

THATHU CONCO



A M I L E

The Queen

ZULULAND

Chapter One

Amile Gumede

“Mile, vuka. It’s your birthday, wake up!” it was hard to ignore him because he was jumping on my bed. If I was a heartless person, I would’ve picked him up and thrown him off the bed, but he’s my annoying little brother, I love him, nonetheless.

“Okay Siviwe, I’m up.” I stretched and yawned. He plopped himself next to me and beamed at me with his cute toothless smile.

“How old are you again?” I tell him my age every time I see him, I even told him yesterday before bed.

“Seventeen, and how old are you, fifty!? You forget so easily!” I tickled him and his loud laugh filled the whole room.

“I’m seven, I’m seven! I won’t forget again, please stop.” He was red with laughter, he even had tears running down his face.

I stopped tickling him and he climbed out of my bed and stood next to me.

“Mom said come get breakfast.”

“It’s my birthday, you should bring it for me.” He rolled his eyes.

“I’m not doing that, come.” He stuck his tongue out at me, see, he’s annoying.

“Amile woza la!” that was mom’s voice echoing from the kitchen. So much for special treatment on your birthday.

I followed Siviwe out the room to the kitchen where mom was. The table was decked with all sorts of goodies.

“Happy birthday my baby.” She engulfed me in a tight squeeze.

“Thank you, mama.”

“Ubaba ka Siviwe called and gave you money for your birthday.” I beamed.

“How much?”

“R2000.” I jumped up and down in joy. I love that man so much.

“Let me go and call him.” She stopped me.

“You won’t reach him, he’s on a flight to Cape Town, he told me to tell you to enjoy your day and he loves you very much.” The arrangement between mom and Siviwe’s dad is unusual. They are both single, he occasionally comes here and stays for almost a week, but they aren’t together, or at least romantically. They act like friends more than anything.

“And what about me?”-Siviwe. I laughed.

“He loves you too baby, but today is about Amile, right?” he sulked.

“Right.” I roughed up his hair before sitting down at the table.

“So, what plans have you and the girls made for later today. I have work later so I won’t be here.”

“We are going to Views. We’ll probably leave at about three so...” she frowned.

“Is that not too late?”

“We won’t stay for too long, we’ll be back before six, you know I hate crowded places and Views gets a bit too much at night.” She nodded.

“I was thinking that maybe because I’ll be working late, why don’t you and the girls check in at a hotel. I don’t want you guys’ home alone here and taking Ubers home at night is not safe. I’ll take Siviwe to Lisa’s house” Since when does mom trust me so much?

“Is this a test?” she laughed.

“No, I know you girls won’t do anything stupid.” I

Speak for myself when I say I won't. I don't know about Yonela and Nambitha.

"So, what do you want to do?" she asked.

"I don't know. Let me speak to the girls first, but for now, I need to take a shower and go to the mall." I said stuffing myself with the last piece of bacon.

"Hamba noSiviwe." She said.

"No, I don't want to."

"Hhayi Amile, go with your brother otherwise there is no Views." Mom can be so unreasonable sometimes. Siviwe stuck his tongue out at me. Brat.

I finished eating then I went to take a bath. As soon as I finished, I went back to my room, made the bed, and sat on it, going through the thousands of birthday messages. I honestly wasn't looking forward to this birthday. This year hasn't really been my year, first it was my

term one marks at school, now my boyfriend of two years breaks up with me. He was that heartless that he broke up with me via text, just a week before my birthday, as if we hadn't shared the past two years in love with each other. Boys will surprise.

I conference call my best friends and as if they were waiting on my call, they pick up.

"Sweet seventeen babes! Finally, you made it!" Yonela said loud enough for my whole block of neighbors to hear.

"Why do you always have to shout Yoni?"- Nambitha.

"Shut up, it's not about you. Amile babes, did you tell your mom about Views?"

"She said yes. She even went as far as saying we can book into a hotel. Imagine! My mom!?"

"Tell me you're lying." -Nambitha

“I oath. She’s working late today, plus Siviwe’s dad gave me R2000 to spend.” Both their deafening screams filled my ear.

“OH my gosh we are going to have so much bev.”-Yonela.

“Don’t forget the hubbly.”-Nambitha.

I laughed.

“We aren’t eighteen yet, remember?” I spoke.

“Who’s going to know, it’s not like they ask for ID’s. if we do encounter a problem, we can always call Siya.” I rolled my eyes at the mention of his name.

There’s really no running away from him. he’s my best friend’s brother.

“No, there will be no calling of jerk brothers if we can’t get alcohol, then tough. Today is about Amile.” Nambitha came to my rescue.

“Thank you, babe.” I said cockishly.

“Speak for yourself. Look, I need to finish cleaning the house. I will see you guys later.”- Yonela.

She left the call even before we could put in another word.

“Your friend is stubborn.” I said to Nambitha laughing.

“She’s your friend too. Angazi wamucoshaphi.”

We shared a laugh for a good minute.

“What are you doing now?” she asked after catching her breath.

“I’m getting ready to go to the mall, I want to do my hands and feet. Then I’m going to look for shoes.”

“You like doing things last minute.” She’s always scolding me for this.

“I work better under pressure. I’ll be done before 2 o’clock, relax.”

“You better. I’ll call you when I’m on my way there okay.”

“Orytie chomie.”

I hung up the call and cleaned up around my room.

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When mom asked me what I’m going to do at the mall, Siviwe refused to go with me, much to my excitement. I went to Sorbet and had my nails done. I don’t have to worry about school because as a matric learner, I have the privilege to having French tips. I also did gel on my toes and I’m looking like the girl. It’s almost two now and I had promised to get to my make-up artist, aka, Nambitha by then, so I need to get skating.

I was waiting for my uber outside and there was

traffic down the road. I was at the top and I could see the cause of it. Three black SUVs with tinted windows. Anyone who's watched enough movies knows that it's some kind of famous person probably in there. But this is Durban, what famous celebrity could be here. But there is nothing more unnecessary than the fleet of cars they are escorted with. Now they are causing traffic for no reason, they are parked in the middle of the road.

"Are you Amile." I almost jumped out of my skin when that car parked in front of me.

"Are you my uber?" I asked looking at the car, then the screen of my phone. It's him.

"Yes, get in, lets go." He doesn't look sketchy as he does in the picture, but that's how they all are, they take dodgy ass pictures and use them as profile pictures.

I climbed in the car, and we also got stuck in the

traffic. I was going to be late and Nambitha was going to bite my head off.

“Yazi labantu basebukhosini bazibona besilawula la.” He was directly next to one of the SUV’s and he hit his honk.

Only now that he said that I saw the flags. What I fail to understand is why are they parked in the middle of the road. The cranky driver continued to honk his hooter, much to my annoyance. Yes, I’m also rushing, but that could be the King for all we know.

The front door of the other SUV opened, and a guy dressed in black walked out, charging towards the car. He was gripping onto his belt and that has never been a good sign, what if he has a gun. He knocked on the window, I felt my body going cold.

“Do we have a problem?” he was ugly, with a scar on his left cheek. I’ve seen ugly people

before, but this man right here, he takes the cup.

“We have places to be, you are causing traffic, please find somewhere else to park.” His hard face is not very welcoming. The driver is also humbled.

“I am escorting the prince of Zululand. I don’t answer to you. I could park you in for two days and it wouldn’t be a problem.” Well damn.

My phone rang, startling me and dragging me out of the conversation at hand. It’s Nambitha. I answered in panic.

“Nambitha, I’m on my way. I’m stuck in traffic.” I whispered.

“I told you not to do things on the last minute, if...” I cut off the call. I don’t need this right now.

The ugly man peeked at the back window where I was sitting and looked at me before he tugged at his waist again.

“Stop what you are doing.” He said to the driver before he walked away.

Is it too dramatic of me to say I saw my life flashing before my eyes when that happened? He could've taken out his gun and killed us, or maybe made us pay a fine for disrespecting royalty. All because he caused traffic by Musgrave mall. What is royalty doing at Musgrave mall anyway.

The two SUVs finally moved out of the road and the other parked on the side, allowing us space to leave. A fleet of other cars followed behind us, which is proof enough that they indeed were causing traffic. Royal people are obnoxious.

My flat is not far from Musgrave, luckily, so I got there in no time. I paid him and rushed up the stairs. Waiting for the elevator was another story. When I walked in, Mom was already dressed for work and Nambitha was waiting for me in the lounge.

“You’re late.” I looked at my watch and it had just hit 14:05

“No, you’re early.” I said dropping my bag on the couch.

“Go wash your face, otherwise we will be late.” Mom shook her head and laughed.

“I’ll leave you guys to it. I have to drop Siviwe off first and you know Lisa will want to sit and chat.” She said picking up her lunch bag and hooking it over her shoulder.

“Enjoy your evening girls. I booked the hotel for you guys, it’s a sharing room for three. I’ll send you the details when I get to work.” she said coming to kiss my cheek.

“Thank you, mama.” She kissed Nambitha’s cheek before screaming for Siviwe to come.

He gave both of us hugs and we escorted them down to the parking lot and bid them farewell.

“I am starving.” I said while we climbed the stairs.

“Well, you can’t eat now, you are going to ruin your appetite.” She said.

“Yeah, I know, I’ll just have a fruit or something. You will never believe what happened right now.” I know my friend is a sucker for gossip.

“We saw the royal family escorts.” She slapped my arm.

“Shut up.”

“I oath. They were blocking the road, three SUV’s. So, the Uber driver gets frustrated because they are causing traffic and starts hooting at them. One of the bodyguards violently climbs out of the car and threaten to shoot us. Imagine. The driver was shaking in his boots.” That’s how you tell stories, you spice them up.

“And what did they do, did they move. Oh my

gosh did you meet them? Who were they escorting?" I chuckled. I forgot she's obsessed with the royal family.

"I don't know, he said they are escorting the prince. I don't know which one though. I don't even know them by name."

"Maybe it was Prince Mandlenkosi, or Prince Dumisani. Ohh Prince Mandlenkosi is so handsome." I laughed at her and opened the door to the house.

"Whoever it was, what they were doing is unnecessary. I'm late because of them." I said rolling my eyes.

"I wonder what they are doing in Durban."

"We need to get going, otherwise we'll be late."

We played some music and she started beating my face. She's very good with make-up, she loves doing it and has been practicing on our faces from as young as seven years old. That's

how far our friendship comes from by the way. Grade one of primary school, it's always been the three of us. Destiny's Child as people call us. Yonela is the Beyonce, or so she thinks. She can't sing to save her life though, I'm the only one with a singing voice.

When she was done, and I looked at myself in the mirror, I looked drop dead gorgeous. I didn't recognize myself.

"I look like a real seventeen-year-old." I said moving my hair back from my face.

"You do friend. You do. Now go get dressed."

I don't have to worry about her, she knows how to make haste. I went to the bathroom to freshen up. I had already bathed in the morning, so I didn't need to bath again. I got my dress out of the wardrobe and went to iron it. As I was ironing, my phone rang and when I saw the caller ID, I almost fainted. Why is he calling me?

“Siyabonga Mzulwini.” I answered.

“Happy birthday shortie. I know you are looking peng wherever you are. Yoni told me you guys are going out, you want me to drive you there?” I almost puked in my mouth.

“First of all, I’m not your shortie, you broke up with me, not the other way around, secondly, I don’t need anything from you. Stop calling me Siya.” He chuckled. That made my blood boil.

“Come on Amile, I made a mistake. I miss you shortie.” Ask me again how I put up with this skrr skrr boy for two whole years. Make it make sense.

“Goodbye Siyabonga.” I dropped the call and continued ironing my dress. I have the urge to block him, but I’m not childish. I want him to see how pretty I am tonight and see what he’s missing out on.

I was to be wearing a red satin cowl neck

rucked side bodycon dress that complimented my skin color. I was skeptical about this dress because I got it on Shein and people often criticized the site but I loved the dress and it looked perfect on my average curve body. If mom saw me in this dress, she would freak out. She hates me wearing short clothes.

“Oh my goodness you look stunning.” I turned and looked at her. She was standing behind me looking at me in awe.

“Thank you, friend. You also need to get dressed.” I grabbed my shoes from the floor. She had already beat her face and she looked absolutely gorgeous.

“You really need to start charging people for make-up, you are really good.” I said as I put on my shoes.

“I will. For now, I want to focus on my schoolwork. this year is no child’s play.”

“Right.” I sighed.

“Who were you on the phone with?” she asked.

“That jerk Siya. I don’t know why he’s calling me. Talking about taking us to Views. I don’t want anything that has to do with him.”

“What he did is unforgiveable. The worst part is he didn’t even give you a proper reason as to why he did what he did.”

“I don’t even care anymore. He was saying he misses me; I don’t want him anymore. He can go to hell for all I care.” I said.

“That’s the spirit. Life goes on. We are going to find a new boy toy for you.” I laughed.

“You just said that we need to focus on school. Matric already has us by the titties. I won’t risk it.”

“Call Yoni and ask her where she is, we need to go.” She said zipping up her dress. I made sure

the windows are all closed before grabbing my phone and calling her.

“Mamazi. I’m outside.” She said before I shouted at her.

“Good, I’m coming.”

“Can I call the uber?” Nambitha asked gathering her bags.

“Yes, she’s outside. Let’s go.” I had a small bag with my changing clothes, so I carried that, and my purse and we left.

When we got to the parking lot, the hypocrite I call a friend was with her jerk brother. I almost turned and went back to the house.

“Amile, wait. He’s just going to take us to the hotel to leave our bags.” Yonela defended.

“Just to cut the costs of the uber. Please shortie.” I felt like slapping him to the nearest 100. Nambitha looked at me with that look, the

one that said just give in.

“Fine, but he mustn’t talk to me.” I said sternly looking at Yonela. She nodded and looked at her brother who also nodded.

He got out of the driver’s seat and helped us put the bags in the boot. The two hypocrites got in at the back and left the front seat open for me to sit. I could fight it, but this has been my seat ever since he got the car.

He started the car and we drove in silence. On purpose, he played our song ‘The Way’ by Ariana and Mac. It was our song; he would rap Mac’s part and I would fumble on Ariana’s part. I can sing but I’m not Ariana good, but he always backed me up and made me feel like I was doing it right. I stole a glance at him, and he was staring at me. The two at the back were dead silent.

“You look beautiful shortie.” I rolled my eyes

and focused on what's on front of me.

My biggest weakness is watching him drive, lord knows how sexy he is when he uses one hand to grip on the steering wheel and the other one would usually be on my thigh. I still love him, a lot; but the way he ended things hurt me. I have never cried like that in my life, and now he's just here, saying he wants me back when he didn't even give me a reason as to why he broke up with me in the first place.

We arrived at the hotel after a dreadful silent drive and as we were offloading our bags, he held my hand and pulled me back.

"Can we talk." He gave me those soft eyes of his and my insides melted. I still have that soft spot for him.

"Fine." I gave Yonela my phone with the check-in details and they went inside while I stayed behind and prepared my ears to listen to the

nonsense that was going to come out of his mouth.

“I messed up Amile, I couldn’t hold myself. Remember when you told me you were a virgin, and I told you I was willing to wait until you were ready, I meant it. I had never touched a girl other than you in the two years that we were together, I really waited.” He rubbed his palms together anxiously.

“When we went to Jali’s party, I fucked another girl. I knew it was going to catch up with me and the best decision I could make was to break up with you, to spare you the pain. I messed up big time Amile and I broke your heart, I’m sorry.” Nothing he’s saying is making sense to me right now.

“So, you broke up with me because you fucked another girl and?” I asked folding my arms across my chest.

“I was afraid to tell you, to break your heart.”

“Didn’t I specifically say to you that when you want sex you must tell me?” he sighed.

“You did, but I didn’t want to pressure you into doing something you didn’t want to do. I’ve seen how uncomfortable you get when I finger you, or when you give me head.”

“Siya, letting you go seek sex elsewhere was the only sacrifice I would’ve made in this relationship because I know I can’t give it to you. I told you that. yes, I don’t enjoy all these things, but I do it because I love you and I want to see you happy, so it’s things like this I will sacrifice for you. I’m disappointed that you didn’t come to me and be honest about what you feel and what you did.”

“I will do whatever I have to do to gain your trust back Amile, I love you. You make me happy.” I exhaled.

“I’ll think about it. For now, can you just give me space and let me enjoy my birthday.” He nodded.

“Anything for you shortie.” He pulled out his wallet from his pocket and handed me his bank card, “I want you guys to treat yourselves today, and enjoy your day to the fullest.” I looked at the card.

“Please, just take it.” He begged. I sighed.

“Thank you, Siya.” He smiled.

“Can I get a hug from the birthday girl?”

I rolled my eyes and went in for a hug. He held me tightly, and I heard him inhale my scent.

“I love you, Amile.” I didn’t respond, I’ll keep my ‘I love yous’ to myself for now.

Chapter Two

Amile Gumede

“Namhla senz’ umlando, lolusuk’ olukhulu senz’ umlando!” these two are embarrassing me, as if they weren’t just silent back there in the car with Siya.

It was a bad idea for him to give them a sealed bottle of gin. We haven’t even gotten to Views yet but they are already drinking. I occupied the front seat of the Uber because they wanted to make a noise properly at the back. The driver is also entertaining it by playing the music loud enough for the whole of town to hear.

“Haibo Amile liven up. It’s your birthday!” she tapped my shoulder and gave me the bottle where she dashed the gin. I don’t like alcohol. I’ve never been drunk; I certainly won’t start now.

We arrived at Views, and I suddenly felt out of place. Yes we looked pretty, just like all the other girls there, full face beat, pretty short dresses and high stilettos. The only difference between us and them is that they are old, they

are either working, or are being funded for the lifestyle they are living, and we know that better, this is South Africa, we know how the Instagram influencers live.

We got a table and as soon as we settled in, these two ordered a bottle of champagne and the hubbly. I definitely won't tell them that Siya gave me his card and told me to go crazy. Yonela might be his younger sister, but she doesn't mind chowing his money like he's a blesser of some sort. I swear sometimes she forgets that they are siblings.

"Can we please have a round of Jager shots!" Yonela said pulling the waiter aside.

"Wait, what about food? We can't have alcohol on empty stomachs, we'll leave this place crawling." I whispered to her.

"It's just shots. The hubbly is coming and then we'll order the food. Relax." She made a list of

other things to the waiter and finally let him go.

“We are splitting the bill right.” Nambitha said getting comfortable on her seat.

“Yes, we are.” Yonela gave me the stink eye. I laughed.

“What was Siyabonga saying to you?” Nambitha said brushing off her friend.

“He told me why he broke up with me and he said he regrets it and wants a second chance.” I slouched in my seat before heaving a sigh

“So are you going to forgive him?” Yonela curiously asked.

“I don’t know man. I don’t know how to feel about what he did.”

“What did he do?” Nambitha asked.

“He fucked another girl. He broke up with me because he was afraid to tell me.” she widened her eyes, both of them actually. “didn’t he tell

you?" I asked looking at Yonela.

"No, he doesn't tell me anything about your relationship. All I know is what you tell me." awkward. They have such a close relationship.

"Well, that's what he did." She clapped her hands.

"Yazi boys are the same. Even the one I shared a womb with." I rubbed my forehead.

"Okay but I kinda understand why he would do that. We don't do anything; I'm a virgin and I don't have any plans of giving it up anytime soon. That's hard for him, he's already had a taste of it, it's hard not to go back." They both shook their heads.

"That's not an excuse. If he truly loved you, he would've been comfortable with waiting for, and wait with you. It's not like you aren't making compromises for him. You do all the other sexual things."-Nambitha.

“I know, but I’m more disappointed in the fact that he didn’t tell me. I think that’s what hurts more. When we started dating, I told him I wouldn’t be able to give him sex, not until I turn twenty-one. I even made the sacrifice and told him that if he feels it’s too much for him, he must tell me. I was going to let him go seek it somewhere else, but I wanted him to tell me.”

“You don’t love that person, Amile.”-Yonela. I frowned.

“You don’t love Siya.” She emphasized.

“That’s not true Yoni. You know how much I love him. That sacrifice, telling him he can go get sex somewhere else, it’s a sign of how much I love him. I know I can’t give it to him, so the least I can do is allow him the one thing I can’t give him.” I defended.

“If you truly loved him, you wouldn’t have still kept yourself because when you love someone,

you give them all of you, and it's always worth it. You won't feel the need to pretend that you enjoy yourself when you are with him, it will come naturally. What I'm trying to say to you Amile is when you finally find the one that you love wholeheartedly, you'll give yourself to him on a silver platter, you won't think twice about it. And I'm not talking just about virginity, I'm talking soul, mind and heart too."

I don't think I would've stayed with Siya for this long if I didn't love him. I've never felt like this for any boy, and I believe that loving someone is about sacrifices. I sacrificed all the things I don't like for him, only because I love him, I'd do anything for him.

"I'm hoping that the two of you fix things. I love the two of you together and something like this can be resolved by sitting down and hearing each other out."-Nambitha tried to diffuse the situation. Yonela was getting heated.

Our shots arrived and they were ecstatic.

“Okay, we’ll drink in three! One, two, three!” we downed the shots, and this thing burned my throat. It tastes like cough mixture.

“Another round?” Yonela asked already signaling for the waiter. We’ll get kicked out of this place before we finish ordering I swear.

“I need a glass of water and food, that’s what I need.” I didn’t even get the chance to grab a fruit before we left the house. I can literally hear my intestines crying.

My eyes were wandering around looking for a waiter nearby, but my eyes landed on the ugly bodyguard man we ran into earlier with that Uber driver. He’s sitting alone at the table, and he has a glass of water in front of him. His eyes are also wandering, he still looks ugly, and scary. Our eyes meet and I quickly turn my head and look at Nambitha.

“You remember the bodyguard from earlier.” I kicked her under the table, and I had her attention.

“The royal one?” she’s already looking around.

“Stop looking around. He’s behind me.”

“Who is that?” Yonela leaned in because I was whispering.

“Amile met the royal escorts of one of the Zulu prince’s earlier and he’s sitting behind her.”- Nambitha says still looking around. I slapped her arm.

“Stop looking around.” I said hastily.

“Which one is he?” great, now Yonela is also looking around.

“The one dressed in black. Don’t look at him, he’s ugly.” These idiots I call friends looked.

“Oh my goodness, he’s standing up, what do we do.” Yonela leaned out, fear plastered on her

face. I froze in my chair.

“Uphi?” I asked too afraid to turn around.

“Do we have a problem ladies?” a deep voice spoke behind me, only then was I intoxicated by the smell of strong cologne. Fuck!

“No sir.”-Yonela said looking directly at him.

“You all look beautiful, but I would appreciate it if you stopped staring and talking about me. I’m on the job and you are distracting.” I don’t even want to turn. I’m too scared to. What if he recognizes me?

“Yes sir, we are sorry.” Yonela has some balls talking to him. I’ve even stopped breathing.

“Have a lovely evening.” For an ugly man, he is very well spoken. When I was certain he was gone, I let out a shaky breath, so did the two I was sitting with.

“What the fuck was that!?” Nambitha to Yonela.

“I don’t know chomie. He’s ugly but he has an aura, a presence. He’s attractive.” She said fanning herself with the menu.

“There is no attractive lapha. He’s just scary. Haibo!” I said picking up my own and covering my face with it.

“Do you think one of the princes are here, he said he’s on the job?” because that’s all Nambitha cares about, the princes.

“I don’t know, maybe.” I said paging through the menu.

“Oh my gosh, imagine meeting Prince Mandlenkosi.” She blushed.

“I don’t care about the royal family, I want him, the ugly bodyguard. He’s so charming.” That’s Yonela for you. Aura and personality over looks is what she always says.

“How old do you think he is?”-Nambitha.

“Maybe he’s thirty. I don’t know, and I don’t care. I want him.” I took the risk and turned my head. He was now on his phone.

“Good luck.” I said and grabbed the shot glass, trying to get at least a drop of liquid down my throat. The service here is slow.

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I’m stuffed, even my belly button is poking out of my dress from being full. These girls are on their third bottle of champagne, and I lost count of the number of shots we’ve taken. Mixing Jager and Vodka, mixing it up. I’m surprised they just serve alcohol here without asking for age. It’s almost half five and I said to mom we would leave at six. I also want to leave at six because I don’t like being in a crowded place, if we want to party, I think we can do that back at

the hotel.

They are on the dance floor, and people are starting to arrive. It's a Saturday night anyway, people want to have fun. I'm sitting here, I just finished my glass of champagne and I need the toilet. I stand up scan the area to look for the toilet. I feel a little lightheaded and I know that it's the alcohol. I wander around looking for what looks like a toilet, I'm really pressed now that I'm standing and if I don't find this damned toilet now, I might just wake up trending as the girl that peed on herself at Views.

"Sorry bhuti do you know where the toilet is?" he looks like a bouncer.

"For this floor, no nkosazane, but I can take you to the one in the VIP." I looked up to his face and he had slanted eyes, but they were very capturing. I cleared my throat.

"I would appreciate that thank you, I'm

pressed.” I realized later that there was no need for me to say that. I wanted to kick myself.

He led me to the VIP section and there was another bouncer standing there. The bouncer bowed his head to him before opening the velvet rope for us. The lounge looked quieter than out there, there was less people and they all looked rich. There were a few girls sitting with rich looking men in suits, wearing skimpy dresses like I am. I am a thousand percent sure these are blesser blesse relationships.

“Must I wait for you here?” his voice brought me back to reality and he was standing next to me. We were in front of the ladies room.

“You can if you want to.” I said jokingly and pushed the door, rushing in.

It was like I couldn't hold it in anymore and as soon as I sat on that toilet seat, it flowed like a tap. That was the longest pee I have ever had in

a while, it felt so good to relieve myself. When I finished, I went to the sink to wash my hands. I was met with my reflection, and I still looked beautiful. My eyes were slightly turning red and that was indication enough that I have had one too many drinks for tonight. I don't drink at all, and being this tipsy, it's not my style.

I was surprised to find him standing outside the door waiting for me. I chuckled and pulled down my dress a little. I suddenly felt naked.

"You really waited for me?" I asked walking out.

"I just wanted to make sure that you are safe."
He said leading me out.

"Thank you." I walked in front of him, and he was following behind me slowly.

"Nkosazane." I turned and looked at him. Did I mention that he's handsome? I don't think I did.

"What is your name?" he asked stepping closer to me.

“Amile.” I said looking into his eyes. They are hypnotizing.

“Just Amile?” he smiled, revealing a dimple on his left cheek. I melted.

“Amile Gumede. And who are you?” I asked reaching out my hand for a handshake.

“Nkosi Zulu.” I chuckled.

“Nice to meet you Nkosi.” He firmly shook my hand.

“Nice to meet you too MaGumede.” I felt a whole flight of butterflies’ land in my stomach, and I felt my cheeks heating up.

“Would you like to join me for a drink?” he asked still holding on to my hand.

“Uhm, I’m with my friends, I’m sure they are worried. It’s my birthday and...” I was stuttering, something I don’t do. When I looked up to meet his eyes, he was beaming.

“Oh really, happy birthday.” He said.

“Thank you.” He would probably faint if he found out my age. He doesn’t look a day younger than 25. He’s probably in his late twenties.

“Can I take you out. Tomorrow, for breakfast maybe.” Confident much. “Just as a young birthday gift.” He backed himself up.

“You don’t have to...” he interjected.

“I want to.” His eyes are hypnotizing. I think I said that already.

I nodded and he kissed my hand. What am I doing? This is a bouncer of a club for crying out loud. I’m barely seventeen yet!

“Mind giving me your numbers, just so I can call to confirm tomorrow morning.” He said looking at my lips. I cleared my throat and he looked back at my eyes.

“083...” I called it out for him, and he quickly scrambled to take out his phone. I’m sure he only got the last four digits only. I chuckled.

“I think you can make it work with those. Right?” I said and walked away.

“Amile?” he called out.

“It was nice meeting you Nkosi.” The bouncer at the door let me out and when I went back to the table, the dancing queens were sitting and were enjoying another bottle of champagne.

“Uphumaphi.” Nambitha asked without giving me a chance to relax. She acts like my mom sometimes.

“I was at the ladies.” I said pouring a glass of champagne. I thought I was done.

“The toilet is that way. You came from that way.” Yonela pointed out and I rolled my eyes.

“I asked one of the bouncers to show me and

they took me to the one in the VIP section.”

“Oh okay.” They said in unison.

“I’m tipsy, I think we should go now.” I said tipping the glass back

“No, we just got here.” Who other than Yonela?

“Yoni we’ve been here for three hours now. We need to go back to the hotel. We can continue back there.” I said standing up. A part of me want to go sleep this alcohol off so I can look fresh for my date with a bouncer tomorrow.

