nod...

Him: That woman really tarnished my daughter's reputation and degraded his son status, not his son son but yeah him. You have been a great acquaintance, you have everything you will need here.

I nod...

I can't even utter anything, this man's presence is heavy and intimidating.

Him: Let me run, I am having lunch with my niece. You know her right?

I nod...

Him: Have you suddenly gone deaf?

I shake my head...

Him: Then talk!

I jump up in my sit, he chuckles.

Him: Nc nc nc. You such a woman, later. Help yourself with food you look hungry.

He walks out with his goons following behind him. I let out a deep breath, damn. I almost peed on myself. I pray that he keeps his word and protect me. This apartment is to die for, i'm sure it cost my 12 years salary and few bank loans. I stand up

and go to the fridge, I open it and my fridge is nothing to this one here, yuhhh. I will leave this house fat. Phindile's day is coming and it is much closer than I have anticipated. I will finally get to know my son, I will build a relationship with him.

v

Nathi

I get to Joe's and everyone's eyes are on me. I flash them a smile and wave at them, some wave back with smiles and some blush. Y'all see, my presence is noticed. I am the Queen after all. I own my crown and I fix my crown, I own my Queendom and I choose who I allow in. I order a glass of juice, I can't drink

alcohol in the presence of my uncle. He hates it when women drink alcohol, sigh.

“How much per round”? A voice speaks just next to my ears.

“How much do you have”?

Him: I have R500.

Me: You think i'm that cheap? Boy you are not in my league, only BBE's men can afford me.

Him: You are insane! You deserve R60 after that viral porn video of yours! You are cheap and you are used goods! No man will ever want you.

I chuckle...

Me: Yet you are here asking me how much I charge per round? That can only mean you were impressed with what you saw

and you want a taste of it. I deny you and you resort to insulting me, does that make you a man or a boy? Go think it through before you answer me. Shush now, come back when you have an answer for me and this juice will be on you Mr R500. Wanna say something?

I am looking at him straight in the eyes...

He shakes his head and he is shaking, i'm sure he wants to pee on himself.

Me: Now leave.

I hiss...

He stumbles and walk away, more like running.

I chuckle and continue drinking my juice, my uncle is running late. Well, I am not complaining because i'm giving people something to talk about. They were bored mus. He sits down, I did not even see him approaching.

“Sorry i'm late I got held up somewhere”

“It's no big deal uncle. These people have been keeping me entertained with their stares”

Him: At least you weren't that bored. How are you?

Me: Good uncle, you?

Him: Good too. Have you ordered?

Me: Just juice I was waiting for you to get here before I order food.

Him: Snakes go and buy us meat.

Snakes nods and walks away...

Me: You have something for me?

Him: A lot niece and that woman is evil. Your boyfriend is not his real son.

Me: What?!

Him: Yes and there's more, she can go to jail for a long time.

He takes out the files and place them on top of the table. I take one and go through it. I whistle and shake my head, this woman is evil I tell you. She has a lot of blood in her hands.

Him: Yeap and i'm sure this information will lead us to that boy who humiliated you.

Me: There's no need. I found him and his acquaintances. You would be surprised to know that even Nhlamulo&Kat were part of it.

Him: What?!

He bangs the table averting few eyes to our table.

Me: Calm down.

Him: After everything you have done for them? Is that how they repay you! They will regret messing with you, ungrateful bastards!

Me: I know I know uncle.

Him: Nxa I am pissed off! Why would they plan such evil against you?

Me: I wish I knew but ke I am not surprised uncle. I am hated for no apparent reason.

Him: This doesn't make any sense. Tell me more about this guy.

Me: He is Bayanda's cousin. You know what's pissing off about all of this?

Him: Tell me.

Me: The fact that he went and got the same tattoo as Bayanda's older brother Lwazi. Phindile is the one who suggested that he gets the same tattoo as his son, why would she do this to her own son? Why?

Him: She is evil and I would like to deal with her personally.

Me: No. Let me do this my way. This is my fight and I referee how it starts and how it ends.

Him: I like this feisty new you. You ooze confidence now and you more matured.

Me: I know and this new me is here to stay.

He chuckles...

Just then his phone rings...

Him: It's the wife.

I nod as he excuse himself to go and answer it. I couldn't help but notice a group of boys&girls looking at my table ever since I got here, let me go and find out what they looking at. I stand up and make my way to their table some pretended to be busy with their phones and some chatting. I clear my throat and they all look at me, fear very much visible in their faces.

Me: Y'all want a autograph or a picture or both?

They shake their heads...

Me: Then stop with the staring or y'all like the view? It's beautiful right?

They just stare at me...

Me: Good.

I wink and walk back to my table.

Our food arrive and I start eating, my uncle will find me along the way.

Ntando

I am looking at myself in the mirror, I am shocked by what I see. I have lost too much weight and my eyes are baggy. I take off my dress and the bruises are very much visible, my leg is swollen I can't even walk properly. Siviwe became this abusive monster in just over night, he doesn't even apologize after he beats me. He beats me everyday, when he's bored. His sex is rough and he always comes back smelling cheap perfume. Pamela once sent me a long message telling me how much of a betrayer and a whore I am, that was after Anele sent me pictures of her&Siviwe acting all lovey dovey. I thought that my eyes were deceiving me. I was clearly played and boy they are good players. I have never cried like that in my whole entire life, I have lost my family for absolutely nothing at all. I thought that he loved me but I was wrong, Kelo have been praying for me over the phone. She is the only person who seems to care about me. Siza is focused in University and at work. Anele is slaying this pregnancy and she looks so happy, and by the looks of things I think he has found her baby daddy. Her captions

always include "Daddy did this for us. Daddy brought these for us. Daddy is the best" I regret every single spiteful words I said to her. She has only a month left to give birth, I wish to be there for her but how can I when I've hurt her so much? She tried reaching out to me but what did I do? I told her where to get off. Now I regret every single of it. I do want to move out of this house, trust me. But where will I go? I have nowhere to go. I have no one. As for Nathi, I do not wanna talk about her. That whore slept with my boyfriend, yes I know that she seduced Siviwe. She lured her with money then drugged him, Siviwe told me everything when I confronted him. He said all he remembers was Nathi seducing him, after then it was black out for him. He woke up the following day only to find Nathi sleeping next to him, they were both naked. He was scared to tell me because he thought that I was gonna end things with him. I will never forgive Nathi for this. Nhlamulo&I we still keep in touch and tomorrow is her little brother's birthday and they are throwing him a huge party. I can't be there to support her due to my bruises&all, I am stuck in this boring cold house. I wish Siviwe comes back in a good mood today because I am not up for his beatings tonight, I am really not in the mood. I take my pain killers and get into bed. A message comes through on my phone, I view it and it reads.

★I know what you did.

I know where you are.

I will come for you.

I will find you.

And I will make you pay.

I am watching you★

I read it over&over again trying to think of who can send me such a message. It can't be Nathi because she is still hiding from her shame, her whorendencies. Who can it be because I don't

have any enemies as far as i'm concerned. Argh, maybe it's someone playing pranks with me. Whoever it is, is clearly bored. The pills are kicking in now and I am about to drift off to lala land. Maybe I will wake up with a clear mind, i'm sure that are these pills making me drunk. It's the after effects after all.

v

Bayanda

I am at the office bored out of my mind. I don't have anything to do, I miss Nathi a lot. I am not functioning without her. I have even lost weight because I refuse food, I don't want anything. I prefer keeping busy with work, I will go crazy if i'm not doing anything. Running two restaurants is not that easy but i'm

thankful for Sbusiso he has been a great help, i'm sure I would've closed down by now. The Zaza's one is also doing well, I couldn't attend the opening but I heard that it was a success. It was gonna be better if I had someone to celebrate it with, but I have no one. Ever since that awkward dinner Phindile never bothered calling me and i'm fine with that. Aziza has stopped visiting me, I guess she is angry at me. My means of finding Nathi all went to vain, his uncle said I must not give up on her. I will have to fight hard for her. I am ready to fight for her, very ready.

v

Nathi

Being at home have been amazing but now It's time for me to go back to my house, my own space where I will be walking around naked with no care or worry about someone walking in on me. I was supposed to leave tomorrow but my mom insisted that I go today and I will come tomorrow to come and fetch them, I have to take them to Nhlamulo's house. They throwing a party for Nhlakanipho, yhey this boy doesn't like me. He hated me ever since he was 10 years old and now he is turning 18, I also don't know why or maybe his parents fed him all the lies about me, phew. These people are a lot and they like showing off, I hope the party goes well tomorrow. My mother went to Nhlamulo's and my father went to check up on his butchery, oh yes. I bought them a butchery in town and they were so happy maarn, if they are happy I am also happy. Their happiness comes first. Hau Kat have been ignoring me lately and she seems stressed looking at her right now, I know why and I guess you know too. It's good seeing her shaking in her boots, she is even scared of going to work, not that I care though. Whether she loses her job or what, I will still sleep better at night and make more money. My bag is packed&all and now I am waiting for my uber. Kat gets in and looks at my bag.

“You are leaving”?

“Yes. I have a house house that's waiting for me, I hate over crowding my parents house. I'm sure you happy that i'm finally leaving”

Her: You have no idea. I will finally get my peace back.

Me: I wish you would really, you really need it. You look like a mess wena girl, your demons finally catching up with you?

Her: What?

Me: Exactly. They even make you scream at night, you should learn how to pray.

I hear a hoot outside...

Me: That's my ride. Get all the rest you can big sis and please don't die in your sleep, we would be too busy to mourn you. Bye big sis.

I take my bag and walk out, I get in the cab and off we drive. I don't know how my house looks like, the last time I left it was a mess i'm sure it even reeks. The driver drops me off, I pay him and walk to my yard. I open my door and the house looks clean. Well, it is bound to be clean because no one lives here. I make way to my room, I open the door and it smells fresh and looks good, the bedding has been changed. A smile creeps out of my face. Argh, i'm such a cutie though. This man of mine still cares about me

I am grateful for him. I unpack my clothes and I look for my phone. I can't find it, I guess he took it. I head downstairs and whip myself something to eat. This house is too big now or is it because I am used to having Bayanda around? Before it was not this big&lonely because I had Sindiswa. Now I have no one, I miss cuddling. I go to the lounge and switch on the TV. I am bored, oh well this sucks. My phone rings and it is my mother, she misses me already? So much drama.

“Mama”

“Hhey nangu u Kat sekayahlan ya la”(here is Kat going crazy)

Me: What is she doing?

Her: She says there are people who are after her.

Me: Who are those people and why would they be after her?

Her: Angazi. (I don't know) I am surprised that Kat have enemies, haibo. A whole Kat?

I chuckle...

Me: What are you trying to say mama?

Her: Kat is an enemy to herself.

Me: Let her be mama. She is a grown woman.

Her: I am. Ungakhohlwa ukusilanda k'sasa mele sihambe early.(don't forget to fetch us tomorrow, we have to leave early)

Me: I'll be there at 09:00am.

Her: Good girl. Have you eaten?

Me: Yes mama I have, thank you for asking.

Her: Good because I don't want you starving my grandchild.

Me: Askies?

Her: What I said.

Me: Mama...

Her: Does the young man know?

I shake my head...

As if she can see me but she knows that I am shaking my head, ladies&gentlemen that's my mom for you.

Her: Why?

I chuckle...

Me: We not in good terms currently.

Her: Fix your issues. I want my grandchild to grow up with both parents and in a happy&healthy environment. Uyangizwa?(do you hear me)

Me: Yebo mama.(yes ma)

Her: Good. Now rest and don't overwork yourself.

Me: Yoh mama.

Her: You hid from me that you are pregnant, it's a good thing that I see such things faster than a doctor.

I laugh...

Me: I will see you tomorrow mama. Love you.

Her: Love you too and please kiss my grandchild for me.

Me: Will do.

Her: 09:00am sharp.

Me: But mama the party starts at 12:00pm.

Her: I know but you know that I will be helping there.

Me: You are not going to help, those people have lot of friends. Let them slave you are done coming through for them, I will see you tomorrow. Bye.

Her: Hau Nathi.

Me: No arguments mama, my word is final.

Her: Haike okay. I love you.

Me: Love you too.

She hangs up...

My mother has been slaving for Nhlamulo's family for far too long now, it's time she takes a step back and relax. I switch off the TV and head to my room, a nap will do.

v

Phindile

I keep on reading the SMS over&over again. Who would send me such an SMS mara? I am cracking my skull here and no one pops into my mind. Wait, maybe it's Zweli, but why would he send me such a message? Argh, he has time. My phone rings and it is Siviwe, I don't know when was the last time I spoke to him.

“Sivi”

“Why am I receiving threatening messages”?

Me: What are you talking about?

Him: I received a message saying that. "I know who you are. I know what you did"

Me: "I know where you are. I will find you. I am watching you. And I will make your life a living hell"

Him: You got it too?

Me: Yes, I did.

Now my heart is beating out of my chest. Whoever this person is means business, but who?

Siviwe: Phindile are you there?

Me: Ye...yeah i'm here Siviwe.

Him: Find out who it is and I will also try finding out too.

Me: Will do just that, bye.

I hang up...

Skhumbuzo! Yes it must be him because I tried contacting all the police stations around and they don't have any Skhumbuzo. I went to his house and he wasn't there, his house was broken into and his furniture was on the floor and his one shoe on the door entrance. Wait, it can't be him too because it's like he have abducted and killed. We just waiting to hear news that a male body was found in a dam or something, wuhhh hhayi. Now, I have no leads. None whatsoever, I hope Siviwe comes through for me because I have no contacts. They mighty has fallen, me the mighty Phindile. Life is a gamble guys. One way or the other our deeds will catch up with us, as for me they already are. What happens in the dark always comes out in the light, I am doomed. I am done, it was fun while it lasted. Ai, life madoda!

v

Anele

I've been having these cramps since I woke up in the morning, actually they started last night. They come&go. It can't be labour pains because I have like 3 weeks left to give birth, not now. Kelo even skipped her Bible study just to guard me, she is busy rubbing my tummy when the pains come, "Arhhhhh" I scream, they are stronger now.

"What is it Anele"?

"M...my ba...g...they are coming"

I scream again...

Her: Who are coming?

She shoots her eyes open...

Her: The babies? Oh my oh my. What must I do? Scream.
Breath, do something while I get us help.

She runs to my room and comes back with my bag, she took her time though. I breath in&out, thanks God the little ones are at Mam Mabasa's house. One of the amazing gogo's here in the hood, she is the best.

Kelo: Sing your favorite song and I will call Siza so long.

She takes my phone and walks out...

I stand and walk around the house trying to calm the pains down, it's not working. Tears fall out, these pains are worse than period pains.

“Arhhhhh”

Kelo enters she looks stressed

Her: Sisi, Siza is not available he is in Mpumalanga.

Me: Mabandla! Call that fucker who is responsible for this. Call him now!

She nods and dials Mabandla's number...

He better answer the phone if he knows what's good for him. I am never getting pregnant, never again.

Her: Yes...it's Anele...She is...

“Arhhhhhhhhh”

She screams too joining me...

Me: My water...water just broke!

Her: They are here. The babies are...here. Arhhhhh.

She hangs up...

I am now sweating and I am feeling hot...

Her: He is coming. He is coming okay. Scream again, it makes you feel better, right?

I nod...

Mabandla enters the house and he picks me up the bridal style. He runs with me to his car, I feel like slapping him. Kelo is right on his footsteps. He gets me settled and goes to his seat. Kelo is sitting with me at the back... The drive to the hospital was fast yuh, fast&furious typa shit. The nurses are already waiting for me with a wheelchair. Mabandla picks me up bridal style again and puts me on the wheelchair, I swear that one of the twins head wants to come out.

Me: I can feel the head...

I am put on the bed and I am asked to push. I can't do it.

Nurse: Push!!!! I can see the head.

With one push the first baby is out, I hear a tiny cry. For a moment there I am happy, oh I still have to push another one out.

Nurse: Push!!!!