“Amile is right, let’s go, otherwise we’ll finish all our money here. We can always get Siya to bring us more alcohol.” Here it goes again with Siya. Didn’t she hate him just earlier.

“Okay fine. Let’s settle the bill. Nambitha call the Uber.”

Yonela signaled for a waiter, and they came with the bill. I almost fainted when I saw it.

“Fucking four grand!?” I screamed out loud unintentionally.

“You’re lying, let me see!” Yonela snatched it from me. She looked at in in shock.

“We are going to wash dished tonight I swear.” She said flipping through the book.

“Ma’am.” Someone tapped my shoulder and I looked up.

“Hello.” I said in fear. I looked at her name badge and it was written manager. What if she knows we don’t have money, or worse, we are underage?

“Are you miss Amile Gumede?” She asked and gave me a big fake smile.

“Yes, I am.” I returned a fearful one.

“Mr Nkosi at the VIP section has settled your bill. I’ll just take this, sorry for the misunderstanding.” She took the bill book and

walked away. I frowned and looked at the girls.

“Who is that?” Nambitha asked.

“The bouncer I was telling you about, the one that took me to the toilet.” Yoni clapped her hands loudly.

“Hhayi ndiyaqala noyiva enje.” She stood up. I’m just as confused as she is.

“How can a bouncer settle a bill? It doesn’t make sense.” I said out loud.

“I don’t know, you tell us.” They said looking at me.

“Just be grateful we didn’t have to wash dishes because there was no way I was going to pay four grand for a mere supper and a few glasses of champagne.” Yonela grabbed her bag.

“Asambe.” She said looking at the both of us.

I gave this person my number and I don’t even know who he is. I’m going to do some research.

I'll probably find him on the internet. We walked out of the restaurant, and we stood outside waiting for our Uber. It was cold and we didn't have our jackets.

"Where is the Uber?" I asked shivering.

"Two minutes away." Nambitha said checking her phone.

"Fuck, it's freezing out here." I said looking around.

My eyes landed on the SUV from earlier. It was just parked on the side of the road. It's the royal escort.

"There's your man's car." I said to Yonela. She did a mini squeal.

"I'm going to go there." She said fixing her dress.

"Don't be stupid wena." Nambitha said pulling her back when she tried to walk there.

The lights of the car turned on and it roared to

life before taking off and disappearing into the darkness.

“Yabonake, that was my chance.” She said scolding Nambitha.

“You’ll meet him another day.” As she was speaking, the Uber pulled up in front of us, saving us from the misery of the cold. Thank God.

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We got to the hotel safely and the first thing I did was hit the shower, remove all the make-up, and get warm and comfy. I also had to call mom and tell her we arrived safely. I’m sitting under the blanket playing Candy Crush on my phone and the girls are finishing their bottle of gin. They called Siya and asked him to bring them more alcohol, hubbly and weed, imagine.

They really want to turn up but I'm not there anymore. I can't stop thinking about Nkosi, the handsome bouncer who paid our bill.

In the back of my mind and in the depths of my heart, I'm praying he got my whole number, because my stupid ass wishes to see him again for some reason.

"Yini wena?" Nambitha slapped my thigh. I zoned out.

"Nothing." I said looking at her.

"You've been quiet since we came back. Are you okay?" she asked starting to look concerned.

"She's daydreaming about Nkosi." Yoni chimed in. I rolled my eyes.

"I'm just wondering how a bouncer can just settle a R4000 bill. Isn't that their monthly salary?" I asked.

“Maybe he isn’t a bouncer. Did he tell you he was one?” Nambitha asked.

“No, he didn’t, but he was dressed like one. Black jeans, a black long-sleeved t-shirt, and loafers.”

“Did he tell you his surname?” Yonela asked.

“Yes, Zulu.” That seemed to spark Nambitha’s interest.

“Zulu? Nkosi Zulu?” she repeated.

“Yes, that’s what he said.” She slapped my thigh.

“Shut up, isn’t it Prince Mandlenkosi?” she asked looking excited.

“I don’t know what he looks like, I’ve never seen him. Come on, don’t say that.” I said feeling fearful.

“What do you mean you don’t know what he looks like?” Yonela said looking at me like I’m the dumbest chick on planet earth.

“I’ve never seen his pictures before.” I grabbed my phone.

“You won’t find his pictures anywhere, trust me, I’ve looked.” Nambitha said.

“Then how do you know how he looks like?” I raised my eyebrow.

“I saw him in the news, a glimpse of him when they were coronating King Zwelibanzi.”

I threw my phone on the other side of the couch feeling frustrated.

“It can’t be him. that man just looked common; he wasn’t even wearing a wristwatch. Rich men wear wrist watches. I would’ve known if he was the prince.” I said. They both shrugged their shoulders.

“Asazi ntombi.” I bit my nails feeling dumb.

“He asked me out to breakfast tomorrow.” They both threw me shady looks.

“And what did you say?” my ever so judgmental friends.

“I said yes and gave him my number.” They both shook their heads.

“Has he called or messaged you?”-Nambitha.

“No, not yet.” I said.

“You will go to that breakfast. We want to meet him.”-Yonela.

“That is not happening.” I mean them meeting him.

“Don’t be like that. It could be the prince for all we know.” I rolled my eyes.

“It’s not the prince. I would’ve known if he was the prince. Why would a prince speak to a commoner like me, what would he be doing a club, a public club? No, he’s not the prince.”

I think I was trying to convince myself more than them. My phone beeped.

Nkosazane, I hope you had a beautiful day, and enjoyed your special birthday. I'm happy I met you, and tonight I'll sleep with something to look forward to. I hope to see you tomorrow. Good night.

Zulu.

It was a text from him. I felt my heart dropping to the pit of my stomach. He signed it Zulu. Could it really be the prince?

Chapter Three

Amile Gumede

A chillers that was supposed to be for the three of us has turned into a room party. Siya came and he came with his friends, and some of their girlfriends. He's trying to suck up to me, and he was disappointed to learn that I didn't use his card, but I didn't use any of the money I had today. If it wasn't for that man that is giving me

chest pains paying the bill today, I would've maxed out his card.

"Amile, can we talk." He whispered in my ear. There's music playing and they are turning up in here as if it's their mother's place. I hope we don't get kicked out.

"Let's go." I stood up and we went to the other room connected to this one. This is where I'm going to be sleeping. There's only one bed. The other room where we are chilling has two beds and that's what Nambitha and Yonela are going to share.

"Why didn't you use the credit card?" he asked.

"I didn't need it." I certainly won't tell him that another man, a stranger settled our bill.

"I know you're still mad at me, but I'm sorry. I don't know what I have to do for you to forgive me." I sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed.

“I’m not mad Siya, I’m hurt. I’m hurt that you didn’t talk to me. you made up your mind about my reaction even before I had a chance to think about it.” He rubbed his forehead.

“I’m sorry. I did the one thing I promised you I would never do, and that is hurt you. I’m really sorry Amile.” I sighed.

“Come here.” I opened my arms for him, and his tall self came to me, and I gave him a hug.

“I love you. You have never given me a reason to doubt you in this relationship, you have made me happy. I’m short of nothing and I won’t let you go just because of a stupid mistake. You just have to promise me it won’t ever happen again.” I said brushing his hair.

“I promise you shortie, it won’t happen again.” I cringed at the name shortie. I don’t necessarily like it, but what can I do? The skrr skrr lives in him.

He cupped my face and kissed me gently. His hands travelled down to my pajama bottom and his hands sneaked in. I tensed up, but he stroked the small of my back before laying me down on the bed. He gave me a gentle look after breaking the kiss. He was asking for permission to go down on me and hesitantly, I agreed.

He helped me take my pants off along with my underwear and he started brushing my newly shaved mound. I wasn't wet yet, so he traced his hand down my skittles and played with it a little, earning himself a moan from my mouth. He raised my legs to his shoulders and his mouth made contact with my other lips. I faked a moan and tightly squeezed my nipple under my top, to try and arouse myself. I just wasn't feeling it, but I will tolerate it because I love him.

After a while, he came up to my face and started kissing me. I could feel his front poking

on my naval. Now I know it's my turn. He gave me room to sit up and I took off my top, got on my knees and made him sit on the bed. I helped him pull down his jeans and his mister sprung out. After doing a sloppy job the first time, I have come a long way, and I have finally mastered the art of giving head. Not that I enjoy it, no, it's unpleasant to say the least, but yet again, I tolerate it because I love him. I plopped it in my mouth and started swirling it in my mouth. He screamed like a little girl, he used his hand to grip on my braids as I went faster and faster. I felt like a prostitute, especially when he nutted on my boobs. Must be nice being a man. I've never had an orgasm.

"Thank you shortie." He said catching his breath. I hate the smell of semen, so I stood and went to the bathroom and wash my mouth.

When I came back to the room, he was already dressed.

“I’m going back, are you coming?” he asked looking at my naked body.

“You can go so long.” He nodded and walked out.

I plopped myself on the bed and looked at my phone next to the bed. I took it and laid on my back. I opened the text from Nkosi and stared at it for a good minute. I don’t know how I feel about it. Am I going to breakfast? Should I?

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I barely slept. Other than the people in the next room making noise, I kept having dreams of the breakfast date with Nkosi. My brain kept creating weird scenarios of how it would play out and that kept my mind half awake. I also had a dream of a man, a man I don’t know, a man I have never met. He was sitting on a

throne like chair, and he looked mad at me. I even went as far as going to kneel in front of him to beg for forgiveness, but he didn't budge. Who is this man, and why was I begging for forgiveness from him?

It's six in the morning and I have no sleep left in my body. I went to the bathroom and sat on the cold toilet seat trying to pee, but nothing was coming out. I was distracted, I was having an out of body experience. My phone started vibrating on my thigh and I almost had a heart attack from the fright. I looked at it and it was unsaved number. My heart rate increased.

"Nkosazane, good morning." He still had a sleepy voice and it sounded so sexy.

"Hi Nkosi." He gave a deep throat chuckle.

"Did I wake you MaGumede?" he asked.

"No, not at all, I'm up." I said softly. Silence passed between us for a few moments, and

after a while, I heard him release a shaky breath.

“I didn’t sleep all night, I couldn’t sleep. I couldn’t get you out of my mind nkosazane.” He exhaled again. I kept quiet.

“Are you still there.” You can tell that he is nervous. I’m making a grown man nervous.

“I’m here Ndabezitha.” I don’t know where I got the guts to say that, but I could hear his unsteady breaths over the phone.

“Angilalanga MaGumede.” He said lowly.

“Nami ngokunjalo.” Someone kick me. What am I doing?

“I need to see you again. Please allow me to see you again.” He begged.

“You promised me breakfast this morning.” Why am I not in control of my mouth? I’m having verbal diarrhea so early in the morning.

“Send me your location, I’ll come pick you up.” I

breathed out.

“Okay.” I said.

“I’ll call you later okay.” I nodded as if he can see me.

“Okay.”

“Bye.” He said.

“Bye.”

I heard him breathing out loudly before the call cut. I almost threw my phone on the other side of the room in frustration. What was that? Ndabezitha? Fucking Ndabezitha!? That’s not me.

I got off the toilet seat without peeing. My legs were cramping from the comfortability of the toilet seat. I went back to bed and started my search. I googled Prince Mandlenkosi Zulu and there was no single picture of him. There were only pictures of the King, his wife and Prince

Dumisani and Khethukuthula. Nambitha was right. I searched for him on Instagram and on Facebook, nothing. The prince is super private. It can't be him, now I know.

I searched for Nkosi Zulu all over social media, I even went as far as going on LinkedIn and they all weren't the man with the dimple and slanted eyes I met yesterday. What kind of fuckery is this? I downloaded Trucaller and I entered his number. It just had Nkosi Zulu, nothing to work with, not even a second name. Maybe he's a ghost.

After giving up, I sent him my location via SMS, and he replied with a simple thank you. He didn't tell me what time I must get ready. I set an alarm for seven thirty and I got under the covers and dozed off.

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He opened my legs gently and came on top of

me. I shook my head no but he instead stroked my cheek.

“This is for you.” I’m aroused, I can feel it.

I want him to be on top of me like this, I want him to touch me like this. I love him, but this is my most prized possession, it’s my gem. I have to keep it safe for as long as I can, so my mother can be proud of me.

“I’m not going to hurt you. I love you; you are mine.” I felt something slip into me and I something wobbling inside my stomach.

It felt so good, I couldn’t feel any pain, not like they have said you should. I tried to hold on to him so he could go deeper, I wanted more of this feeling, it felt amazing, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t hold him

“My Queen.” He whispered into my ear before he fell on top of me. It stopped.

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I shot my eyes open, and I felt my panties soak. I got out of bed alarmed and ran to the bathroom. I took off my pants and sat on the toilet seat trying to pee, but nothing came out. I was drenched in sweat and my heart was racing. I touched my coochie and it was soaking wet, I was dripping. I can still feel something moving inside my core, and my skittles is throbbing. Did I just have a wet dream for a man I don't know?

If I was a cry baby, I would be bawling my eyes out. I've heard too many stories about spiritual husbands and all those other things about animals, and this could easily be it. It's the same man I was kneeling in front of in that other dream, asking for forgiveness from.

I heard my alarm going off in the room and I got off the toilet seat, washed my hands and went to switch it off. I don't feel like going out anymore, but I don't want to disappoint him by standing him up. The winter sun is out and it's a

good day to have breakfast maybe by the beach. Plus, I have a headache now, I need proper food.

I climbed in the shower and made sure to clean myself up properly. I felt sticky, imagine sweating in the cold. I hate nightmares. My coochie is still soaked and slippery. I ignored it and finished my shower. I felt a little better when I was done and I headed back to the bedroom to make my bed. I know there are people who do this, but the lady in me can't leave the place looking like this. I put on my robe on top of my naked body and went into the other room to check on the girls.

I fear the hangover they will have today, they drank like fishes last night and they slept late on top of that.

“Nambitha.” I shook her. She groaned. “Wake up.”

“Ayi Amile go away.” She shooed me away.

“I’m going out for breakfast with Nkosi. Check out is at ten by the way so you guys have to wake up.” She ignored me.

“Nambitha.” I shook her again.

“I heard you, hamba lana, I’m trying to sleep.” I chuckled and walked out the room.

I checked my phone and there was a text from Nkosi.

“Five minutes away Nkosazane.” Well damn, I need to make haste.

I pulled my bag from the floor and took out a pair of blue jeans. I also had a black vest with me, and I paired that with white sneakers and a bomber jacket. No make-up today, I want him to see the real me, maybe he’ll realized how young I am and run away. Not that I want him to.

Essence lip gloss finished my look, and I had my braids tied up in a high ponytail. As I was gathering my bags, my phone rang, and it was

him.

“Nkosazane, I’m outside.” He sounded more awake now, livelier.

“Okay, I’m on my way.”

I had everything packed and I was to be taking my whole bag. I’m going to call an Uber from where we are going and it’s going to take me straight home. I walked past the girls, and they were both dead sleeping.

“Guys, I’m gone. I’ll see you guys tomorrow.” They better recover today because tomorrow we have school.

They didn’t say anything so I just left my room key on the table and walked out. Bazozibona, I’m gone.

I walked out the lobby and there was a charcoal grey Mercedes GLE parked with their hazard lights on. This possibly can’t be him. I stood there looking around. Not long after, my phone

rang, it was him.

“Why are you standing there?” he said laughing.

“I can’t see you.” I said looking around, ignoring the Mercedes.

The car made a honk and I almost fainted.

“Can you see me now?” he asked again.

“I’m coming.” He was laughing.

I dropped the call and walked towards the car. When I got closer, I saw the license plate and it was written ‘Zulu,’ it’s really his. I expected him to climb out and open the door for me, but he chilled in the car like a king. I opened the door to the front seat, and I was welcomed by cold air laced with the smell of his cologne. He flashed me a smile as I climbed in.

“MaGumede.” Does he have any idea what that does to me?

“Hi Nkosi.” He chuckled.

“What happened to Ndabezitha?” I rolled my eyes and placed my bags in the back. It is the first time I’ve never climbed in such a fancy car; I feel out of place.

I turned my head, and he was staring at me with a smile on his face.

“What?” I asked shrugging my shoulders.

“Umuhle.” I blushed and looked down.

“Thank you.” He chuckled again before starting the car.

He was playing trap music along the way, and he looked so effortless in the way he was handling that steering wheel. He kept glancing at me every now and then with a smile on his face and then he would turn to the front quick enough. Today he was wearing a wristwatch, it looked bloody expensive. He also had traditional beads on the same wrist and they were colorful, they looked beautiful. Ucu

Iwentombi if I'm not mistaken.

"Did you enjoy your birthday?" his one hand was gripping on the steering wheel and the other one on his thigh. Sexy!

"Yes, I did. You didn't have to pay the bill." I say.

"Why don't you just say thank you?" I looked at him and he still had a smile. I rolled my eyes.

"Thank you Ndabezitha."

"You are welcome MaGumede." Butterflies!

We are heading towards Durban North, and I can't help but wonder where we are going. I can hear him rapping here and there, he's bopping his head to the music, tapping the steering wheel. He looks like a happy soul.

"Are you this quiet?" he asked looking at me.

"Yeah, I guess." He laughed.

"Noma usaba mina?" I laughed.

“I’m not afraid of anyone. I just have nothing so say.”

“Okay, what type of music do you listen to?” he asked taking out his phone.

The latest iPhone for your information. It is no secret to me that this man is loaded.

“Pop and Rnb.” He handed me his phone.

“Here, play your music.” I carefully took it and started searching for my favorite song.

I like Sabrina Claudio, I like YEBBA, I like Ariana Grande. I know all these people make different genres of music, but I love them, nonetheless. I played Distance by YEBBA. He stole a glimpse of me then looked back at the road. I hummed the tune lowly, just so he couldn’t hear me. He kept looking at me, and every time he did, I kept quiet. At long last, he caught me off guard.

“You can sing?” I blushed and looked down.

“Just a little.”

“You must sing for me one day.” He said as he parked in the basement of the apartment we were at.

He switched off the car and I handed him his phone.

“Please hold it for me.” he said and opened his door.

He climbed out, came to my side and opened the door for me. I felt special.

“Thank you.” I climbed out and he closed it behind me.

He opened the backseat and took out my bag along with my purse. He carried them for me, and he led me to the elevator.

We rode in silence and when the elevator stopped, it opened up to a loft like apartment, so spacious, so beautiful. The high walls and

ceilings and nude décor around the house made it look cool. It was fairly cold in here though, the aircon was on, and all the windows were open.

“It’s so cold in here.” I said holding my jacket closer to my skin.

“I’ll close the windows.” I was expecting him to say he’ll switch off the aircon. It’s as cold as a mortuary in here.

“Please make yourself comfortable.” He led me to the lounge, and I sat on the couch.

I’d like to think he likes cool places, even in the car, he had the aircon on the whole way. It was a bit bearable in the car, but not in the house, especially such an open house. It’s freezing cold in here.

Did I mention that we are in matching outfits? Yes, unplanned matching outfits. He’s wearing blue jeans, a black golf t-shirt and white sneakers, just like me. the way the t-shirt hugs

his arms makes me wish I was the t-shirt, holding on to his skin for the whole day.

“Are you still cold.” He said descending the stairs.

“Yes.” I said looking up at him.

“But I’ve closed all the windows.” He walked closer to me.

“You have the aircon on.” He chuckled and held my hands. His were warm, mine were cold.

“You’ll be warm soon enough. Can I get a hug?” I looked at him in the eyes, those sexy slanted eyes and I melted.

I walked into his embrace and his arms tightly wrapped around my small figure. I felt at peace when I laid on his firm chest. His heartbeat was loud against my ear, but it was soothing. He smells amazing too. I don’t think I’ve ever been in the presence of a man as perfect as this one.

“I have a confession.” He said resting his chin on the top of my head, still holding me tightly against his body.

“I haven’t made any breakfast. My chef didn’t come.” I sighed out loud.

“We can make it together then.” I bargained.

“Thank you MaGumede.” I didn’t want to let go, but I had to.

“Okay, show me around kitchen mister, what do you have.” I pulled him towards the kitchen.

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“So how long do I have before I take you home?” he asked watching me plate the breakfast.

The one I made all by myself. He was of no help; he was sitting there watching me. All he was

useful for was fetching ingredients I needed. I can say with a mouthful that he is spoiled.

“I have school tomorrow.” I said, but quickly bit my tongue. I haven’t told him how old I am yet. I’m so glad I have my back to him.

“School?” I cleared my throat and turned to him.

“Class I mean. I’m attending tomorrow.” What a lie. He jumped off the counter and came to me.

“What are you studying?” fuck!

“Physiotherapy, second year.” Why can’t I stop!?

“That’s amazing. This looks delicious.” He looks at the plate of food, and I internally sigh in relief. Thank God he dropped the subject.

“Let’s go sit down.” I said carrying his plate and mine.

He was right when he said I would warm up quickly, I took off my bomber and I’m left in my vest.

“Did you realize we are in matching outfits.” He said walking behind me with the sauces.

“You copied me.” I can fully say that I am starting to get comfortable with him. I don’t know why it’s so easy.

He sat down next to me and I put his plate on the table. I held his hand and I prayed. When I opened my eyes, he was staring at me.

“Why didn’t you say amen?” I asked giving him a smirk.

“No one has ever prayed for me before.” His eyes softened up.

“I wasn’t praying for you; I was praying for the food.” He caught the joke and laughed.

“Thank you MaGumede omuhle.” Blushing!

“Eat your food Ndabezitha.”

He picked up his fork and dug in. He seemed to be enjoying it because he was eating faster

than I can pronounce the word eat.

“You’re good at this.” He said in between chews.

“Thank you, I try.” My phone vibrated in my back pocket, and I took it out.

“Can I please take this.”

“Yeah, sure.” I stood up and stood a bit further than where we were.

“Hello mommy.” I answered.

“Hi my angel, how are you?”

“I’m good, how are you?”

“I’m okay, just tired. When are you coming back?” I looked over at Nkosi and he was stuffing his face.

“I’m having breakfast, checkout is at ten. I’ll probably come back at twelve. We want to do some shopping at the mall.” I lied again for the second time today. God will have to forgive me.

“Oh okay. I’ll fetch Siviwe later then. Ngisalala ke mina. I just came back from work.” she said yawning.

“Get some rest my queen. I’ll see you later.”

“Bye baby, I love you.” She said.

“I love you too mama.” I hung and slipped it back in my pocket. When I got back to the lounge, his plate was clean.

“You couldn’t even wait for me to come back?” I teased.

“I could eat your plate too.” I shook my head and continued eating.

“That was my mom, she’s asking me when I’m coming back home.” I reported.

“And what did you say?” he smirked.

“I said I’m going shopping with my friends.” He laughed.

“I’ll throw in a favor at Gateway, and we’ll go buy

a few things.” He said packing up his dirty dishes, taking them to the kitchen. I don’t know what he means by throwing in favors. I guess I just have to wait and see.

I stood up and followed him to the kitchen with my plate. He had dumped his dishes in the sink and was busy on his phone. I cleared them and the sink so I can wash them.

“No, leave them.” He looked up at me.

“I don’t mind.” I said.

“Cha, the cleaning lady is coming in later today, leave it.” He slid his phone in his back pocket and pulled me closer again.

“Can I get another hug?” I love how polite he is, how mindful he is of how I feel. Such a gentleman.

I stepped into his frame, and he tightly held me. His chin rested on my head.

“Thank you for the breakfast, and for the wonderful company.” I smiled.

“You are welcome.”

We stayed like that for a moment. I felt safe. Safer than I have ever felt.

Chapter Four

Amile Gumede

When the cleaning lady arrived, he said it was the perfect time for us to go to the mall. The sun is shining, and we are cruising, listening to good music. He likes laughing, he’s always smiling and being in his company is the most refreshing thing I have ever experienced, and it’s only been three hours since I’ve been with him. He parked the car, and he didn’t move. He didn’t switch off the car. I’m starting to believe he can’t live without the aircon. I wanted to ask what we are waiting for, but I don’t want to be

forward. A loud Golf 7 parked next to us and he finally switched off his car. He wore his shades and asked me to stay in the car. Weird.

He didn't stay too long outside, after a short while, he came to my side to open the door for me, and we walked out. He slowly reached out for my hand, and it intertwined with his. I looked at him in the eyes and smiled.

"Let's go."

We walked together and weirdly enough, he still had his shades on, didn't think of taking them off. The first store he took me to was Armani Exchange, the one right across Versace. I don't understand what we are doing in such an expensive area of the mall.

"Mr Zulu." He was welcomed at the door with glasses of champagne for the both of us. Looks like they were expecting us.

"Thank you." He gave me the glass and we

walked into the store.

“I can’t afford any of the things in here.” I whispered to him. He laughed.

“Me too. I just want some sneakers.” I squinted my eyes at him. “What about his and hers?” he asked kissing my cheek.

I melted. That’s the first time he’s made a move without asking. He’s asked for a hug both times and it’s been sweet, but this, this is even sweeter. This is a whole new world.

“Mr Zulu, do you maybe need any assistance?” a lady dressed in black came to us. She looked like the manager.

“She wants something that we can match in. Sneakers please.” I slapped his arms and laughed.

“Hhayi Nkosi.” He laughed at me.

“Right this way sir, ma’am.” This feels so good,

it's like I'm in a movie.

We browsed the sneaker section and all I could see were men's sneakers, sneakers that would look good on him. Nothing I like. Not that I'm here for myself. I can't even afford it.

"The men's sneakers are nice." I said just loud enough only for him to hear, not the lady that's already looking at me like I'll steal something and run away with it.

"I like these for you." I pointed to one pair. He beamed.

"You know today is about you, right. So what do you like for yourself?" I blushed.

"Well, here nothing."

"Then why are we still here." He said and turned around.

"Thank you miss." He said to the manager and he grabbed my hand and we walked away. I felt

embarrassed.

He took out his phone and called someone as we walked out the store.

“Jama, we are going to Dior.” He waited for the person on the other side to hang up before we started walking. People are minding their business, walking around and we are just walking too, in comfortable silence.

We got to Dior and as soon as we walked in, he was welcomed like he was at Armani Exchange. It was a perfume heaven. I looked at him.

“You are famous here?” I asked him.

“No, I’m just a regular customer, nothing much.” He brushed me off.

We went to the counter and he had me tasting a variety of different perfumes for both of us.

“I like this one.” It smelled sweet, and I love sweet perfumes.

“Miss Dior. New to the collection.”

“We’ll get this one and the Sauvage.”

“Yes sir.” They went to the back, and I looked at him.

“How am I going to explain this to my mother.” I asked looking into his eyes. That’s my favorite thing to do. Look into his eyes.

“Say uZulu spoiled you.” I laughed and hit his chest playfully.

“I’ll have to hide this.” I said.

“You certainly can’t hide everything. We aren’t done.” He looked at his wristwatch, “we still have one hour and thirty minutes.”

“Okay Ndabezitha, let’s get moving ke.” I said.

Even a blind man can tell that I am already smitten with him, I don’t know if it’s the money, the spoils or his eyes. He just drives me crazy. And what kind of man buys a girl he met only

yesterday Dior perfume with a cost of over R2000.

When we left the store, we had his and hers matching paper bags, he finally got what he wanted. We then journeyed to Forever New, a store I only ever dream about going into. The dresses here are bloody expensive.

“I know you girls like this store.” I looked up at him.

“It has the best clothes, but it’s so expensive.” He gave me his card, a FNB Private Wealth card. I almost screamed.

“Go crazy.” Even my father in his grave would’ve never done this for me. Never!

“Thank you.” I involuntarily gave him a tight squeeze and he hugged me back. He took the Dior bag from me and let me go inside alone.

Is this what it feels like to be in a blesser-blesse relationship, because if it is, I don’t want this to

stop. I got two bags that I liked, a dress and a pair of heels. When I was at the till, he came to me.

“Is that all?” he asked looking at the things on the counter.

“Yes.” He put his hand around my waist and kissed my cheek for the second time today.

“Are you sure?” he nibbled on my ear, much to the cashier’s irritation. I felt my skittles throbbing, something I have never felt from a mere whisper.

“Yes, I’m sure Ndabezitha.” I’m not, I saw this beautiful dress, but it costs R2000, and I will not by any chance be that girl who looks like a gold-digger.

“That will be R2630.” The cashier said. He was the first to interject.

“That’s not enough, go take something else.” He said. Is he serious? I tried to protest.

“Amile go take something else.” It’s the first time hearing him calling by my name, it’s always MaGumede or Nkosazane.

I walked straight to the dress that I liked, took it off the rails and headed straight for the counter. I zipped my lips and she scanned it. The amount went up to R4730. He was satisfied so I put the card on the counter and just like that, I had spent so much money on just two dresses, bags and a pair of shoes. Must be nice having money.

When we walked out, I was shocked to see Yonela’s ugly man, the royal escort, walking towards us.

“Jama.” Nkosi said giving him all the shopping bags. I looked at him.

“Zulu, Nkosazane.” He bowed his head.

“We are going to one more store then we are done.” He nodded.

They did a handshake before he walked away. I felt my insides burn up.

“Let’s go.” He tried to hold my hand but I stayed glued to my spot. I swallowed hard, trying to find the courage to look at him in the eyes but I couldn’t. And just like a dream, I am standing in front of the Prince of Zululand.

“MaGumede?” he touched my arm, I froze.

“I want to go home.” I said softly.

“I thought we were still...” I interjected

“I want to go home. Now.” I felt tears stinging my eyes.

“Amile what’s wrong? Did I do something wrong, is it because I forced you to buy som...”

“What’s your name?” I interrupted him again.

“Nkosi, I told you.” I shook my head.

“No, your full name, I want your full name.” he saw the tears in my eyes, and he realized that

he fucked up.

“Let’s go. We’ll talk in the car.”

People were now stopping and staring so he put on his shades, and we walked out the mall as quick as we could. He called his ugly guard, who I now know is Jama and as soon as we got to the entrance, the car was already waiting for us. He got out of the driver’s seat, opened the passenger door for me and I got in. Nkosi got in on the other side and we drove off, driving out of the mall like celebrities fleeing a scene flooded with paparazzi.

The tears cascaded down my face. I don’t know why I’m crying because I’m not a cry baby, but him being the prince, it changes everything.

“Why are you crying nkosazane, please don’t cry, you are making me weak.” His voice was begging, and he looked at me.

I wiped my tears with my palm and faced the

front in silence. He sighed and we continued to drive in silence, only the sound of my sniffs were audible. I couldn't control my tears at this point. We arrived in Durban North, back to his apartment and as soon as we climbed out the car, we found Jama waiting for us.

"Please take the shopping bags in the car." He tossed him the car keys and he led me up to the elevator that took us to his cold loft.

He led me up the stairs to his bedroom and I followed behind him. The tears were at tame for a while, but I know that as soon as he starts talking, it will start again. One thing about me, once I start, I can't stop.

"Come sit here." He patted his side, and I shook my head no.

"How long where you going to keep it from me?" I asked trying to hold myself together.

"Amile come on." My breathing hitched.

“Answer me Nkosi.” He sighed and rubbed his forehead.

“When we met yesterday, I knew that when you looked at me, you didn’t see me for my money or my title. You weren’t interested in Prince Mandlenkosi kaMhlabawesizwe Zulu, you were interested in Nkosi, the man you have the past few hours with. I didn’t want to jeopardize that; I didn’t want it to change.” I wiped the lone tear that escaped my eye.

“Do you know that this changes everything.” I said looking at him. I couldn’t meet his eyes anymore.

“It shouldn’t. Nothing should change Amile.” I hated my name when it came out of his mouth.

“You were bound to find out, sooner or later, it happened to be sooner...”

“You made me a fool.” I said lowly.

“I didn’t. I love you.” He blurted out. My heart

raced. I looked at him and he looked terrified by his words.

“I warmed up to you, I let my guard down today and did something out of my comfort zone, I let you in. the least you could do is trust me with you identity.”

“And when were you going to tell me you are a pupil?” I went cold.

“Look Amile, I wanted you to know me for me, and not as the Prince of Zululand. That’s why I didn’t tell you, because for once I met a girl that didn’t know who I was, a girl who saw me as I was, as Nkosi, that’s how I want to be seen.” He drew closer to me. “I don’t care about you being a scholar, all these things, age, titles, status, they don’t matter. All that matters is what we feel and if you feel even the slightest bit of emotion for me, even if it is a single heartbeat when you hear my voice then please, give me the time of day. That’s all I ask of you.”

He held my forearms and used his index finger to lift my chin. He wiped my tears and leaned in to give me a soft peck, and that's where he left it. Just a peck.

"Please." He begged.

I wrapped my arms around his waist and laid my head on his torso and listened to his thumping heartbeat. I want this to be my home. He held me back and I guess our silence spoke for us.

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I begged him not to take me home, I don't need my mom to shout at me for coming home with bags from Forever New and worst of all, being dropped off by a GLE. I can explain the clothes, the car, it's another story. I also left the Dior back at his place, I can't risk mom finding it,

lord knows how much she snoops around. So I'm in the car with Jama, in the Golf 7. It's no different from the GLE, it's also fancy, but that can easily be explained, Siya also has a Polo, it's something in my league.

"I've been running into you so much. I think this is the third time I'm seeing you now." He said looking at from the rearview mirror, yes, I'm sitting in the backseat, that's where Mr Zulu said I should sit.

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you were stalking me." I said to him, and he laughed.

"Not at all. It was just a coincidence. I know I scared you in that Uber yesterday."

"You knew you were wrong but turned it around and made it all about the driver." He laughed.

"He was annoying me." he defended, killing me with laughter.

"Why were you causing traffic anyway?"

“Your boyfriend was inside the mall, and we couldn’t leave without him. we had to block the entrance.” That makes no sense.

“Royal people are dramatic, and Nkosi isn’t my boyfriend, he’s my friend.”

“Yeah right.” he doesn’t believe me.

“Honestly. And my friend has a crush on you.” I told him.

“Angimfuni. Ubila too much loyamntwana. She’s a child, just like you.” I rolled my eyes. “Uyabona nje, ubungane bonke lobo.” He’s such a straight talker.

“Whatever Jama.” He became serious and glanced at me in the mirror once again.

“I’ve known Nkosi since we were kids, he’s my brother, the brother I never had. I’ve never seen him talk about a girl like this, especially a girl he met less than twenty-four hours ago. He’s already fallen in love with you and once he is in

love, he loves hard. Please don't hurt him." he looked sincere. My heart thudded.

"I can't promise that Jama, but I care for him too, and I want to give it a go. But it won't be easy." I said.

"Trust me, it won't. I've seen so many girls leave, only the strong ones make it. The ones who get to meet the family also can't put up with them. Getting to be liked by the family is the last step. They are brutal people." He parallel parked next to my flat.

"And you think I will be able to deal with all of that. You are scaring me off Jama." He chuckled.

"Don't. Like I have said, I have never seen Nkosi like this. He will fight for you, no matter what. He will protect you, all you need to do is stay in his corner and let him protect you, forget about what they say about you or to you. Uze kuNkosi,

ayi bona.” He’s speaking as if we have decided to get married.

“All in due time, for now, I want to enjoy his company.” He shook his head.

“You do that.” he switched off the car and climbed out.

He came to my side and opened the door for me and I climbed out.

“Thank you.” He went to the boot and took out my shopping bags. There was so many of them, they could’ve just packaged all my things in one bag, but they put them separately. Nice life problems Amile, that’s you now.

“I’ll see you tomorrow.” I don’t know what he means by that, so I just nod and bid him goodbye.

I see the curtain to the lounge being opened and my mom’s head peeking out as I attempt to walk into the building. I’m late, it’s almost two o’

clock.

“Sakulindake ntombi.” She said as I walked into the lounge where she was standing. I sighed.

“You guys travel with guys who drive Golf 7’s with tinted windows now? Haibo Amile.” She’s judgmentally looking at the shopping bags.

“Who bought you all of those things?” I looked down at them and back at her, she’s not budging.

“I did, with the money from baba.” I said lowly.

“Forever New, so many shopping bags, with only R2000? What did you settle the bill with at Views at 25?” she asked putting her hands on her hips.

“We split it.” I mumbled.

“Shopping bags?”

“I used the rest of it for the shopping. There was a sale.”

“How did you get to Gateway, surely it must have cost a fortune, right.” I cleared my throat.

“Siya paid for the Uber” Why is mom putting me in such an awkward position?

“And you mean to tell me that Golf 7 is the Uber?” I nodded.

She shook her head in dismay.

“Go to your room, I’m going to fetch Siviwe.”

With my tail between my legs, I went to my room. I got there and as soon as I plopped myself on the bed, I called the girls.

“You hypocrite you!” Yonela was the first to bash me.

“Hey, don’t you dare, don’t you dare come for me. I tried to wake you up but you were too drunk to open your eyes.”

“That doesn’t mean anything, you didn’t even call us to check on how we were. We almost

missed checkout and paid for that.”-Nambitha

“You can’t say anything to me because I woke you up and you told me to leave you alone. I told you where I was going, I was busy. I didn’t have time to be waking up girls who willingly decided to get drunk.”

“Who are you and what have you done to our Amile.”-Nambitha said and I laughed.

“Is it dick, is that what’s got you so high and mighty?”-Yonela.

“Just because you’ve had it, doesn’t mean I’ve had it too.” She laughed out loud. What’s a sisterhood without teasing?

“How did it go? Is he a bouncer or the prince?” I rolled my eyes thinking about how dramatic today was. I laid back on the bed with my knees up.

“No, he’s not the prince, he’s just an ordinary man.” I made a promise to Nkosi that I will not

disclose any information about him, especially not now, but I'm not only doing it for him, I'm doing it for me too, so we can have a peaceful relationship while we can and enjoy what we have in private while it lasts. Jama is the only one who knows, and it's going to stay that way.

"How old is he?"-Yonela.

"He's twenty-three." I lied again. Nkosi is twenty-eight. Born on the 31 of January.

"Oh, he's young! Okay, so what did you guys get up to? Do you like him?"-Yonela

"We had breakfast and then he took me shopping." I held my mouth, but it was too late, I had already blurted it out.

"Shopping? Where? Is he rich?"-Nambitha.

"Oh my goodness guys, so many questions. No, he's not rich, he's an average citizen, he just works. And just brought me a bag and shoes at H&M as a birthday present." I hate lying to my

friends, but I'd do anything to protect this relationship.

"And what about Siya?" Oh goodness.

"I don't know, it's not like I'm dating Nkosi already, we are just friends."

"You said you love Siya."-Yonela.

"I do."

"But?" she asked. I froze.

"But I want to see where things could go with Nkosi." She sighed.

Truth be told, what I felt today is ten times greater than what I have ever felt in the two years I have been with Siya, and I feel like a hypocrite for feeling like that.

"You are my friend, I support any decision you make, but remember, in whatever you do, Siyabonga is still my brother, and I will always choose him over everything." That felt like a

threat.

“Hhayi Yoni.” Nambitha exclaimed.

“Oath.” She said.

I risk losing a lot if I pursue this relationship with Nkosi. I foresee tough decisions ahead.

Chapter Five

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He feels incomplete now that she's not here, he can't even fathom how life used to be without her here, breathing the same air as he is doing. He tried calling her several times after Jama let him know that they had arrived, but her line was busy. He's not panicking that much, he just wants to talk to her, as if spending the whole morning and a quarter of the afternoon was not enough.

“Bafo.” Dumisani's voice echoed and when he

turned around, he was standing behind him.

“How did you get in?” Nkosi asked looking at him up and down.

“You are busy daydreaming, that’s why you didn’t hear me come in. how are you?” he went to join him on the couch and took his beer from the table.

“Ngikahle ndoda.” He said taking out his phone to see if Amile had responded to his text.

For a modern man, living in the twenty-first century, he is quite backwards in life. he still sends SMS’ and doesn’t have WhatsApp. He doesn’t even have a single social media page. He’s just a lover of the finer things, that’s why he has an iPhone 13 pro max.

“Where is Jama?” Dumisani asked changing the channel.

“Why are you changing, I’m still watching.” He said staring at his phone, not even paying

attention to his brother.

“Ihhe, wena bakushaye ngepenty.” Dumisani chuckled.

“What do you mean?” he asked absent-mindedly.

“Haibo Mandlenkosi!?” Dumisani snatched his phone out of his hand and his eyes widened.

“Bring back my phone.” He tried to grab it, but Dumisani held it in the air.

They fight like little boys; they tease each other like kids. All in all, they have a solid relationship. He’s closer to him than all his brothers.

“Who is Amile?” he finally succeeded in getting his phone back.

“None of your business.” He continued typing his message.

“When did you meet her?” silence from Mandlenkosi.

“Forget about him, he won’t answer you, not while he’s like this.” Jama spoke coming into the lounge with a beer of his own.

“Ubani lentombazane mjitha?” he asked looking at Jama.

“Stop talking about my girl.” They both cracked up, he still wasn’t looking up. That’s one long ass message he is sending there.

“Relax Nkosi, she’s home safe, I waited until she entered the building.” Jama reassured.

“She’s not answering my calls.” He finally looked up.

“She’s probably busy. Relax, have a beer. You just spent the whole morning with her.”

He sighed and switched off his phone, stood up to go fetch beer for him and his brother. He’s got the jitters of a new relationship, that’s why he’s like this.

“Ingcosi mfethu leyana.” He walked into Jama saying that. he got touched.

“Don’t speak about Amile.” He warned.

“She’s the same age as your sister. How does that make you feel? It’s just okay for you to pursue a child.”

“Baba married MaJili when she was fifteen. Age is just a number, if my brother here loves this girl then he mustn’t be stopped by her age.”

Jama visibly agreed, but it’s his opinion, the Zulu’s seem to agree with one another.

“Thank you bafo.” His phone rings and he beams as soon as her name pops up on the screen.

He got off the couch and went upstairs, leaving the two in stiches. He’s whipped for real.

“MaGumede wami omuhle.”

“Ndabezitha, I’m sorry for not answering your

calls, I was on a call with my friends and then I had to clean the house. Mom is not speaking to me.” his heart sank.

“Is it because of me?” he asked feeling sad.

“No, it’s not because of you. Don’t worry about it, she’ll be okay, by tonight she will be talking again. How are you there?” she asked in her sweet voice and he melted like ice.

“I’m not okay.” She giggled.

“Why, what’s wrong Ndabezitha?”

“I miss my baby girl, my sweet plum, intombi yami emhlophe.” The sound of her giggle soothed his aching heart.

“She misses you too, she misses your hugs, your scent and your soft kisses.” She has no idea what her words are doing to him.

“Can I see you tomorrow?” he asked in a begging tone.

“Yoh, I don’t know Ndabezitha. I’ll make a plan. I have school tomorrow remember.” She said softly. That is just the nature of her tone, she’s soft.

“Yeah I remember Nkosazane. I’d do anything to see you, anything.” She giggled.

“I’ll do my best okay.” She reassured. “My mom just came back from the shops, can I call you back later?”

“Yeah, sure. Go make sure she speaks to you again. I don’t want her to hate me before she even meets me.” she chuckled.

“Okay Ndabezitha. And please download WhatsApp, I don’t have SMS’.” He laughed.

“I don’t use social media MaGumede.”

“Iseyinde indlela lapha kuwe nkosiyami.” They laughed.

“It’s okay, I’ll call you later Nkosazane.”

“Goodbye.” She said softly.

“Goodbye MaGumede.”

The call cut and he went to his banking app. He sent her R500 airtime and loaded SMS's. now she has no excuse not to answer her.

Amile Gumede

After that call with Nkosi, I dumped my phone on the bed and went to the kitchen where mom was.

“Are you going to cook, or must I?” I asked helping her unpack the grocery.

“No, I'll cook. Go help Siviwe take a bath.” She said coldly.

“Mama, I apologized for coming late, what else must I say for you to forgive me and stop being mad at me.” she turned and looked at me.

“Tell me the truth. Since when do we hide things from each other? You’ve told me about everything in your life. why are you not being honest now?” I sighed.

“So you know what you are doing is wrong, that’s why you won’t tell me.”

“What do you want to know?” I asked.

“Whatever you aren’t telling me.” this is harder than I thought it would be.

“I was courted by someone in the public eyes mama. He’s older than me, but I like him, and he likes me too.” Her eyes widened.

“Who is he?” I shook my head.

“I can’t tell you.” Worry lines etched on her face.

“You have to tell me Amile because if you don’t then who will? How am I going to protect you, who’s going to advise you. No, you have to tell me everything. Sit down and tell me how it

happened.” I know my mother, she’s not going to shout or scold me for whatever happened between Nkosi and I today, she’s not that type of parent. She just expects me to be open with her.

I sat down on the kitchen stool and took a deep breath.

“His name is Mandlenkosi.” I said lowly.

“What is he famous for.” Now the hard part.

“He’s Prince Mandlenkosi kaMhlabawesizwe Zulu of Zululand. We met back at Views, but I didn’t know who he was. I only found out today.” You can’t miss the look of utter shock painted on my mother’s face. Her face is turning red like a tomato.

“Start again.” She’s in disbelief. Just like I was.

“He’s the second son of late King Mhlabewesizwe.”

“I don’t understand Amile, you aren’t giving me a full story. Give me the full story.” She leaned against the counter.

“Yesterday, at dinner, I needed the toilet and I ran into him, thinking he was a bouncer at the club and I asked him to show me the toilet. He escorted me and when I was done, walked me back to my table. He found out it was my birthday and asked to take me out to breakfast this morning as a birthday present. I didn’t take him seriously because I obviously thought he was a bouncer. I gave him an incomplete number and thought I would never see him again. When we were about to leave Views, and wanted to settle the bill, the manager came up to me and told me that he had done so already. I was shocked and I wanted to go and find him, but Yonela advised me against it and we left. When we got to the hotel, I received a text from him telling me he couldn’t wait to see me again

and I panicked, not knowing what to do. Then he called me early in the morning to confirm if I was coming for breakfast and I couldn't decline, I said yes. When he came, he came in a Mercedes GLE and took me to his apartment in Durban North." My mother's facial expressions are scaring me.

"I made breakfast for the both of us, and when I called and told you I was going to go shopping, he offered to really take me shopping. We went to Gateway and bought me all the things I came back with." She shook her head in dismay

"And in all of this, when did you know he was the prince?" she asked.

"I had speculations after I told Nambitha because he didn't introduce himself to me as Mandlenkosi, he introduced himself as Nkosi, Nkosi Zulu. I googled and looked all over social media for a Nkosi Zulu, and all the people that came up were not him. when I searched for

Mandlenkosi Zulu, there was not a single picture of him anywhere and I made up my mind that he was not the prince, I mean I would've know if he was. Princes don't go to Views on a Saturday where he stands a chance of being spotted and splashed all over the newspapers and social media. So earlier, when I was at the mall, I mentioned I was stuck in traffic, that was because there were royal cars blocking the road. One of the royal escorts threatened my Uber driver when he kept honking at them, and then that's where I saw him for the first time, he introduced himself as a royal escort, escorting the prince of Zululand. Then we ran into him again at Views, but I didn't look that much into it."

"And Nambitha, didn't she see this bouncer guy of yours?" she asked.

"No, she didn't. that's why I didn't find out on the spot who he is. I dismissed the idea of him

being the prince. But today, when we were coming out of Forever New, he came right up to us, and it wasn't hard to connect the dots, all he had to do was tell me who he was."

"And did he?"

"He did, and then he told me he loves me." she exhaled loudly.

"I'm finding it hard to believe you mntanami." She said blatantly.

"Why would I lie about something as serious as this mama. I can even show you the messages."

"History is repeating itself." She said lowly.

"What do you mean?"

"Your grandmother, she was almost the queen mother to King Mhlabawesizwe, but she met my father and she fell in love with him, and left the king." What!?

“Yes, they went to school together. Mom didn’t love him though, but he kept pestering her about it, but it never happened.” I sighed.

“Ma I like him.” I said lowly.

“Because he’s the prince?”

“No, I liked him before I knew he was the prince. I liked him for him. he’s a lovely human being mama. I almost ran for the hills when I learnt he was the prince because that changes a lot of dynamics, having a relationship with a person like that could never be easy, but he begged me to give him a chance.”

“And did you?”

“I did.” She saw the tears in my eyes and came to give me a hug.

“And what about Siya? This man is older than you, yes he does all these things for you, but at the end of the day, you can’t give him all he needs. I say this from experience. I had you

when I was your age, to your father, a man that was almost 10 years older than me, and yes, I loved him, a lot, but that only ended in tears and shame.” The story of my mother and father, is a story I wish not to talk about.

“I don’t know mama. Siya broke up with me, but he apologized, now I don’t know what to do. I like Nkosi, a lot, something I have never felt before, even with Siya.”

“All this in less than twenty-four hours.” I chuckled through the tears and she brushed my back.

“I’m not going to stop you from following your heart my baby. All I want you to do is be careful, because at the end of the day, boys will be boys, I can’t keep you away from them, doing that will only ruin you. I’ll do my job as a parent and warn you about them, and all I can do is hope that you listen and make the correct choices and be there for you when the going gets tough. I want

to be the parent my mom wasn't for me. the parent I wish I had when I was growing up." I wouldn't trade this woman for anything else in the world.

"I love you mama and thank you. I promise I will be careful, and I will make wise choices. The last thing I want is to be pregnant and alone. Not that Nkosi would do that."

"Never put your whole trust in a boy, leave room for disappointment. Another thing, don't string Siya along, if you don't want him anymore, be honest with him, but don't let the prince be the reason you do it, because you will regret it." I nodded.

"Okay."

"Okay, now show me what he brought you. I can't believe I'm letting you date an old man." I laughed.

"He's only twenty-eight." Her eyes widened.

“That’s eleven years older than you. Hhayi Amile. Be careful my baby, don’t let him touch my kraal.” I nodded.

“I promise I won’t.” one thing about me, I keep the promises I make, especially the ones I make to my mother.

I feel like a heavy load has been removed from my shoulders, at least now I have someone to openly talk about Nkosi about, and who better than my best friend, my darling mother.

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Mom may give me the green light to continue being with Nkosi, but I still respect her in the sense that I won’t be bombarding her all the time about his presence. I told her that he asked to see me after school and as skeptical as she was, she said it’s okay. The only reason

why she agreed is because we are done with term two exams and we are waiting for holidays, so she's being less hard.

School was unnecessarily long today, maybe it's because I couldn't wait for the day to end and go out with Nkosi. We agreed to lunch, but I know he doesn't like public spaces, so we might be going to his apartment. I went to my locker, collected my physics books, and made it out the school as quickly as I could. I heard Yoni shouting my name and when I turned around, she was standing with her other friends from school.

"Come here." I showed her my watch to signal to her that I was rushing, and she sighed and left them and rushed to me.

"What is your problem? Since when do we leave each other, I waited for you by the lockers."

"I'm so sorry. I really need to get going. I'm

going to see Nkosi.” She raised her eyebrow.

“Really now?”

“Yes, my Uber is almost here.” I say showing her my screen.

“You have to be joking. Manje you are ditching everything for this boy, what about Siya.”

“This is not about Siya Yonela. It’s not like I broke up with him. I might have forgiven him, but I didn’t agree to getting back together. Technically, I’m single and I can see whoever I want to see.”

I could hear the loud pipes of a car coming a mile away and looked up. I saw the Golf 7 approaching. I shook my head in dismay, who other than Jama.

“Look, I need to go babes. I’ll see you tomorrow.” I kissed her cheek and left her standing there.

I wanted to find out what Jama is doing here.

“Get in the car.” He said rolling down the window.

“I’ve already called an Uber...”

“And I got here first. Get in.” I rolled my eyes and hopped in at the back. When I got comfortable, I cancelled the Uber.

“Unjani namhlanje Nkosazane kaZulu.” He asked scanning me before taking off in high speed.

“I’m good, I just would like to make it to Zulu alive please.” He laughed and slowed down.

“Bekumnandi esikoleni?” he asked turning down the radio slightly.

I feel like his niece that he’s picked up from school, not that I would have such an ugly uncle. My family genes are very beautiful.

“School was school Jama.” He chuckled.

“Wenza grade bani kombe? Grade eight?” I rolled my eyes.

“I don’t think Nkosi would appreciate you teasing me.”

“I’m asking for real, I don’t know. Tell me MaGumede.” I shook my head.

“Matric.” I said lowly.

“Hawu, akufani nje. You are almost done.” He said in a mocking tone. I foresee a very colorful teasing relationship between him and I.

“So what do you want to study when you get to University?”

“Physiotherapy.” He gave a proud look.

“Oh so you are the double science girl. Yazi Mandlenkosi was a physics and math whizz in school. He’s so good with numbers.”

“Really?” I’m utterly surprised.

“Oh yes. Among all his brothers, he’s the only

one who did science. In those times, science was only for the selected few. Thina, the dumb kids, we did commerce with math and accounting.” In those days? He reminds me every chance he gets that I’m a child.

“Aibo accounting is a hard subject.” I said to him.

“I know, the only reason I passed was because of Nkosi. He didn’t even do the subject, but he was better at it than I was.” I laughed at him. Nkosi doesn’t strike me as the smart type.

“Maybe I should ask him to tutor me for my trials.” I said.

“You should, he will get you straight A’s.”

We were already entering Durban North. I was supposed to go home first, change, then meet up with him, but Jama hijacked me, now I’m going to see Nkosi wearing school uniform. When we parked at the basement, he was

already standing there waiting for us. I laughed.

“He’s been going on about you the whole day, he even wanted to fetch you himself.” Aw shame, my big baby.

I didn’t wait for Jama to open the door for me, I got out and rushed to him. He met me halfway and engulfed me in a tight hug. I felt complete.

“Sthandwa senhliziyo yami.” He whispered in my ear, and I felt the butterflies. It’s absurd to miss someone you’ve only just met. Someone explain to me why I am so attached to him.

“Kade sengikukhumbule MaGumede.” He held me tightly in his embrace and he took in my scent. I felt complete.

“I missed you too Ndabezitha.” My feelings for him are starting to scare me, and I can’t stop myself. I’m falling for him, hard, fast!

“Let’s go inside.” I didn’t even realize that Jama had long gone taken my things inside. I stopped

him looked into his eyes and smiled.

“Hi.” He smiled back.

“Hi.” That moment right there was wholesome and the thought of having to leave him again later paralyzed me.

We went up to the apartment and as always, it was cold. Jama was in the lounge watching soccer and there was a lady cooking in the kitchen. I guess that’s his chef. He led me to his bedroom and closed the door behind him. I was sitting on the bed, and he was leaning against the door. He smirked.

“Awusukume ngikubone.” I frowned and stood up.

“You with such a long skirt.” He sneered.

“You called me here to tease me kanti.”

“Chabo MaGumede, ngikubizele isidlo sasemini.” That’s the zulu man in him coming

out to play. Do I like him? Very much so, he arouses me.

“Zulu.” I called out to him, and he looked impressed with me.

“Yebo ntokazi.” Blushing!

“When are you going to kiss me?” he smirked, and pride danced on his face.

“Do you want me to kiss you?” I nodded and put on an innocent face.

He moved closer and caressed my face. I closed my eyes thinking he was going to do it, but instead, his thumb brushed my lips.

“If I kiss you, I won’t be able to control my body, and all the things it will want to do to yours.” His breath was fanning my face and he was making me wet. I licked my lips.

“Touch me Nkosi, kiss me.” I said with my breath hitching. He chuckled before putting his

hands on my bum and tightly gripping on it.

Swiftly, in one move, he picked me up and I wrapped my legs around his waist. He pinned me against the wall and teased my lips with his. I tried to reach in, to lock his with mine but he pulled them away. I felt his shaft growing under my skirt and my eyes widened, causing him to chuckle.

“See what I mean.” He whispered against my lips. I nodded fast before trying to get in a breath.

He let me down and I looked down to see his hard on through his sweatpants. Was I not also soaking wet down there? What in the name of love do you call this? I’ve never felt anything like this before.

Chapter Six

Amile Gumedede

So this is the sexual tension they talk about in the movies, where two people with unresolved sexual issues sit and ignore them, but both parties can't sit together and not think about it, the sexual frustration they feel. Maybe he's doing a better job at holding it in, I on the other hand, am failing dismally. This has never happened to me before.

He's sitting across me on the little table that was set up for the both of us. He's eating his meal and trying to make conversation with me but there's a puddle in between my thighs and I know that my mother would kill me if she found out that I even have such feelings. There's nothing I haven't tried, crossing my legs, spreading them apart, nothing is working. My skittles is throbbing. His effortless sexy isn't making it any easier for me too, especially when he lifts his eyes to meet mine and a smile etches on his face, revealing his dimple. I just

want to have him on this table, that's what I want.

Virgin Amile. You are a virgin, you know nothing about having men, especially on tables.

"I need a tutor." I crossed my legs again and he looked at me with a raised eyebrow. It's not the statement that's making him raise an eyebrow, it's how uncomfortable I look.

"For which subjects?" he asked and continued to eat.

"Life Science, Physics and Math."

"Okay, I'll tutor you." I smiled subtly.

"Thank you." He took the last spoon of his food before pushing his plate back and standing up.

"Let's go." He was by my side, and he held out his hand for me to hold.

I intertwined my hand with his and I followed him. He led me to a door that I had not seen

ever since I came here. He opened the door, and the room was dark. He turned on the lights and it looked like a sanctuary, but it had a big bed in the middle of nothingness. There were a few paintings draping the high walls and the walls were bare, no paint, no plaster, just red bricks. What a beautiful room this is, but what are we doing here?