I push and push and and push and push. One last push and another cry follows. I am too weak to do anything.

Nurse: Congratulations mommy it's a girl and a boy.

The other midwives helps me sit up. They give me both my babies. They look so cute, who knew that I can produce such cuties? Wuhhh, they take after their father, he is handsome. Zubenathi&Ibanathi Madlala, their names given by me. Their father will give them names also, the nurses take them back allowing me to rest.

57

I am on my way to my parents house and it's half past ten already going to 11:00. I am surprised that my mother didn't call me and asked me how far I am, I guess she listened to me after all. In no time I am home, I don't even bother walking inside. I hoot 3x and my dad is the only one I see approaching my car. Don't tell me that my mother left already with the kids, I will be very mad at her. This will show that she prefers Nhlamulo's family than mine, ai look at me being all dramatic.

“My princess”

“The king. How are you”?

Him: I am good and you?

Me: Good too. Where is your wife?

Him: She is busy combing her wig.

Me: That's unlike her.

Him: Tell me about it I was shocked. Phela I expected her to wake me up as early as 05:00am, she woke me up at 06:00am and she went back to sleep. She woke up around half 8 and watched TV, she did not bother taking a bath. Kat was done bathing along with her kids and your mother told them to go, she will meet them there.

I chuckle...

Me: Wawu.

Him: Yeap. To tell you the truth for the first time ever since we started attending these family ceremonies, she finally decided to put herself first and not jump to lend a helping hand. I am very proud of her.

Me: Same here dad, I am very proud of her too.

I hoot again and she comes out looking beautiful&young as ever. She is really slaying and bringing her sexy old self back, how cute. I look at my dad and his jaw is on the ground. I don't blame her though, my mom is flames y'all. I want Bayanda to look at me the same way looks at my father, with eyes full of love once we are old.

Me: Dad!

Him: I am inlove.

I laugh...

And his precious wife is taking her time, what a drama Queen she is. She gets to the car and my dad is already opening the door for her, I did not even see when he got off. Mom gets in thanking dad in the process, and dad joins her at the back. Great just great, now I am sitting alone, I am not complaining though.

Her: Sorry to keep you waiting little one. I am ready when you are.

Me: You look beautiful dimamazo.

Her: Thanks. Angisho I am not going to slave around today, I have to dress to kill and those people must see that I mean business. Thanks for knocking sense in my head, you the best.

Me: You welcome Marlyn.

Her: Now you pushing it, stop.

I nod while chuckling...

Dad: You look beautiful my wife.

Her: Thank you husband and you don't look bad yourself.

They share a kiss and I roll my eyes.

Mom: Nono don't you have Barry white CD or the Ballads.

Me: I don't but I will play you some old school music.

Her: Not Khanyi B, neh?

I laugh...

Wawu, Khanyi B she says. Her phone rings

Her: Hello Siba.

Her: I am on my way sis. Did you wanted something?

Her: Oh, I did not forget. I just felt like not coming early as we agreed.

Her: Continue cooking without me, it's all good. Today I am not going to do anything, I am a Queen.

Her: Don't shout at me I am not your friend. See you when I get there and stop calling me Siba. I am with my family, bye.

She hangs up...

Her: Hhe, these people think that they are gods. Ai ke, I drama yabo. Let's pass BH the mall I need to buy some wine

Dad: What?

Her: It's gonna be a long day.

I drive off while laughing, my mother is a whole vibe.

Mom: So Nono, you are our chauffer right? You going to drive us anywhere we want to go. That's your job for today, after all you owe me and I am willing to keep your secret until everything settles.

Me: Blackmail!

Dad: What secret?

Mom: Are you willing to be our chauffer Nono?

I nod and she smiles. My mom is so slick, hha. Should my father find out that i'm pregnant he will read me long scriptures, arhh this man. I put on the USB and Whitney Houston x I will always love you comes in, I have to Carter their needs, phew.

v

Katlego

Nhlamulo&I are walking to the shop. We are both lost in our own thoughts, we both received the SMS now I am pretty sure that it is Nathi who sent them. What I don't understand, is how did she find out that we are also involved? This is bad real bad. Ever since I got he SMS my mind haven't been functioning, Nhlamulo is worse because she was the last person Nathi saw

at the baby shower. We don't even know what her plan is or when she will strike. She is a completely different Nathi, she is not that sweet Nathi we once knew. I buy what we need and I buy Nhlamulo a cigarette, she says it calms her down when she is stressed. I hand it to her and lights it, her hands are shaking.

“Keep it together Nhlamulo! We don't wanna raise suspicions now, do we”?

“Keep it together? She knows that it was us! I'm sure she even knows that I was the one who drugged her muffin&juice and you telling me to keep together? I was the one personally serving her Katlego”

Me: I know but we are not sure if she really knows that you the one who drugged her.

Her: Are you stupid or are you just being plain ignorant?
Katlego this ain't no game. We must be prepared she will be coming for us.

Me: Prepare how? Now you are the stupid one. Let me just go, I don't wanna think too much about this, we are celebrating Nhlakniphho today.

I walk away leaving her standing at the shop smoking her life away. I approach Nhlamulo's house and it seems like my parents have not arrived yet, it is so unlike them. My mother is the first person to arrive when there's a ceremony here at Nhlamulo's but today, she did not even bother waking up and taking a bath. Siba asked where is my mother since she was supposed to come and cook as early as 07:00am. I told her straight up that my mother is not even prepared coming here and I don't think she will even come. I know that she is coming with her precious daughter. To tell you the truth, I don't even know why I hate Nathi because she has never done anything to me. My parents treated us equally, they had no favorite child in their eyes we were equal. I guess jealousy got the best of me. She was doing well academically while I was slacking, she was participating in sports while I sat behind the toilets, dodging periods and hanging around with the wrong crowd. I ended up dropping out of school I knew very well that I wouldn't pass. It got worse when she went to university and almost got married. I was so happy seeing her miserable and in pain, it satisfied that at least the attention will be now on me and not on her. Indeed

I got it but I hang out with a wrong crew again and everything went outside. I am also jealous of the fact that she has achieved more than me

she is humble and doesn't allow money to control her. Her heart is big and pure, I felt useless. I have fatherless kids and my relationships never last, maybe I am just cursed for having jealous towards Nathi. I should've just focused on myself and maybe I too would've been successful, married with kids who have fathers and lots and lots of money, living in a mansion ordering helpers around. Funny enough I've never been to Nathi's apartment/house, I don't even know what's the difference between them. They all look the same to me. I head to the kitchen and give aunt Nosi her spices and walk out. The table is set, I don't even know why they throwing a 18 year old body a party in the afternoon, who does that in this day&age? Everyone is going up&down. The teenagers gets settled and they start singing. We are disturbed by loud music blasting, everyone turns their attention to the G-wagon that is parked at the gate entrance. Whoever this is, must be very rich. I hope it's some hunk with a money, the doors open and the first thing I see are these long slim heels, this has to be one of the tallest inch heels. Wow. The person steps out and it is none other than Nathi, she looks beautiful. I hear everyone gasping and murmur erupts amongst themselves, we are all shocked, even me. Her sex appeal is so loud and out there. She opens the back door

and I see my parents stepping out looking beautiful as ever. My mom looks totally different, she is not the old woman wearing faskots and doeks, with big glasses. She looks young and so is my dad. They sure made an entrance that will never be forgotten. They all walk inside the yard and I see Xolane, Nhlamulo's little brother bringing chairs for them. They thank him and get settled.

“Show is over. You may proceed” Nathi says getting busy with her phone. My parents are so smitten with each other.

“Happy birthday Nhlakanipho” Nathi starts singing.

Everyone joins in and they continue singing, as for me my heart is beating out of my chest. She looks so calm, I need to get out of here as soon as possible. I am not comfortable being around her, I look for Nhlamulo and she is nowhere to be seen. I guess she ran to her room, I also leave and go to Nhlamulo's room and I find her looking at Nathi via the window.

Her: She scares me. She has changed a lot.

I nod...

I pray that she leaves early, I so pray.

v

Nathi

All of a sudden everyone is uncomfortable at my presence, they all look pressed. Arh, they've seen a pornstar in real life, yet they always masturbating to it. I see aunt Siba coming to where I am sitting, alone. My parents went to join the elders inside the house. She looks nervous, I don't know why. This woman used to spew hurtful words my way, she would call me with all sorts

of names. Right now, here she is looking all nervous. I thought that she was gonna be happy, after all her Facebook comments&post about my video were getting more likes than her normal posts. She saw herself as a “savage Queen”

Her: H...hi Nathi.

Me: Hello Siba. Can I help you with something?

Her: No. Not at all I was just greeting you

Me: Okay. Now leave

Her: Hau Nathi.

Me: Wanna say something else?

Sanny: Siba, what are you doing with that porn star while we short of meat, huh?

She is shouting letting the whole world know the obvious.

Her: Sanny not so loud. Do you want people to start talking? You embarrassing us.

Sanny: But it's true. We've run out of meat and the elders haven't eaten, I don't care about this porn star you sitting with. She can even starve to death for all I care.

I burst out with laughter...

Now I see what's going on, Siba is here to ask me for money to buy meat. Haibo, is not as if like they've already started paying me for my job. And shame I won't help them cabanga, not even a little 10c. These people will mos def know me, wiyibo i'm famous phela.

Me: Hhe Sanny. You saying that to a celebrity? You should be asking me autographs not telling me what you telling me now, because I can buy you a whole of checkers and top it with spur.

Mind how you talk to me and Siba, no I don't have money to help you. I did not ask you to throw a party with a low budget. Y'all like to impress people with money you don't even have, mxm.

Sanny: How dare you talk to us like that? We are your family! You are supposed to help us?

I chuckle...

Me: You guys are my family? Hha.ah. y'all need help. You are not my family you are just people I know and I don't go around helping strangers. Now, go ahead and explain to your guests why they not eating. You know very well that you will be all over Facebook, your know your community. Y'all are forever in a competition and Sanny don't worry about me. I will go to spur and buy myself a meal. What about your guests? Boo hoo!

I stand up and leave them standing there with their mouth hang open. Argh these people love making themselves a laughing stock in the community. I am not bailing them out, they will have to figure something out. I get into my car and

drive off. I need something to keep myself busy with, I drive to BaNathi fast food&beverages and it is packed. People have money neh. I get out of my car and I earn myself some few stares, well these ones here don't really care about me. I greet the workers and head straight to Zaza's office and I knock and she summons me in. I make my way in. As soon her eyes lands at me she quickly stands up and comes and hug me.

“You suffocating me”

Her: Hhayi wena. Look at you. You look different. Where were you? Your boyfriend is not looking good maarn, he worries.

Me: Let him sweat a bit. He is not ready for me.

Her: Can I get you something to eat?

Me: Sphahlo will do thank you.

Her: You must tell me everything, hau phela that was not you.

I chuckle...

Me: Zaza!

Her: Ngim'dala njalo.(I am old like that)

I laugh as she makes her way out, she is a ball of fun. Almost forgot that I have people to chauffeur, it's gonna be a long day. Hhayini I've rented the G-wagon, y'all. I had to stand out from the masses and boy did I? I amped that yard with their sponge bob theme for a 18 year old, wuhhh.

58

Ntando

These past few weeks have been really a nightmare for me, Siviwe, Pamela and everyone else who was involved in tarnishing Nathi's name. Everyday we are receiving threatening messages, it's no longer fun. We don't even know how peaceful sleep feels like anymore. 10 minutes is enough for us. Siviwe haven't gone out ever since, one day he found his car tyres punctured and blood words written in his car's back window.

★THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. I AM COMING FOR ALL THAT YOU LOVE DEARLY, STARTING FROM YOUR MOTHER TO YOUR SIBLINGS. THEN LASTLY, YOUR ONLY SON. I TOLD YOU THAT I WILL FIND YOU AND I DID. GREET YOUR GIRLFRIENDS FOR ME

★

Just then he received a message...

★Mirror mirror on the wall, move away from the car because it will explode★

Before he can even get any further, the car exploded and pushed him to the wall. I watch as the car went up in flames, neighbours came and tried to put out the fire but it was too late. Ever since then we have been living in fear. We were not prepared for her, we did not think that she would retaliate but she proved us wrong. We really underestimated her, shame. She came back 10x stronger than how she was before. Kelo sent me pictures of Anele's babies and they look cute shame and fresh, she even named her baby girl after Nathi, to think how much she hated her aneh? Life is something else I tell you. I am happy for her in all honesty, she deserves all the happiness in the world. Anyway, Siviwe went out. His friend came and fetch him, they have a deal that needs to be sealed. He did not

want to go but his friend forced him too and he ended up agreeing. Sometimes it feels like there are people watching us, it's just a feeling I have. We are also running out of food, it's bad real bad. I am in the kitchen standing near the window drinking coffee, I see Pamela coming in looking on both sides. To think that she is the reason we are in this situation makes me angry. He&Siviwe used me in the most cruel way, but then again sometimes I contradict myself that's how messed up this situation is. She knocks and I open the door for her, she quickly steps in and locks the door. I guess she is here for Siviwe, after all it's been almost 2 weeks since Siviwe went to her, I hope she understands why.

“Where is Siviwe”?

I shrug and continue drinking my coffee.

Her: You think that you've won him Forever neh, since he spends more time with you now than with me, right?

Me: I have far more things to worry about than to worry about your Popeye relationship with Siviwe. My life is in danger here, so Mme wa ngwana leave me alone.

Her: I knew that you were gonna use the current situation as an excuse to spend time with my man.

Me: Wuuuhh, you have drama sisi.

Her: That's because I haven't seen my man and the father of my son for 2 weeks! And it's all because of you.

Me: Funny enough you the one who offered to do me a makeover. You the one who made me cross paths with Siviwe, now that he sleeps in between my thighs you suddenly have a problem? Listen here girl. You gave me Siviwe, I did not ask for him. Now deal with it and leave me the fuck alone!

Her: I will wait for him, nxa!

She walks to the lounge and I remain where I am, I don't have the energy to fight her. Once upon a time, my life was simple with no stress, heartache, betrayal, abuse and broken promises. I was surrounded by people who loved me and whom I loved back, but now they are just a distant memory and they are doing just fine without me. They look happy without me, clearly I am not needed. They are complete without me, I wish one day they can forgive me. My phone beeps notifying me that I have a message, i'm sure it's Nathi. Yhey we are in hell bahlali, ai ke. We are in hell and there is no escape. We can't even go to the police, that means jail for us. In this case, jail sounds better than this endless torture. Why doesn't she make us pay already? I am jogged out of my thoughts by Pamela's scream. I rush to the lounge and I find her standing on her feet, hands trembling and lips quivering.

Me: What is it?

Her: Th...the message. She knows that we are together. She will burn us alive in this house, she knows I am here. We are both going to die.

I shake my head not believing this, maybe she is trying to scare me or get a reaction from me, but then again she might be telling the truth. We are all part of the clique after all. I walk back to the kitchen and take my phone from the kitchen counter and view the message...

★Isn't this a beautiful union? I mean 2 women who are in a polygamous relationship with a rapist in one house, now imagine being burned alive in that house. Your rapist boyfriend will find both of you burnt into ashes. He will go crazy, plus he is bipolar after all. Then here's the nicest part about this: Pamela, think of your son growing up with no both parents? Think of how when he is old and find out what you did, how would he react? Angry, mad, maybe? It was gonna be more fun if your boyfriend was present, but he deserves more. You have like 2 minutes left to get out of that house or Boom. Take care.

★

Yoh, this is bad. I waste no time, I am already outside running for my dear life with tears streaming down my cheeks. I don't care whether Pamela followed me or not, my safety comes first. I take a breather at the Pakistan shop. I am hoping to see fire but nothing, bitch played us! Well, it's better safe here than in that house. I don't think I will be spending my night there, it's bad.

v

Kat

I am at the hospital to see Nhlamulo. She tried committing suicide but aunt Siba caught her before she can even kick off the chair. I know that we going through a muship but suicide is

not an option, that shows cowardice. I do not really blame her though, she is in more deep than me. Well, maybe just a little bit. I get to her ward and I find her awake, I've bought fruits along.

“Hey”

“Hi”

She turns her face and looks at me. Her eyes are puffy&red, it's like she has been crying.

Me: Why? Why did you decide to take the easy way out mara Nhlamulo? Did you honestly think that suicide was the only option? The act of cowardice?

Her: I...I can't help it. The threats are weighing in on me, I am not that strong to stand them, they are too much.

Me: You need to keep it together Nhlamulo, i'm sure it's just minor threats. How many times did she threatened us and

nothing happened? She is trying to scare us, Nathi is not that heartless.

Her: It's not easy Kat. I stand to lose a lot.

“You did not think of that when you poisoned me

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my personal server. As for you Katlego, how sure are you that I am trying to scare you and not heartless”?

I swear my heart stopped beating for few seconds upon hearing her voice. Yoh, it carries so much authority. I look at Nhlamulo and her eyes are wide open and she is trembling, I see tears forming in her eyes.

Her: For a girl who knows more about drugs, i'm disappointed that you couldn't find a fast killing drug. I'm more disappointed at the fact that you still alive, I was ready to rejoice and possibly close down the street and throw a massive street bash, at the expense of you of course.

She is now standing next to me, I swear she can feel my heart beating. She can see it through my chest, because wow pee is so close to come out.

Her: You were crying? Failed suicide must be the worst possible thing ever, look at you. You look like a mess. What I don't understand though is; why would you poison me?

Nhlamulo is shaking her head crying...

Her: If you answer me, I will let you be.

She is still not saying anything.

Her: Okay. I will come back to you. Katlego.

Me: Mhmmm...

Her: Why?

A drop of sweat drops on the floor, I am shaking in my boots.

Me: I...jea...jealousy.

Her: Jealousy? Why are you jealous wena as old you are?

Me: Because you've achieved more than me.

Her: Is that why Mr Mbatha&Phindile&Rendani asked you to organize your nyaope boyfriends to kill Obakeng, then make it look like it was an accident?

Her eyes are so cold. No signs of tears, nothing. Ho...how does she know this? It was said that it was a clean job, nothing was not to be traced back to us. She, she knows. What more does she know? My palms are sweating and I think I am about to faint.

Me: I...I don't know what you talking about Nathi. I did not kill Obakeng, I was at the house with you when it happened.

She chuckles...

Her: You think i'm a fool neh Katlego? You think I also don't know that you and that witch of a woman a.k.a ex mother in-law of mine drugged Obakeng, her mother wanted you to sleep with him and milk him money. You were going to record a video of you guys having sex. Your plan was to blackmail him if he didn't agree to your demands, i'm thankful to his ancestors that his stick couldn't wake up and uncle Mondli caught you red handed. You then killed him to silence him! You are one evil woman Katlego, your hate for me runs deeper than you think. You are the reason why my parents gave me up for adoption. It was all you! All you Katlego! How could you be heartless?

I am frozen. I am unable to utter any words, my lips are quivering and i'm trembling. Tears are streaming down my cheeks.

Her: I should be the one crying because you've robbed me a chance of living a life I've chosen for myself, but ke it's all in the past. It took me 5 years to get my life back in order and boy, did I? Yes I did and I was given another chance to be inlove. I guess, I should thank you for making me cross paths with Bayanda. A man who compliments me, and me him. We were made for each other. And again, thank you for making me to realize my full potential. As for you? You are still single, stuck with fatherless kids. Oh, wait. I almost forgot.

She looks at Nhlamulo and smiles then me. No! No! She can't know about this, she can't. This was one secret, I swore I will go with it to my grave.

Her: Nhlamulo. What I am about to tell you will shock you if not kill you. Innocentia, Katlego's daughter it's your half sister. Kat was sleeping with your father and she's the one who caused your mother's stroke. Okay, bye. As for you Nhlamulo, I am coming for you. I hope you won't be dead by then. Toodles. And oh, the family will know about this. Now, who will be more damaged between you&me Kat? The family will surely hate you.

She chuckles and cat walks out with her heels clicking across the tiled floor, she is heartless. The machines start beeping very fast and Nhlamulo is having seizure, iyoh. I run out of her ward and I bump into a nurse. My voice is failing to come out, I just point towards Nhlamulo's room and she rushes inside her ward. As I walk to the toilet, I see Drs running towards Nhlamulo's ward. As soon as I get to the bathroom, a loud sob escapes my lips. I pray she doesn't die, I will be held responsible. My world is crumbling down very fast. Death is better than this. How did she find out? Who is her source?

v

Bayanda

I am woken by someone banging the table, startling me to wake up. I thought I am seeing things. I rub my eye balls and my vision becomes clear. It is her in the flesh, she looks more beautiful than the last time I saw her. She has grown so much at such a short period time, she is not even smiling. She looks disappointed I must say, I don't blame her though.

“Hawu induna elala emsebenzi madoda. Kumnandi e hhofisi”
(a boss sleeping on duty, it is nice at the office)

Me: Ba...babe.

Her: Nathi to you or miss Bembe or partner. Since when do we sleep during working hours?

She is looking at me with a straight face on. If she knew how tired I am, she wouldn't be doing this with me. Lately I am forever tired and I sleep more than my usual sleeping time, I have weird cravings and i'm moody at all times. Oh and I just realized that my favourite meal is Nando's peri peri chicken and home made chips. It all started a month ago.

Her: I asked you a question Bayanda.

Me: I am tired.

Her: You should've stayed at home then. You can't be sleeping on duty, what do you want the stuff to stay?

Me: They understand my situation and thank you for relieving me from office work. My bed needs me.

I stand up and start packing my things.

Her: Whoa whoa, not so fast brother. I did not come to work, hhe.

Me: You might as well get settled because I am done for the day.

I walk out of the office and head straight to my car, I need a driver. I start the engine and drive off.

v

Nathi

Oh wow. He actually left me here, that's so unlike him but he sure did look hella tired. His body said it all, I wonder what's wrong with him. I chuckle, since when does he sleep in the office? He is the focused one while I am the opposite. I sit down. The office still looks the same, nothing has changed. The door opens and Sbusiso steps in whistling, he stops on his tracks when he sees me, he is shocked. He has a packet of lemon creams, bliss yoghurt & Nando's paper bag with him. His girlfriend is very lucky maarn...

“Ehh, boss lady welcome back”

Me: Thank you Sbusiso.

Him: How have you been?

Me: Been good thank you and yourself?

Him: Good too. Where is boss man?

Me: He went home.

Him: I'm sure he was sleeping. Now, what am I supposed to do with all of this?

Me: Aren't those for your girlfriend?

Him: What? No. These are Bayanda's cravings lately.

I chuckle...

Me: Really?

Him: Yeah and he is very moody lately, he shouts at us then forget that he shouted at us. Yoh, he is too much hha.

I laugh...

Could this mean that...? Hahaha, oh yes. He took my symptoms and my cravings. God is good! I have never experienced any of those things, I feel very much normal.

Me: Give them to me, I will take them to him.

He: And please tell him to take few days off. We need to breath.

Me: I will do just that.

Him: Let me go and eat my lunch, some peacefully eating after a month. I am his errand boy, welcome back sister boss.

He hands me the goodies and walks out, he looks so happy I'm telling you. What was Bayanda doing that scares the workers so much? I shake my head and laugh. What a punishment.

59

Nathi

After work I drove to straight to Bayanda's house. I knock few times and I am ready to leave when door opens. Hehehe, he was sleeping indeed. He opens the bugler gate and I make my way in. His kitchen smells like Nando's. I chuckle and place the things on top of the kitchen counter. He looks nervous, his eyes are wandering around the kitchen.

“I came to drop these” I point at the things that are on top of the kitchen counter.

“Thank you. Anything to drink”?

Me: Juice will do just fine. Thank you.

Him: You can get yourself settled.

Me: I rather stand here and watch you because you don't look fine.

Him: I am fine Nathi, just tired.

Me: What tires you exactly? I mean being at the office can't really tire you to a point of sleeping on duty.

Him: Here you go...

He hands me the juice...

Me: Thank you.

Him: I too dont know what really tires me. I get enough sleep and more but I still wake up tired.

Me: Have you got yourself checked at the Dr? Maybe it's something major.

Him: Nope. The smell of pills makes me nauseas, I will be fine very soon.

Me: Not by a long shot. You still have a long way to go.

I mumble...

Him: What was that?

Me: Nothing. What's the deal with you and Nando's by the way? The last time I checked, you did not like it.

Him: I still don't like it, but somehow it has become my favorite meal all of a sudden. I don't know why but all of this is just messed up. This is not me.

Me: That's strange.

Him: Urhm, Ba...I mean Nathi.

Me: Yes?

Him: I'm sorry.

Me: For?

Him: I'm sorry that I wasn't a man enough to protect you. I am sorry for how I reacted when I saw the video. I am sorry for the fact that, I did not give you a chance to tell the side of your story. I am sorry that I've insulted you and called you names. Sorry for thinking that you loose, you've never given me a reason that you are, not ever. I am sorry that I acted before finding out the truth. I am sorry for not being there at your darkest hour. Sorry that you went through hell alone. Sorry for being selfish, not considering your feelings and not caring about how all of this affected you. I am the reason for what happened to you. My family used you to hurt me, they used you to tear me apart. You are innocent in all of this, I am the one at fault and I deserve to be punished servilely. I've been given warnings

and I forgot them as soon as I saw the video. I felt betrayed&played, I was a jerk. A handsome jerk that is. I am so sorry that I was not part of your healing journey, I turned my back on you the time you needed me the most. I was supposed to heal with you, cry with you, shout with you and fight with you.

He wipes his tears. He is crying, like ka mareg. Strue God. I've never seen a man cry, but here I am seeing a man with a beard crying. My tears want to betray me, hhey this salty water is not loyal bahlalali.

Him: Please forgive me babe. I was weak for you. I was not a man enough. I am a failure, I admit I've failed you big time. I've failed protecting you. Please forgive me babe, I am so sorry. I love you and amidst of all this, I realized that I can't leave without you. You are my everything and the only person I have close to family. My life was not complete, you were the missing piece of it. I love you Nathi, please forgive me. I can even get on top of the room and shout just for you to forgive me. I can do anything you want babe, anything. Just tell me and I will do it. I love you munt'wami. Ngixolele Sthandwa saam. Now that you back, I am not letting you go. Ever. I will hold on to you and I will fight for you. There will be "us" now not "I". I promise to be

a better man from now on. I will with you every step of the way. Whatever you going through, I will go through it with you. Even if it means you wanna cross fire, call me and we will gladly cross it together. I am not perfect Nana, I am a human and I make mistakes. I love you always know that. There's no other person I've loved or will love in future like I love you.

Hhe, this man athy in future. Am I not parr of his future na?
Wehhh Jesus.

Him: I am not saying forgive me now but please forgive me. I can't bear you torturing me by not forgiving me, I've been tortured enough. Maybe if you forgive whatever i'm going through will disappear. I love you and I am willing to hold your hand from now on, as I said I am not letting you go. You are mine&mine alone.

I can't help it. Your Queen is chopping onions, good Lord so much betrayal for a feisty Queen. He pullls me towards him and hugs me, not wanting to let go. How I missed him

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being in his hold right now makes me feel some tyra way. Well, at least he admitted to his mistakes. I am not letting him go that easy though, argh I love my boyfriend. Love is a beautiful thing. I still have a things to settle, now how do I tell Bayanda that Phindile is not her real mother? And how do I tell him that my uncle the crust have found his father? Erh, how do I break this down to him! How would he feel? HmMMM...

Him: Now that I've coughed up the phglem that was on my throat. I like the new you. You are perfect just the way you are. But wait, is it me or are using anything for your face? It looks different. Let's eat.

I chuckle...

He said a lot in a short period of time.

v

Anele

These babies are going to be the death of me. Ibanathi is such a cry baby while Zubenathi is a food lover. This girl always leaves me dry. They are a month old now and they look more like their father, especially Zubenathi. I just finished bathing them with the help of Mabandla of course, he so much loves his babies. He even took 2 months unpaid leave just to bond with his babies. I can't say that things are good between us, but we getting there step by step. I am currently staying at his apartment with him, no his babies apartment. Gog'Mbatha, Mabandla's aunt's friend is the one guarding the kids. She loves them and the kids love her too. Phumla&Mabandla's relationship is dead, peyiye tu tu. According to Mabandla it long died, yes that's what he said. I don't care though about that, as long as he takes care of his babies i'm all good. He is the best Daddy ever and next week, we are taking the kids to KwaNongoma for imbeleko. Upon hearing the news that Mabandla is now a father, yoh his family keeps on video calling

him everyday just to see the kids, especially her older sister Lerato. By the look of things, they all seem to like me. Judging by the way they call me just to check up on me. Argh, they so friendly. I will just have to see how they behave towards me next week. Kelo have grown spiritually yazi, she is now a youth leader and a preacher. To God be the glory, finally our life is coming together. If you see us now, you wouldn't even tell thst once upon a time we used to sleep on an empty stomach, sometimes water. Look at us now, his grace&mercy are surely following us. God had to send us Nathi, an Angel in a human form. Speaking of her, I will have to go and see her then apologize for how I treated her. She did not deserve any of the things I said to her. Just then my phone rings, I look at the screen and it's an unknown number.

“Hello”

“He...hey Anele”

Me: Ntando? Oh my God, is this really you?

Her: Ye...yes. It's me. I just wanted to congratulate you on your babies, Kelo sent me pictures. They are very cute.

Me: Thank you. I wish you were here. How are you? You don't sound okay.

Her: I am fine, argh don't worry about me

Me: You are not fine I can tell by your voice. Ntando, come back home. You have a family, messed up as you are you are still family and we never throw away family. Come back home if you are not happy where you are.

Her: I...will see. Goodbye.

She hangs up...

Whatever she is going through, must be really hard for her. She needs to let us in, we are her family.

“Hey hey, why are you crying”?

I wipe my tears and smile...

Me: It's nothing, I am just happy you know. Are they sleeping already?

Him: Yeah and I need to nap too before they wake up.

Me: Take all the time you need big Teddy bear, you deserve to rest. I will take over once they wake up.

Him: You are such a life savior babe.

Me: Just don't get used to it.

He chuckles...

I hum a song as he tries to sleep.

Katlego

It's been a week since Nathi dropped that bomb at the hospital, I was never okay. I am stressed, and for the factor that Nhlamulo haven't uttered a word to me, it's nerve wrecking. I've been trying to figure out how Nathi knew all of my secrets, I mean we made sure that we do a clean job. Now, I don't know what really happened, it was said that the tracks are covered. I'm more fearful of what my family will do once these news come out, I am pretty sure that they will hate me, that's if; Mandla doesn't kill me first. He never liked me anyway, sigh. Oh, then there's Nathi's issue that I'm the one who made her parents to give her up for adoption. That's not how it happened, here's what happened. Let me break it down for you.

★I remember the day very well. On that day it was very cold&rainy, I was at Mr Mbatha's house when I saw a woman and a man. They were with Nathi she was 6-7 years back then, her parents really looked stressed, I called them over, and they were hesitant to come at first, but they eventually did. The rain was not so friendly after all. Mbatha was not around, he was attending his seminars. I made them coffee and lit the heater just to keep them warm. They started narrating their story to me, apparently their land lord has kicked them out because they've missed rent with 2 months. Anyway, fast forward... Mbatha agreed to help them but if only they give him Nathi, actually he wanted Nathi to be his wife. Iyho, I couldn't allow him. Nathi was still young then, I saw the need to protect her. Her parents were ready to give her to Mbatha without thinking twice, I mean the money he offered them was too tempting. So, I took it upon myself to talk to Nathi's mother to take Nathi to a foster care, other than selling Nathi to an old man. She was hesitant at first but she agreed. Days later we did all the necessities. Nathi was officially living in a foster care. Haike Mbatha find out, Nathi's parents ran away with the money, and that Nathi was in a foster care. At least Nathi's mother didn't sell me out. I overheard Mbatha over the phone telling someone to go and abduct Nathi. Well, I beat him to it. I got Nathi abducted, and made sure that they erase every memory of her from age 12 to 3 years. Money makes wonders I tell you.