“I call this my therapy room. Most men go to the gym for therapy, I come here. This was an indoor gym, but I changed it.” Okay, I don’t care about the history of the room, I want to know what we are doing here.

“I have a certificate in massage therapy, do you want me to give you a massage?” he turned to look at me after a while.

He wants to touch me? Hell yeah, I want to be touched. I nodded and he gave me a gentle smile. He went to the small cupboard mounted on the wall and took out a white towel and a

few oils. Oh, my goodness I'm such a lucky girl. I'm getting a free massage!

"How do you want me?" I asked when he handed me the towel. He gave me a questioning look accompanied by a smirk. Fuck, did I just project my horniness onto him? oh my goodness.

"I meant should I uhhm...should I take...clothes, must I be unclothed?" I stuttered.

"Yes, please MaGumede." The smirk didn't leave his face. I wanted to run away and never look back.

I don't know how I feel about him being here while I take off my clothes, but he's not paying any attention to me, he's busy mixing oils. I stand with my back against him and take off my shirt, along with my bra, then I undid the button of my skirt and it dropped to my feet, exposing my bum. This room is warmer than the rest of

the house, and I like that.

I turned around and he was staring at me. When our eyes met, he swallowed hard and dropped his eyes. Come on Amile, cover yourself up.

“I want you fully unclothed MaGumede.” His voice was suddenly a few octaves deep.

I was only left in underwear. My heartbeat quickened and my skittles throbbed even harder, faster, uncontrollably. I turned my back to him again and slowly bent down, pulled my undies down and threw it on the floor. I heard him groan behind me.

I wrapped the towel around my body, picked up my clothes and placed them on the wooden chair, unfolded. I then made my way to the bed and sat quietly like the good girl I am. He started burning incense and that calmed me down. I unintentionally bit my bottom lip between my teeth when he took off his t-shirt

and I finally got a glimpse of his hard chest, his firm, toned body, the v-line. I held my stare for too long.

“Stand up and remove the towel.” He instructed and I didn’t think twice. I stood up and removed the towel. I handed it to him and stood fully naked in front of him.

He grabbed the towel, went to sit on the bed, laid it on his lap and instructed me to sit on top of him. Again, as instructed, I got on top of him, my legs on either side of his body, my skin on his. I laid my head on the crevice of his shoulder and closed my eyes. I felt something warm running down my back before I felt his hands working my back.

The feel of the oils on my skin soothed me like a little baby. If I was a ticklish person, I wouldn’t take this seriously, but his hands are doing things to me, something I have never felt before. I’m sure he can feel my heartbeat, he can feel it

against his chest. He teases my bum, runs his hands down, up, then down again. I moaned softly from the pleasure of his hands. I was slowly drifting into a deep sleep, but his voice pulled me out.

“Vuka MaGumede.” He whispered and kissed my neck gently. I moaned again and wrapped my arms around him, not opening my eyes.

He untangled my arms from his body and laid me down on my back. I opened my eyes and he got on top of me. I wanted the feel of his lips on my skin again, I wanted so badly for him to kiss me.

“Zulu.” I whispered.

“Relax sthandwa sami”

I closed my eyes and I felt warm droplets of oil on my stomach, on my chest, dripping down my boobs. His hands gently smothered the oil all over my stomach. His palms traced my nipples,

my sensitive spot. I sucked my lip between my teeth and muffled a moan. He did it again, and again and again and I almost screamed from the pleasure. He lifted my legs, made me wrap them around his waist and trap him in between them. I had his hard on poking my mound and he worked my stomach and my boobs. This is no different from making love. This is his way of making love to me.

He started working my thigh. He had my leg on his shoulder and he gently did my thigh, tenderly running his finger in between, making me arch my back when they made it close enough to my palace. He did the other one and it felt like the pleasure I was feeling went to the max.

“Amile open your eyes and look at me.” he said softly, yet commandingly. I did as told. His eyes were tiny as slits.

His fingers slowly danced around my opening. I jerked up and closed my eyes. He stopped.

“Look at me.” he pulled me closer to him, my leg still on his shoulder. I shot my eyes open and looked at him, my lips slightly parted and air leaving my lungs too quickly for me to keep up.

I locked my eyes with his and he started again. I felt his thumb brushing my skittles and I bit my lip in pleasure.

“Is it all for me?” his voice was soft. I nodded.

“I can’t hear you, Amile.” He ran this thumb on my skittles again.

“Yes Zulu, it’s all for you.” I moaned out.

He didn’t want me to drop eye contact. I gasped when I felt his finger gently slide into my core.

“Breathe sthandwa sami.” He gently rubbed my skittles before he started pumping his finger in and out of me.

“Nkosi!” I moaned, my moans were getting

louder and louder, uncontrollable. He pumped faster and when I tried to close my eyes he stopped.

“Please don’t stop.” I begged.

“Look at me.” this is the hardest thing I have ever done.

He swirled his finger deeper and subtly smiled. I trapped my lower lip between my teeth and cried out, calling his name.

“I love you, Amile. I love you so much.” He pumped again and again and again.

“I love you too, aww! Nkosi!” I felt an uncontrollable wave of shock go through my body before screaming and water squirted out of my body. My legs were shaking untameably, and I just squirted, with no stop. Whenever I tried to close my eyes, he pressed my clit harder and made me want to fall apart.

“Yes baby, good girl.” He said rubbing me gently.

I didn't want it to stop.

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All my life, I thought squirting only happened when you had sex, at least that's what I was made to believe. Here I am, an hour late, still having flashbacks of his touch on my body. He did all of this without even kissing me. I might have well had sex with him, that is what we did, we made love. He gave me his sweatpants and a sweater to change in, there was no way I was going to put my school uniform back on.

I couldn't walk, call me dramatic, I don't care, my legs were wobbly. He carried me from the room downstairs to his room. He also helped me with some physics homework, and I realized that Jama wasn't lying when he said that he's good at physics and a math whizz. The

calculations he makes in his head without a calculator are those of a genius. I even asked him why he didn't become a teacher and he told me he doesn't like kids.

He's taking me home now. It's almost five o'clock and mom is coming back from work soon.

"Sekuyahambeka manje?" he asked teasing me. he was folding the blanket that I was wrapped in.

"Don't, please don't, otherwise I'll command you to carry me all the way to the car." I said and got out of bed.

"Command me, I am your servant." I rolled my eyes.

"Have you gotten everything?" he asked looking at me. I had packed all my books, and my uniform, I was ready to roll.

"Yes, let's go."

He hooked his arm around my shoulder, and we walked out the room. I said my goodbye to Jama, and we left. He was driving a different car today, a red Jeep Wrangler. Now I know he likes big cars.

“Let’s talk.” He said and turned down the volume of the radio as soon as he got on the road.

“How did you convince your mom to let you come here?” he asked.

“I kinda, sorta told her about you.” He gave me a blank expression.

“She had me cornered and I just came clean. I tell my mom everything and when she didn’t buy the whole story, I had spun to her, she wouldn’t talk to me. She wanted the truth.” He kept quiet.

“I’m sorry, but telling her has made it easier for me to be able to make plans to see you and be with you without fearing being caught. She

approves of us being together.” He placed his hand on the thigh and squeezed it reassuringly.

“Don’t apologize MaGumede. You didn’t do anything wrong. I’m just surprised she was so welcoming to the idea of you being with a 28-year-old.”

“My mom had me when she was 17, like I am now. My father was 26 at that time, something similar to this. She loved him and because she had to hide everything from my granny, her mom, she ended up making mistakes and I was born. She had to marry my dad and drop out of school, only for him to die four years later. For the longest time, my mom suffered, especially at her in-laws. The only reason we are where we are now is because with the little money dad left for her, she went back to school, got a stable job and we moved here. She doesn’t want that life for me.”

“I understand. She wants you to learn from her

mistakes. The only difference between your mom and dad's relationship with our is, I will never leave you. Never." I looked at him deep in the eyes and tightened my hold around his hand, that was on my thigh.

I might have been in my own world of fantasy and ecstasy when I declared my love for him, but I meant every word of it. I love Nkosi. Three days later, I'm in love with him. Time truly means nothing. I can see that.

"And when do you think I'll meet my mother-in-law?" he's back to his jokingly self now, good.

"You might be ready to meet her, but she certainly will have to take a while to wrap the idea of you around her head. She didn't believe me, imagine." He chuckled.

"You should've let her believe whatever she wants to believe."

"Oh no, she saw it with her own two eyes. That

R500 airtime? Are you mad Ndabezitha?" he laughed.

"So you will never complain about airtime. Tell me when it's finished, I'll load another." I shook my head in dismay.

"What you need to do is download WhatsApp so we can video call. You have an iPhone, I have an Android, I can't do FaceTime's."

"No, it's fine. I'll buy you this phone. I'm not going social media." He is so impossible.

"WhatsApp is not social media Ndabezitha, it's a communication app. Your life could be so much easier."

"iMessage is perfectly fine, thank you. If you want that thing where we see each other on the phone then I'll get you the iPhone, it's fine."

Nkosi is crazy, he will actually do that, so I have to shut that idea down before it's imprinted in his brain.

“I see you want everyone to hate me for making you bow down to me.” he cracked up.

“Why do you care who hates you, my love for you should be the only thing that matters to you.” Angazi ngizoyithini lendoda mina.

“It does Ndabezitha, it does.” He parked next to my flat and he switched of the car and looked at me, leaning back in his seat with his one arm up.

“So when will I see you again?”

“I don’t know, I won’t go to school one of these days, if I don’t, I’ll make a plan. You’ll come with me to fetch my report, right?” he gave me that look and I remembered who he is. It’s times like these where I wished he was just a normal citizen. He sat up.

“Hey, don’t look so sad MaGumede, I can always get Jama to fetch you and we will do something together, just to celebrate. I know you did well.” He brushed my cheek.

“You’re breaking my heart baby, smile for me.” I gave him a smile and he smiled back.

“I love you okay, no matter what, don’t forget that.” he said and leaned closer.

“I love you too Ndabezitha.”

For the first time, in the three days I’ve known him, his lips locked with mine in a kiss. We sure did skip a few steps.

“I’ll call you when I get home.” He said and stole another kiss. Letting him go is always hard, for the both of us.

I opened the door and climbed out, grabbing my bag from the back. I said my final goodbye before closing the door. I was surprised to meet my mother standing in the doorway of the lobby leading into our flat with her arms folded across her chest.

“Is that him?” she asked walking closer. I know this look, she wants to meet him and I’m not

ready for that, not yet.

“Yes, it’s him.” why is Nkosi not starting the car and leaving.

She walked directly to the car and opened the passenger door where I have just climbed out, climbed in and closed the door. Well, I’m officially fucked.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He was about to start the car and leave after dropping off Amile, but his phone rang, and he is a terrible multitasker, so he sat back and answered his phone.

“Bhuti.” He answered politely.

“Mandlenkosi, you need to come home.” He sighed and put his hand on his forehead in frustration.

“I’m tired of chasing you around every time. You left a huge mess here in the village and you just expect me to fix it for you while you find other skirts to mess around with. I will not have that.” while he was listening, the door to his car abruptly opened and a woman he doesn’t know climbed in.

He might not know who she is, but you can’t miss the resemblance. The mother of the love of his life. his heart started racing.

“Bhuti, I will get back to you.” He didn’t wait for his response. He dropped the call, lowered his phone and removed his beanie.

“Ma.” He scrunched it up in his hand and brushed his head.

“Listen my boy, I might have told Amile that I accept this relationship, but I only did that to make her happy. She is my baby, and I will not have playboys like you breaking her heart. If you

are serious about my daughter, you will stay away from her, wait for her until she is of the right age.”

Who he is doesn't matter to her right now, all she sees is a boy here to threaten her daughter's livelihood and take her back to her own childhood memories, then she won't have it. He isn't frightened by her presence like he thought he would, he wasn't expecting to see such a young woman.

“I love your daughter ma...” she interjected.

“Uthando olunjani olizwa after 3 days?” he kept quiet.

“I know it's absurd and unbelievable, but I truly do love Amile Ma, and I am willing to do anything for her. I am not here to distract her, and I certainly don't have any plans of impregnating her, or taking away her precious gem. If that is what I wanted, I would've have

gotten it a long time ago. I love her for who she is, how she carries herself and how she cares for me, and for those around her. In the mere three days she has shown me just how much she loves me, and I love her too. I promise you Ma, if you just give me a chance, I will treat her right.” Makhosazane shook her head.

“And your family, what about them?”

“My family has no say in who I choose to be with, who I love is my choice.”

“My daughter is too young to be brought into a world full of drama. Being with you comes with a lot of responsibility on her side. She is a child.”

“My title doesn’t define me Ma, she knows that all too well. I will never put Amile in a position where she has to suffer at the expense of my title and who I was born as. Her only job is to love me, and mine to love and protect her.

Nothing else. I will do anything to prove myself worthy of your daughters love Ma, just please, give me a chance.”

Her coming here was futile, she’s not going to change his mind, she can even see it in his eyes that he loves her, the way he speaks of her, he just adores her, and she can feel just how much he means all the things he has just spoken.

“Ground rules: you don’t touch her without her consent, you will not force her to do anything she is not comfortable with, you will stop being ridiculous and buying her R500 airtime, she is still my child, I am very much capable of taking care of her needs and you will only see her one weekends and holidays. I don’t want her distracted from her school work, matric is a crucial year, I’m sure you know.”

“Yes ma’am. She has asked me to tutor her in physics, math, and biology.” She frowned.

“I assure you, I will help her pass, I also did physics at school and I often got straight A’s.”
He’s not one to gloat.

“I’ll look into that. I hope we don’t run into problems in the future.”

“I assure you we won’t MaMchunu.”

She climbed out of the car and he finally caught a breath. He wasn’t lying when he told her he will fight for her. Now he needs to go home and find out what this mess his brother is going on about is. He doesn’t need anything posing as a threat to his relationship so whatever it is that he has supposedly done, he has to fix it, fast! He hates going to the farm, but when the king summons him, he must respond.

Chapter Seven

Mandlenkosi Zulu

“Jama pack your things; we are going to Zululand.” Jama was surprised when he barged in the lounge in a haste.

“Why?” he asked standing up.

“I don’t know, your king summons me.” he picked up his beer bottle from the table and walked around the couch to go to the kitchen.

“Do you think it has anything to do with Jabulile?” the mention of that name sent chills down his spine.

“It better not be because that would be a waste of my time and energy. Listen dude, I just made a promise to Amile’s mom not to break her heart, I intend to keep that promise.”

“You were talking to her mom?” he asked walking closer to where he was.

“She caught me off guard, I wasn’t expecting her, and she said if I love her I must break up with her.”

“Wena wase umthanda kangaka nje ngo3 days.”

“Times means nothing Jama, that’s what you don’t understand. I fell in love with her that moment my eyes met with hers. That’s when she had me.”

“If I didn’t know you, I’d say it’s one of your flings. I hope you didn’t smash her though in the therapy room. She’s young Zulu.” Jama see’s a little sister in Amile more than anything and the thought of his friend being acquainted with her gives him the chills.

“Come on Jama, I know better than that. I only gave her a massage, it almost escalated but I know how to control myself, I’m not a monster.”

“Good.” Jama said and disappeared into his room downstairs.

He appreciates Jama being here but sometimes he acts like a saint when he isn’t. He’s the last one to judge him. He was about to

call Amile, but his phone rang, who else than king Banzi.

“Bhuti.”

“Ngikhuluma nawe uvala ucingo, awungihlonipi umthetho wakho.” He heaved a sigh and rolled his eyes, a habit he picked up from Amile.

“I had something to attend to. Yobe Ndabezitha.”

“Come home and fix your mess, I’m not going to do it for you.”

“What mess are you talking about bhuti?”

“UJabulile, buya la uzobukana nezinkinga zakho.” He wanted to throw his phone across the room in frustration.

“Ngizobuya Ndabezitha.”

“Namhlanje.” He said before he hung up.

He doesn’t have the closest relationship with him, even though he’s the only brother from his

mother and father, the age gap between them is ridiculous. He's closer to Dumisani, from his father's third wife, then he found a brother in Jama, who's father worked as the late King's personal escort.

In total, he has eleven siblings, only two have departed. First born was Langaletu, who died just a few months after his father died. He was next in line to the throne and his death was suspicious. Many speculated that Banzi killed him, but there was no evidence to that.

Langaletu's death really put a strain on him, because they had a close relationship, and he didn't treat him like a child the way Banzi did, and the way he continues to do.

Next in line is Zwelibanzi, then twins Balungile and Nomalungelo from the third wife KaMalinga, Khanyisile and Ntombizodwa. She only had girls, that is why her last born was named Ntombizodwa. His father married another wife,

MaJili, and she had Khethukuthula, Mfanafuthi, and Dumisani. His mother, MaNdlela only had two sons, Zwelibanzi and himself. Langaletu had his own mother. Nkosi is the last born of the family. He has a younger sister he didn't get to meet, she died a infant.

His mother also died when he was young, he was only eleven when she abruptly passed away, leaving him in the care of his brother and father who was barely around.

His phone rang disturbed him from his train of thought, but he was more than happy to answer the call, it's the love of his life.

"Hawu Zulu, you promised to call when you get home." She didn't even greet. His heart melted.

"I'm sorry MaGumede, I just arrived now, but I have bad news." She sighed.

"What now Nkosi." That was quick. "Was it something my mother said?"

“No, your mother and I are good, or I think we are. I just have to go back home for a while. The king summons me.”

“What do you mean you think you and her are good?” Did she just ignore the real bad news for this? He chuckled.

“She wanted me to break-up with you, but I couldn’t let that happen so I reassured her that I wouldn’t do anything to hurt or distract you. And I mean all of those things Amile, I didn’t just say them to soften up your mom. I love you.” She heaved a sigh.

“I’m so sorry you had to go through that. I thought my mom understood.”

“I understand her, at the end of the day, she’s a parent. No matter what, she won’t be fully comfortable with you dating, especially an older man who comes with so much baggage.”
That’s what he calls his title, baggage.

“I’ll talk to her and tell her to apologize.”

“No, don’t. I know what she said to me, she knows what we agreed upon. I don’t want you in the middle of it.”

“Okaay. So when are you going to come back?” she whined. He laughed.

“I don’t know sweetheart, but I won’t be gone for long. I’m hoping I’ll be back before you get your report, I want to be the first one to see it.”

“Okay I love you Nkosi.”

“I love you too nkosazane. I have to go now, I have a long drive ahead of me.”

“You are driving at night?” her voice was laced with concern.

“Yes, I have to, but I’ll be with Jama. Don’t worry about me, I’m a big boy.” She giggled.

“Okay big boy. Bye.”

“Bye MaGumede.”

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Nkosi only goes home when he misses his mother, and he goes to visit her grave and depending on his mood, he will pass by the palace. You will never see him going to sleep there when it wasn't a good reason that sent him to her grave, no matter how late it is, he will turn back. Only when he was sent by good reasons to her grave will he pass by the palace, and that too is not guaranteed that he will spend the night. Talk about someone who hates his own home.

Many may envy his life, he is rich, comes from a family that is worshiped by thousands of people and, as he has heard several times, has a golden seat in heaven. People seem to forget that earthly things are just that, earthly. Your

title here on earth doesn't secure you a seat in heaven, maybe it won't even get you a stool. You could be the king of Zululand but still have a first-class ticket to hell.

The last time he was here, the rain had damaged the gravel roads so badly, only big cars could drive here. He's surprised to find that it has now been upgraded to tar roads. At least Zwelibanzi is good for something. He felt uneasy as soon as the car parked in front of the palace, and he needed a minute or two to compose himself. Jama has never understood why he doesn't like this place, or why he just doesn't like being associated with the royal family, but he's obligated to, it's who he is.

"What do you think Jabulile did?" Jama asked leaning on the steering wheel.

"I don't know." He rubbed his forehead feeling frustrated. It's little things like this that could mess up his newly found relationship and he

doesn't need that.

"You said she was the one who left you, right?"
Jama asked, sounding doubtful.

"Obviously. You know this." He was over her, no doubt about that, but it hasn't been that long, and for so long, she was the woman of his dreams.

"But you weren't faithful to her, on multiple occasions."

"I know Jama, you don't have to remind. Don't act like you are perfect. Jabulile knew what she was doing, she better not come back here and start causing drama because I didn't fight her about her decision. I gave her what she wanted."

"You are only assuming that this is about her, we don't know, this could be about anything."
He certainly doesn't have any other loose ends in Zululand. He's one hundred percent certain

this is Jabulile.

He opened the door and climbed out, slamming the door roughly behind him. Nkosi is a sweet person by nature, he's kind, caring, gentle, and that side is often witnessed by the people he loves. He's not a violent person, even in his boyhood. But the emotional strain he endured after his mother passed away turned him into an unstable person with crazy mood changes. It's not who he is, it's the circumstances. Jama has been subject to all angles of him.

He headed straight for the door and before he could open it, someone on the other side beat him to it. He didn't want to show her how he felt on the inside, he's always been a taciturn person, he won't act out now. Although he had burning rage inside of him from now finding out that he's been summoned here for nonsense, he decided to keep a straight face. A straight, unwelcoming face that dared her not to breath

a single word. But this is Jabulile, she doesn't scare easily, especially by Mandlenkosi.

"Mageba." She breathed.

He scanned her up and down and felt disgust upsurge from the pit of his stomach and when his eyes inspect her rather large front.

"Move out of my way." He warned. Her face softened.

"Mandlenkosi please..." he grabbed her shoulder and gently pushed her aside, making space for him to pass.

"Move out of my way Jabulile." He put emphasis on her name before he successfully got through and left her there trying to force her tears to come out.

No matter how hard she tried to scrunch her face, the tears were protesting. She's still that heartless woman, he can see right through her. It was late, he wanted nothing but a warm bed

and a good nights rest. He had an amazing day with Amile, he won't let anyone ruin that for him, especially not Jabulile.

Jama was surprised to find Jabulile standing by the door looking ever so pregnant.

"Jabulile." He exhaled in displeasure.

He knew everything about Nkosi, so he felt terrible having to think that he was doubting his word. Her standing here pregnant is proof enough that the break up was on her terms, and not his.

"Jama please, just please talk to Mandla for me." he shrugged.

"Angizingeni, angikaze ngizingene, ngeke futhi ngiqale manje." He walked right past her and clicked his tongue in disgust.

She slammed the door in frustration and waddled back to where she came from. She was comforted by the thought of the king being

on her side, that's all that matters. She has Nkosi right where she wants him.

Amile Gumede

I don't know when I fell asleep, I spent almost three hours waiting for Nkosi to call and nothing. I tried his phone a few times, but it wasn't going through. I'm worried, I don't even know what to think, there are a thousand things going through my mind.

"You will be late, stop looking at that phone and get ready for school." Mom was already dressed. today is supposed to be her day off, where is she going.

"Where are you going?" I jumped out of bed and started making it. She walked well into the room and leaned against the chest of drawers.

“Siviwe’s dad and I are going out for the rest of the week.” Hhayi.

“What?” she giggled like a little girl. Hhayi.

“Hhayi mama. What do you mean?”

“I mean we are going out, for some fresh air. Just us.”

“And what about me? what about your son.”
She laughed.

“Your brother will stay here with you. School closes on Friday anyways, we will probably be back on Sunday.” I clapped once in shock.

“No way mom. So are you guys back together or something?” she shook her head.

“We are going as friends.”

“Are you sure about that? we don’t need another Siviwe.” She laughed.

“Go get ready for school and stop being cheeky.” She pushed me out.

I'm late, even Siviwe is already dressed. I took a quick shower and went back to my room to get dressed. I wonder why mom didn't tell me she was leaving all this time, why during the week!

My phone rang as we were walking out to the car. That was the quickest I've ever gotten ready. I took it out of my pocket in a haste, it almost fell out of my hand. It was a number I don't recognize. I answered anyway.

"Hello." Mom turned and looked at me.

"Ntombi ka Zulu." Jama, the answer to all of Zulu's problems.

"Jama, hi." I said more relaxed.

"Yah Nkosazane kaZulu. Nkosi told me to tell you not to worry about him, he's okay. He will call you later, he's busy right now. There was no network last night." I sighed.

"Thank you for letting me know Jama, I appreciate it. I'm off to school now though so

I'll only be able to talk to him when I come out."

"I'll be there to fetch you, don't worry." He said.

"Are you guys coming back today?" excitement filled my voice.

"I don't know, but I'll fetch you." I got too excited too soon.

"Oh." My tone dropped.

"Don't sound so disappointed. Uzobuya, he's just taking care of somethings here."

"Okay Jama. Thank you." I said my goodbye and ended the call. Moms eyes were piercing through my skin.

"Nkosi's escort." Her gaze softened.

"Where is he?" she started the car.

"Zululand. He's going to deal with something and then he'll come back." She nodded.

"So why is the escort calling you?"

“To tell me his phone is not working.” She nodded again and kept quiet.

Since Nkosi advised me against confronting her about speaking to him and threatening him to break up with me, I didn't. I didn't go through with it because she didn't bring it up when she came back to the house anyway. I don't know how I feel about it though.

“He told me you asked him to tutor you in science and biology. What does he know about science?”

“After lunch yesterday, he helped me with physics homework mom and he's so good. I know, it's unbelievable, I also didn't believe Jama when he told me, but that man is a human calculator. He can work out big number in his head as quicker than I can count to ten.” She raised her eyebrow. “I oath mama.”

“I hope this is not a trick for you to start

spending time with him.” I shook my head vigorously.

“Not at all, I promise. He’s probably more serious than I am.” She shot me a hard look.

“If you want to get into medicine, you have to get that A for both maths and physics. I don’t want those 40’s and 50’s from term one.” Do I not get lectured about that every hour of the day? It’s the story of my life.

“Yes mom.” I was glad we were at school now, I can’t wait to get through this conversation.

“I’ll fetch Siviwe and drop him off at Lisa’s before we go. You’ll take an Uber.” Nothing I’m not used to.

“Okay, bye. Enjoy your trip, I love you.” I said kissing her cheek.

“I love you too.” I climbed out the car.

“Bye Siviwe.” He was sleeping at the back.

He always sleeps on his way to school, I don't know how he gets through the day after sleeping so early in the day. He lifted his hand and waved without even opening his eyes. I laughed and closed the door.

The first person I ran into when I walked into the school gates was Yonela, a very unhappy looking Yonela.

"Chomie?" I tried to hug her but she pushed me off.

"What is your problem, is this friendship not enough for you now?" I frowned.

"What is this about now?"

"It's about you. It's only been three days but you've changed. Siya tells me you are ignoring his calls and his messages, yesterday you left us by the lockers, you didn't wait for us, and now you are being fetched by fancy Golf 7 cars with tinted windows, you don't even have time

for us.” I shook my head in disbelief.

“Come on Yonela, you can’t possibly be serious right now. You are giving me best friend drama. Come on, sibadala mesibangaka.”

“You see what I mean.”

“No Yonela. You were the one that made this awkward, you were the one who told me in the face that you would choose your brother over any circumstance as if I wasn’t in pain when he did what he did. So no matter how wrong he is you were just going to choose him? you were the one who put the cracks in this relationship. If you were a true friend that knew exactly how I feel about Siya, you would be in my corner.”

“You didn’t listen to me when I told you that you don’t love Siya. If you loved him, you wouldn’t be gallivanting with this boy like you are doing now, because he gives you all you need.” Yonela and I fight all the time, but this; it feels different.

“Well I’m sorry for stringing your brother along, it wasn’t my intention, but I never agreed to get back together with him and I’m allowed to speak to anyone I want. Another thing, you should stop meddling in our business, what Siya and I do, that’s our story. I only confided in you because you are my sister, I trusted you to be there for me.” shock and hurt covered her face.

“I can’t believe you.” That’s all she said.

“I’ll clarify things with Siya today, maybe you were right, I don’t love him the way I thought I did. I’m sorry that it didn’t work out Yonela but you can’t crucify me for that, I put in my all into that relationship and your brother damaged it, he damaged me. It wasn’t bound to function like before.”

“So you are choosing a stranger over him?”

“I love that stranger, for real this time.” She

shook her head and walked away.

I know most of the things I said were harsh, but sometimes standing up for yourself is necessary, because no one will do it for you. I don't know what this means for her and I, but it would suck having to let her go. I love her, we've been friends since pre-primary, she's my ride or die.

Chapter Eight

Mandlenkosi Zulu

"I met a girl mommy, she's not just any girl, she's the love of my life. I know it sounds absurd that only two weeks ago I was here, I was still heartbroken over Jabulile only to come back claiming to be in love but it's how I feel. I love Amile. More than anything, I think it's because she reminds me so much of you. Your

soft gaze, those beautiful eyes and those soft hands that took care of me. I still remember what you smell like mom, like flowers and sweets, she smells sweet like you. I see you in her. I haven't been this happy in a long-time mom. Jama says I'm smiling more, Dumisani thinks I've been bewitched. I don't care. I'll bring her here one day, and I promise you, I will do right by her. I will be the man my father never was to you. I love you mommy." He got up from the grave and dusted his pants.

This is what he needed, he needed to talk to the first lady of his life, to collect strength to face the day ahead. He was not at all prepared to listen to his brother take all sides except for his. It's his reality, he's been subjected to it for fourteen years of his life.

He walked back to the car where Jama was and he felt much lighter. Even speaking about Amile brightens up his day. What more could a man

ever ask for.

“Can we go now?” Jama asked when he got in the car.

“Yes, let’s go. We will start in town and have breakfast.” He instructed. Jama frowned.

“MaMzobe said we must come back for breakfast.”

“I can’t share a table with Jabulile. We are going to town. After we finish, we’ll go back, have this meeting they want and go back to Durban. I miss my woman.” He really doesn’t need anything to ruin his morning.

Jama started the car and they went to town to get some breakfast.

“Did you get a hold of Amile?” he asked when they sat eating in the car like starving bachelors.

“Yes, she’s disappointed that you might not come back today.” He shook his head.

“No, we are leaving today. You have to fetch her from school remember.”

“Yes, I know. Did you see that Jabulile is pregnant.” Jama brought up the topic, much to Nkosi’s annoyance.

“It’s not mine.” Jama shook his head.

“I know it’s not yours. I’m just shocked, she also cheated on you.” Nkosi dragged her through his teeth.

“She left me for him, and now, there is water in the house, she can’t get out. That’s why she’s here, she wants to pin the pregnancy on me. she doesn’t know what awaits her.” Jama chuckled.

“Girls think they are smart.”

“That’s why you always have to be a step ahead of them. Singaphenduka izilima. I know Banzi will want to force me to marry her. That will not happen. She was able to turn down my proposal,

she's not getting another one." He said with repugnance dressing his voice.

"She doesn't deserve it. Futhi ke manje, sekukhona uSmall." Jama said laughing.

"Amile is here to stay, no one stands a chance."

"If you hurt her, I'll kill you Zulu." Jama warned.

"So all of a sudden you like her now?" he laughed.

"She's a case, but she's grown on me. reminds me of Sbongile." Sbongile is his little sister, just a little over Amile's age.

"Ngiyethembisa bafo, ngeke ngimenzakalisa. Ngiyamuthanda." Jama patted his shoulder in approval.

"Don't make promises, act on them." He nodded.

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He hardly enjoys being in Zululand, but this morning has been nothing like the typical ones he's used to having here, the ones he runs away from. All of that was only for a moment though, quite short lived. He's back at the palace and the first person he sees is Jabulile standing by the rose bushes, pretending to look happy smelling them. Her stone-cold heart can't even take in the smell of fresh nature and sweet-smelling roses in the morning dew. Instead, she wants to follow him around and bombard him.

"Mandlenkosi." For once, Jama followed his job description and held Jabulile as she tried to charge towards Nkosi, letting him enter the palace without being attacked.

"Jama let me go, I just want to talk to him." she was still trying to fake tears, but it wasn't working.

“He doesn’t want to talk to you. Maybe he’ll let you once you cry real tears.” He let her go and walked inside the palace behind Nkosi. So much for respecting the pregnant.

Nkosi walked right into MaMzobe. She exclaimed.

“Hawu, we woke up and you guys weren’t here. What happened?” they saw each other last night, just before he retired to bed, he ran into her in the passage. The only person he hasn’t see is the king.

“I went to visit mom’s grave.” They know him now, he goes there almost every two weeks, it doesn’t shock them anymore.

“And what about breakfast, must I fix you something to eat?”

“No, you don’t have to MaMzobe, thank you.”

“I see you’ve seen Jabulile.” She said pulling him away from where they were standing.

He gets along with MaMzobe, she's the one who actually treats him like the baby of the family. She's the one who understands that he also needs love, the love of a mother.

"I don't want anything to do with her." She shook her head.

"What happened between the two of you? She said you cheated on her." He rubbed his head.

"I did, but it was a moment of weakness. What she did to me was ten times worse. She left me for him, even after I proposed. Now she's here claiming to be pregnant with my child. I know it's not mine."

"How do you know?"

"I can't have children. I had a vasectomy when I turned 20." Shock covered her whole face.

"So she's been here lying about you this whole time." She's in a state of disbelief.

“uMageba is dead set on getting you two married now.” She said in panic.

“That will not happen Ma, over my dead body.”

In the back of his head, he was wondering where his brother is in this present moment.

“Let’s go to the lounge and wait for Banzi to come.” She said and led him to the lounge. It’s just over 10 o’clock in the morning, if they want to cover 2 o’clock, right on time to fetch Amile from school, they have to leave by 12. Jama is a fast driver, they normally take an hour and a few minutes to get to Durban, instead of two.

Banzi walked in with his cane in his hand, exuding so much power in his posture. Nkosi never understood what the cane was for. He still doesn’t understand today, but if it makes him look powerful, than that’s what he will use.

The both rose from their seats and greeted him. He kissed his wife’s cheek and shook his

brothers hand. Formal as usual.

“You arrived late last night.” He said as he sat down.

“We left Durban late.” He answered.

“You don’t visit us anymore Mandlenkosi, when was the last time you came home?” that’s his daily song, deep down, he’s broken that his brother is never home, his wife knows this. He doesn’t need to tell her, he can see it all over his face.

“I’m a working man Ndabezitha. I’m not just chilling in Durban. I’m doing something.”

“Coming home and actually spending time with your family wouldn’t hurt, just once in a while.”

“I’ll do better.” He promises.

He know that will not happen. Especially now that Amile is in the picture.

“Now why did you just up and leave Jabulile?”

She's expecting your child and she said you promised to marry her. I have faith in the man that you are Ndabezitha and I know that you aren't the type to up and leave a woman you love just like that. What happened?" he didn't think that he was here to be asked his side of the story. He thought he was here to be attacked.

"She's the one who broke up with me. She was the one who turned down my proposal and yes, I was unfaithful, but I apologized, it was a moment of weakness that got the better of me but I wanted to prove to her that I loved her and wanted her only. But she left me for another. I wasn't going to stop her, its what she wanted and I'm not one to stand in the way of somebodys happiness. I loved her enough to grant her that, what her heart desired. She can't come back here and claim I didn't love her or didn't care for her, I did. Her being pregnant is

also a sign that she was also not faithful. I don't know how to feel about that."

"The child was conceived while the two of you were together, that means its your child. Ingane kaZulu which means you have to marry her to keep the child here."

"See Mageba what you are not understanding here is that exactly. She wasn't faithful. The child is proof of that."

"What do you mean?"

"It's not my child."

"How do you know? How sure are you of that?"

"I had a vasectomy done when I was 20, even before I met her. I can't conceive children. I don't want them." He gave the same reaction his wife gave when he came clean.

"And she doesn't know that?" Banzi asked.

"She doesn't. I don't want anything to do with

Jabulile and her betrayal, and whatever you decide to do with her, that please should not involve me. She knew what she was doing when she broke things off with me. I'm over her. Now can I be excused, Jama and I still have a long drive ahead of us." He declared as he stood up.

Banzi was more annoyed by the fact that the girl had the audacity to even step into the royal house and lie to him like this, try make his little brother the bad guy in all of this. Nkosi could care less about this whole thing, he wanted nothing but to have Amile in his arms in this current moment. The thought of waiting another 4 hours before he sees her paralyzes him.

"Ngasho kodwa Zulu." MaMzobe said looking down. Banzi clicked his tongue and stood up.

Like the good wife she is, she got up and followed him wherever he was going.

Amile Gumede

Nambitha and I were sitting and I was catching her up on my life, at least she still cared about my well-being. I wasn't exactly being honest but that's only for her well-being too.

"Yonela was shaking with anger yesterday after you left, she feels betrayed." She said lowering her voice.

"She cornered me today and told me I'm not being a good friend since Nkosi came into the picture. And yes, I understand I was wrong with the Siya situation, I'm going to sort it out as soon as possible because I don't want to string him along. But she made it clear as day that she'd choose her brothers side if push comes to shove. What kind of friend is that, a friend that doesn't care about your happiness and

your well-being. I totally understand where she is coming from, I'd also protect Siviwe, but if he's wrong, he's wrong. He needs to acknowledge that."

"I understand chomie, and I'm glad you are admitting that you were wrong about stringing Siya along. You need to make up your mind."

"I have. I love Siya, but over the past few days, especially since Nkosi came around, I've been feeling quite different. And it's not Nkosi's fault that I feel different, no. I think more than anything, he made me realize what love really should feel like, and it's nothing I've ever felt in the two years I've been with Siya. It scares me."

"Much more reason to follow your heart."

"That's what mom said, and I'll do that. He makes me happy. For the first time Nambitha, I experienced an orgasm." Her eyes widened and she giggled.

“OH my gosh! Really? Give me the details girl I want to know!”

“Okay so in his apartment neh, he has this room and he calls it the therapy room. He took me there and told me he is a qualified massage therapist and offered me a massage. I obviously wasn’t going to say no, but I wasn’t expecting it to be that good. He asked me to be fully naked and wrap a towel around my body.” She slapped my arm.

“Were you not afraid?”

“No, not at all. I was surprisingly comfortable, especially when he devoured me with only his eyes. Oh chomie it felt so amazing to be in his presence like that. He’s so genuine. Anyways, he took off his shirt...” She interrupted me.

“Is he fit, abs? V-line nyana?” I laughed.

“He has an amazing body, especially for someone who doesn’t go to gym all the time.

He prefers jogging.”

“Okay, continue ke.” She probed.

“So he sat on the bed and told me to give him the towel so I did that and sat on his lap, naked like that. He started massaging my back and it was better than the massage we got at that spa. His hand work was amazing, I even started falling asleep. He woke me up and had my lie on my back and mind you, I’m butt naked, my cookie was exposed to him. He didn’t make me uncomfortable. He did my chest and stomach chomie and you know how sensitive my nippers were. I started moaning when he kept rubbing them over and over.” Her eyes were on the verge of falling off I swear.

“Is that how you got your orgasm.” That’s Nambitha for you. She will interrupt you like her life depends on it.

“I’m getting there. So I was really wet chomie,

like extremely wet and he could see that. He started doing my thighs and legs, he teased my inner thighs a few times before he asked me to look at him. Then his fingers teased my palace. Yoh that was the best thing I have ever felt. He didn't want me to close my eyes, he wanted me to look at him. It was hard because I wanted to scream, close my eyes and feel the pleasure but he was here, in my face, telling me to loom at him. He stopped me every time I closed my eyes. He was different to Siya, he didn't just finger me because he thinks I like it, he was giving me real pleasure with only his finger. I squirted cabanga."

"Lies lies lies Amile. Don't lie." She protested, clapping her hands.

"Oath. All over his pants. It didn't stop, my legs were shaking and my body was doing something else, I don't even know how to explain it."

“Ay Amile you are fibbing.”

“I think more than anything that showed me that I do have feelings. That I can have a relationship with someone who I love who will give me the same pleasure I give him.”

“I’m not even going to lie Amile, I’m happy for you chomie, I can see that you’ve changed, that you are exuding a much more happy energy and it’s him, he’s making you this happy. I’m team Nkosi all the way shame! I never like Siya vele.” I laughed.

Don’t all friends say that when you break up with your ex. Oh well. At least I have someone in my corner.

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Siya is here, parked in the school premises

waiting for Yonela. He's talking to some guys in our grade and I'm scared of going to him now. My worst fear is Jama arriving and finding me with him. That's what I fear the most. I'm scrolling through my phone when I feel a tap on my shoulder. When my eyes met with his, I was quick to look away.

"Shortie, you've been ignoring my calls." I froze and all the things I had rehearsed in my head went out.

"Siya..." I breathed.

"You said we are okay, what's wrong now?" I touched his shoulder and tried to maintain eye contact, but it wasn't easy.

"Yes, we are okay, and I forgave you, but that doesn't mean we are back together." He frowned.

"That doesn't make sense Amile. We made out, you told me you love me, what do you mean we

didn't get back together?"

"I think we both need to sit down so I can explain myself." He slowly lowered himself on the bench, so did I and I softened my gaze. He looked so confused.

"Siya I love you, but you remember when you complained that I was detached, that I couldn't express myself, I know the reason behind that detachment now. I love you, but I'm not in love with you. I never was in love with you. I just learnt to love you, and that's why it hurt when you did what you did, but the time it took me get over it, and how I handled the situation, its not how a person in love handles themselves. I'd like to think of myself as a spiritual person, I'm a human who acts on emotion and I let my heart control me, and that's what I'm doing now. When I was with you, I felt nothing like I do now, I had no emotion in me."

"What are you saying, you are saying there is

someone else?" tears danced around the corner of his eyes.

"I'm sorry Siya. He has my heart in a way I've never felt, it's a foreign feeling. All I'm doing with you right now is being honest because I don't want to string you along and hurt you further." He wiped his tears and stood up.

"Siya." My heart broke when he wiped his tears.

"Two years later you tell me this, after so much I've done for you, after all the love I've given you Amile. It took you one guy to know that you don't love me. You've been lying to me all along, making plans with me, all the while you knew you never cared."

"I cared Siyabonga, I still do. That's why I'm being honest." I stood up too.

"I hope he breaks your heart, I want you to feel what you have just made me feel, angithi you love him, your heart only breaks for the one you

love. I hope he also breaks yours.” I felt a thousand daggers in my stomach. Heart break was written on his face. I tried to talk but he stopped me.

“Save it, I don’t want to hear it. Where is Yonela?” he looked angry, but he had tears in his eyes.

Siya was my first boyfriend, first kiss, first everything, now having to do this to him, it makes it look like I never cared for him, but I did. I can’t even cry right now, that would help, it would show him just how regretful I am about stringing him along for a full 2 years.

I admit I was selfish. I used him as a placeholder for Nkosi. He was the faint line between faith and blindly waiting, waiting for Nkosi. It’s not that I didn’t think about this once. I had these thoughts, they crossed my mind on many cold nights listening to the rain pouring out. I knew there was something missing when

I was able to imagine or create a scenario of love with a whole different man in mind while he was in the picture, with me claiming to love him. It's was never Siyabonga, now I've found the man created in my midnight scenarios. His name is Mandlenkosi Zulu and I love him unconditionally.

"Siyabonga." Yonela's voice echoed behind me and I froze. My heartbeat quickened and I felt my body heating up. She didn't acknowledge my presence.

"Let's go." Siya said taking her bag.

"What happened, did she do something to you?" she gave me a nasty look, one I've never seen before.

"Leave it alone Yonela. Let's go home." I know Yonela is petty as hell.

"Uyanginyanyisa Amile yezwa. I can't believe you." She said looking at me. I felt tears

stinging my eyes.

“Asambe Siyabonga.” She said and pulled him away. I don’t think she understands the harshness of her words. This makes me question the friendship we have shared, was it ever genuine. I find it hard to believe that.

As they were walking to his car, Jama’s car made a grand entrance just like yesterday, the only difference today is he had his window rolled down and passed right by Yonela and Siya. I felt my pulse weaken by the mili second. She took a second to stare at the car, then fixed her gaze at me, disgust dancing on her face. I was even afraid of going to that car now, especially now that she’s seen the driver. Anything could be going through her head, anything from concluding that I’m dating the Prince, to her thinking I’m actually dating Jama. I swallowed the lump in my throat and looking down, I made my way to the car.

“It’s him, isn’t it?” She let go of her brother’s hand and charged towards me.

“Yonela please.” I said lowly and moved back.

“All this time, it’s been him. You are a whore.” I looked at Jama and he looked pissed. He got out of the car.

“Miss please move away from her.”

“Or what, are you going to run me over, or tell the king? I don’t care, your girlfriend is a whore and she will leave you too.” I couldn’t believe it.

I climbed in the backseat and closed the door. She was still going off but I couldn’t hear her because the windows were now closed. I saw Siya coming to drag her away because she wanted to come for me. My hands are shaking.

“Are you okay?” he asked as he took off in high speed.

I nodded and swallowed, trying to calm myself

down.

“Isn’t that your friend?” I shook my head.

I have no such friends. Someone who claims to love and care for you will never embarrass you like that in front of so many people. I know I’ll be all over peoples phones tomorrow for dumping Siya for an ugly man who drives a Golf 7. I wish I could dig up a whole and crawl inside of it for the rest of the week.

Chapter Nine

Amile Gumede

“I’m sorry my king.” I dropped to my knees and put my palms together pleading with him. His hard face was scaring me, not the man that I love, he never looks at me like that. His gaze softens when he looks at me.

I'm draped in nothing but red cloth, it covers my boobs, back and bum. My skin is cold and my heart is beating loudly like a Nazareth drum in my ears. His expression doesn't change, he's angry.

I lean down and kiss his feet.

"My king." I beg.

He rises and holds on to his cane, looks down on me like I'm his servant. Tears are streaming down my face.

"My king please forgive me. I will never do it again, just please, have me once again." I begged again.

"Stand up." His commanding voice sounded and I was quick to get on my feet, my head staring at my feet in fear.

"Come home Amile. Woza uzomisa umuzi wakaZulu." A woman's voice echoed behind me. I wanted to turn around but my neck was stiff.

“My King.” He didn’t speak.

I looked up and he wasn’t there, only a mirror for me to meet my reflection. I had a white dress draped with beads around my neck, and his majesty’s cane in my possession. He appeared behind me, his hands on my shoulders and his breath on my neck.

“Hamba omisa umuzi wakaZulu.” He whispered and kissed my cheek.

A sharp ringing sound shot through my ears...

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I shot my eyes open and realized my phone was ringing. Even Nkosi’s name popping up on my screen didn’t make me happy. I answered.

“Ndabezitha.” I stretched and got out of bed.

“Did I wake you Sthandwa Sami. I miss you.” I haven’t spoken to him in so long. Hearing his voice melted my insides.

“It’s okay. Are you back yet?” I asked heading to the kitchen to get myself a glass of water. Lord knows I need it.

“Yes, I’m at work, that’s why I couldn’t come with Jama when he fetched you from school. I’m sorry.” He said. He works!?

“Yeah, it’s okay Ndabezitha. When am I going to see you then?” at this point, I need him more than ever.

“I’ll come by today before I go home, I promise you.” He always keeps his promises.

“I know you just woke up, but you sound down, I don’t like that Amile, talk to me.” I rubbed my forehead and gulped down the water. I don’t know what bothers me more, the dream or Yonela.

“Yonela, she caused a scene today at school.” I said.

“Is that your friend?”

“Yes she is. Was.” He sighed.

“Don’t worry Sthandwa Sami, losing friends is normal, especially at this age. You both are finding yourselves and it’s completely okay to grow out of each other. Don’t beat yourself up. We’ll talk more when I get there, I want you to tell me everything.” I smiled to myself.

“I didn’t know you work.” I said.

“Kanti ucabanga ukuthi imali ngiyithaphi ntombi.” I laughed. He doesn’t strike me as the working type.

“You never cease to surprise me Ndabezitha.” He laughed.

“Spontaneity is important in a relationship. I’ll always keep you guessing too. Look MaGumede, I have to go. I’ll call you when I’m done here okay.” He said in a haste. He seems busy.

“Okay Ndabezitha.” I said.

“Ngiyakuthanda yezwa MaGumede.”

“Nami.” I said. He protested.

“Nawe ini Amile. Haibo njalo.” I laughed.

“Ngiyakuthanda nami Zulu.” He was pleased. He said his last goodbye and ended the call.

He just knows how to brighten my day, he effortlessly puts a smile on my face, without even trying.

I remembered I had R500 untouched airtime so I decided to call mom, I need a distraction, the house is too quiet, at least Siviwe must come back to keep me company.

“MaMchunu.” I said. It was fairly noisy where she was.

“Amile, did you get home safely?”

“Yea, I did. How was your trip?”

“We travelled safely sweetheart, Baba kaSiviwe said I must say hi.” She sounds so happy.

“Tell him he’s unfair.” She laughed.

“You got so much money on your birthday, don’t be selfish Amile.”

“Mxm. When is Aunty Lisa going to bring Siviwe back?”

“He doesn’t want to come back. He might stay there for the rest of the week, don’t be surprised. You know how he’s like when he’s with his cousins.” That’s unfair.

“So I’m just going to sit here alone for the whole week?”

“You can also lock up and go to Lisa’s house if you don’t want to be alone.” No thank you, I’d rather be here alone.

“Nope. I’ll stick it out alone.”

“Okay dear. Cook something for yourself to last you for the rest of the week. You’ll be fine.” I rolled my eyes.

“Yeah right, you’ll come home to a skeleton of a child. Aningithandi nje nina.” I heard Siviwes dad laughed in the background.

“We love you so much Amile.” He said.

“It’s fine, I’ll go do my homework and forget about vacationers.”

“Bye baby, we love you.” Mom said before she hung up.

Everyone is busy, I might as well do the same.

I was sitting at the table trying so hard to concentrate on my physics notes but it wasn’t happening, the dream kept replaying in my head like a film. None of it makes sense. I know what the king looks like, I know King Zwelibanzi, he looks nothing like that man in my dreams. Why do I worship this man so much, why am I always apologizing to him, what did I do to him?

At this point I should be concerned. I’ve always dreamt of this man, but these past few days, his

face has been getting clearer and clearer. What I mean by that is, when I dreamed of him before, when he would be inside of me (something I also should be concerned about) I could never see his face, but I always knew it was him, his face just didn't show, if that makes sense.

Now I know his face, I know if I were to run into him, I would clearly point him out. I don't want to think this has anything to do with Nkosi, it can't be him, but this dream, it's scaring me. This man, I called him 'my king' he carried the royal cane and wore the leopard skin on his shoulders. He sat on the throne and wore a crown on his head. I'm terrified. He said I must build the Zulu home. I don't know if I should tell Nkosi about this dream, or the other ones in fact. Maybe it means I should marry him.

Don't get me wrong, I love Mandlenkosi, and if he would ask me to marry him, I wouldn't say no. But I'm not ready for marriage right now. I'm

still young, I still want to finish school, get my degree, work before I can think of getting married, that's my goal, but these dreams, they are scaring me.

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Nothing written in this textbook is making sense and that is frustrating me. It's already dark outside and I've concluded that Siviwe is not coming back home. It's another cold and lonely night for me. The thought of having to wake up and go to school tomorrow paralyzes me.

Just as I slammed my textbook closed in frustration, my phone rang.

"Ndabezitha." I breathed.

"Have you cooked?" I don't remember telling

him that I'm alone.

"No, not yet." I replied.

"Okay. Come downstairs." He said. My heart started racing and butterflies landed in my stomach.

"I'm coming." He dropped the call. I got up from the table and put on my shoes.

I locked the door behind me as I climbed down the stairs to the foyer. Who else than Jama standing outside the GLE waiting for me.

"MaGumede." I was stupid enough to leave a jacket inside the house, it's freaking cold here.

The backseat door opened and my tall handsome boyfriend climbed out dressed in sweats, and a Hoodie pulled over his face. I laughed.

"Zulu." I said looking at him.

"I'm hungry MaGumede." He said coming to

give me a tight hug. Aren't I glad it's dark outside. He doesn't do public places.

"Come in, I'll make you something to eat. You too Jama." I looked at him.

"OH no, I'm going to check on my woman. I'm just dropping off your boyfriend." I laughed.

I wrapped my arms around his waist still in shock that he's here. I took in his scent.

"Keep your phone on." He told Jama. He nodded and climbed back in the front seat.

We walked back to the flat without running into anyone, and I'm glad we didn't. My neighbours are very nosey. As soon as I closed the door behind him, I turned and looked at him.

"Are you cold or are you hiding?" I laughed.

"Cold. I have sensitive ears." I rolled my eyes.

"Manje Zulu kuphi ke ukudla?" I asked again. He removed the hoodie from his face and came

closer to me, grabbed my waist and my body crashed against his.

“Ukhona nje uMaGumede, uzokwenza.” This man thinks I’m a joke.

“Bese ngikukhumbule ntombi yami emhlophe.” He lowered his face to touch my nose with his. His eyes locked with mine and I felt my heart smiling.

“I missed you too Nkosi.” If I go on a hunch, I’d say he doesn’t like kissing. He’s so close to my lips but all he can do is rub his fat nose against mine.

“Kiss me.” I commanded. He chuckled.

He moved away from my face and let go of my waist. What an anti-climax.

“Make me food first.” I rolled my eyes. When I turned around to get to the kitchen, he took me by surprise, grabbed my hand, turned me around and lowered his head, devouring my lips.

I froze for a good second before I registered what was happening in my brain. My breathing hitched and I grabbed his neck to deepen the kiss. Instead, he pulled out.

“Will that stop you from doing that vexatious eye rolling of yours.” My eyes widened. He chuckled.

“I vex you?” I asked in the sulky voice.

“Your eye rolling vexes me. Iyekele lento yakho.” This is what it feels like dating a Zulu man. A real Zulu man. I have the strong urge to bend and say ‘yebo baba’ but I know Nkosi will never let me forget about that. He’s stupid like that.

“Yebo bab’ Nkosi.” I almost rolled my eyes, but I held myself. He could sense the sarcasm in my voice.

“Very good. Hambake uyokwenza ukudla MaGumede wami omuhle.” He kissed my forehead, then my lips before he went to sit in

the dining room where my books were scattered on the table.

I have no idea what I'll make for this man. My mom doesn't buy fancy groceries like he does, his fridge is filled with all sorts of ingredients, ingredients with names I can't even pronounce. He freaken has a chef, a qualified one at that who prepares 5-star worthy meals. How would I even begin to compete with that? All I found in the cupboard was basmati rice so I put that on the stove and let it boil while I defrosted the beef.

I'm not the best cook, but my mom is and she has taught me a thing or two, I only dream of getting to the level she is on. I made a potatoes salad and raw tomatoes chutney on the side and made the curry. I didn't want to leave the kitchen while the stove was on, I don't need any mistakes happening so I waited until everything was prepared. I carefully plated everything and

the presentation looked amazing. I hope the taste is as good as it looks. I placed everything on a tray but before that, I went to give him a bowl of water to wash his hands. He was surprised.

“Are you done cooking already.” He was busy doing calculations from my physics textbook on a piece of paper.

“Yes, I’m done.” While he washed his hands, I stole a glimpse of what was written on the paper and it was a mind fuck.

“I’ve been doing that sum the whole afternoon and I can’t get it right.” I gave him the cloth.

“I’ll show it to you when we finish eating.” He said clearing the table. He looked like he was in his element when he was doing all of that. He thanked me, handed me the cloth and I went back to the kitchen.

I came back with his tray of food and placed it

in front of him. He rubbed his hands and licked his lips.

“This smells amazing.” He looked at me.

“Okay, let me pray. Close your eyes.” I watched him put his hands together and close his eyes.

I prayed for the food, and audibly thanked God for his presence too. I was grateful that he was here, not just in my home, but in my life, my heart.

“Thank you MaGumede.” He dug in.

I went back to the kitchen to get my bowl of food and I went back to the dining room and sat across him. I don't normally sit here when I eat, I normally eat in front of the TV.

“Tell me more about your friend. What was her problem?” He seemed to be enjoying his food because he was almost half way done with his plate. Speaking about Yonela will ruin my appetite.

“She’s upset that her brother and I aren’t together anymore and that I love you, not him.” He looked up briefly.

“And what else?”

“She called me a whore for climbing into Jama’s car because she thinks he’s the one I’m dating. She crucified me like this though because she wanted him, she made it loud and clear to me.” His face scrunched up.

“That’s not a true friend. You should be glad that she’s put of your life. What happened between you and the brother?” Is he really asking me that?

“Should I answer that?” asked stealing a glance at him.

“I asked didn’t I?” eish, this guy mara.

“He cheated and broke up with me out of guilt and fear of being caught. He apologized, I forgave him, but he mistook that for taking him

back and now earlier, when I made it clear to him about what was happening, he went as far as cursing our relationship.” He doesn’t look fazed.

“Little boys. I’m sure it’s his first heartbreak. Uzoba right, uyakhula.” Obviously Mr Zulu will be insensitive about it.

“He was stupid enough to leave you instead of coming clean, now he’s lost you for good, that’s his fault, not yours. Now you are mine, and mine alone.” He claimed. I smiled.

“I was never his to start with.” Our eyes locked and butterflies fluttered in my stomach. Oh this is love. I can feel it.

We continued to eat while conversing about his job. He’s a chemical engineer. I didn’t quite understand a few of the things he said, but I did catch that he works in a plant somewhere in Durban North and he handles all types of

chemicals. He doesn't work everyday, he only goes in twice a week, today was one of those days. He's filthy rich because of his job, it makes sense.