I took her to my parents, and told them that I found her gallivanting the streets. She had no one. That's how she ended up living with my parents★

Honestly speaking, I saved her from being sold to a man old enough to be her grandfather. I gave her a better life, after all. Having her around was really fun since she was an introvert. Then jealousy as I stated before played a huge role, in it all. I was threatened by her success. Obakeng was a sacrifice, Mbatha sacrificed him, he was special after all. I helped him, I organized the guys. He was actually killed before, took certain organs, and they made it look like an accident. Phindile paid the hospital not to say anything about what they saw. Phindile was Mr Mbatha's boyfriend, haikhe she killed him. Phela Mr Mbatha no longer gave her time, he was super rich now. Phindile couldn't stand it, so she killed him. Instant of attaining his assets, they all disappeared. No trace of it at all. I'm a woman with lot of skeletons in her closet, yhey I am a bad someone. If you can take a tour on my journey of life, I don't think you will get to where I am. Everything I did is now coming back to me, I'm already taking jabs. I guess it's true when they say, "Whatever happens in the dark will always come out in the

light". My skeletons are creeping out from my closet, they coming out so fast that I don't know how to stop them. The secrets I vowed to go to the grave with are broken. I guess it's true, they say vows break. I am the receiving end of them now. Siba asked me to fetch Nhlamulo since she has somewhere to be, and he can't really ask Mandla. Apparently Mandla is not talking to them, I wonder what changed or should I say happen between them, they used to be so close. I get to her ward, and she is packing her clothes, this is so awkward.

"Hi Siba said I must come and fetch you"

She ignores me and continue packing her clothes. She zips her bag, pick it up from the bed and walk out leaving me in her ward. What did I expect? Of course she doesn't wanna talk to me, I'm the one who killed her mother after all. I slept with his father not once, but many times. Family incest we had, fucked up typa shit. It's shocking but I had no conscious back then I follow after her, and I see her climbing in a golf, hmmm. Guess that's Azola her boyfriend, I tried. I see a church not far from the hospital. Why don't I just go, and confess my sins, and maybe just maybe God can forgive me. I don't wanna go to jail. Tears make their way down my cheeks, its a dead end. I'm

pretty sure my ancestors don't even recognize me, kubi. Ku bad. Ku shubile.

v

Bayanda

The moods are still there and now they are worse. Nathi hasn't forgiven me yet, I mean after I poured out my heart to her. I understand her though, she can't just forgive me overnight, it doesn't work like that. I won't lie to you guys, it hurts. Her giving me a cold shoulder is not nice, she is indeed not the old forgiving Nathi. I've been observing her lately, she has this undescrivable glow going on, her boobs have doubled up than the last time I saw her. She is even gaining weight, guess she is

happy. I am not giving up on her though, she will eventually forgive me. She has stopped me from coming to the office

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angisho the workers sold me out, and said I am slaving them around. Slaving them how? They are just lazy. Phindile is hosting a family get together today, she has invited me, and some family members. A part of me doesn't want to go, but the other part says I must go. I don't know why, but I have this feeling that something will happen today. Something we don't have any idea of. I am busy heating up my Nando's when there's a knock at the door. I attend to it, and I am shocked to see Sizwe. He looks so skinny, I've even forgotten about him. He doesn't look good, I open the door wide for him, and he gets in. I close the door.

“You may take a sit”

“Thanks man” he sits down.

Me: Anything to drink?

Him: No I am not staying for long, I just came to apologise.

I nod...

Him: Look man, I am really sorry for every bad thing I've done to you. I know me asking for forgiveness won't justify what I did, but I am truly sorry. Please find it in your heart to forgive me, I guess I was jealous of you, and somehow I wanted to be you. I am sorry man.

Me: I forgive you dude. It's water under the bridge. What's eating you? You look sick.

Him: Cancer, prostate cancer to be exact.

Me: What? Are you getting help for it?

Him: There's no use, it's in its last stage. There's nothing they can do.

Me: Hhayi maarn, I'm sure there's something doctors can do.

Him: There's nothing Man B. My time is up.

Me: You are dying?

Him: Seems like it. That's why I came to ask for forgiveness, I want to die in peace.

Me: No, man. Don't talk like that. You are not dying. You still have a life to live Sizwe, you can't die just yet.

He chuckles...

Him: God is ready for me son.

Why does it sound as if like he has given up already? He must fight maarn, and I am definitely not liking this talk at all.

Me: Want some Nando's?

Him: Since when do you eat Nando's?

Me: I started a month ago, funny enough I'm addicted to it.

He laughs...

Him: Did you knock your woman down?

Me: What does this have got to do with anything?

He chuckles...

Him: I'm just asking.

Me: If she was pregnant I would've seen her long time ago.

Him: You are scanner now?

I laugh...

Me: Fvck off wena!

We hear a hoot outside...

Him: That must be Bawinile.

Me: How is she taking all of this? I mean, the cancer issue of course.

Him: Not good man. She looks sad very sad, and I am afraid that she will do something drastic once I pass on.

Me: I can imagine. What could she possibly do?

Him: Kill herself. You know, I recently learned that she has been giving out our furniture to our neighbours.

Me: What? You need to ask your mother to talk to her. How sure are you that you going to die? Yes, you may look frail, but you are able to walk.

Him: You wouldn't understand, I will see you soon man.

He gets up from the chair, and I walk him out. We hug and he walks to the car. I wave to Bawinile, and she just gives me a nod, she looks so empty. I watch them as they drive off, God. I walk back inside the house. I take my Nando's, and take my car keys then walk to the car. Sizwe? Cancer? It's unbelievable. I wonder if Zweli will be there, he must come I need to apologise to him. He didn't deserve what I did to him, but I was angry and emotionally not okay. I hope he will forgive me.

Nathi

I was surprised to receive Anele's call yesterday apologizing. I mean the last time we crossed paths, things ended messy. I didn't even know that she was pregnant, her babies are very cute she sent me their pictures. My heart skipped with joy when she told me that she named her daughter after me, I pray her daughter grows up to be a better me. I will have to make time and go to see them. I still haven't forgiven, wait I have forgiven him, but he doesn't know that, and of which it's a good thing. My uncle is on his way coming here, he told me that he has something for me. I wonder what is it, I hope it's car keys for a G-wagon. I'm kidding, he even told me to wear nice we are going to a family meeting, I wonder which family meeting because its definitely not ours. I would've known if it was, but then maybe they might've forgotten to tell me. What if he has another family that we don't know off? Phela men can live double lives, it's been proven. I can hear him calling my name

all the way from outside, I chuckle. He is so dramatic. He comes in followed by his guards then a man, I shoot my eyes open. You can't miss the resemblance. In fact they are twins, they look twice. I blink few times, maybe my eyes are deceiving me. I can also see her resemblance in this man too, especially eyes, and pointy nose.

“Haiké this is a person not a ghost, you can even pinch him if you like” he laughs.

I look at this man, and he is shying away from my gaze. I mean, I am not even blinking. He looks uncomfortable, yet nervous.

“Nathi”? Shouts my uncle.

I shake my head and look at my uncle, he is really chuckling.

Him: You should see your face right now. Are you ready to go?

I nod...

I am still looking at this man. I feel someone yanking me by my hand, and it is my uncle.

Me: I am so sorry. I am just shocked, don't mind me.

We walk to my uncle's car. We all get in, and we drive off.

Him: Do you have all the files?

Me: Yes I do. Where are we going exactly?

Him: I'm taking you out for lunch. You, and this man right here need to catch up.

He chuckles...

Me: Erh...okay.

Him: We need to pick someone, then we continue with our journey.

What is my uncle up to?

v

Phindile

My yard is fully packed and more family members are pouring in. Bayanda arrived minutes ago, I wish Lwazi can come to. I would really love to see him here with us, his family. At least these people will be keeping me company, it would be nice to spend my remaining days with them. I have to capture the

memories, I will have to cherish everyone of them. The conversations are flowing, and the food is being cooked. Everyone looks happy, this is what I wanted, maybe they will also infect me with their enemies. I walk around the yard checking who is here and who is not. I feel a tap on my shoulder, I turn to look and, I swear my heart stopped beating for few minutes. It can't be, it can't be happening. I feel my walls closing in on me, and I am feeling hot all of a sudden. He hasn't changed just one bit.

“Phindile”

“B...b...but how?” I stutter.

Phindile

Everything just became stand still. My heart is beating faster, than its normal rate. How is this man alive? I thought he was dead. I killed him with slow poison, I witnessed him taking his last breath. Now, here he is looking as healthy as ever, like he never got sick. He is like a nightmare, actually he is my nightmare, because right now I am seeing a ghost. A breathing ghost for that matter. I thought I was never going to see him again, boy did I not just lie to myself? Clearly I did. I can hear my family gasping from their seats. Everyone is shocked, Bayanda is the worst. Why wouldn't he, after all this man who just pat my shoulder is his father. He looks exactly like him. This man is the man I killed, and for what? For nothing! I killed him but I never got his riches, yet here he is alive and kicking. Did he really die? Did he resurrect from the dead? I think he is Jesus the 2nd. My head is spinning, I think I am dreaming. Yes, this is like an illusion, hhey guys. How did he found out where I live? Was he stalking me all this while? This is not making any sense, Jesus! Too much witchcraft in broad day light, yah neh, and he

to choose this day out of all the days. My enemies have started with me, bringing a ghost to life, a breathing one. A ghost that is visible.

“Phindile. Wh...who is this man, why does he look so much like Bayanda”

Ai Uncle Scelo naye. Can't he see that this is a ghost? A whole flipen ghost.

“I don't know this man. It's my first time seeing him”

I fan myself with my hand, its getting hot in here.

Bayanda: But he looks like me mama. Who is he?!

Me: I don't know Bayanda! Maybe he is one of your long lost relatives who got a plastic surgery. You might find out that it is Lwazi, he transformed himself to look like you, after all you are the handsome one.

Bayanda: Lwazi is not this old and he is not fat mama. Just tell me the damn truth Phindile. Is this man my father?

I just stare at him blankly, honestly I don't know what to say.

“Yes, that's your father Bayanda, and Phindile is not your real mother. Care to tell him the truth or should I?” That's Nathi.

What is she doing here? Could this mean, ai maarn... She is with his uncle, and his uncle guards. How did they even know that there's a family gathering happening today? I knew that there was something off about this day.

Phindile: Jesus, and a porn star decides to grace us with her presence. I swear God is punishing me for something I don't know of!

Her: He is not punishing you. Your evil deeds are finally catching up with you, this porn star is here to expose you. It's a good

thing that your family is present, can someone decent please bring me a chair.

Bayanda rushes to her, and gives her his chair. Mxm, he still love this porn star of his? Even after, she showed the world her assets? Rubbish.

Her: Thank you babe. As I was saying, are you ready to tell them the truth or should I? Look at my hands, what you see in them are your files. They are basically your jail. I really wanted this to be messy, but now I have a very important responsibility that needs to be very well taken care off. I don't wanna derail, and drag this issue. Let's get this over and done with.

Me: Yhey wena prostitute! Are you trying to tell me that you are the one who resurrected this man from the dead? This is all your doing, huh? What are you trying to do or what point are you trying to prove?

Her: Ey you woman. You started war with me the time you used me to hurt Bayanda! You shouldn't have dared me

Phindile, you dared a wrong woman! You are now going to pay for your sins, aloku I don't have the whole day.

Me: Leave my house at this instant you bloody porn star! Leave! You don't have anything on me, you just making empty threats. Nonsense, and you Mbatha leave my yard right now. Take your rubbishes along with you.

I look at this porn star, and she is getting irritated by me, I can tell by the way she is tilting her head. Serves her right.

Her: I am losing my patience woman. I am giving you one last time to come clean.

Me: Baby girl. Famous porn star, you don't have anything on me! Now, be a good girl, and leave my house. You think these people enjoy seeing your face? They are disgusted by you!

Angie: Let the child talk Phindile, clearly she has a lot to tell us. Go ahead Sisi, the stage is yours.

Me: Angie, in your right state of mind. Do you believe this porn star? You? A whole born again Christian?

Nathi: Bayanda, I had with your mother. Take these files, and take a look at them. Luyanda, please go, and call Lwazi for me. He is in the car.

I shoot my eyes open, my lips starts quivering. She also brought Lwazi along? But, why? Why would she bring him along? Does she also know that, argh. I am just reading too much into this. She doesn't have anything on me. I see Lwazi coming, he looks more grown than the last time I saw him. He greets everyone and, sits next to Nathi.

Me: Lwazi my boy, thanks for coming.

Him: I am not here for you. I only came here as per request from Nathi and her uncle. If you may please, leave me alone.

I nod and, swallow hard. Wawu!

“Phindile why”! Bayanda roars.

Him: How could you do this to me? How could you!

His eyes are full of tears, I shake my head tears run down my cheeks.

Him: Why did you kill them? Why Phindile?!

I have no say. I cover my mouth with my trying to prevent a sob from escaping my Lips. He knows, Skhumbuzo you've killed me. You've dug my own grave, I hate you.

v

Bayanda

I never thought that Phindile was this heartless. She has been lying to me all my life, I've been living a lie for the past 32 years of my life. Looking at this file right now, the things I am reading here are heartbreaking. I've been living a lie, a whole fucken lie. She pretended to love me, she gave me fake love knowing very well that she will kill me in the end. I am suffering because of a man who was not even my father, just because of money. She values money more than life. She killed my mother and my little sister in cold blood. I never got the chance to see, and bond with my mother and little sister. I was robbed a chance of experiencing mother's love. Phindile is one heartless woman she is the devil's wife herself. my heart is aching. It's like someone is stabbing it with a knife continuously, I wish someone can come, and rip it out, and throw it far away. My hands tremble as I read further, I scream and throw the files on the grass. I need to be out of here, I need to breath. This is too much for me. I run out of the yard, I don't know where I'm going but I trust my legs to carry me far. Far from this pain that I am feeling right now.

v

Phindile

Immediately as Bayanda ran out of the yard, the sob I've been holding erupts my lips. Tshepo Mbatha his father ran after him. I look at my family, they are looking at me in disgust. You can see that some are shocked by these revelations, who wouldn't kodwa? I see Nathi handing Lwazi a file, good Lord. This porn star is working overtime, what is in that file now? Yerrr. Haven't she done enough, huh?. I mean, she ruined my family get together.

Angie: Kodwa Phindile! Who did you take after with that evil heart of your?! Cha, mohlolo! Your lifestyle is sponsored with blood money? Sies Phindile maarn Sies!

She claps her hands...

I don't care about her, my focus is on Lwazi. He is concentrating on whatever, he is reading. I can notice his facial expression change, okay. He looks angry. He closes the file, and looks at me with his cold eyes. The very same eyes, that he did when he strangled me, almost killing me.

Him: Where is my father?

Me: You...your father? Yo..you know that he is de...ad.

I am shaking in my boots right now, Yerrr this porn star. Hha.

Him: I am not talking about the man that you killed! I am talking about my real father. Melusi Isaac Nkosi. Where is he?

Angie: Haibo. Lwazi is not Moses son? Yhey imhlola!

The other family members gasp, some murmur amongst themselves.

Me: Melusi? I...I don't know any Melusi!

He stands up and approaches me. I am left with no choice but to confess, before he kills me in front of others present here.

Me: Wait. Wait. I will tell you the truth.

I look at everyone, they are all looking at me, except for the porn star who is busy with her phone.

Me: I don't know where he is. I've been keeping in contact with him, he disappeared when I told him that you wanted to meet him.

He chuckles...

Him: Do I look like a fool to you? Where is my father?

Me: I don't know Lwazi. I swear.