I didn't want to sit down with the kitchen still a mess so I told him I was going to clean the kitchen. He offered to help me but he's here watching me, talking more than helping.

"Nkosi are you helping or talking?" he raised an eyebrow at me.

"Yes, I'm asking you a question." I dried my hands on the dishcloth and turned to look at him.

"I don't do dishes MaGumede, I don't do manual labour." I rolled my eyes. Only when he gave me that look did I remember.

"If you could just help me at least wipe them, life would be so much easier. We would sit and spend more time before you go."

“I’m trying to think, yazi nje, uJama la ekhona njengamanje nje, uyabhebha. Mengabe ngiyibuka kahle lento, ngeke akwazi ukubuya manje la. Phela leyanto imnandi, ihlanyisa abantu.” I covered my mouth in shock, stifling a laugh.

“In other words MaGumede, we have all the time in the world.” I slapped his arm playfully feeling flushed by his statement. Now I have a picture of Jama doing the deed...ewe!

“I’ll take this now.” He took the dishcloth from my hands and threw it on the counter.

He put his hands on my bum, grabbed it and lifted me up and placed me on the counter, I giggled and covered my head with my hand. His hands rested on the small of my back and he lowered his head to the nape of my neck. He planted soft kisses and I smiled, wrapping my arms around his frame.

“I’ll help you with dishes MaGumede, yezwa.” I nodded, feeling vulnerable under his touch and the feel of his breath on my bare skin.

I’m almost done anyway, I only need to wipe and pack them in the cupboard.

I tilted my head to give him access to my neck and he planted kisses and he gradually moved down until his hands rested on my breasts. He lifted his eyes to look at me and he looked so sexy, I had flashbacks of yesterday in that therapy room.

“Permission to undress you?” I bit my lip.

“My bedroom is the second door to the right.” He chuckled and picked me up from the counter and with my legs around his waist, he walked with me to the direction of my room.

He used his one hand to unhook my bra even before he laid me on the bed. I felt like I was in a novel. He laid me on the bed and he took of

his hoodie and threw it on the chair before he climbed on top of me. Our eyes locked for a few seconds before he closed his and leaned in for a kiss. It was steamy, I had my hands under his t-shirt, on his back touching his muscles as he flexed. My legs were wrapped around his waist and his hard-on was pressed against my palace.

He pulled out of the kiss and helped me out of my vest, and then the bra. He started planting soft kisses on my neck, down my chest. He sucked my hard nipples and I cried out in bliss. It's like this man has the blueprint to my body and how it functions. This is nothing like I've ever felt before.

He's horny, so am I. I can feel it from the way he presses his hard shaft against my palace. He's groaning lowly and sucking my boob while he twirls the other nipple around his finger. My legs are wrapped around his waist and I'm grinding against him, I want to feel it. I'm a moaning

mess.

I snuck my hands into his pants and I held it in my hand. His breathing quickened and I started stroking him slowly.

“Kodwa MaGumede.” He moaned out, his eyes closed and he tilted his head.

I threw out any morals I have ever had in my life and helped him out of his pants, I pushed them all the way to his ankles and got on my knees in front of him. He was bigger than I anticipated, and I was afraid, but I swallowed up the courage and spit on it before jerking him off in my hand. He lost it when I plopped it into my mouth and he grabbed my braids, twisted them around his fist and pushed me down on him. I gagged so hard he pulled me out. I had tears in my eyes.

I always said this is my least favourite thing to do to a man, but this, it feels completely

different. Looking at him and seeing so much pleasure on his face, it makes me happy.

“Ngizochama MaGumede.” He said tightening his hold on her braids.

Instead of stopping, I deep throated him and he cried out like a little boy. I didn't see it coming, even though he warned, he released his semen inside my mouth. I felt like an A-grade prostitute when I swallowed his load like a gulp of water. No 'I love you' today, we are playing dirty and waking up sleeping beasts. Will I be able to keep up, will my virgin ass keep up!? I don't think so.

Chapter Ten

Amile Gumede

Did he help me with the dishes? No. Did Jama

come fetch him? No. Did we ever get out of bed? No. He's lying behind me, holding me close to his body. He's such a peaceful sleeper, he makes no sound, and doesn't toss and turn like a mad man. I could get used to this, waking up in his arms every morning. I've decided to not go to school today. I know we don't have a physics lesson and I can always catch up on math here at home, I don't really struggle with that. I just want to stay wrapped in his arms like this for as long as I can.

His hand slowly snuck to my inner thighs and his breath hitched. He's finally awake.

"Nkosazane." He said in his deep morning voice.

"Good morning sleepy head." I turned and faced him. Our eyes locked.

"When did you wake up?" he asked rubbing his eyes.

"Just now. I'm not going to school today." He

put his hands on my waist and pulled me closer to his body.

“I want to do this for the rest of my life MaGumede. I want to wake up next to you every morning. This feeling that I feel right now, it’s indescribable.”

“I love you Zulu.” I declared.

His hands travelled to my bum, he grabbed it and pulled me even closer to him, closing any gap that separated us. Our lips met and we kissed sensually, in no rush. I felt complete and wanted nothing but this for the rest of my life. Maybe to freeze time and stay in this moment forever would do.

When I got on top of him, I rubbed myself against his boner. He gripped my ass and pulled out of the kiss to look at me.

“Uzoyimela lento ofuna ukuyiqala?” That sounded like a threat, but I was so aroused, I

wanted nothing but to feel it, feel the unknown.

My answer was kissing him back. Harder. He responded by flipping me over and getting on top of me. He removed my underwear and teased my skittles with his thumb. I parted my lips and a soft unexpected moan escaped my lips. I was now dripping wet and his finger was pumping in and out of my core. He slowed his pace when I almost fell apart under him and took his finger out of my core.

“Amile.” He called out softly.

“Nkosi I want it.” I don’t know what I’m saying, but I mean it whole heartedly. I want it so badly.

“I can’t sthandwa sami.” He said lowly, kissing the nape of my neck in the process. He’s not making it any better.

I ignored him and pulled down his pants. I held it in my hand and I could feel the veins popping on it. Why can’t he just give it to me, it’s all I

want. I lifted my legs up and locked him in between them. His eyes were barely open and he looked so sexy.

“Amile stop, please.” He’s begging but not doing anything to stop me.

Our private parts are in contact and I can just feel his tip on my entrance.

“I want this Nkosi, please.”

I wrapped my legs around his waist and held his shaft so he could enter me, but he was much stronger than I was and removed my legs from his waist. Like what the hell bro!

“I said I can’t Amile.” I was on the verge of tears.

“I made a promise to you, and your mother. I promised that I would wait for you. I can’t let this happen Amile.”

“But it’s what I want Nkosi!” tears streamed down my face.

“You aren’t ready. I don’t want you to regret this, I want you to be sure about your first time. Right now is not the right time Amile.”

“Nkosi I have nothing to lose. I’m ready and I want this with you, nobody else.” I begged. Even my tears weren’t doing any justice.

“I want you to be proud of who you are, I want you to be proud to be the good girl that you are. Keeping yourself is not a bad thing, it’s an amazing thing. It will be even better when you walk into that Zulu home as my bride, with that white dot on your forehead, proud that you kept yourself. Our wedding night will be special, much more special than this. Please MaGumede wami.” He stroked my cheek and wiped my tears.

He’s way to much of a gentleman. I know of no man who would’ve stopped me, and deny pussy. He himself said that it’s the best thing in the world, it drives people crazy. I can’t help but feel

like he thinks I'm too young though. Will he always look at me and see a child?

"I'm sorry for crossing the line, it shouldn't even have gotten to this point." He apologized.

I nodded and attempted to get off bed. This whole morning just took a left turn.

"MaGumede buya la." He pulled my hand back to the bed, closer to him. He made me touch his erect shaft. He locked his eyes with mine.

"It's all yours, it's all for you. But when you are ready, okay. Not now Sthandwa Sami." I nodded.

He kissed my lips slowly and I started stroking him up and down. He groaned in my mouth, not breaking the kiss. My lips were the receiving end of his sexual frustration and when I quickened my pace, the harder he bit me. I love this man so much and I want to give him the world.

“OH MaGumede.” His load shot out and he leaned against the headboard to try catch his breath.

“Ngiyakuthanda Nkosazane yami.” I felt cheated. I’m still very much horny.

“I love you too.” He rolled out of bed and I got a chance to admire his frame from the back. His round black bum, his perfectly toned back and hairy legs. He has a beautiful body, I don’t want to lie.

“Your mother will kill me if she found out that I slept here, that I ate her food and showered in her bathroom.” I rolled my eyes. He might as well date my mother then.

“Are you going to join me?” I sulked and looked at him.

I don’t care about him saying no to breaking my virginity, I don’t care about that anymore, but he at least owes me an orgasm. He’s being selfish,

he got his.

“What now MaGumede?” He wasn’t pleased with my expression. I felt tears threatening to fall out of my eyes.

“You didn’t want to sex me, you left me wet and horny, now you don’t want to give me my orgasm? It’s your fault, I didn’t even know what it felt like, you gave it to me and now when I want it, you won’t give me.” I didn’t want to cry because this is stupid, but my heart hurts so much. I’m horny.

I thought this man loved me, but he started laughing at me instead.

“I said lets go shower.” He came to my side and picked me up bridal style.

“I didn’t know you were a cry baby.” He wiped my tears and kissed my lips.

“I’m not mean like that Sthandwa Sami. Trust me.” I showed him to the bathroom and he

carried me there. He placed me on the toilet seat and fixed the bathtub for me.

He instructed me to climb into the tub and only a quarter of it was filled.

“How are we going to bath with such little water?” I was annoyed by him.

“Just get in the tub Amile.” He commanded. I rolled my eyes and got in. He got in behind me and instructed me to sit down.

“Lift your legs up.” He slapped my thigh. I lifted them up impulsively.

He unwrapped the adjustable shower from the tap and turned on the water. I turned to look at him concerned.

“Relax.” He gripped on my thigh before adjusting the water pressure on the shower head. What is this man doing?

He rubbed his hands over my mound and

brushed it. He directed the shower head on my skittles and the water pressure hit me. My legs twitched and stretched my legs. Vibrating sensations shot through my body and I leaned my head back from the pleasure.

“Zulu!” I screamed in shock.

The pain and pleasure from the dense water hitting my pleasure button was too much for me to handle.

“Zulu stop, please.” He laughed and closed the tap. I breathed out trying to catch my breath. My legs were shaking.

“How is that?” he kissed my neck.

“I don’t know. It’s amazing, but it hurts too.”

“Must I continue?” he asked and I shook my head vigorously.

“Okay so how do you want your orgasm?” he kissed my neck again. Did I mention that I have

love bites on my chest, on my boobs. I'm fucked.

"Which way is faster?" I asked turning around. I don't think he realizes that I could just get up, sit on his dick and ride him like the world is ending. Not that I know how to anyways.

He told me to sit up and I faced the other way of the bath. He's so tall, I'm surprised that we both fit into it. He laid me on my back, lifted my legs and put them on his shoulders and went down on me.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He said his last goodbye to her and left her packing the dishes in the cupboard, he wasn't much of a help though, as always. He was just keeping her company, she didn't mind though, she got what she wanted, she was in a world of her own. To him it seems she got over the

mornings incident quickly, by the time he left, she was all happy and loving again. That bathtub session worked wonders for the both of them.

He climbed in the car as quickly as he could as soon as he exited the flat. Jama seemed to be having a happy morning, he was all smiles.

“Bafo.” He said starting the car.

“Kombe wena ubhebhile.”

“Ya phela think sijola nabafazi, abantu abakwaziyo ukuphatha indoda.” He rubbed his hands together. That’s a jab at Nkosi, but he won’t take it, it doesn’t hurt, in his head and heart, he knows he could get the cookie anytime he wants.

“Ay bafo cishe kwenzeka iflop kodwa yazi.” He said chuckling in disbelief.

“What, did you smash?” He might care about Amile, but he understands the importance of

friendship and brotherhood. He'll always be on his side.

"You have no idea. She had me locked in between her thighs and she was ready to have me break her virginity." Jama slammed the steering wheel and he chuckled.

"She's a virgin? That smart mouth is a virgin?" Nkosi shook his head recalling the events.

"I know bafo, it took a lot for me to stop her. She even started crying because she wanted dick." Jama cracked up. This only amused him because he actually got ass, good ass last night. He's carefree, no worries in the world. Akuna mathata.

"It's not funny yazi Jama. That was the hardest thing I've ever done."

"If she wanted it so badly, so badly that she was crying real tears for it, why didn't you give it to her. Lay down the pipe one time, maybe she

would've been less babyish.”-Jama.

“She’s not ready...”

“Is that what you think, or did she tell you that?”
Jama questioned.

“I know she’s not. She’s young mfethu, I love her but I respect her and I don’t want to damage her like that. I want to do right by her.” This conversation just took a serious turn.

“What do you mean?”

“I want to marry her. I want her by my side as soon as possible. I also made a promise to her and her mother to respect her body and protect her. What I did was protecting her. She deserves that white dot on her forehead on the day of her wedding day, I want her to be proud of it, I want her mom to be proud of it, I want to be proud of it.” Jama removed his eyes from the road briefly and looked at his brother is sheer confusion and disbelief.

“Uwena lo Zulu?” he couldn’t believe his ears.

“imina mfo kaMzizi. Ngizimisele ngalentombi.”

Jama slapped his shoulder in pride.

“I’m happy for you bafo, you deserve happiness and I’m glad you found it, especially after Jabulile.” The mention of her name left a bitter taste in his mouth.

“So when are you planning on bringing her home?”

“Not now, we’ve only known each other for a few days. I just want her to myself for now, I don’t want to share her with my family.”

“Makes sense.” Jama said and chuckled.

“So do you think she will agree to marriage? These 2000’s are stubborn, she’ll tell you about school, graduation and work before marriage. There is no way she will agree to that.”

“She’s hinted that she wants to have a career,

and I might be a Zulu man, but that stereotype that Zulu men want their wives at home taking care of the household and children, that's not me. I want my wife to reach her full potential, and do what she loves, not to live to serve me like I am God. Plus, I don't want children."

Jama has two children, two boys back in the village with different mothers. He loves his children dearly and everything that he does is for them. He's always wondered what the real reason behind Nkosi not liking children is. Even to him, the one who knows him like an open book, doesn't know this.

"Amile is that woman, she has a vision in life, she fights hard for what she wants and that's the kind of woman I'm looking for. She certainly is more mature than any other woman I've ever met." He was obviously madly in love with her, but Jama could agree with him on this one. She's a focused young lady.

As the car parked in the basement, Nkosi's phone rang.

"Are you going to answer it?" Jama asked staring at the screen of car monitor.

000°"Yeah, I will." It's the king.

Jama gave him some space and he sat in the car, and braced himself for the call.

"Bayede." He spoke.

"Mandlenkosi, it's me, MaMzobe." He was partially relieved it wasn't his brother. His calls are always dreadful.

"Nihambe kahle kodwa?" she asked with her naturally caring voice.

"Yes Ma, sihambe kahle. Sorry for not calling, I got tied up at work." He respects this woman the same way he respected his mother, she earned it, he can safely say she is the closest thing she has to MaNdlela.

“It’s okay, I understand. I just wanted to let you know that Jabulile has left the palace. UMageba wanted her to pay a fine to the royal house for disrespect and disregard of the King. I told him that we must talk to you first because before anything, Jabulile was the love of your life and maybe you don’t want her to...to, you know, suffer.” He shook his head.

“Ma I don’t care what your husband decides to do with Jabulile. At the end of the day, he was the one who let him into the palace. If it’s vital, then he can, but I don’t want any part of it.”

That’s Nkosi for you. A master at moving on. She laughed.

“Ngiyakuzwa Ndabezitha.”

“And thank you for letting me know Ma, I appreciate it and it feels good to know that somebody thinks my opinion matters.” He just made this deep for no reason at all, unprovoked. He left MaMzobe speechless.

“Nkosi your brother loves you, don’t put that idea in your head that he doesn’t love you. He just has a terrible way of showing it, trust me, I’ve been married to him for 18 years.” He nodded to himself.

He’s not in search of love anymore, he’s found the love he’s been longing for. Amile is more than enough for him. His princess.

Amile Gumede

I’m not the most active person when it comes to chores. Mom usually does the intense cleaning around the house, and I’m always in charge of dishes, cooking and school uniforms. My mother is a superwoman I tell you. Today I was busy, good mood, good music, equals a productive day. I did a proper spring cleaning job, did the laundry and even made lunch for

one. I'm bloody exhausted and I want to take a well deserved nap, but Nambitha called and asked to come over and wait here for her parents to come back from work.

I was sitting on the couch watching TV. I wasn't paying much attention, I found myself daydreaming about Nkosi. I don't know when I fell asleep, but I startled when my phone was ringing. It was Nambitha so I assumed she was outside. I made my way downstairs to fetch her. She was coming from school.

"Chomie." She gave me a tight squeeze.

"Hi chomie. How are you?" I asked.

"I'm good friend. I should be asking you." I frowned.

"I'm great chomie, in fact, I'm amazing." She nodded like she didn't believe me.

"Okay, let's go inside ke." She said and held my hand.

She's being weird.

"I feel like you are hiding something from me." I said as we made our way inside the house.

"I'm not, what would I be trying to hide?" she said, looking very suspicious.

"What happened at school."

"Nothing." She was too quick to answer.

"Nambitha!" I unintentionally shouted from the frustration.

"Fine! Yonela made a video last night and she called you a gold-digger and a hoe for leaving Siya. She sent it to everyone at school." I don't know how I feel about that. Do I care, not really.

"That's all?" I asked.

She took a deep breathe and rubbed her forehead. Okay?

"She also leaked the...th...the nudes. The ones you sent to Siya." I felt my body temperature

rise.

“What!?” tears burned my eyes and I almost fainted.

“I’m sorry friend.” She embraced me.

I knew Yonela was petty but this, this is devils act, she is the child of Satan indeed. I felt my world crumble before my feet.

“Siya also didn’t know about it, and there was some commotion now after school between them.”

“And the teachers, what did they say?” I’m shaking, my voice is strained.

“They haven’t seen anything yet, but I know it will be a matter of time before it happens.” She said in a low tone.

Am I not fucked right now!? I have to call Nkosi. I scrambled around for my phone.

“What’s wrong, what are you looking for.” She

asked trying to hold me back.

“I need to call Nkosi. I need him here, now.” I was on the verge of a mental breakdown. There was too little blood circulation in my veins. I felt light headed and my chest was slowly closing in on me.

She helped me look for my phone and with my shaking hands, I dialled Nkosi’s number.

“MaGumede wami.” He sounded jolly and that just seemed to trigger me.

“Nkosi, I can’t...I...me...I need you...here.” I was hyperventilating.

“I’m on my way Sthandwa Sami, keep still and drink water, I’ll be there now.”

The phone slipped from my hand and I sat down on the couch. My reputation has been ruined. If this gets to the teachers, I might be expelled all for what, for breaking up with someone?

“Amile, please, calm down my friend.” I had my head on my lap and I was trying to exercise my breathing, but it wasn’t working.

“Did Nkosi say he’s coming?” I nodded.

I don’t even care that she’s here to see him. I trust her, I know she won’t be hysterical about it. I saw her footsteps disappear and when she came back, she gave me a glass of water. I tried to gulp it down, but the lump in my throat wasn’t allowing me to.

“You can cry friend, you are allowed to.”

I can’t even cry right now. It’s not happening, it’s this stupid lump in my throat and my beating heart. My phone rang again after a few minutes of silence between us, only the sound of our loud breathing audible. Nambitha answered.

“Hi Nkosi, it’s Amile’s friend.”

I’m assuming he spoke on the other side because she nodded before dropping the call.

“He wants to come in, must I open for him?” she gently grabbed my hand for reassurance. I nodded.

“Okay, I’ll be back now.”

I know she’ll probably faint when she gets out there, but I won’t say anything to her, she’ll see for herself. I closed my eyes for a few seconds and tried to process what was happening. I couldn’t even fathom what was happening. I opened my eyes to try and look for my phone, but I think Nambitha took it with her.

It wasn’t long before she came back in looking pale like she was slapped by a freezing whiff of wind. My man hurriedly followed behind her and then Jama. He rushed to me and gently picked me up and gave me a tight hug.

“What’s wrong Sthandwa Sami? Talk to me, please.” Getting to smell his scent and be in his warm embrace made me loosen up and let it all

out.

“I’m sorry, Nkosi. I...it’s just...” I cried.

He turned his head to Nambitha.

“What happened?”

“Yonela leaked some inappropriate pictures of her and spread rumours about her at school.”

Her voice was shaking. I buried my head on his chest and he caressed me.

“It’s okay sthandwa Sami. I’ll sort it out.” His breathing patterns proved to me he was angry, but now I don’t know who he’s angry at, me or the whole situation.”

“I’m sorry Nkosi.” I said trying to ease my conscious.

“Don’t apologize, you didn’t do anything wrong.” I wanted to scream.

Who would’ve thought that I would be betrayed like this, especially by someone I trusted, a

sister! Never again.

Chapter Eleven

Yonela Mzulwini

She may be petty, and a person that let's her anger control her, but she has a conscience, and right now, it's feeling guilty. Siya is not making it any bearable for her.

"I never said I want you to fight my battles Yoni, I didn't ask you!" Siya shouted

"Don't shout at me." She was holding her head in panic.

"No, I will shout if I want to, I will scream at you if I want. Entlek, you piss me off." He banged the table.

"I was angry Siya."

"I don't care about your anger. She's your friend, and she's right, you should have had her back.

What you did, it really disappointed me. It was low of you and I'm not proud of it, I'm not proud to call you my sister right now."

His words are often hurtful, especially when he's mad. Their mother always tells him not to speak when he is mad, he must calm down first, otherwise he says things he will regret, and most of the time, he doesn't apologize for it later.

"Siyabonga!" their mother intervened. The loud shouting from their game room was enough to send her from the bottom of the stairs to where they were.

"I told you to stop shouting at your sister." She says walking into the room, apprehension written on her face.

"Your child is uncontrollable, she has no morals." She interrupted him.

"Hhayi hhayi Siyabonga, yintoni

ngawe!?” (Siyabonga what is wrong with you?) Yonela isn't even crying now, she's just sitting here taking whatever she gets. Deep down she knows she's to blame.

“When Amile commits suicide for this, you will be to blame, her death will be on your hands.” she looked down in shame.

He left the room and left her and her mother to comfort each other.

“What is he angry about, what did you do to him?”

Siyabonga isn't a terrible person, and although he has anger issues, as he grew up, he learned to control it, but when he is pushed to the edge, he explodes, that's what happened with him now.

“Amile broke up with him.” Her mom frowned.

“So why is he shouting at you?”

“Because I leaked her nudes.” She mumbled. Her mom didn’t catch what she said, only to her frustration.

“Speak up Yonela, andikuva mna.” (I can’t hear you.)

“I leaked her nudes.” Her mother’s eyes widened. She doesn’t know which part scares her the most, the fact that these children are already taking nudes and sending them to boyfriends, or the liver of her own seed.

“Ubolile mntanami, I won’t lie to you.” (you are rotten my child.) She buried her head in her hands.

“I know mama.”

“What did you do that for?”

“I was angry, I still am mama, at her. For making Siya an idiot and for forgetting about me.”

“First of all, Siya is old enough, he is more than

capable of deciding for himself what he wants to do, you had no right to be involved like that in their relationship. Why was it so easy for you to ruin something you have built for years with Amile?”

“She ruined the plan mama, she broke up with Siya, we were going to be real sisters.”

“Yonela it’s time for you to grow up now and start realizing that life is not all roses and rainbows. Khipha lengqodo yakho yokuba spoiled, life is not always about you, and it’s not always going to work out the way that you want it.” She was on the verge of tears.

“She’s dating the same guy that I told her that I want.” Her shook her head.

“You are not being specific, first it was the break up with Siya, then it was a plan, now it’s a boy. Yazi Yonela you don’t have any idea how serious what you have done is, and you still

have to sit and do some introspection. I'm not going to force you to apologize to Amile, you'll do it when you have a valid reason for doing the rubbish you did to her. Your brother is right, if she kills herself, it's on you my girl. Sit here and think about what you did. Give me your gadgets." She's shocked.

"I'm your daughter mom, you should be on my side." She complained

"I won't pick your side if you are wrong, you will never learn your lesson. Sit here and think." She took her phone and laptop and walked out her room. She wanted to scream.

Amile Gumedede

I wanted to call my mother, but every head in this house protested, even the quiet head that I thought had lost their voice. She hasn't said

anything to me since she came back with these two men who are now invading my mothers living room. I appreciate them both for being here, it means a lot to me, especially because they dropped everything they were doing to come here. It's such a petty issue, and I know Jama probably thinks it's stupid high school drama. He's still here though, which means he cares, and that's all that matters

"Can I get you guys something to drink?" she asked as she stood up. She looked like she was suffocating.

"Yes, I'll go with you." Jama replied way too quick. He was on his feet waiting for Nambitha to lead the way. She cleared her throat and led the way.

"I'm sorry." I apologized again. He shook his head and brought me closer to his frame.

"I told you to stop apologizing. These

inappropriate pictures that she leaked of yours, where did she get them and how inappropriate are they?" I felt embarrassed

I think what hurts more now is that Yonela knew just how much taking nudes was uncomfortable for me and she was able to just leak them just like that. It took a while for me to be comfortable with the way my body looked, it took even longer to learn to appreciate it and that's when I started taking those pictures, but they were only for my eyes, not anyone else. She was the one who convinced me to send them to Siya. The only reason I did it was because I 'loved' him and that's what people in a relationship do, they share secrets.

"She had them on her phone." I couldn't bring myself to answer the second question so I pretended not to hear it.

"Why?" I felt like I was in an interrogation room..

“She was my friend, I trusted her, I wanted to get her opinion on them, its what girls do.”

“So you could send it to your boyfriend?” I could sense a hint of jealousy in his voice but I’ll ignore that and the question too. I rolled my eyes.

“How inappropriate are they Amile?” I cleared my throat. “Show them to me.” This man right here looks very unhappy, but he’s holding himself. He’s very unfriendly in this very moment, I never wish to be on his bad side.

I reached for my phone and opened the pictures. This is embarrassing for me. I’m basically naked in all of them.

“Ay niyawenza amanyala bo.” (you guys commit such abominations) He said scrolling through the phone.

I swallowed hard, the lump going up and down my throat uncomfortably. Whoever said Zulu

men are the Woolworths of all men, that person should retract their statement. So now I can cross nudes off my 'seduce Mandlenkosi' list.

"I don't know how we will remove this from everyone's cellphones, but I will definitely do something about your friend." I panicked.

"Please don't hurt her." He chuckled, but it wasn't his normal usual friendly chuckle.

"What do you think this is, the mafia?" ouch, okay. "Why wouldn't you want me to hurt her, she hurt you too, and when you hurt, I hurt." He caressed my cheek.

"I don't want her back in my life, but I forgive her. Only because she was once a good friend to me." He moved closer and hugged me tightly. I melted into his arms and for the first time since he got here, there was a sense of normality in our relationship again. It feels like I had lost him.

"Manje mina ubuzongikhombisa nini

amanyala?” (When were you going to show me your abomination?) I couldn't hold it in, I cracked up with laughter.

“Cha, ungahleki, ngiyabuza MaGumede.” (no, don't laugh, I'm asking MaGumede.) He had a small smile dancing around his lips, just enough to reveal that dimple I love so much.

“Whenever you want Zulu.” I kissed his cheek and laid my head on his shoulder, and took in the smell of the fabric softener mixed with his cologne on his shirt. He's my favorite smell.

“Kanti bayayimba yini le juice?” (Are they digging up this juice?) he asked looking at me. I shrugged my shoulders.

I wouldn't be surprised to find Nambitha asking all there is to ask about the royal family, she's forward like that. It's unfortunate that Jama is not the friendliest of people to pester.

“Let's go and get it ourselves.” I said trying to

stand up. He pulled me back down.

“Manual labour MaGumede, I don’t do it.” He emphasized.

“You wake up and go to work twice a week Ndabezitha, what are you trying to say?” I laughed.

“Let the juice come to you Sthandwa Sami.” He’s the type of man who would appreciate a manicure and pedicure with the clear nail polish to top it all off, he’s boujee like that.

No but on a serious note, what are those two doing in that kitchen that is taking so long. Jama better not be trying to make a move on my bestie, she’s took beautiful for him, way out of his league.

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They came back with juice and crackers, I don't know where they came from. It looked like they were attempting to make a cheese board, I didn't even want to know. They left shortly after that, and Nkosi promised to fetch me tomorrow from school after fetching my report. Nambitha is awfully quiet as we journey back to the flat.