Him: Why you never told me about him? Don't you think I had a right to know about him, huh?

Me: You didn't need him. You had everything, you had me.

He chuckles...

Him: Okay, we will get back to my father's issue. Now tell me, why did you plant Bayanda's girlfriend's underwear in my room?

Me: What? I did not plant it! How many times must I tell you Lwazi?! I don't know how it ended there, I swear!

Him: Your plan was to destroy me. Your plan was to stir hate between me&Bayanda, of which you succeeded in doing.

Busani: So, it wasn't you in that video? But that man there had a tattoo like yours, exactly like yours. If not you then who?

Lwazi looks at me and smiles.

Him: Its you son Siviwe. Your son drugged Nathi and raped her.

Her: Ini? My son would never do something like that! For your information, he doesn't have a tattoo like yours. Stop dragging my son into your nonsense!

Him: Nc nc Busani. You clearly don't know your son. Anyway, why don't you ask Phindile, after all she is the one who orchestrated everything. Ask her. She is right in front of you.

She looks at me with tears in her eyes.

Her: I...is it true Phindile? Is my...son involved in this? Is he the one in the video?

I nod...

I am so ashamed of myself right now. I feel my cheek stinging, she slapped me.

Her: How could you?! How could you do me like this?! With my son phindile? With my fucken son!

She slaps me again, and again, and again.

Her: I hate! I hope you rot in jail together with my son! I curse you! May they abuse in that jail, till death will be the only way out. You are dead to me!

She clicks her tongue, as she stands up, and leaves. Everyone has its day, and today happens to be mine. Honestly, I no

longer care what happens next. I am finished, there's nothing left of me, and it's all because of this porn star fault! I dared a wrong woman, I met my match who happens to be more advance than me.

Her: Okay, I am now hungry. One last thing. Luyanda this is for you boy, should I give it to him or will you tell him?

Ayaya, she has buried me this one. I am finished! Rha, Satan herself. She breaths fire.

Him: Tell me what? Mom what's going on? What is happening exactly? Who the hell are you anyway? Because right now, I have no fucken idea who you are! You are not my mother, I don't know who you are, definetly not my mother! Moses is also not my father?

There's no denying it, what's the point? There's nothing for me, never did I ever think that one day I will be exposed. What's worse is that I've been exposed in the presence of my whole family, everyone.

Him: I asked you a question!

I nod...

Him: No No mama! Then who is he? Where is he?

Me: H...he is in jail.

“She is lying son. I am here. My name is Skhumbuzo, I am your father”!

Everyone gasps, as for me I am dumbfounded. He is supposed to be in jail, when did he get out!

Me: Yo...you are supposed to be in jail! You handed yourself over to the police! You lied to me you fucken lied!

Him: I did it to protect myself. You wanted to kill me, silenced me for good. They have enough evidence to put you in jail for a long time.

Me: Fuck you Skhumbuzo fuck you!

I break down, How could Skhumbuzo do me like this? How could he. From a distance, I can hear police sirens. No bad deeds horse unpunished.

Nathi: My job here is done. Happy family gathering everyone, enjoy.

She stands up and walks away, she is bad. I look at my family one last time. They are are so dissspointed in me. I've disappointed them. The neighbors are all out, I walk out of the gate, and wait for the police to reach it. I hand out both my hands, my bad deeds have catched up with me. This is the beginning of my new journey, I wonder what awaits me on the other side. I pray that I become a better me, while inside. My journey ends here...It was fun while it lasted, See you on the other side. My name is Phindile and this was my story.

62

Nathi

We are now on our way to serve Ntando&Pamela their files on a silver platter. I think I enjoy doing this exposing game, it's like I'm in a movie or something.

I feel kinda sad about the turn of events, especially seeing Bayanda breaking down like that. He seemed so lost, but I did what I had to do. He had to know the truth, I know that it he found out under different circumstances, but now he knows the truth. He will know his true identity. He will know his roots. Phindile is one evil woman, I tell you. How did she even sleep night? Ai, some women.

“I think we should call it a day. It was enough for today”

“But Uncle we still have 2 more people to visit”

Him: No. We are calling it a day. You need to relax and not stress yourself, or do you want to get high blood as young you are?

Me: What? What could possibly cause me highveld, I mean I am as good as an ox.

He shakes his head...

Him: I don't really care about you, I'm more worried about the young one inside you.

How did he? Am I that obvious? Hhayi angeke.

Me: What are you talking about Uncle?

Him: I am talking about the baby you are carrying Zubenathi. You need to think of him and not for yourself. You are putting his/her life in danger.

I keep quiet...

Him: You know that what I'm saying it's true. You need to rest, we don't want you giving birth prematurely now, or do we?

I shake my head...

Him: Does that young man know about this? Did you tell him?

Me: No. He doesn't know.

Him: What are you waiting for? Enhlek, how far are you?

Me: I am just waiting for the right time, and I am going on 4 months, if not already.

Him: Right time? When is the right time Nathi, huh? You are on your 2nd semester for Christ sake! You need to rest. Have you even registered for antenatal classes, huh?

Me: Antenatal?

Him: Yes antenatal classes. You need to go and register. It is for your own good, and it will also help you monitor your pregnancy. You also need to take the pills to help the baby grow. Are you even listening to what I'm saying?

Me: Yes uncle I am, and I hear you uncle.

Him: Good. Now, when are you starting with your antenatal classes?

Me: I will go and register first thing Monday morning.

Him: When are you going to tell Bayanda?

Me: When he is calm.

Guard 1: Why are you not with him? He needs your support, you must comfort him.

I laugh...

Me: Where was he when I was going through a rough patch, when I was dealing with my own demons? I healed by myself!

Uncle: He was also going through a rough patch. He also had no one, worst part he had no one in his corner. He was all alone, you've healed, and he hasn't. He is not himself, have you noticed that or you simply turning a blind eye to all of that? Why are you punishing exactly? Didn't he apologise? I understand that you've changed, a lot actually. But don't be bitter, don't change yourself just because you want to prove a point. You can prove it to others but not to your man.

I swallow the lump that is forming in my throat. He is right, very right for that matter.

Him: That young man loves you, and I know that you love him more than you've loved Obakeng. The least you can do is meet him half way. You guys are going to be parents, you need to enjoy every single moment. You need to walk this journey together, give him a chance Nathi. He is not perfect, we all aren't but he admitted to his doings. You know he came to me crying, he is broken Nathi but you don't even see it, because you busy revenging people. Take a seat back and allow me to handle this.

I am already chopping onions. This is the very first time my uncle gives me such a talk. Was I that selfish towards Bayanda? I touch my tummy, baby I am doing this for you.

Him: Fix things with this young man, It's not cute to witness a grown man like him crying.

I chuckle...

Then his phone rings, he answers...

“Yes”

“Where are you now?”

“Wait there. I am on my way”

He hangs up...

Him: That's your father in-law. Bayanda dissapeared on him.

Me: Where is he now?

Him: By the garage.

I nod...

We drive to the garage, and we find him waiting for us. His eyes were blood shot red, you can tell that he has been crying. He gets inside the car.

Uncle: Nono do you need something before we drive off?

Me: I am fine uncle, thank you.

Him: You don't get any cravings?

Me: The father has them on my behalf, but I'm the one gaining weight.

We laugh...

Him: Sbari this is your daughter in-law Zubenathi, and don't worry about Bayanda. Makoti here will bring you to him, relax, okay? It's not cute to see a father of someone cry, it's not.

I laugh...

I look at this man on the rear mirror, he looks just like her. I just can't believe that she shares a father with Bayanda, this is interesting. Very interesting, but as my uncle said. I need to take a seat back, and let him take the wheel.

Me: Does Mr Mbatha have a place to sleep?

Uncle: He is going to sleep at my other apartment with Skhumbuzo.

Me: That won't be right. I'm sure Skhumbuzo will be there bonding with Luayanda, how do you think that will make him feel?

Him: Do you have a better idea?

Me: Yes. He will sleep at Bayanda's.

Him: Do you think Bayanda is there?

Me: Definetly not, but I have keys to his house with me. He can spend the night there, first thing tomorrow morning Bayanda will be there. They have a lot to talk about.

My uncle nods...

Him: Are you okay with this set up Sello?

Sello: Its fine man, just as long as I will be able to have a talk with my son. I need to make things right, I owe him that much. Thank you makoti. My son has found a diamond in you.

I smile...

We drop Sello off at Bayanda's and I give him the keys. My uncle hoots, and off we drive.

Me: Uncle

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I think I might've also found a long lost daughter of this man.

Him: What are you saying Nathi?

Me: He resemblance someone I know, even though I saw her once but they definitely look the same.

Him: We will have to find her. We will talk.

Me: I will text you everything I know. I love you uncle, and thank you.

I hug him and bid his goons goodbye.

v

Bayanda

I am woken up by someone shaking. I slowly open my eyes, and I find Nathi standing over me, concern written all over her face. She has a cup of hot chocolate on her hand. I sit up right.

“Hey“

“Hi”

Her: How are you feeling now?

She asks sitting next to me, and handing me the cup of hot chocolate.

Me: Thank you. I don't know how I feel, I am happy. Sad. Confused and shocked. Today's revelations were something I did not expect, I can't believe that I've been living a lie all my life.

Her: It was something else indeed. Aren't you glad that you now know that you have a father? I mean, a replica of you. You guys look twice.

I chuckle..

Me: We do look together indeed. Ho...how did you find him?

Her: Me? Why do you think that it's me?

Me: You tell me. After all, you the ones who had the files.

Her: My uncle is the one who found him. He is the master mind of it all.

Me: Your uncle never mentioned anything to me. Why did he hide such big news to me though?

Her: The plan was to expose Phindile with her evil ways. She picked a wrong woman to dare.

Me: And that woman is you, I guess.

Her: Of course. Apart from finding your father, how do you feel about the fact that she killed your mother and little sister?

I sigh...

Me: Sad. It breaks my heart that I never got the chance to see them, I'm sure my mother was gonna give me the love I deserved.

Her: At least now you know the truth, and you will heal from it. What you must do now is to fix things with your father, he was

looking for you too. You need to give him a chance, and I think you might also have a sister. I don't think your father knows that he has another child yazi, i'm sure he will be shocked.

Me: A sister? Do I know her? Do you know where she is? Well, I will fix things with my father I am still overwhelmed.

Her: I understand. I hope you don't mind your father spending the night at your house.

Me: What? You took him to my house?

Her: Yeap. I took him there because, Luyanda is bonding with his father. He was supposed to go and stay with Skhumbuzo.

Me: Whoa, did you just say Skhumbuzo is Luyanda's father?

She nods...

Me: Wow: So, Grace has been sleeping around? And who is Lwazi's father?

She chuckles...

Her: You won't believe me if I tell you.

Me: Come on. Tell me Nana, I promise to believe you.

Her: You asked for it. Its Melusi. Your old friend, a.k.a private investigator, you remember him?

Me: What? You are lying! Melusi as in Melusi? Melusi Melusi?

Her: Yap. He has been feeding you wrong information when he was still working for you. Phindile told him to tell you lies, she always threatened him that he will never see his son, if he continued digging information for you.

I can't believe this. Phindile is a very cruel woman, she is Satan's mother I tell you. I am glad that she has been exposed, I also need to fix things with Zweli&Luyanda. Since, that witch is no longer in the picture. We can build our brotherhood again.

Me: I'm just glad that she has been exposed, and now I can leave a normal life. Baby.

Her: Hmm...

Me: Have you forgiven me?

She chuckles and furrows her brow...

Her: Why did you go and cry to my uncle?

I chuckle and shake my head. Mandla sold me out that fucker.

Me: Mandla is such a snitch, yasis. I went there because I was broken and, I had no one to talk to. I went to him to vent, and he runs to tell you. I am never going to him ever again.

Her: You are such a sissy, and yes I have forgiven you. I wanted you to sweat a bit, but I am in no position to punish you, and prolong forgiving you. I forgive you babe. I can't let your heart pouring apology go to waste.

I attacked her with a hug.

Me: Thank you. Thank you baby. You don't know how much your forgiveness means to me, Thank you NaBembe.

Her: Only a pleasure wena my skat.

Me: I love you so so much. Thank you for being part of my life.

Her: I love you too Mr Mbatha jnr.

Me: Now you pushing it. How about we go upstairs and make a mini us.

She laughs...

Her: Fix things with your father first, then we can make a mini us.

Me: Why do I feel like you hiding something from me?

Her: Call my uncle and ask him to investigate for you, he is the best.

I chuckle...

Me: I might as well hire him.

Her: Weehhh...what are you going to eat? Nando's?

I chuckle...

Me: Anything babe.

Her: Let's order in then.

God I am thankful for leading Nathi my way, she is everything I need in a woman. Tomorrow morning I am going to fix things with my father, I want to do right by Nathi. Its time.

v

Unknown

After lots&lots of hitch Vikings I have finally reached my destination. I am thankful to that man&woman who helped me escaped, even though I did not get their names but I am thankful. The house looks a little different from how I left it 6 years ago, It is bigger now. I wonder how are they going to welcome me, maybe they've even forgotten me. I take a deep breath before knocking at the door, I knock 3x and the door opens, It's Catherine who opened the door. She screams as soon as she see me. It's like she just saw a ghost.

“Yini Catherine”? That's my mom asking.

When her eyes lands on me, she starts shaking and tears run down her cheeks.

“N...Nomasonto”

“Its me mama”

I can't help it by cry. She pulls me into a tight embrace.

Me: Where are my children?

I pull out from the hug...

They both look at me and not say anything.

Me: Where are my children?

v

Ntando

Siviwe has been gone since early in the morning. He said he was going to a family gathering, but it is said he wasn't there. There was no sign of him, even his friends don't know where he is. Pamela is here with me also looking for him. I can't help but feel like something has happened to him. His phone is ringing unanswered, we have idea where he is.

“Anything”

Me: Nothing, I am getting worried now.

Her: Me too. I hope he comes back.

We are disturbed by a knock at the door, maybe that's him. I unlock the door and I am surprised to see 2 women standing before me. They are wearing all black. The other one is wearing a black jump suit with leather boots and leather jacket, she is very beautiful. The other one is wearing black leggings, black vest, long leather jacket and spiked boots. She too is beautiful, I wonder what are they doing here. I won't lie to you guys, they look a little bit off. They have this aura maarn.

“Hello can I help you”?

“Hi my name is Anthea the throat slitter”

“Hi and I'm Lorna the... Argh, just Lorna. We came here to visit”

Anthea: Your boyfriend sent us. He said we must do this...

They blew something on my face and I feel deep sleep
overcoming me...

Bayanda

After taking a bath, I make Nathi breakfast and put it in the warmer with a note attached to it. I take one of her cars and drive straight to my house. I am so nervous, I don't know what to expect when I get there. Where are we going to start with the conversation? Argh, sizobona phambile. I park the car at the gate, and make my way inside the yard. I knock, imagine I am knocking in my own house. This is funny I tell you. I can hear some shuffling then the door opening, he is still in his yesterday's clothes, and by the look of things I don't think he even got a proper goodnight sleep. I greet him, and I step inside the house.

“Coffee”? He asks.

“Yes please. How did you sleep”?

I am leaning against the fridge with my legs crossed.

Him: I did not sleep. I was waiting for you to come back.

Me: Sorry to keep you waiting. Who told you to wait up for me?

Him: No one. Makoti did tell me that you will be here first thing this very morning.

I chuckle...

Me: Yet you still waited for me?

Him: Yes. How many sugars?

Me: 5 spoons and lots of milk.

Him: What? That's too much sugar son. You will spoil your teeth.

Me: I won't. That's how I take my coffee. Have you eaten?

Him: Nope. I wanted to talk to you first.

Me: Let's go and sit down then.

We walk to the lounge and we sit down. He hands me coffee.

Me: Thank you.

Him: Pleasure. First things first I would like to apologise for not being part of your life while growing up. I'm sorry that I wasn't the one to guide you.

Me: Where were you? Why did you abandon me?

Him: I did not abandoned you son. Your mother&I our marriage was no longer the same. I am a Mkhonto wesizwe veteran, I was never home most of the time. I only came once upon a blue moon, my work then was very demanding. I was also part of an army in Afghanistan, and you know how dangerous that place is. Its war after war, no break.

He takes a sip of his coffee...

Him: I came back home only to find her in bed with another man. A huge fight broke out between me and this man. We fought&fought, your mother tried breaking us apart but she was not that strong. The neighbours eventually broke us apart. The man left, little did the man know that there's someone actually following him. Your mother&I eventually got divorced, it was a messy divorce. She took everything and left me with only R200, she kicked me out in the house she was already pregnant by then. I did not argue with her. I found myself a small, it was more like a toilet, but at least it covered my head. The rent was R50. I looked for piece jobs with no avail until I came across with this other powerful healer's number. I took them and called him on the land line, he told me to see him first thing tomorrow morning. I did that, he told me what to do

in order for me to get rich. I knew that it was wrong, very wrong but I was desperate.

He takes another sip of his coffee...

Me: What did you do that was wrong but you ended up doing?

I can see him swallowing hard. This is big, I can tell by the way he shakes his head.

Him: I had to sleep with young girls, from age 8-12 years old. I've kidnapped some, some their parents offered them to me in exchange of money. I was not a rich man, for every child I sleep with I get more money. They were actually sacrifices.

This is shocking, such a disgusting act! Just because of money?! Fuck it maarn, yasis.

Him: Then I met Phindile, she was everything I needed in a woman. She knew how I attained my riches, I was a very well known business man. I was respected. Your mother came back,

and told me that she was pregnant with you. I laughed at her face, and told her to go and look for the father of that baby because I am not the father. She cried, pleading with me that she is carrying my child. I asked her, how is she sure that she is carrying my son because I found her in bed with another man? She said this&that, I told her to never keep in touch with me. Months went by, and my relationship with Phindile. We ended up getting married. We were so happy, as for me I no longer wanted to do this sacrificing thing. I wanted out, but I was told that the only way out is through death. Yoh, that scared the shit out of me. When I got home, I started praying asking God for forgiveness, and confessing my sins. I guess Phindile found out that I wanted out, but death is the only way out. She poisoned my food. I was told by one of my helper, I did not eat the food. I had to pretend to be sick for a week, it wasn't easy I tell you. I was refusing food, she always wanted to feed me. I knew that she wanted to kill me. I never ceased praying. One Saturday I decided to fake my death, I've already had a talk with my helper, she agreed to help me because she saw that I was willing to leave this Ukuthwala. Shortcut riches are not good so,. Because you lose yourself in the process. You always have to please your masters. I took my last breath with Phindile in the room, she went out, saying she is going to call for help. She has been gone ever since, I woke up as soon as she left. It's not nice to hold your breath, yoh. The helper called one of her

Uncles to come, and fetch us. It did not take me 3 days everything I attained through the sacrifices disappeared. I then went to church, and devoted myself to God. At church they revealed to me that I have a son, he is crying for me in the wilds. I tried looking for you to no avail. The house I knew as a home was burnt down to ashes, it was unrecognizable. Then I heard Phindile is the one who burnt them alive, it turned out the man your mother was sleeping with is her husband. She has long kidnapped you by then. I am very thankful to Makoti and her Uncle to reunite you with me. I know that it's a lot to take in, I urge you to process it. I am here. I am not going anywhere, I will wait for your forgiveness.

I am too stunned

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words are stuck on my throat. This is too much, ishhuuuu. My coffee is even cold.

v

Nomasonto

I did not sleep a wink last night. My mother told me that my children ran away, she don't know where they ran away too. I can feel it that she is lying, she is hiding something from me. Today she will tell me the truth. My children run away, Catherine now stays here it doesn't make any sense. Why is she not in her house, or is marriage showing her flames? I get to the kitchen and I find them laughing over a cup of tea.

“Morning”

“Morning”

I make myself a cup of coffee...

Ma: Where were you all these years Nomasonto?

Me: I was kidnapped.

Her: Who kidnaps a whole human being? A mother of a whole Sundowns?

Catherine: She is lying Ma. I'm sure her boyfriend that she was with got tired of her, who can stand a deep whole?

They laugh...

Me: And wena, why are you not in your house? Or has the korobela run out?

Her: What are you talking about? Is it wrong to come and stay with my mother?

Me: Yes. You are a married woman not a girlfriend. Who cooks for your husband while you are here?

Ma: That's enough Nomasonto! I will not allow you to talk to Catherine like she is your child.

Me: Still your favorite I see. Where are my children Ma?

Catherine: Did you leave them with her? Is she their nanny?

Me: Was I talking to you Mrs failed marriage? Are you Ma now?

Ma: Argh Nomasonto maarn!

Me: Just tell me where are my damn children Ma!

I am getting angry now...

Her: Don't you dare shout at me Nomasonto, I am still your mother!

Me: I wouldn't be shouting at you if you can tell me where are my children. All I want are my children, damn it maarn!

Catherine: We told you that they ran away. Do you now want us to sound like a broken record?

Me: Why did they run away?

Her: They were very disrespectful, especially Ntando, Anele and Snikelelo.

Me: You are lying! My children never disrespected anyone.

Her: What did you think was gonna happen when you left them for 6 years? Nawe, how can you give birth to fatherless babies?

I give her a slap on her cheek...

How dare she disrespect me like this?!

Ma: I will not tolerate you slapping my child. I am going to ask you nicely, to please leave my house! Follow your useless kids whenever they are! You can't come here and bully my daughter!

I chuckle...

Me: I am not going anywhere until you tell me where my kids are or else I will turn this house upside down, I think you have forgotten me. By the time this day ends, I want to know where my children are!

I bang the table causing them to jump up.

Me: Just find my children!

I walk away, and go to my room. I face down on the bed and cry, all I want are my children. I hope they are safe wherever they are. It's fine even if they live in the streets, as long as I will be with them.

v

Ntando

I am woken up by someone splashing cold water on my face.

“Wakey wakey princess”

I look around me and I realize that I am tied on the chair. Fear takes over. What do these women want from us?

“Don't worry Princess. Your boyfriend and your sister wife are also here, They are actually next to you in case you haven't noticed”

I look besides me, and indeed they are next to me.

Me: Wh...what are we doing here? What do you want from us?

Anthea: What do we want from you? We want to play house.

She laughs...

Lorna: I am not here to play house with you, I am too old for that. Anthea can play with you guys, all I want is to know why did you do?

Me: Do it? Do what?

Her: Why did you do Nathi like that? Why did you betray her like that, after everything she has done for you?

Pamela: It's my all my fault.

Her: Was I asking you? Bitch please, I am coming to you.

She takes a deep breath...

Her: Now talk.

Me: I hate her!

Her: Why do you hate her?

Anthea: You don't hate her! You were fed love portion by this nonsense boyfriend of yours. You did everything he asked you to do, you never questioned him.

Me: I was not fed love portion! I did all I did because I loved him!

She laughs...

Lorna: You love him? The very same man who is sleeping with Pamela? The very same who raped our daughter?

Me: Yo...your daughter?

Her: Yes. This fucker here raped Nathi, he then had the audacity to record a sex tape, and posted it on the internet!

Me: You are lying. Siviwe would never do that! That is not Siviwe!

She chuckles...

The door opens and steps in a very handsome man, hhayi he is handsome. Siviwe has nothing on him. Why am I even drooling over him? He gives Lorna a perk, then he walks straight to Siviwe.

“My name is Ludo. I am here to make you shit the truth”

Siviwe: Just let me go man! I don't know what you talking about, you've been keeping me here since yesterday morning! What more do you want?

Him: You don't know? I guess this will help you talk. We've tried forcing the truth out of you, we were very gentle with you, now you leave me with no choice but to scare the shit out of you.

Siviwe: Nothing is going to scare me! You guys are weak!

He chuckles...

This Ludo guy smiles, and straightened his neck, and I swear I heard some bones cracking. His eyes started changing, they became super dark. I am shaking on my chair right now. What is this man? I look at Siviwe and he doesn't look scared, and so is Pamela.

Siviwe: Is that all you got bitch?!

He spit on his face...

Iyoh, before we know it this man had changed into this beast, a ugly beast for that matter. I see him yanking Siviwe from the chair, who is crying like a little boy. It sent him flying across the room. I scream, and peed on myself right then. Pamela is also crying, its a mess. He yanks him up, and holds him upside down. His head is facing down.

Anthea: Habashwe!!!!

Lorna: It seems like you practically shit on yourself, now start shitting with your mouth too. Did you or did you not rape Nathi, and recorded a video?

Him: I did. I did it. I am so sorry.

Me: What?!

Lorna: Shut up maarn wena! Why did you do it?

Him: I wanted to hurt Bayanda. I wanted to hurt him. Please let me go man, I'm sorry.

He is crying guys...

Her: Why did you want to hurt him?

Him: It was his mother's plan. She asked me to do it.

Her: What about the other girls you've raped? What about his exes that you've drugged?

Him: I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

The beast roars, causing the ground to shake vigorously.

Her: Sorry cannot undo what you did. Sorry cannot erase what you've put our daughter through. What are we going to do with him?

Anthea: Let's do the very same thing he did to Nathi. Bring Stallion&Danger in, it's time for a show.

Lorna: Simanye, drop him.

The beast nods, and let go of Siviwe, then it transforms back to its human form. That was one scary shit, it will haunt me for the rest of my life. Two huge men steps inside the room, they look very scary.

Anthea: Gentlemen, here is your meal. Untie the girl.

One guy comes and untie me, Lorna hands me a phone.

Her: You gonna record your boyfriend having sex, and you lover boy better make sure that you enjoy or else, Simanye here will kill you instantly.

Anthea: Or I can slit his throat right in front you, he better fucking enjoy!

Lorna: Pamela we haven't forgotten about you. Why do you sell little girls for sex slavery?

She shakes her head crying...

Anthea: Fuck it she won't talk!

Lorna: She will after this trust me. Switch on the screen.

There sitting on the floor playing with his toys, is Pamela's son Musa.

Lorna: If you still want to see him. You will start talking, and you start recording your boyfriend.

Ntando

What's happening right now is very horrific. These people are not human, they are animals. They are enjoying this, I can't even steady the phone with the way my hands are shaking. Siviwe painful groans are not making things any easier for me, These men are enjoying what they are doing. They keep on pumping them with pills. My heart is very sore, this sight is really sickening, I even wanna puke. My tears have dried out. Pamela is still not talking, I think in her mind she has this mindset that they won't do anything to Musa.

Anthea: So, you really are refusing to tell us why you sell little girls?

She shakes her head, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Lorna: You basically don't get a damn about your son? Very good then, the gun please.

One guy runs to her, and gives her a gun.

Her: Wait, do you have a funeral cover for the little one first?

She shoot her eyes open...

Her: I asked you a question. Answer the question woman!

Anthea: _Clearly she doesn't love her son. Let us just kill him, and spare him living with a mother who doesn't love him.

Lorna steps out of the room, she is now in the same room as Musa. She points the gun at him.

Anthea: Still not talking?

Her: The...they will ki..ll me if I ta...lk.

Anthea: So, you rather protect them than to save your son's life? Is he even really your son?

She nods...

Anthea: So, you are not going to tell us why you sell them?

Her: D...don't you hav...e kids? Those men are dangerous, the...they will kill me.

Anthea chuckles...

Her: Unbelievable! I do have kids.

She looks at the screen and nods to Lorna. Since the room is sound proofed, we only saw blood filling the entire screen.

“Noooooooooooooooooooo my son” Pamela let out a painful wail.
“My son. You’ve killed me”

I can't help but cry too. I look at Siviwe and I can see that he is numb, seeing his son's blood on that screen defeated him. The pain in his eyes was evident enough for me, right there he gave up. He looks at Pamela who is looking at him too.

“I hate you Pamela” he mouths.

Pamela breaks down again. Anthea chuckles and shakes her head. How can she laugh at something like this? This is not funny, it's sad and heartbreaking. As I said before, these people are not humans.

Anthea: You just killed your son for not cooperating. The problem with you is that you don't listen. You should've just told us the truth, your son would still be alive now, but nope you decided to protect the people who are six feet under.

Her: S...six? Wha...t ar...e you talking abo...ut?

Anthea: We killed those fuckers. We only deal with bad guys. How did you think we found out that you sell girls for prostitution, to men old enough to be their fathers? Are you really that heartless? They are kids for Christ sake.

Says someone who just laughed when her friend or whoever she is to her, killed a young boy in front of us. Talk about double standards.

Her: What's the use? You've killed my son, y...you might as well kill me.

Anthea: Kill you? We vowed not to have blood in our hands ever again. I am not going to kill you, but your most definitely going to jail. Your son will grow up without knowing, because they might be a possibility that you will die few years in the. Jail its no child's play, you dissapoint me.

She shakes her head, and walks to Siviwe.

Her: You young man. What was going through your mind when you recorded that video? Oh, wait, you recorded it because you wanted to embarrass Nathi. You recorded it because you wanted to hurt your cousin, of which you did, but then what did you gain in all of this?

Siviwe is just sniffing, his tears are now mixed with mucous, gross.

Her: You want to know what you've gain? A life sentence in jail. You are going to join your aunt and your first girlfriend there, you are most probably going to have a family reunion. Well, look on the bright side. It won't be difficult for you to drop the soap in jail, my men just made things easier for you. I hope you will learn your lesson there in jail, that you never rape a woman and record a video of it.

He moves away from him and comes to me. I swallow hard.

Her: You girl. I pity you because you have no one now. You are all alone. No family, No boyfriend, No job, no nothing. The only thing you will have is that house of your boyfriend, that's if his

other family members come and claims it. You've betrayed the girl who gave you a job. Who never judged you or made fun of your home situation back then, she changed your legs lives for better but you took all that she did for you for shit. I

understand that you are also a victim. You had no idea what you were doing, but no one will believe that you were under a spell. Truly speaking, you also did some things willingly, a part of was jealous of Nathi. You were jealous because at your age she has achieved more than you.

She shakes her head...

Her: I don't how you gonna fix this or mend things with your family. From now on you will be all alone, you are going to start afresh. Just don't commit suicide. You will only be living with regrets, and if only. I hope you heal from all of this, and find yourself again.

She then goes to Pamela...

Her: You can say your last goodbyes to your son, because by the time you come out of jail he will not know you, let alone

recognize you. This better be a lesson to all of you. No bad deeds goes unpunished, you pay a great prize for them. If I was the old Anthea, I would've long slit your throat.

Lorna steps inside the house with Pamela's son. He is 4 years old, still very young. My heart is at ease seeing him, at least they are humans. This is one lesson I will never forget, the trauma will clearly hunt me forever. Where will I start picking up the pieces?

v

Bayanda

Spending the day with my dad has been a bliss, I tell you. He is actually a funny person. It turns out that the “helper” is now his wife, and they have kids together. I can't wait to meet them, my has a big family, so he says. He even showed me a picture of his family, they look like very devoted church members. They don't look like they burn incense and talk to their ancestors.

Me: Do you guys do ancestrally stuff?

Him: Of course we do son. We do burn incense and call our forefathers.

Me: That's good then.

Him: I will never turn my back on my ancestors.

He dished up for us

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since he even cooked a feast for the both of us, now it is confirmed that I take after him when it comes to cooking the kitchen. We are now watching soccer.

“How did you meet u Makoti”

I chuckle...

I narrate everything to him. He is dead with laughter.

Him: You were that scared of her?

Me: You have no idea dad.

Him: I don't blame you, she does look intimidating, and son you really have a good eye.

Me: I really do. I am very lucky to have a woman like her in my life. You know, she loved me for who I am.

Him: I see. You need to do right by her. When are you going to pay Lobola for her?

I smile...

Me: Very soon dad very soon.

Him: Good, because we can't be having your unborn baby born out of wedlock.

Me: Unborn baby? Whose baby?