"I know you have something to say." I said.

"I'll keep it to myself for now, but Yonela was right, personality over looks." I frowned at the mention of her name, but as soon as that statement registered in my head, I cracked up.

"Tell me what took so long in that kitchen."

"The cheese board. Futhi I'm not speaking to you, shut up." I laughed.

I know this is more serious than we are making it out to be, but that's who we are, we joke around like that, just to ease the tension. We are running away from the real problem at hand.

At this point I don't even know which one it is.

"So what did he say?"

"Who?" I asked absent-mindedly.

"Your man, him. What did he say?" I looked at her. He can't even utter his name.

"He didn't say much, he just said he'll fix it. I don't know how he will do that." Silence passed between the two of us.

I feel obligated to apologize to her. I absolutely had no plans of her finding out now, but there is nothing I can do about it now. I at least owe her an explanation.

"I couldn't tell you. I'm sorry I didn't." She sighed.

"I understand Amile, you really don't have to apologize, and you don't owe me any explanation. Thank you for trusting me with your secret. What Yonela did is disgusting, I'm disappointed in her and so I totally understand

why you would keep it from us. I promise you, I'll keep this as our secret."

I didn't doubt her for a second, I knew that she would ride with me, even though I've known Yonela longer. Yes, it hurts terribly that I have to lose someone so dear and close to me, but for my peace and happiness, especially in the relationship I have just entered, I need all the peace I can get. School and exams aside.

"I appreciate that Nambitha, I couldn't have asked for a better friend. Thank you." I squeezed her in a hug. I was emotional, I was hurting.

"Yonela thinks I'm dating Jama by the way." I told her, breaking the hug.

"Yeah, I know. She told me." She brushed it off.

"So you really have nothing to say?" I asked again.

"I told you, I'd rather keep it to myself for now." She smiled. I definitely calculated her reaction

wrong.

“Okay, at least tell me what you and Jama were doing in that kitchen for so long.”

“I actually wanted to give you guys space, because it was getting awkward, the silence between the two of you was deafening. So when we got to the kitchen, I came up with the cheese board idea just to spare time.”

“And what did you talk about.” She rolled her eyes.

“Come on Amile.”

“No, I want you to tell me. Tell me why you are saying personality over looks. Did he ask you out?” She laughed instead.

“He was flirting, or I think he was. He’s very charming at least, that’s I can say.”

“So he asked you out! Shut up, a whole Jama, asked you out while you were in school

uniform!?” she laughed and dismissed me.

“He didn’t ask me out, he just flirted. And don’t tell your boyfriend that he did.”

“My boyfriend has a name.” she gave me that look that told me to fuck off. I laughed.

“The prince, don’t tell the prince.”

I cracked up and gave her a side hug.

“I love you chomie.” I said and kissed her cheek. She playfully wiped it.

“Yeah, I know. Who doesn’t.”

Maybe this was a lesson to teach me that not everything lasts forever, that even the longest of relationships, the longest of friendships, can end, abruptly so. The pain will end, eventually. I will not make the mistake of not taking it all in the feeling it, because if I don’t, I will never heal. I will feel.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He's quiet. He's not speaking a single word, Jama seems to be the only one in an okay mood.

"What did you do say to her?" Jama asked after a prolonged silence.

"That I was going to fix it." He replied, clearly evident that his mind is far, else where.

"How do you feel about it?"

"It doesn't matter how I feel. I just need to fix this." He got up from the couch.

"So how are you going to do it?"

"I don't know Jama, I don't have a clue. I just wanted her to feel secure, I want her not to worry."

"You can't protect her from everything. She will go back to school, she will be bullied. Things

like this don't just fade, social media is a wicked place."

"That's why I feel like I've failed her."

"You haven't. You won't. She loves you, and she appreciates any little thing that you do for her. You leaving everything for her like that when she needs you, I bet you one thousand Rands that made her better. Maybe it may make her not care what people say about her, it won't matter. As long as she has the one she loves on her side. And that is you." Jama is wise, he thinks to himself.

They've been friends for a while, but he never ceases to amaze him.

"Maybe you are right. Thank you bafo."

"Don't thank me, just fix it."

He nodded.

"I'm going to take a nap." Nkosi waved.

“And what about work?”

“Fuck work. They need me, I don’t need them.”

He sauntered away.

Life would be fucked up if we all thought like that, but he’s Mandlenkosi Zulu, he can do whatever he likes.

Chapter Twelve

Amile Gumede

I’m ready for school, Nkosi called me even before my alarm went off, waking me up. He’s so excited, it’s like he’s fetching his own school report, it’s weird. I’m not really looking forward to it, and I have a very valid reason. I don’t know how many eyes my pictures have reached, I definitely am not ready for the stares and whispers. Nambitha decided against going

home last night and her parents allowed her to stay over. I still haven't called my mother, I don't want to ruin her holiday, I don't think I'll mention it, especially if Nkosi fixes it in time. I'm standing in the kitchen waiting for Nambitha to finish getting dressed. She's always late and I know Jama will be here any minute from now.

"We don't have to be so early you know." She said carrying her small bag, chucking in her pen and lip gloss, my lip gloss.

"Bring it back." I warned.

"I will." She rolled her eyes.

I chuckled inward when I remembered what Nkosi said about eye rolling. He's such a breath of fresh air to me, I'm afraid of him sometimes, but it's not in a bad way. It's that love type of fear, where I respect him so much that I fear him. He treats me like his precious cargo yes, but he's very quick to put me in line, I find that

very amusing.

The only reason why I'm rushing Nambitha is because I know how punctual Jama is, and I know he'll be here at seven on the dot. I don't want to be on his bad side ever, I'm not ready for that, I still fear him very much. It doesn't help that he's still ugly. I thought I would've adjusted to his ugliness by now. Nambitha doesn't know that though, and judging from the way she spoke last night, there is a high chance that she might catch feelings.

"Let's go." I said grabbing my side bag and shades.

"So you are going to wear shades?" she asked as we made our way out the flat.

"Yeah, I don't want people to look at me in the eyes. That is embarrassing." She gave me a tight reassuring squeeze.

"It's going to be okay, this will all settle and by

the time we go back to school, it will be over.”

I hope it will. This day will be better if I don't run into Yonela, I fact my whole holiday will be fantastic, I won't have a reason to run into her for the next three weeks.

Nambitha slapped my hand when we walked out the lobby and saw the GLE parked right outside, waiting for us.

“Riding with royalty?” she was in disbelief, but you could see the excitement on her face. I giggled.

“Good morning ladies.” Jama flashed us a bright smile. Huh!?

“Good morning Jama.” I said. I know my man is inside the car, now all I want to do is see him.

“He's sitting here.” He pointed to the backseat, I rushed to open the door but Nambitha grabbed my hand.

“Where must I sit?” she tried to whisper, but that was futile, Jama is right here.

“You young lady, will join me in the front.” I involuntarily snorted and opened the door as quick as I could when she shot me a death stare.

She looked nervous for someone who spent almost twenty minutes conversing with him in the kitchen.

There he is, my handsome man, he’s here with me and I actually letting go of the stress of going to face all of those people at school, he’s here. He turns his head when I climbed in and the smile that etched on his face when our eyes met sent me to the moon. He had his top lip tucked in between his teeth and his dimple was out to play. I wanted to stick my finger in them one day, I’ll do it one day.

“MaGumede.” Cue the butterflies people, the

prince is speaking.

“Hi Nkosi.” I slid next to him and placed a kiss on his cheek. He frowned.

“Is that where you kiss me now?” I giggled. Says the one who couldn’t even initiate a proper kiss.

“If you wanted a kiss Ndabezitha you would’ve taken it, but that’s all I can offer.” He shook his head and chuckled.

“Jama, awushaye imoto lapho sihambe, ngifuna abantu bajabhe.” He said looking at me. Wow.

“And what do you mean by that.” He ignored me. Jama laughed as he opened the door for Nambitha. She muttered a low greeting for the prince.

“Good morning my prince.” She looked so uncomfortable.

“Hi Nambitha, how are you?” he was casual as always, and my bestie is probably breaking a

sweat.

“I’m okay Bayede...” He interrupted her by chuckling. She looked terrified, I wanted to die with laughter.

“Bayede is my brother, and all of those other names you guys use. I’m Nkosi, say it, Nkosi.” She cleared her throat. I looked at him with a smirk dancing on my face.

“I’m sorry Bayede, I can’t, you are older than me...” her voice was quivering. I so wish I could record her. Let’s not forget that this is her celebrity crush!

“Then call me Zulu like your friend here.” He held my hand that was resting on my lap and he locked his eyes with mine. Finally, they released the butterflies!

“Nambitha, relax, soon enough, you also won’t be able to take him seriously.” Jama said starting the car.

We all laughed, except Nambitha who just cleared her throat once again.

“Did you guys have breakfast?” he asked me, brushing his hand on my arm.

“No, we were going to be late if we did.” I said.

“Late for what, you have until 10:30 to do this.”

“I don’t want to fight with Jama.” He laughed.

“Ngoba ngenzeni mina.” Sharp ears I see.

“You are punctual, too punctual if you ask me.” I replied.

“Yes, a real man knows the importance of time and how valuable it is, every second of the day should be spent wisely.” True, but it coming from Jama, it’s weird.

“Kuhle ngoba uyazi MaGumede, asidlaleli ngasesikhathini. If you say ten, it will be ten.” He continued.

I swear I saw Nambitha stealing a glance at him.

He drove into Mac'Donald's and parked in the parking lots.

"Stay here, we'll be back with breakfast." He said to me.

Isn't he supposed to be top secret and not be in the public eye and all of that? I nodded nonetheless and let him go. As soon as we watched them both disappear into the store, Nambitha exhaled as if she was holding her breath.

"Why are you doing this to me?!" She exclaimed, turning I'm her seat to face me. I laughed.

"No, don't laugh, you aren't being a true friend." She was sulking.

"Come sit with me." Nkosi can sit in the front, its fine.

"No, so your man can kill me, no thank you, I'll pass." I have a feeling that she's enjoying the front seat.

“Your man is intimidating chomie, it doesn’t help that his escort is also ugly, and now he’s making me sit in the front seat like I’m his side chick or something.” I cracked up.

“You said you liked him yesterday.” I added.

“No I didn’t. I just said his personality is better than his looks, nothing else.” She’s irritated, and it’s very amusing.

“Yeah right, he may be ugly but he’s smells amazing, dresses like a real gentleman and is rich. What more could a girl ask for?”

“Ayy, I don’t want him.”

I wonder what Jama wants though, jokes aside. Just the other day, he was not fine with Nkosi being with me because of my age. It’s him hitting on my friend that’s confusing. What does he want?

“Okay chomie, it’s fine, but come sit with me. I’m nervous.” I said. Her face straightened. I’m

calling her to the back for the third time now and she has no plan of moving. She really is enjoying that front seat.

“About what, the report or Yonela?”

“All of it really, but I feel a bit lighter now that Nkosi is here. I don’t really care what anyone has to say.”

This feeling scares me though. It makes me think I’m dependent on him. What happens to me when he isn’t here and I have no one to depend on?

“And that’s a good thing chomie. I feel like maybe this thing that you two have will last forever, and I’m not only saying this because he’s richer and older, or because he’s the prince, but it’s because of the way you look at him, the way he looks at you, the way he speaks to you, the way you speak about him. Its nothing like I’ve ever seen before, even with Siyabonga. You

are genuinely happy, effortlessly and that's all I want for you, to be happy." I am happy aren't I? I have that royal glow.

"I am happy, and I love him so much that I'm giving him all of me. I am fully dependent on the love he gives me and I am afraid of being hurt for real. Nambitha, in just a few days I love him like I've known him for years, like life didn't exist before he came. I love him so much that I was on the verge of giving up my virginity to him. I'm not leaving any room for disappointment and that's the number one rule my mother taught me about relationships."

"I feel like when you love someone, and you give them your all, it's a good thing. I am definitely no where near feeling what love feels like, but I imagine it to be this beautiful airy feeling, mixed with a little bit of fear, excitement and giddiness. You see that fear, its normal, and yes you should leave room for disappointment, but that

fear that's there, that's that room, because when something does happen, and you find yourself disappointed, that fear, it will be your room. I'm not making sense."

"No, you are. I don't know Nambitha, I feel like there is no need for that room of disappointment."

"Then don't pressure yourself into thinking that something will go wrong, otherwise you won't enjoy your relationship and love with him. My best advice to you is live in the present and enjoy this while it's still at its purest, because you will always face problems, that is the inevitable, and when those problems arise, you will only have memories of the good times to hold on to. Only when you never find your way back to those good times. But you two love each other, no problems will ever be bigger than your love." She's right, and if I love him so much now, I can't begin to imagine what it would be

like in the years to come.

“And what stopped you from giving it up to him?” I love the seriousness of this conversation.

“He stopped me and told me he doesn’t want to damage me. He said I’m not ready for it and now that I look at it, I really am not, but in that moment, I was vulnerable, so in love with him. I wanted him to feel the love I have for him, I needed to prove it to him. But he stopped me. He showed me that he doesn’t need me to prove my love for him, he just knows that I love him, he feels it.”

“And that right there is a real man.” No lies detected there.

“You know I don’t judge, and whatever decision you would’ve taken, I would’ve supported you, but I’m glad he stopped you. Now we can go to the Reed dance together.” The seriousness

never lasts for long, does it.

“OH hell no, so the king can choose me. No thank you.”

“Why do you have this absurd fear, there are thousands of girls that attended that ceremony. There is a high chance that you will not even see one person from the royal family. Only the lucky few get to see them.”

“I don’t care about all of that, I bagged myself a prince, that’s all I need.” She laughed and rolled her eyes.

“You, I still need myself a royal man, tell your man to hook me up at least with Dumisani.” This one is crazy, sometimes I forget she’s obsessed with these people.

“The married one?” I raised my eyebrow.

“Haibo, we can always gudluza a problem. Even being number two is not an issue.” Ihhe.

“Problem? That’s his wife, he loves her and I don’t think he’s a polygamist. Even the King isn’t a polygamist.”

“Kuzoqala ngaye Amile, come on musa ukubhayiza.” (he will be the first one Amile, come on, don’t be dumb.) I laughed.

“Ukhona uJama, I’ll set you up with him.” She slapped my arm and rolled her eyes.

Her eyes wandered around for a few seconds before she turned to face the front. She’s pretending as if we are in a classroom.

“What’s wrong?” I asked looking around.

“They are coming. Shh, don’t talk to me. Ngiyayisaba indoda yakho.” I cracked up and she gave me a stern look through the rearview mirror. I can’t help it, she’s killed me.

The door on my left opened and I was still laughing.

“What’s so funny?” He asked handing me coffee and orange juice. I hope the juice is mine.

I can feel Nambitha’s eyes piercing through my skin as I stare at her back. Her eyes looking at me through the mirror. As soon as he climbed in the car, she dropped them quickly.

“Something Nambitha said.” He quickly took a glance her direction direction flashed a small smile, she wasn’t even looking.

He smells like an ashtray.

“Why do you smell like a chimney?” I asked sniffing around the car.

The smell of his cologne is obviously stronger, but I have very sharp nostrils, I can smell anything, and I know what cigarettes smell like, he smells like one; or many.

“I went for a smoke.” He said nonchalantly like it’s a good thing, a normal thing. Haibo.

“Don’t look at me like that.” He defended himself. “You are creeping me out.” He said looking away from my eyes. Yes, feel guilty. I won’t have a chimney for a boyfriend.

“Didn’t you think of telling me?” he frowned. I’m not angry, I just don’t know what this feeling is called though, I don’t think it has a name.

“I don’t do it all the time MaGumede, just once in a while.” I shook my head.

I removed my eyes from his face only to find that we were almost approaching the school, I didn’t even feel the car moving. Silence has graced the space.

“Smoking is not good for you.” I murmured. Jama raised his eyes. He also looked guilty.

“Siyaxolisa MaGumede.” So he can hear me. I looked at Nkosi.

“I won’t do it again MaGumede.” He said. I don’t hear Jama saying that though.

“I won’t do that again MaGumede.” Good!

I’m not angry, I just don’t like smoking and cigarettes. They killed my father, I’m not ready to lose someone again over those. Yes I don’t remember much of him, but if such a little thing killed him, then they really are dangerous.

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They remained in the car and they are waiting for us. We are just collecting the report anyway, it won’t take longer than 5 minutes if we don’t run into queues and trouble.

“What was that back there?” bafflement dressed her voice.

“You know I hate cigarette smokers. Smoke weed or vape or something, not cigarettes.”
Again, I’m not angry, I wasn’t angry. I was just

telling him.

“You literally addressed two grown men like they are your kids Amile, one of them is a prince, just so you know.” I rolled my eyes.

“I know, but they listened, so it worked.” She laughed and clapped her hands once.

No, I’m not controlling, that’s not who I am, I just care about the safety of the ones that I love. I care about their wellbeing and if it is in jeopardy, I will protect it.

The classroom was filled to the brim and our teacher was standing in the front addressing them. Looks like we are late.

“Come in.” she demanded.

We pushed each other into the class and as soon as we walked in, all eyes turned to us. Their stares weren’t judgemental, but I still wanted to disappear and never be found.

“As I was saying. Majority of you did well, but the few that has not put in the effort, and is not being serious, you will definitely not make it. It’s not too late to pull up your socks. And on that note, can we give our number one in the class a round of applause, Miss Gumedede, congratulations. Continue to put in the hard work.” She handed me an envelope.

I wasn’t expecting that. I’m not a typical A student, but I do well, and I normally get good marks, but to be first amongst so many smart kids, it’s overwhelming. Now this gives everyone another reason to look and talk about me. Great.

“Well done chomie.” She gave me a tight squeeze. I’m still shocked

“Amile can I see you after this.” Ayibo!?

“Yes Ma’am.” What does she want to say to me?

I sat at one of the desks and waited for them to

finish collecting their reports. A few of my classmates came to congratulate me when they were done and it seemed like no one knew about the incident I was so stressed about. Everyone was quite normal in fact.

“I’ll wait for you outside.” Nambitha whispered as she walked out.

When everyone finished collecting their reports, I went to join Mrs Cullen at her desk.

“I’m impressed by your marks, so whatever study methods you are using are working, continue with them. What happened yesterday with Miss Mzulwini will be sorted out as soon as possible, she has been suspended from the school and her parents will be contacted as soon as schools open. The school will also be in touch with your mother and a disciplinary hearing will be held.” I frowned.

“And what about me? Will I also get suspended

for the pictures?”

“No, you will not.” This has Nkosi written all over.

“Thank you ma’am.”

“Have a good break, and study hard.”

“You too ma’am, and I will. Thank you.” I said and slowly made my way out the classroom.

Not only is she my class teacher, she’s also my physics teacher, and an HOD. She scares me. Why is she being so kind to me? Mandlenkosi Zulu, that’s all I can see written all over this. It hasn’t even been twenty four hours and they are already talking about suspensions and hearings. Mmh, suspicious.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He’s freaked out, not only has he not met that

side of her, but it resembles the side of the first woman he ever loved. Resemble is not even good enough to explain it.

“Bafo what the hell was that?” Jama asked just as baffled as him.

“Awume kancane Jama.” He’s head is spinning. When he said she reminds him of his mother, she meant it to some extent, not that she must morph into her now.

“She sounded exactly like MaNdlela. I’m not crazy right.” Jama spoke.

“So I’m not crazy?” he asked, self doubt dressing his voice.

“You aren’t bafo.” Jama said.

They both shared a laugh, but this was more serious than they are making it to be. They both know that.

“You are dating your own mother.” Jama teased.

“Don’t say that, but that bafo was creepy. That look she gave me was the exact look she gave me every time I went out to play and came back late.” Jama chuckled.

“Or when she would lock us in the bedroom and whip us with the belt for stealing the neighbours oranges off the trees.” They both laughed as they reminisced.

“It was always your fault, you couldn’t get down the tree quickly and we would always get caught.” Jama teased.

“I was a fat child. And then you guys would leave me when you were running away, I was always caught and punished while you guys to away.”

“Those were the days neh. Look how far we’ve come.” The atmosphere changed.

“My childhood wasn’t the same after she died Jama.” They both sighed.

“I was forced to grow up when I didn’t want to, when I wasn’t ready.”

“MaNdlela’s death affected all of us dude. But what I saw right now, that was her right there. Whatever it may be, she is definitely living inside of MaGumede, and that is why you love her so much.”

“That’s not hard to believe.” Nkosi confessed, his thoughts crossing each other.

This was a sign for him to visit her again. Maybe even have a little appreciation ceremony for her.

“We are going to Zululand tomorrow.” He said.

“Okay.”

Why are the girls taking so long, he wants to see that report now!

Chapter Thirteen

***Mandlenkosi Zulu**

Jama sees them approaching and he is quick to jump out of his seat and open the door for the both of them.

“I hope people have good news for me.” Nkosi said as the two ladies settled back in the car.

“You can open it first.” Amile handed him the envelope with no enthusiasm in her voice. He takes it, but places it on his lap.

“Are you okay? Did you run into her?” her forehead creased before she turned her whole body to face him.

“They said they are going to suspend her once we go back to school, and she will have a disciplinary hearing. What do you know about this?” he sighed.

“Sizokhuluma endlini.” He squeezed her thigh. His response made her conclude that he was

very much involved in all of this. But when!? It hasn't even been twenty four hours.

He grabbed the report from his lap and ripped the envelope open.

"My mother still has to see that you know." She said looking at the state of the envelope.

"We can always get another envelope MaGumede." He's not interested in the envelope anyways. He wants the contents of it.

He's impressed as he scans through the piece of paper in his hand. It's nowhere close to the marks he got in his matric year, but it's not about him, its about the love of his life, and she did extremely well, she deserves to be spoiled.

"This is impressive. Well done sthandwa Sami." He said and leaned in to kiss her lips. She won't stop him, she's been yearning for this kiss all morning.

They respect the people in the car, so they keep

it brief.

“So what do you want?” he asked looking at the paper again.

“For?” she asked putting a finger on her lips, just where his were a few seconds ago. He chuckled.

“For doing well, what would you like?” her mom usually takes her out for lunch, and she appreciates that because not all children get that. Parents always encourage their children to do well in school, but don’t applaud them when they do well. It’s unfair.

“I don’t know? Lunch maybe?”

“Come on, something better than lunch. You can have lunch anywhere.”

“I don’t know Nkosi. Anything you want to get me.”

“So you will be happy if I slaughter a chicken for

you?” he asked mockingly.

“I would be overjoyed.” She replied. She’s not joking, and that’s the funny part.

“You aren’t okay MaGumede. It’s fine, I’ll make a plan.”

The two in the front have become mutes. One is lost in thought and the other can’t even breathe from the fear of the people she’s riding with. It’s not like her best friend is making it easier. They aren’t heading anywhere towards the direction of home.

They arrive at the apartment and as always, it’s spotless, and cold, just the way he loves it. Nambitha is the first one to fold her arms around her chest to try and keep warm. It’s already cold outside, they are dressed in warm clothes, but this place is freezing cold. The aircon is on as always.

“Chomie I’ll be back now.” Nkosi had already

disappeared somewhere in the house.

Nambitha shook his head vigorously.

“Don’t leave me.” She whispered.

“We are just going to stay for breakfast, I also need to go home, Siviwe is coming back today.”

“Fine, go. Don’t do something I wouldn’t do.”

She laughed.

“I promise I won’t chomie.” She swore before kissing her cheek and leaving her in the lounge standing about like a lost sheep.

Nambitha Makhathini

She was looking around at the interior. Expensive taste is all she can see on all the portraits hung on the walls. It all looks expensive but nothing screams royalty. It literally looks like your typical bachelor pad.

She startles when warm hands rest on her forearms and she hastily turns around.

“Please don’t do that.” She said under her breath.

He’s ugly, that has been established more than once, but he’s likable, and intelligent, or at least he’s street smart. That’s what she’s seen about him in the two times that she’s met him.

“Yobe MaXulu, it wasn’t my intention to scare you.”

Now this is cliché of him to try and do. This thing that friend do of trying to ask out friends, he must not try that with her.

“My name is Nambitha, stop calling me MaXulu as if I’m some old lady with four kids.”

He chuckled. She’s feisty, just like her friend. Amile is a bit more reserved than her though. Nambitha is some what controlling, dominant and exudes power, in the way she walks, and

the way she talks. She's bold like that.

Jama has seen all of this in just a matter of hours in her presence, and no, this will not be another love story. He's not looking for one, especially in a child.

"Olayithi ke Nambitha. Your name is beautiful, what does it mean?" he led her to the couch and he sat down. She's shaking her head, chuckling in a sarcastic tone.

"Google it Mr...?" she got stuck on his surname.

"uDlamini, uMzizi, uJama ka Sjadu, uNomane, uMtikitiki." She blushes internally. She is a sucker for Zulu men, and this one, he's a Zulu man to the core.

"So why does Amile call you Jama?" she asked.

"I don't know, ask her." It's his turn to be sarcastic. But the joke flies right over her head.

"Is it because it's your clan name?"

“I thought it was clear.” He said, hitting her with her own bat. She rolled her eyes, much to his annoyance.

“Jama ka Sjadu. What is your real name ke Jama ka Sjadu?”

“Google it, Miss.”

“Haha, very funny.”

Silence passed between them. He was sitting next to her breathing heavily, drinking a can of Redbull scrolling through his phone. She has no interesting thing to look at on her phone, she doesn't even have data. She's at his mercy. Why is Amile doing this to her.

“Why are you breathing so heavily?” It was the most irritating sound she had ever heard; his breathing.

“Aibo kahleni bo?” he was baffled, but he stifled a laughed.

“Can’t you breath inwardly?” he shakes his head at the audacity.

“I have asthma.” He put it out there.

“But you smoke? Very interesting.” She said, not minding her mouth.

She paying attention and he can see that she is. He smiled to himself and continued with pressing his phone.

“Please show me the bathroom.” She said getting on her feet.

He switched off his phone, slid it in his pocket and stood up, unintentionally placed his hand on her waist and when he was leading her, she removed his hand.

“My bad.” He said raising his hands in the air.

He’s too old and ugly to be playing these games, she thinks to herself.

Amile Gumede

I need to learn how to be angry, better yet, I need to learn how to be angry at him. My intention in coming here was to talk to him about this whole suspension thing I heard about Yonela. I told him to stand on the other side of the room, and he thinks I'm dumb to not see that he's moving closer and closer. He's taking advantage of the fact that I'm pressed against the door and I have no where to go.

"Why did you get her suspended. We are in matric Zulu, she doesn't need that."

"And you didn't need that ruining your school reputation and mental health. I don't care about your fake friends Amile, you are all I care about and your well being will be my first priority, always."

He's now in arms reach. I opened my arms for

him and I wrapped mine around his waist. I laid my head on his broad torso and listened to his hum-dumimg heart. The rhythm it makes is addictive. I love him! I don't think I told him today.

"I love you Zulu. I appreciate what you did." I can feel him smiling.

"I love you too MaGumede, but I want my kiss." He said and his hand travelled to my bum.

I don't think I'll get used to this side of him any time soon. Just yesterday ago, he didn't want to kiss me because I was going to make him weak, now that I've made him weak, he wants more weak.

I got on my tippy toes and placed my hands on his shoulders. I locked my eyes with his and got lost in them. He gradually lifted me up and had my legs wrapped around his waist.

"What kind of music did you say you like again?"

I asked breathless after breath-stealing kiss.
He frowned.

“What does that have to do with what I’m doing now?”

“I just want to now, I don’t remember you telling me.” He rolled his eyes. Shut up and down!

“Uhh, that’s unfair, why do you get to do it and I don’t!?” I playfully hit his chest and he laughed.

“Yabona wena, udinga ukuya ezinhlanyeni.” He said tracing his finger on my lips. I giggled. It’s not funny because he’s dissing me, but he’s touching me.

“I like trap, hip-hop, and some rnb, but I, MaGumede, I’m in love with you.” Did I not melt like butter in the hot sun!? Hello!? I think every girl deserves a Nkosi out here.

“Okay, let’s go for breakfast.” He said when I was leaning in for a kiss.

“No, no breakfast now.” I wrapped my arms around his neck and pressed my body closer to his. Why can’t we live in the same body? That would make so much sense. God needs to go back to the drawing board, I don’t think a rib isn’t strong enough to keep people together.

“Khona uzophinde ungivalele emathangeni?” it’s sad because we choose the people we want to love.

“You asked me what I want since I did well in school, this is what I’m asking for.” No, I don’t want sex from him, I definitely learnt my lesson from yesterday, I’m never forcing a man to have me. But he’s given me a taste of what an orgasm feels like, now he owes me one every time he sees me.