Him: Don't you know? Makoti is pregnant with your child.

Me: What? Dad are you for real?

Him: Seems like I've jumped the car too fast. I thought you knew.

Me: No I don't.

Him: Don't worry, it is not that boy's baby. She is 4 months pregnant.

Me: Really? I am going to be a father? Me dad? Me? There's actually a mini me growing in Nathi's tummy? I can't believe it.

Him: Why don't you ask yourself why you crave certain foods? I heard about your Nando's addiction.

I chuckle...

Me: It never crossed my mind. So, I am getting all of her symptoms, and she only has a growing baby inside her and gaining weight? Instead of her being crappy&moody, I am the one who is that? How does pregnancy work like?

He laughs...

Him: I don't know son. I've never experienced any of the symptoms. All I know is that I always get beaten when labor pains start, that's when all hell break loose.

He has 4 kids by the way, and they are all boys. No girls, I guess I will not be beating boys for hurting a little sister.

Me: Wow dad. I can't believe that I'm going to be a father. I am happy dad, I am very happy. Dad, when are you doing me imbeleko?

Him: Once you meet my family.

Me: Be quick about it dad. I really want my unborn baby to grow up with both parents, and I will also want you to help me with something.

Him: What is that?

Me: I will tell you soon. Dad, let me go and see the mother of my unborn child. I will see you later, that's if I will find you here.

Him: I don't by that, but if you don't find me here. I will call you, and we will set up a day for you to meet the rest of the family. Dish up for makoti, and tell her that I cooked that meal for her with love.

I laugh...

Me: I thought you cooked for us, not for her.

He laughs...

Him: Yhey just tell her what I said. She is my daughter in-law njalo, after all I will be the one taking cows to her family.

I chuckle...

I finish dishing up for Lorna, and bid my father goodbye. He knows where to leave my key. I get inside the car, and drive off. I need to pass by Woolworths and buy her some goodies, I need to spoil her. She deserves it. My heart is leaping with joy, I

can't believe that I am going to be a father. God I thank you, I need to start writing down babies names.

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Nomasonto

The day is nearing to an end, and still no word on where my children are. I am now pretty sure that my mother and Catherine don't know the whereabouts of my children. I feel so bad, I have failed then big time. I've let them down. I'm sure it was hard for Ntando to raise these kids on their own, I can imagine the responsibilities she had. She did not enjoy her life, because she was busy baby sitting my kids while I had fun. I chose a man over my kids. Where is that man now? He has

gone back to his wife, I mean he even got me kidnapped. I was tied up for months only because I ended things with him, it was a bitter separation. I've endured the abuse, I mean the money he used to give me was good. I had everything I wanted, I never lacked anything, but the cheating and abuse was too much for me. I was not even allowed to have friends, it was bad. Ladies never stay in a relationship because a man does everything for you. Never sacrifice your happiness because of material things, never depend on a man. Work hard, never give a man the upper hand. I've this lesson in a bad way. I wish to find my kids, and apologize to them. Give them that love they deserve, I need to make things right with them. The question is, where are they? Where do I even begin looking for them? Well, at least Ma did tell me that Ntando&Siza are working at a certain restaurant. I will have to wake up early in the morning tomorrow, and go to all these restaurants and look for them.

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Nathi

My phone beeps indicating a message. There's a attachment to it. I view and what I see is unbelievable, there being rammed from behind is Siviwe. This has Anthea&Lorna written all over it. As much as it is entertaining, but the video it's just sick. I wonder how they do it, because wow. Finally, he has paid for his sins. At least they did not kill him. He is going to jail, along with Pamela. I guess I must just let them deal with Nhlamulo&Kat, but I wanna witness it. Oh yes, I am going to do a family lunch. Why not expose Kat in front of her family, everyone must get their share of shame. I delete the video, and make myself tea. I am too lazy to cook, I will just order in.

“Mommy to be I'm home” Bayanda shouts from outside.

How did he know that I am expecting? There goes the surprise. I wanted to tell him in style, but oh well. He now knows.

“Open the door my hands are full”

I open the door and indeed his hands are full, full of junk. I chuckle, he drops the things on the floor, and go straight to my tummy, and starts kissing it. He looks so happy.

Him: Why didn't you tell me that we are going to be parents?

Me: I wanted to surprise you, but ke it looks like I was beat to it.

Him: You sure as hell was. I am here to take care of your needs baby, you don't have to strain yourself. I will even give you foot massages.

I laugh...

Him: When is your next doctor's appointment?

Me: Well, it will be my first appointment tomorrow.

Him: Good, I am going with you. I can't believe that we are going to be parents babe, thank you for giving me such a gift. I love the both of you so much.

Me: We love you too.

He pulls me into a tight hug...

65

Katlego

It's been a rough, crazy month for me. I've isolated myself from everyone, I don't even care about my kids. I don't care what they eat, what they wear, how is their health. I don't bother myself with them, what's the use because I might be going to jail very soon, and possibly spend the rest of my life there. Phindile, the famous boutique owner is arrested. The woman who was untouchable, the women who had all male species bowing down at her presence. Her face was splashed all over internet, and front page of all the newspapers in and around the city. The news came as a very big shock to me. While I was trying to process Phindile's arrest, more news came in that Siviwe&Pamela have been arrested too. It all happened in just a day apart. Clearly Nhlamulo&I are next. I chuckle, guess I will be spending the rest of my remaining life in jail. Honestly, I had no life. I have no good memories about my life, it was all just sorrow, heartbreaks, drinking and hurting people. All I want to do is to go and hand myself over to the police, there's nothing left for me in this world. My kids will grow up just fine without

me in their life, after all, I am none existence to them even now. I don't have that mother and children with them, I always don't have time. They are even used to it. Nathi does almost everything for them, and I do nothing for them. Nhlamulo's health is not looking so good, she is too skinny now and, she refuses to eat. As for me, she doesn't even want to see me, I don't blame her. I too wouldn't want to see myself near me. Anyway Anthea invited us to a family lunch today, I wonder what's the occasion because Anthea never hosts family gatherings/lunches. I wonder what changed. I can't even come up with a very believable excuse of why I will not be able to attend the gathering. My uncle will practically drag me there. As much as I don't feel like being around people, I have no choice but to be there. I can't let Anthea down. But then, what if Nathi exposes my deed in front of all our family members just like she did with Phindile? Now, that's my most fear. I know that she won't do it, she knows very well that Anthea doesn't like family politics. I've just finished taking a bath, now I am looking for something to wear. Something that will fit because I've lost too much weight due to stressing too much, I can't even tell my parents what's eating me up like this. My mother will surely be broken and possibly hate me, I don't even wanna get started about my father. He will disown me without thinking twice. They are very concerned about my wellbeing. They wouldn't be this concerned if they knew exactly the cause

of my sudden weight loss. They will definitely hate me. I end up settling for a short summer dress, it looks like it fits me perfectly, I don't even bother with doing my make-up. Nathi is the one who will be driving us, heard that she bought a family car. Both her restaurants are doing good, she is back together with her boyfriend again, and they are expecting. This life thing surely favours her. I shake my head and grab my bag on top of the bed. Nathi is already outside, I am even surprised that she offered to drive us. You can even tell by the smell that this car is still brand new, her car seats are maroon with a pinch of black, and the seats are embroiled with our names on them. Wawu, I wonder. I greet Nathi and she greets back with a boring nod. This pregnancy is really for her, her glow is very much loud, and she has no pimples. She has even gained weight. I foresee a long day ahead. The car takes off, and there's a lot going on in my mind right now. Well, at least we won't be doing anything at Anthea's she loves doing things on her own, wait, with the help of her best friend Lorna of course and Linda her mother.

Bayanda

Today I am meeting with my father's family. I don't know what to expect. Will they love me? Are they going to accept? Will they judge me? Ai, let me not worry about that. My dad told me they all can't wait to meet me. They've been busy all week perfecting everything. Oh, and, Dad is going to do imbeleko for me. Wait, what I did not tell you is that he is going to do imbeleko for me and my newly found sister. Yes, he actually found out few days ago about this daughter of his. I will meet her today. Thanks to Nathi's uncle for his efforts, that man deserves bells and more maarn. My life is finally coming along together. I am going to be a father, I have the best woman in my life, the mother of my still coming. We've fixed our brotherhood with Zweli&Luyanda. We are back to what we used to be before, I may not be their mother's son, but I am their brother by heart. After all we all have one thing in common, we've all found our fathers. I'm sure from here going forward, our lives will change for a better. I am now in now is Soweto,

that's where my father's parents live. I still don't understand, why didn't my father went to his parents the time he was down&out. I'm sure they would've helped him. I send him a text, telling him that I am where he asked me to wait for him. A part of me wishes that Nathi was here, but I understand that she is also attending a family gathering. I hope the won't be some exposing taking place, Nathi is such a bad timer though. I chuckle. Someone knocks on my window, I roll of down and it is some boy, he looks like he is 18-19 years old. He is Siza's age.

“Sho. Is your name Bayanda”?

I nod...

”My said I must come and fetch you. He is still busy there at home”

Me: Oh, okay. Step in.

He runs to the passengers side, and climbs in the car.

Him: My name is Sbonelo.

Me: Great knowing Sbo. How far is your home from here?

Him: Its just than 30 minutes drive.

Me: How did you get here, because I did not stand more than 30 minutes.

Him: A friend dropped me off here

I nod...

Me: Is your home yard full of people?

Him: Too full. Almost everyone from our streets, and neighboring streets are here. Everyone wants to see Moses son, since they've already saw his daughter.

Me: The daughter is already there?

Him: Yes. She arrived few minutes ago.

Me: I guess I'm the one who's late, how is your family like?

Him: They are very good people. They are full of love, and they support each other, but then you know that each and every family have those family members who think they are better than others. Those who arrived on the actual day, and wants to be pampered.

I laugh...

Me: I see.

Him: You are handsome just like our father, no homo big bro.

I chuckle...

Me: Thanks man. You not bad yourself.

Him: I am handsome more than you&dad combined.

We both laugh...

I guess this is the street judging by how it is is fully packed, plus there's also a tent.

Him: Hoot man

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announce your arrival.

Me: Is that really necessary?

Him: You need to make a statement man, plus your car will be the only big&expensive car here. Now hoot, let them feel your presence.

I chuckle...

I start hooting five houses away from the actual house. I hear whistle blowing, then I see people coming out from the yard. Women ululating, they all look so happy maan. I wasn't expecting this kind of welcome, this is huge and heart warming. I park my car just near the main gate. Sbo steps out of the car, I see my father approaching he is overalls. He is with some men, they look old. I guess they are my uncles. I don't know if this is the whole family or they are mixed with their neighbours. My father comes to my side and open the door, I am so nervous. He embraces me. One uncle start praising.

“Shandu kaNdaba, Mthiya, Ndabezitha, Sontshikazi, Khumbula Mgwala, UShandu ubengakanani ngoba nasentendeni yesandla uyahlala. Kanti nala umkhonto ucije ngakhona uyahlala athi cababa. UShandu owalima insimu eyilimela izinyoni zase zimbonga zithi tjiyo tjiyo tjiyo. UBhabha Magwaza, unkentenkente olwakhwela izintaba zaseNhlazatshe kwaze

kwaphuma abafazi bengabhincile bethi ingabe
lolunkentenkente lunkenteza lwenzani. Ndaba Komkhulu”

Ululations erupts from the women and whistles are being blown, as I am escorted inside the yard. I feel like a Prince, too bad this is not a royal family. The other uncles hug me too, I feel really special right now. I am led inside the room where my grandparents and some elders are in, including my sister. I step inside the room and an old woman breaks down, she opens her arms for me. I walk up to her and embrace her.

“Welcome home Shandu KaNdaba” she kisses me on my forehead.

Her: I'm Joyce, your grandmother and these are your aunts.

She introduces them to me, and my eyes land on a girl. She looks familiar.

“Bayanda you finally made it. The ancestors are happy with your presence. It is rather sad that Makoti is not here, the ancestors approves of her and they are protecting the little one she is carrying, together with God”

I look at her...

Her: I'm Snikelelo. Ntando's sister or should I say your sister?

Oh, yes. Now I remember her. I once saw her at the funeral of Nathi's friend.

I chuckle...

Me: Either way is fine young one. It is my pleasure to meet you all my elders, I am now that I have some sense of belonging.

Sbo gets in and calls for me and Snikelelo, my father's wife want to meet us.

Sbo: Damn bro, you are turning heads. I heard the girls talking about you, they actually want a piece of you. Man you are the ish.

I chuckle...

Kelo: Tell them not to even dare look his way, he is very much taken. Tell them.

Him: Alright, little one. I will tell them.

We all laugh...

This yard

is actually big. We get into this other outside room, there are few women there. We greet them and they greet back. A woman who I assume is my father's wife, rushes to us with her eyes full of tears. She embraces us, her embrace is that of a mother, and she looks like a humble person.

“Welcome home my children. We have been long waiting for you. God is indeed alive”

Us: Thank you for the warm welcome Ma.

Her: It's a pleasure having you here. My name is Danile, but to the both of you I am your mother.

Kelo&I nods...

Her: Sit down, I will dish up for you. I want to know everything about you.

“Haike haike who is this young man, making all those girls outside crazy”?

Danile: That man might be my newly found son, Bayanda.

The woman looks at me and smiles.

Her: I don't blame them. He is very handsome, he takes after his father. You little girl, you are too cute maarn. So nunus. Tell me if these boys give you problems, I will sort them out.

Mom: Kodwa Bassetsana!

Her: I mean it njalo. Danile, dish up for my kids they must be starving. I want them full before others come and kidnap them.

Mom: There goes my babies.

We all laugh...

I am home.

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Katlego

Everyone is gathered around the long 5 tables in this garden. The food is looking delicious, but as for me I don't have appetite. Everyone looks happy. Nathi has been sitting with his uncle ever since we got here, I am not liking this one bit. Nhlamulo is sitting next to Siba, I didn't even know that she is now wheelchair bound. I am shocked to say the least.

“Are you okay”? Nandi ask me.

“I'm fine”

Her: But you haven't touched your food, and you've been sad ever since you got here.

Me: I am fine dammit!

I snap at her...

Everyone looks at our table.

Me: What the hell are you all looking at?!

Anthea: Why are you snapping at everyone?

Me: Why can't everyone just let me be and leave me the hell alone!

Her: Whoa, easy tiger. We will leave you then, just don't ruin this for all of us. If you are not okay, go and get some fresh air. It looks like you need it.

I look at her, and click my tongue. Why is everyone on my case?
RHA!

“Don't come here with your attitude Missy. You got pissed off too fast. Attention family&Extras”

Upon hearing her voice I cringe in my seat, sweat dripping at the back of my neck. I swallow hard, I hope she is not going to expose me. I look at Nhlamulo who looks at me with her eyes wide open. I shake my head, and swallow hard.

Nathi: First things first, I would like to thank you guys for honouring the invitation, and to those who were not invited but they are here welcome. You guys like things shame.

They laugh...

Her: Now that everyone have eaten, except for some who can't even stomach this delicious food because of how evil they are. Half of you family don't like me, and its no secret. Right now,

some of you still see me as the girl who has a “sex tape”. What you guys don't know is that, some of you here had a hand in it.

She chuckles...

I feel my throat getting dry, shit is about to heat the fan. I can hear others talking amongst themselves.

Her: My precious cousin here. The person who I thought understood me Nhlamulo is the one who drugged me! She is the one who drove me to the strangers house. She is the one who delivered me on the silver platter to my rapist!

I can hear people gasping...

Her: Whoa, let me not forget about my sister here. The evilest of them all, Katlego. Y'all think that she is a good person, its just that she is a drunkard. Hehehe aunt Ncazana, this girl you loved so much was sleeping with your husband.

I hear everyone gasping again, they are now looking at me waiting for confirmation, I can't talk. I am shaking.

Her: Innocentia here is the result of that disgusting act. She is also the reason for your stroke, it was all her doings.

Ncazane: K...Katli...ke nnete?

I look at my parents, and look so disappointed. They look angry, shocked. I can see the pain in their eyes, I can see my mother's eyes pleading with me that it is not true. I look at my children, and they are just looking at me in total awe. Innocentia is in tears, it's a sad thing to see. I close my eyes, and open them.

Me: It's true. Everything she said is true.

Wail erupts from other family members, Insults are hurling my way. I find myself being attacked by Siba&Nadine, I just let them. I deserve it. They are throwing me with everything they find near them, I can hear police sirens. All I do is just cry. My time has come to an end, see you on the other side. My name is Katlego, and this was my story.

EPILOGUE

Ntando

If only I knew then what I know now, that my life choices would turn me into something I don't know. Something I don't recognize, I would've took a quick U-turn, and turned back and never looked forward. I don't even know if I am making sense or what. Life has really humbled me. I've eaten the humble pie of it, I think I ate the bigger portion, because wow. The love portion that was given to me by Siviwe was now out of my system, a big thank you Anthea who gave me something to drink. I had to spew it out, it was very bad I tell you. I felt like my intestines wanted to come out, it was one horrible experience I've ever had. It saddens me that I lost almost everything because of being naive, everything that I worked so hard for. I lost my job, my family, my life, I lost everything that means so much to me, and for what? For absolute nothing! The man who fed me that love portion is in jail along with his baby mama, and now his family is here kicking me out. The place I've been owning for the past 3 months without Siviwe, the place I've made a home. I won't lie to you guys, I am very hurt by

Siviwe's arrest. I thought that it was going to be easy to pass through it, but its definetely not a walk in the park. Another thing is that I keep on having nightmares about what took place months ago in that warehouse. It all plays like a record in my mind, I can't forget about it. I think it is one thing I will live with for the rest of my life. As cold as this house was, it was comforting for me. Now, here I am being kicked out of it. I have nowhere to go. The aunts are waiting for me to finish packing. They got here and started insulting me, they also blame me for Siviwe's arrest. They even called me a curse, ever since I came into Siviwe's life he was no longer the same. He changed into something he is not as soon as he met me. Honestly, I have no strength to fight them. Their insults and name calling don't even get to me, I am dead inside. I pack my last bundle of t-shirts, all my clothes are in refuse bags. I wipe the forever gushing out tears, wawu. Life is not to be taken for granted, it doesn't come with a manual, and it doesn't do favours. I look at the room one last time, and pick up my plastics.

“Don't ever come back here you little witch” one of his aunt tells me.

“I plan not too. Not soon anyway”

I walk out of the yard with my heavy refuse bags. This moment takes me back to when my grandmother chased out us of her yard. History is indeed repeating itself. I walk to the taxi rank, going back home is not an option. I've shamed them enough, and I'm sure they no longer care about me. I need a clean start, I'm a huge mess. I need to regroup and find myself again. Cape town is where I'm going, I have enough money to keep me going for a couple of months. I will also look for a job, at least I have some work experience. One day I will ask for forgiveness to Nathi, when I've gained the courage too. The first thing I will do when I get to town is to withdraw all Siviwe's savings. The pecks of knowing all of his pins, I'm sure his family is also here because they want his money. Too bad for them, they won't get any cent, greedy bastards. I get to the ranks and ask the Marshall for Capetown taxis. He directs me to where they are, I thank him and walk away. Luckily for me it is only short with 2 people. I don't where I'm going in Capetown, but I am going there. I wonder what awaits me that side, I hope its only good things. This is my new beginning, my new journey. See you on the other side. I hope you learnt something from my life. My name is Ntandoyenkosi and this was my story.

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Nomasonto

I've finally reunited with my kids. It wasn't an easy journey, they gave me a tough time especially Anele&Siza. Siza still doesn't want anything to do with me, he even moved out that's how much he can't stand me. I don't blame him though, I mean I chose a man over them. Snikelo decided to go and stay with his father. I was so shocked to learn that Mbatha is alive, and he reunited with Kelo. After lying to him that Kelo is not his, I was pregnant with her then. Honestly, I thought that he was going to leave his wife for me, pfttt I was a real fool to even think that. Anyway, I've been trying to track down Ntando, but it all goes in vain. It's like she just disappeared on the surface of the earth. She clearly doesn't want to be found. At least the little ones love me, and they are happy to be with me. I will give

them the love I've failed to give the old ones, I vow to protect them. I am very proud of how all of my kids turned out to be. They are a better version of me, Siza&Anele really did a good job with this house. Ntando paved the way for them. Anele comes maybe twice a week with her cute babies, she stays with his fiancé. They got engaged a couple of weeks ago, it was a very beautiful intimate ceremony. She even enrolled at college, I am so proud of her. I hope Ntando is safe wherever she is, I need to apologise to her. She deserves my apology, above it all. Everything is going just fine. God has given me another chance to fix my wrongs, and for that I will forever be grateful to him. Trust in him, and he will surely bless you. My story might've come a little late, but I hope you learnt something from it. See you on the other side, where more about me will be unfold. My name is Nomasonto and this was my story.

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Bayanda

What can I say? Life has been really great for me these past months. Knowing my family have been a great blessing in my life, everything is going perfect. Today is the day where I make Nathi officially mine, yes I am going to pay Lobola for her. We have been through a lot together. We've been through a lot together, we've passed heavy storms together, but here we are still standing. We've grown much stronger than before. Our love too, maar yhey this pregnancy is making her lazy, and she is forever tired not forgetting too emotional. Her tears are blackmail shame, once she starts crying you will do anything she asks you to do. I still have the symptoms, but they are better now compared to how they were on the first trimester. My uncles and my father went to Nathi's house, they've been gone since early in the morning. The women here are getting impatient, I understand exactly what they are going through. Seems like Nathi's family are giving them a hard time, I'm sure its Mandla. That man is a pain in the arse, I tell you. Especially now that Nathi is almost close to giving birth. I've been watching videos of women giving birth on YouTube, not because I wanted but was forcing me. Its not so cute if you ask

me, its scary. Yerrrr, I am not going to be present when she gives birth, I don't wanna be traumatized. She says she wants water birth, she finds it quite amazing, so she says. Danile will hire a stay in midwife for her, Nathi's mother will have to move in with us until Our unborn baby turns 3 months old. My body is here with my family, but my mind is at Nathi's house, its frustrating not knowing what's happening. Basetsana steps into the kitchen, she looks angry I must say.

“Haike the in-laws are really taking us for a ride. Can you believe that they are still standing outside at this time? They are hungry for Christ sake, your in-laws are nonsense maarn. I should've gone there myself, yerrr” she is breathing fire.

“Ini? What nonsense is that? Why are they keeping them waiting for such a long time? Are they royalty or what”? Celiwe.

Danile: Calm down ladies, maybe its how they do things in their family. Let's all try to be patient, I have a feeling that they are coming back with her.

Batsena: Now, why are they playing hard to get with our Makoti? Its not cute. We want her here.

Celiwe: Why don't we just go there and drag our Makoti out of that house, we will give them a show they will never forget.

Danile: But you love drama Celiwe. Let those people be, our Makoti will be here.

Celiwe: Ey Mam'mfundisi! (Pastor's wife)

They all laugh...

I can hear cars hooting from a distance, does this mean that...wait, let me not get ahead of myself. Basetsana just told us that they are still waiting, it can't be this quick. I am already on my feet, Danile is peeping through the window. Celiwe and Basetsana are already outside, I am so nervous.

Danile: Argh, its just Sbonele. He loves playing this one.

Dammit, this can't be happening. Why are they taking so long, I thought that Lobola negotiations were easy, and they don't take time. Now, I no longer understand how they work. I sigh and sit back down. I can't even eat, that's how much this situation stresses me or maybe they are not agreeing with the amount? Do Nathi's uncles want more than what I budgeted? Not knowing what's happening is stressing guys.

“Alilili u Makoti ungowethe. Siyavuma” that's Snikelelo singing stepping inside the house. She looks very happy, I must say. Sbonelo pushes her aside and

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comes straight to hug me.

Him: It is done man. Nathi is officially yours big bro.

I break the hug and look at him. I want to hear him saying it again, my ears need to hear him say it.

Me: What?

Kelo: Nathi is officially MaShandu. Congratulations big brother!

Me: Yes!

I punch in the air. This has to be the greatest news ever, my heart is overjoyed.

Danile ululates and soon everyone joins in, they all give me hugs. They say a man don't cry but here I am in tears, it can only be tears of joy. I am so overwhelmed, God it is all because of being you. I wouldn't have done this without you, I've seen your powers through me. My phone rings and it is none other than my wife, if y'all could see the smile plastered on my face right now, you will know that it's a genuine smile.

“MaShandu”

“Baba”

Me: How are you feeling? As for me I am so happy baby, that you are now officially mine forever.

Her: Thank you baby for making me the happiest woman on earth. I love you so Much Mthiya.

Me: I love you too MaShandu. I can't wait to see you.

Her: Me too. I have to go now, these aunts of mine want to have a word with me. I love you and take care, I will see you tomorrow.

Me: I love you too.

She hangs up...

I am left smiling to myself, God she is the one for me.

“Love is a very beautiful thing. I can see it in your eyes that you love this girl, and how your eyes twinkle at the mention of her

name. May it remain like this, till you grow old together. You guys make a cute couple, your kids are gonna be too cute. You must make more kids. We the Mbatha men have more than 3 kids, you should join us. We expanding the family”

I laugh...

Uncle Scelo is one crazy uncle I tell you, he is my favourite out of all of them. My phone beeps indicating that there's a message, its a WhatsApp message from my wife. I view it, and I am met by her pictures. She looks so irritated, I think its the mini blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The doek looks good on her though. I chuckle, damn her nose is huge though. I am also happy that my family accepted her, they all love her especially aunt Celiwe.

v

Nathi

Life life life life. I never thought that, I would be this happy after Obakeng's passing. I never thought that, I will find a man who will love me unconditionally. He showed me the other side of life that, I never thought existed. In him I found a lover, brother and best friend. He is my everything, I will never trade him for anything. I love him shame. Anyway, after that epic family gathering some relatives of mine, look at me with respect now. I still don't exchange more than 4 words with them, just a "Hi. Hello". Then there's this pregnancy of mine, yohhh it makes me so emotional, it is literally showing me flames. Well, I am just happy that my baby won't be born out of wedlock. I still don't know if its a girl or boy, I want the gender to be a surprise. I am ready to give birth now, I've had it with this pregnancy, but I enjoy the kicks, mostly the pampering that I am receiving. I also enjoy ordering daddy around. Yhey, but once his hormones take over, hhe kwanyiwa. Lapho ke umazibona. I have to do things all my by myself. I've risen above my trials&tribulations of life. I've been broken, shamed,

made fun off, hated, raped but still I rised all of those things. I know that it was all part of God's plane to go through what I went through, he was sharpening me for a better life. I am very content with everything I have now, I would never trade it for nothing. What makes more happy is that I am now Mrs Mbatha, just need to get it signed on a certificate, and its all done.

★»★«

Today is my wedding day. I am happy, yet I have fear. Fear of what if, what happened 6 years ago will happen again? After all it is said "history can repeat itself". What if it does? I don't think I will survive it, it will clearly break me to a point of no return. I've asked to have a small wedding since I am expecting, just being amily, and close friends. We having the wedding ceremony at the back of our house yard, whuuu Bayanda surprised me with the house. I didn't even know that he was

planning to buy a mansion, this one is bigger than mine. It has a vast garden which can accommodate 100-200 people, it will all depend on the setting of your sitting. I sold the previous apartment that I was staying in for more than 5 years. Bayanda sold his house too, he paid my Lobola with it. I am in my traditional, it's one size bigger than my normal size. I wanted a bigger dress, because I look a ball, iyoh. I am so round is not even funny.

“Dear God. I come before you right now asking you to bless this day for us. Let there be no bad news, and may I get married to Bayanda peacefully. I ask for your guidance God, I plead with you. May our union become successful, I hand it all to you. Amen”

I wipe my tears, and look at myself in the mirror. This is it. You will get married to your man, the heavens have approved of your Union.

“Are you ready to Mrs Mbatha, because everyone is ready for you”?

I look at the door and smile at her...

“Yes. Yes I am ready. I man just nervous”

Her: Don't worry everything is going to be alright. You are going to have your mini wedding.

I chuckle...

Me: Thank you.

Her: You are most welcome. Now, stand up and let's go get you married you sexy whale.

I laugh...

Me: Voetsek Anele maarn!

She laughs then comes, and help me stand up. She is my maiden of honour, since I have none.

Kele&Nhlanzeka(Bayanda's cousin) are my bridesmaids. We've managed to fix things with Anele, I am very happy about our new friendship. I like the fact that, she never complains about my controlling behavior or being send from pillar to post. Her fiancé Mabandla makes her happy, love its a beautiful thing if you've found the one you want to share it with. Someone who won't hurt you intentionally. I walk out of my room...we get to the backyard, and Mr piano man starts playing perfect x Ed sheraan. There standing before the alter, looking as handsome as ever its my husband. I am so happy that he is here, I just let my tears flow freely. I get to him, and she helps me sit down, I can't stand for a long time. He kisses my tears, and I giggle. We start our wedding ceremony with opening prayer. The pastor or should I say my father in-law? Hehehe, which ever you find fit for him. He welcomes our guest, and give us few words of wisdom as they say.

“You can say your vows”

Bayanda takes my hands into his...

“I have never thought that one day in life, I would be standing here taking a wife. I would like to thank you, for allowing me into your space. You've turned me into a better person that I never thought, I would be. Thank you for making a tremendous change in my life. I am just sad at that universe that it took its precious time to make our paths cross. Thank you my love for loving me for me. Thank you for respecting me, not once did you ever disrespected me. Not once you did not think that you are better than me, because you had money. You loved me with my buggage, I will never trade you for anything. You are mine. Always have. Always will be. Forever you will still be. Thank you for loving me, and thank you for making me a father. I love you Zubenathi Bembe”

He wipes my tears, and I chuckle...

“You said a mouthful my love. You actually said everything I wanted to say, hahaha I am just joking. Firstly I would like to thank everyone for being here, thank you guys”.

They clap hands. “Bayanda Mthiyane wami wena Ndabezitha. I have a lot to say about you, but I will sum it up in few words. Firstly I would like to thank you for loving me unconditionally. Thank you for being the best boyfriend in the worl...”

Wuuuhh, my back is in pain. I feel like someone is pricking it with a needle. In the morning they were not this intense, they were just mild.

“Baby are you okay”?

I nod...

“As I was...arhhhh”!

They are now few minutes apart. I don't know how labour pains feel like, but all I know is that I will be having a baby today. I am rushed inside the house, thanks God the mid-wife is here. It's only the 2 of us in this room. I am in the bathtub, the midwife is kneeling in between my parted legs.

“I will count to 3 and you start pushing okay”?

I nod...

“1...2...3...push”

I push once, and I hear a tiny cry. I chuckle, and wipe my tears.

Her: Congratulations its a girl.

The door flies open and Bayanda comes running in. He looks at the baby in the midwives arms, now covered with a blanket. He wipes the single tear, such a beautiful thing to witness.

Him: Can I?

The midwife hands him the baby.

Her: The ambulance its on its way.

Him: She is beautiful babe. She looks just like you. I can't believe that we created this beautiful creature.

I chuckle...

Him: Do you have a name for her?

I shake my head...

Him:, Her name is Hlelolwenkosi. She is our God's plan.

Me: I love it.

Kele comes and chant clan names for the child, then she hands us our rings.

Him: I love you.

Me: I love you too.

We slid the rings in, everyone ululates.

Pastor: I now officially pronounce you husband&wife.

Everyone erupts in cheers, I guess my daughter was too happy about this day, and she decided to come.

Bayanda: I will forever cherish what you've given me.

Me: To us...

We've conquered the storm. We fell in love again. My name is Nathi and he is Bayanda, and this was our story. Thank you for being part of it...see you on the other side.

.....**The End**.....

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