“You are going to turn me into a sex addict without even having sex Mandlenkosi Zulu.” He smirked, satisfaction dressed his face.

“I like my name when it comes from you lips, you sweet lips my darling.” He teased on my bottom lip, and nibbled on it, forcing a moan put of my lips.

“Kahle ngamawala MaGumede.” He warned.

Does he have no idea how sexy he is? I don't think he knows. I'm not going to listen. I ran my hand under his t-shirt and my hands danced on his back. My fingers traced his muscles as he started kissing my neck. He was going hard on my neck and when his shaft started poking under me, I knew I had succeeded in achieving my goal.

“Cela ungifakisa emathangeni MaGumede.” He begged and massaged my boobs under my t-shirt.

Any girl who's smart enough, or in my case who does science, knows that doing that is just as dangerous as sleeping with a man, only

because you can fall pregnant. Look at me, just yesterday, I was more than ready to give it up to him, only now am I thinking about pregnancy, when he wants the thighs, not the cookie. No sense in that Amile!

I nodded anyway, he better not ejaculate because that could land me in hot water. I've never done this before, I have no idea how it works. He placed me on the bed and he started undoing my jeans. He also took off my top, along with my bra and he stared at my boobs a little longer than usual. He's never done this before, so I feel shy and cover them up.

"No, don't cover them, I love them. They are the most beautiful things I have ever seen." He said removing my hands and put his over them, massaging them gently.

Over the past two years, my boobs gave grown stretch marks and my mom often tells me it's because they are still going to grow bigger. I

don't want that, I don't want to have big boobs, especially because I'm not that thick. I'm just an average girl.

"You are absolutely angelic. My delicate flower, the love of my life. You have no idea just how much of my heart you own. I love you, with or without imperfections." He kissed my lips sequentially and bit by bit, he moved on to my neck, then my chest, down my stomach, all the way to my palace.

My heart leaped in excitement and in a nick of time, his head was buried down there, my legs around his neck, locking his in and my hands on his head, pulling him in deeper and deeper. I grouse in pleasure and lift my waist and grind along to his pace. I'm dripping wet and I'm in a world of rapture. This is what I like about Nkosi; he pays attention to my weak spots, and uses that to his advantage. He knows my skittles is that button that he needs to push over and over

and over to get me over the edge. I didn't want him to stop, it felt so amazing, but I cummed all over his face and that was the end of the ride. With my legs still shaking, he turned me to the side, got on top and held my thighs together. His pants were now down and he was hard. He stroked it a few times before he positioned himself against my thick thighs pressed together. My heart was racing, it was like he was going to break my virginity here and now.

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“You are a very beautiful young lady.”

Says the lady draped in white clothes but is looking more radiant than I have ever looked. She is drop dead gorgeous in fact. My beauty is no where near hers. Her skin is clear, it's glistening and she has her hair in a neat bun. I

don't know her, I've never seen her before, but her beauty, it's refreshing.

"But you Ma, you are perfect." I complimented. It's so serene here, all I can hear are the birds chirping and the sky is clear blue.

I'm walking barefoot next to her, the grass is wet and soft, my feet are having the time of their lives. It's not cold, or hot, there is a moderate temperature and I'm loving it. In the far distance, there is the sound of a stream flowing. This place is a heaven of some sort I tell you.

"Walk with me." She hooks her arm on mine and we journey on.

She has an empty basket on her other arm.

"What do you think about this place?" she asked in a soft voice. I think her voice is soft naturally.

"It's wonderful. Nothing like I've ever seen before." I admired looking around.

“This is my home, and I sit here all day picking fruits for my castle.” She said. When I looked up, we were in front of a few trees.

“Where is your castle?”

“It’s a bit far from here. I’ll take you there someday. I don’t live alone though.” She said majestically walking to the orange tree to pick some oranges.

“Who do you live with?” I asked joining her. The fruit picking looks nice.

“The king. We are getting to spend more time together, but I always leave the castle, just in case my son comes to visit. Then I come here and pick so fruits.”

“Doesn’t the king want you to visit your son?” I asked with a handful of apples in hand. They look so delicious.

“He doesn’t mind. I just don’t tell him because I don’t want him to come after me when he’s

here, he doesn't come everyday."

"Why don't you live with him here?"

"He can't. Just like you can't live here too. You can only visit." I nodded and shut my mouth.

I took a bite of the apple but she stopped me.

"No! Don't eat those." I startled and quickly spit it out of my mouth.

"Why can't I eat them?"

"These fruits aren't good for you."

"But they look delicious and healthy."

"Don't eat the fruits Amile." She warned again.

I looked at my feet where I had spit out the bitten apple and it turned brown in a instant. It then turned into a snake.

"Don't eat the fruits Amile." Her voice was fading and everything turned dark.

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“Amile wake up.”

He was giving me soft kisses on my face. I tell from the cologne that it's him. Where am I?

“Nkosi?” I rubbed my eyes and sat up.

“You've been sleeping for too long Sthandwa Sami. Wake up and have something to eat. I brought you a fruit salad.” Open my eyes and everything registered. I was dreaming.

“I can't eat fruits.” I mumbled.

Im still very much sleepy, but I can see the look he's giving me. He's looking at me like I'm the craziest person on earth.

“Okay, what do you want to eat.”

“I'm not hungry.” I stretched. He chuckled.

“What were you dreaming about. You even have sleep lines all over your face.”

“Nothing.” I lied. He shook his head.

“You look exactly like my mother when you wake up.” He kissed my lips briefly before standing up with the tray. Okay maybe I am hungry.

“Nkosi I’m hungry.” I said as he was about to walk out the door.

“Hhayi ke MaGumede usudlala ngami ke manje.” I pouted.

“Fine, I’ll bring you something else.”

“And some coffee please.” I begged.

“Okay Sthandwa Sami.” I gave him a small smile.

This has to be the weirdest dream I’ve had yet. I have so many questions, but the one burning me the most is why Nkosi brought me fruits right after this dream. Was he trying to do something to me? Now I’m scared.

I get up from the bed and go to the bathroom and pee. When I sat on the toilet seat, and

looked down on my underwear, there was blood. Great, my period is here I don't have any pads or tampons with me.

I took off my underwear and wiped myself. I don't know how I'm going to do this but I wash it and leave it on the rail. This is a man's bathroom, I know there is a low chance of me finding any feminine products for me to use, but I look through the drawers anyway. So that's me, standing half naked in the bathroom searching for pads in a man's bathroom.

All I can find in here are shaving creams, a variety of them. Deodorants, soaps and different hand washes, hand creams and all the other manly things in a bathroom. My hand stops on a picture frame placed in the bottom drawer. I pull it out in curiosity and it is a black and white picture. It's that lady in my dream, just as beautiful and elegant. Could this be his mother?

"Sthandwa Sami? Are you okay in there?" the

knock on the door startled me, I almost dropped the picture on the floor. My goodness...

“No, I’m not.” I said in a shaky voice.

“What’s wrong?” he sounded concerned.

There’s a lot going on.

“I need lady things.” I put the picture down before I drop it.

“What lady things?” I didn’t think of him as the slow type.

“I started my period.” I said in a much lower tone.

“Amile open the door because I can’t hear what you are saying.” He said. You could hear it in his voice that he was worried.

I put the picture back in the draw and took a towel from the rail, put it around my waist and went to the door. I didn’t open the whole thing, I only showed my head.

“I need pads, I started my period.” He frowned.
Don’t tell me he doesn’t know what that is.

“Ngizoyitholaphi mina leyonto?” sometimes I
forget that he’s a Zulu man. A typical one at that.

“In the shop, anywhere Nkosi. I don’t know, but I
can’t leave this bathroom and I don’t have any in
my bag.” He looks flabbergasted.

“Okay, I’ll go look for them.”

“Go with Nambitha.” I said to him.

“No, its fine, I’ll go alone.” I don’t trust him.

“Call me when you get to the store and tell me
what you find.” He nodded.

Looks likes he’s never done this before. I closed
the door again and went back to chill on the
toilet seat. I should probably run myself a bath,
that would make sense. Maybe it will help me
understand why the fuck I’m dreaming about
my boyfriends mother, the one I’ve never even

met.

Chapter Fourteen

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He's smart, he obviously knows what periods are and what they do to the body of a woman, but he's not educated on the practical side of it. He never had a sister to tell him about all these things, all his sisters are years older than him, and he hardly ever talks to them, they are all married and living their best lives. He's also never lived with a woman full time to know what these things look like.

He wanders around the store looking for the woman's cosmetic aisle. He should've listened and brought Nambitha along with him, there are so many different brands, so many different colours, so many different shapes. He doesn't

know which is which. There was a lady standing next to him, picking out some things on the shelf.

“Excuse me miss, can you please help me.” She turned and looked at him.

She was quick to recognize him and she dropped her eyes in a haste.

“My prince.” Oh goodness, not this. So much for being under the radar.

“My girlfriend needs one of these things, and I don’t know which ones she uses.” He ignored the rest.

“Does she have a heavy or light flow and does she use pads or tampons?” she’s not lifting her eyes from the floor.

“I don’t know any of those things.” The lady chuckled lowly.

“Okay, you can get her both.” She took a blue

box from the shelf, another box and a packet of pads.

“Is this all she needs?” he asked taking the things from her.

“There are also wipes and feminine washes, does she use those.” She said, but this man clearly knows nothing about his girlfriend.

“I’ll take them just in case.” She took them off the shelf and handed them to him.

“Thank you so much.” He said, gratitude filled his voice.

“You are welcome my prince.”

Hes never going to see her again, he won’t bother to correct her. The eyes he was getting at the till would make another person uncomfortable, but he could say he’s used to it, all those that can see his resemblance to the king, know that he is the prince.

Just like he is, Banzi was also the most eligible bachelor in KZN. Every lady wanted him, not only for his title, but because he was handsome. The only reason why they are this handsome is because their mother was a beautiful woman, and they got their beautiful genes from her.

Although MaMzobe has been in Banzi's life for as long as Nkosi can remember, there were other women. Plenty of them who came and went but MaMzobe was always there. She was the only constant one in their lives, both of them. Even their father loved her, but the whole of KZN was expecting Banzi to enter into a polygamous marriage within the first year because of his scandalous dating life. Even after he was crowned king, he never spoke or mentioned anything about taking a second wife, much to the many maidens disappointment. Every girl who attended the Reed dance each year had hopes to be lucky enough to capture

the eyes of the king and get him to choose them as a second wife. Because that's every girl's dream, becoming part of the royal family. After all, that's how prince Dumisani met his wife.

He arrived at his place after even going out of his way to buy her some goodies and absurdly, underwear. Is he not just the sweetest?

"I thought they had kidnapped you." She said when he walked into the bathroom. She was covered in bubbles in the bathtub.

"Have you been sitting here the whole time my love?" he went to kneel next to the tub and kissed her lips softly.

"Yes, I was waiting for you. You didn't call." She sat up.

"Yes, I got a lady there at the shop to help me. Turns out I don't know anything about women." She laughed at him and leaned in to kiss his

cheek.

“Now you’ll know. So did you get tampons or pads?” She reached out for the towel and he handed it to her. She covered her body before stepping out and draining the water.

“I don’t know the difference. But there are two boxes and one packet. I think one said liners.” She laughed and shook her head.

“This lady you said helped you, are you sure she’s a lady?”

“What do you mean?” Shame, he’s so clueless.

“Its fine Zulu, I’ll check it out.” He held her waist and pulled her closer.

“Are you feeling sick or anything?” he knows that women on their periods normally go through the most.

“Nope, I don’t get sick, thankfully.” He sighed out loud.

“Okay, let’s go see what you bought.” She led him out the bathroom.

“Where is Nambitha.” She asked suddenly remembering that she’s not here alone.

“She’s downstairs watching TV.” He replied and handed her the plastic.

She looked through it and it had everything she needed and more.

“You got everything, that is so sweet Ndabezitha, thank you.” She gave him a side hug.

“Wait, there’s more.” He went to the closet and took out the paper bag. She frowned when she saw the brand.

“Bras n’ Things? You bought me underwear?” she can’t believe it.

“Yeah, I assumed you would need it.” She got emotional and couldn’t speak so she just gave

him a tight hug.

“No, don’t cry. It’s just panties MaGumede.” She giggled through her tears.

“No, you don’t understand.” He does, it’s tears of joy, it’s not only the panties, it’s everything.

“I love you MaGumede okay.”

“I love you too Ndabezitha.” She sniffed and rubbed the back of his head.

When they broke the hug, he sat on the bed and she started moisturizing her body. He sat there and watched in admiration.

“I had a strange dream.” She said to him. She’s skeptical about this, but she feels like she has to.

“When, now?” he focused all his attention on her.

“Yeah. I had a dream about a woman I don’t know and she told me she lives in a castle with

her king. Oh she was beautiful, she was wearing white and had her hair in a neat bun. The place was beautiful and so serene, there were lots of trees and they were all filled with fruits. It basically a mini heaven.”

“Sounds like a good dream.” He said, now feeling less concerned.

“That’s what I thought too, until we started talking properly. She told me that she can’t be with her son because he doesn’t come to visit regularly and when he does, he doesn’t stay for long. She also said she doesn’t tell the king when she goes to see him. She asked me to help her pick the fruits and when I tried to take a bite of the apple, she told me not to. When I spit out the piece I had bitten, it turned into a green little snake and it ran away.”

“That’s weird. What do you think it means?” she rubs her head in frustration.

“Normally, dreams about fruits are associated with pregnancy. I don’t even want to think about that.” He shook his head.

“That can’t and won’t happen anyway.” She frowned.

“What do you mean won’t?” she raised her eyebrow. He cleared his throat.

“Let’s not talk about that now. So you don’t know that woman at all?”

She felt some type of way about his statement, but he’s brushing it off, so she won’t push him if he doesn’t want to be pushed.

“There’s a picture in your bathroom drawer, that woman in the picture is the same woman in the dream.” She admits finally.

His breathing hitches. She was able to put two and two together and knows that the lady is his mother. You can’t miss the uncanny resemblance between them. Now that she saw

the picture, she can clearly point it out.

“That’s my mother.” He said in a low breath.

She sighed. His brain has just been jumbled. Why would MaNdlela visit Amile in her dreams when Amile hasn’t even been introduced to the Zulu’s yet. It’s not making sense.

“Was it the first time dreaming about her?” he asked.

“Yeah...” she stopped.

“What? Tell me, was it the first time?”

“I’ve heard her voice before.”

“Where?” he’s getting frustrated now.

“I can’t remember Nkosi, I’m confused just as you are.” She grabs the tampons from the bed along with underwear and prepares to put it on.

“Kanti leyonto ingenaphi?” (Where does that thing go?)he asked looking at the tampon she placed on the bed.

“My vagina.” She said taking it and opening. His eyes widened.

“Hhayi Amile.” He warned.

“What Mandlenkosi?” okay, she’s also irritated now, but she slowly practiced her breathing techniques and calmed down.

Nkosi watched in silence as she lifted her leg up to the bed and inserted it up her palace. The atmosphere has suddenly grown thick, something that has never happened between them.

“I’m sorry for snapping.” She apologized.

“I forgive you.” He said, clearly not prepared to apologize back. Okay!?

She got dressed and when she was done, he went to his closet. He came back with her Dior perfume that she left here. She had completely forgotten about it. He handed it to her.

“Thank you. Can you please ask Jama to take us home.” He picked up the tray of food as she tidied the room.

“Eat first.” He said.

“Siviwe will come home today and he needs to...”

“You won’t leave here until you eat MaGumede.” He’s not shouting, he has on his normal voice, but she feels like she’s just been shouted at.

“I will make you fresh coffee, this one is cold.” She shut her mouth and sat on the bed.

He picked up the tray and walked down the stairs. It seemed like Jama and Nambitha were getting along. As he descended the stairs, they were laughing like old friends. He passed them like he didn’t see a thing and went straight to the kitchen.

This dream Amile had bothers him, and it’s not even about the message it may be trying to

convey, but the reasoning behind his mother visiting her in her dreams. It makes no sense how she can just visit someone she doesn't know when he has never seen her in his dreams. He can barely count the number of times he's seen her in his dreams, and the way Amile described it to him, it was a pretty vivid dream. He wishes he could hear her voice, or see her face like that, but all he has are pictures even pieces of clothing that belonged to her ended up losing the smell of her sweet scent. 17 years without her is long enough.

"Zulu." He felt a tap on his shoulder and turned to meet Jama's stare.

"Why are you so deep in thought?" he asked picking up the kettle that had water for Amile's coffee and poured it into the mug he had placed for him and Nambitha.

"I'm thinking about tomorrow." He genuinely is thinking about tomorrow, and how he definitely

has to raise this with his brother.

He just won't mention Amile, she's the most precious thing he has in his life right now and telling his brother about her means he will have to start sharing her with them, and he's not ready for that.

"Kanti siyokwenzani kaZulu?" Jama asked.

"I want to do a small tea for MaNdlela."

"And what about Bayede and Bhut' Langa?" He rubbed his forehead in frustration.

"I don't know. I don't care about that now. I just want my mother to visit me in my dreams."

"You've been hosting teas for her every year, and she still hasn't come to visit you, don't you think maybe it's something else you are doing wrong."

"Amile just told me she had a dream about her, why is she visit her, not me, her son?"

“Then that means MaNdlela is her guardian angel and is looking over her. Maybe she has a message to send to you via her.” Jama suggested.

“But why her? Why not you, or Dumisani, or any of my other one thousand and one siblings, why Amile? Why are they involving her in my family matters. Why can’t I just have her to myself bafo.” Jama shook his head in disagreement.

“Don’t forget that MaNdlela was never traditionally married to Bayede, she was not introduced to the Zulu ancestors, therefore, your mother does not advocate for your dad’s side of the family, but for herself.” At this point, he wants nothing but to tear his hair out and scream.

“I’ll do that tea anyways. I’m doing it for my mother. Bayede will get a tea from his precious son, the king he chose.” Jama sighed.

“You will regret this Mandlenkosi. Don’t do something you will regret.”

They both startled when Amile placed the plate in the sink. They both turned to look at her and she had a blank unreadable expression.

“Mom is calling. I need to go home.” She said keeping the straight face.

“I’ll take you.” He dropped everything he was doing and walked to take the keys from the kitchen counter.

He’s confused, he doesn’t know what to do with himself, theres so much going on right now, he doesn’t know what to do and what not to do.

Amile Gumede

I don’t know if he’s pissed at me, or what I told him, or whatever is going on in his life, but he’s

awfully quiet. I had to lie about mom calling me so he could take me home, the energy around him was stressing me and I don't want that. I'm sitting in the front seat and Nambitha at the back. He's listening to Michael Jackson but he's not even humming or nodding his head like he usually does when he listens to music. He's just quiet.

"Now that schools are closed, we need to start studying." His voice was low, but very drawing.

"When?" I asked.

"I'll draw up a study timetable." He said lowly. I nodded and shut my mouth once again.

My phone vibrated under my thigh and when I took it out, it was a message from Nambitha. Come on, she's sitting right behind for goodness sake.

-please ask him to drop me off at home, I don't have transport-

She's still scared of him, even after spending a whole day at his house. I still want to know what she was doing the whole time, with Jama especially!?

"Babe can we please drop Nambitha off at home." I'm also shaking as I ask this by the way.

"Babe?" he had a silly smirk on his face. Oh come on now, wasn't he sulking just now?

"Did you hear what I said?" I asked.

"No, my ears closed after babe." I could tell he was being sarcastic, but I love him anyway.

"Akaziceleli ngani uNambitha? Usenqunywe umlomo yini yena?" (Why doesn't Nambitha ask for me herself? Has she been silenced?)

I cleared my throat and gave him a stern look. Jeez, why is he putting her on the spot like that? I turned and looked back at her. She looked like a rained on cat.

“Anikhulumeke magals, indlela iyaphi?” (Speak up girls, where are we going.) I think I like the quiet Nkosi better. I definitely do.

“Montclair.” I said.

“Nambitha where are we going?” he’s doing it on purpose.

“I said Montclair.” I repeated.

“I’m not asking you, I’m asking Nambitha.” Oh wow.

“We are going to Montclair my prince.” Her voice was barely audible.

“Thank you. You will direct me.” I shot him a look but he ignored it and turned up his music.

Now that’s I’ve spent a lot of time with him, I can clearly tell that he is the last born in the family. He has last born tendencies, but he also has only child behaviour. He’s impulsive, that’s one of the reasons why he fell so crazily in love

with me so quickly. Funny I should say that though because I'm just as in love with him. I'm yet to learn more about him though, I still know the outer parts, and what makes him the Nkosi I know now, but it's only about time before I meet Mandlenkosi Zulu. I hope they aren't two different people because I love the man I'm with now.

We dropped Nambitha off and she thanked him using her own mouth. He was happy. I think more than anything, he just wants to feel normal amongst people, and not have people always bowing down to him. We are five minutes away from home, but the amount of traffic on the road will only let us get to my flat in ten minutes. It's almost a standstill.

"I'm going to Zululand tomorrow." He turned down the volume of the annoying voice of Michael Jackson. Thank God.

"Again?" what do I mean by that, it's his home

for fuck sake.

“I want to have a tea for my mother.” Huh?

“What is that?” my model c school ass doesn’t know what the hell that is.

“Chickens for my mother. You light candles and slaughter chickens and give her food.” The Zulu culture is weird. That is nowhere close to making sense.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked again.

“I want her to visit me I my dreams.” Okay, now I feel terrible. His mom visited me, but not him.

“Has she ever visited you in your dreams?”

“No.” I can see that it hurts, I can’t imagine how painful that is. Not that my father has ever visited me too.

“In the dream...” I hope I don’t regret this, “she said her son comes to visit her all the time, but he doesn’t stay for long because he’s not

allowed to stay for too long.” He frowned.

“Which son, me or Banzi?” oh jeez.

“I don’t know.” Now this dream is not making sense to me all over again.

“This is why I need to do this tea, maybe she will appear in one of our dreams, whether it be Banzi’s, or mine, but she will make things clear.” He said determination filling his voice.

I honestly am not the best person for him to discuss these things with, I know nothing about tradition and all these cultural rituals done in our culture. I grew up in the city, I left Nongoma when I was only 6 years old. I’m clueless.

“I hope everything goes well ke Zulu, I’ll be this side praying for your success. Your mother is a good angel, she will definitely show herself to you.” I held his hand.

“I wish I could take you with me, I wish I could have you there with me MaGumede. I need you

there, but I don't want you around my family. They are a bunch of toxic people that you don't need right now in your life." He looked stressed all of a sudden, I felt terrible.

"I know Zulu, I also wish I could make it better, but all I can do is be there for you and with you in spirit." I turned his head to face my direction and I locked him in a stare.

"Please just take it easy, don't stress too much and know that I am not going anywhere. You will find me right here when you come back. Okay?" he nodded.

"I need to make you mine Amile." I don't know what he means by that, but I know when he calls me by my first name that he's not joking.

"I am yours Nkosi." I whispered.

"All mine?" he asked.

"All your Mandlenkosi."

“I love you.” He said.

“Ngiyakuthanda nami Zulu.” I confessed before pressing my lips on his.

Life is all about living in the present because you don't know what tomorrow has in store. I will love him now because I don't know for certain what my future has I store. I don't see a life without him now, if he's not there, there is no life left in me. It's that crazy type of love that I'm experiencing, the dangerous kind, and I hope I don't burn in the flames, I've already put in all of me.

Chapter Fifteen

Mandlenkosi Zulu

Jama is fast asleep in the back seat, only lord knows why he didn't sleep last night and during

the day. He knew they would be traveling at night. Now he's driving himself while he snores like a warthog in the back. He doesn't mind though, the trip won't feel like anything because there's a lot on his mind. One of them being Amile, in his mind, it feels wrong to be driving home without her. He really wants her there with him, he needs her there with him. He pulled over on the side of the road and rested his head on the steering wheel, feeling a flood of emotions coming over him.

"Are we here?" Jama's sleepy voice erupted from the back seat.

He didn't respond. Jama raised his head to look out the window, confusion clouded him.

"Mandlenkosi what's going on?"

"We need to go back." He said in frustration.

"Go back where manje, you said we are going to Zululand to speak to Bayede."

“Amile.” That’s all he could say.

“Listen bafo, now is not the time to be thinking about girls, angithi uthi ufuna ukwenzela uMa itiye, concentrate ke! If you want this to work, you have to concentrate.” It sucks having to be a pick up man while he’s still fast asleep, dead in the brain.

“She’s not just a girl, she is the love of my life. She holds my heart. She’s not just any girl, she’s the girl that my mother, the same woman who gave birth to me, the one who has never visited me in my dreams, visited in her dreams. She’s not just a girl, she’s the chosen one bafo and if you haven’t seen that yet then there is something wrong with your comprehension skills.”

“Okay ke, pho manje ucabanga ukwenzenjani? Uyajika ubuyela kuAmile noma uyokwenza itiye laMaNdlela?” (Okay then, so what do you plan to do now? Are you going back to Amile or are

you going to do MaNdlela's tea?) He sighed out loud. Jama is now getting frustrated, you can hear it in his voice.

Impatient from Nkosi's hesitation on a decision, he hopped out of the vehicle, walked around the car barefoot, his feet walking on the wet grass and went to the driver's door. He violently opened the door.

"Phuma." He was annoyed, boaderline fuming.

Nkosi lazily turned his body and forced himself out the door.

"I told you not to make a decision you aren't sure of."

"It's not time for that Jama." He sat in the backseat where Jama was a few seconds ago.

"So when is the right time?"

"Never, you don't judge me Nkululeko, you are not perfect." He sounds very emotional.

“I never said I was Mandlenkosi, but this may be bigger than you and as your brother, I’m here to steer you towards the right direction.”

“So what must I do Jama?”

“Go home and speak to Bayede about it. Maybe Amile coming into your life means much more than I have made out. If MaNdlela is visiting her, than she is important.” The car took off.

“I won’t tell Banzi about her. I don’t want to.”

“You don’t have to Zulu.”

He kept quiet and Jama took that as a sign to continue on his journey. Off to Zululand they go. Nkosi who is now sat at the back almost half dead, decides to take out his phone and call Amile. Maybe hearing her voice will help him snap out of it, and maybe reassure him that he’s making the right decision by going home. It’s late at night, she’s asleep now. She had a long day, Siviwe is back too, she’s been busy.

“I’m sleeping.” That is how she answered, you could tell from the laziness of her voice that she was in a deep sleep.

“Who is this?” she asked earning herself a chuckle.

“Do you know now?” she hummed softly.

“Yeah, I know.”

“I’m sorry to wake you sthandwa sami.”

“No, its okay, I fell asleep now, I was waiting for you to call.”

“I’m sorry to keep you waiting. I was driving.” It’s amazing how much his tone changes when he speaks to her. Respect oozes out of his voice.

“Why does it sound like you are still on the road, are you not home yet?” she was wide awake now, her voice had cleared up.

“No, I was driving slowly, and I almost turned back.”

“Turned back to where?”

“Back to you. Yazi Amile I can’t even help it, something in me tells me that I just can’t go to Zululand without you, and I don’t know if it’s the love or my ancestors telling me it’s not right, but I had doubts, I still do.”

“Don’t you dare turn back Mandlenkosi.” He chuckled.

“I promise I won’t MaGumede. Sivumelene kahle angithi sthandwa ukuthi uzoba nami ngokomoya, angeke ngisephule lesosithembiso.” (We have agreed love, that you will be with me spiritually, and I will not break that promise.)

“Yebo Zulu, sivumelene.”

“You have no idea what you do to me when you call me Zulu.” She giggled softly.

“Zinjani lapho izinto zami?” (How are my things there?) He carefully lowered his voice, much to

Amile's amusement.

"Ziphi izinto Zulu?" (What things Zulu?)

"Izulu lami elincane." (My little heaven.) She giggled.

"Haibo Zulu. Is Jama not with you in the car?"

"I don't care about that, I asked you a question MaGumede."

"Ziseright izinto zakho Zulu." Her admitting that it's all his turns him on completely.

"Zisemndandi, ongizwela phela sthandwa sami." His voice is going an octave deeper by the second.

"Hhayi Zulu." She exclaimed giggling in between.

"Touch yourself MaGumede, I want to hear you sing in my ear." He commanded.

"Zulu?" she said in a breathy tone.

"Touch yourself." He whispered.

More than anything, Jama's ears have been subjected to a lot these past few years.

Nontuthuzelo "MaMzobe" Zulu

She hasn't been feeling well since Mandlenkosi left the palace. Both her spirit and health are lacking. She's no seer, but she can feel the heaviness of his heart. He looks happy on the outside, and he certainly is, but his heart is heavy, and his aura is darker than usual. That never means anything good. She felt the same way about her husband a few days before King Mhlabawesizwe passed away. It didn't make it any easier that they had to lose Langaletu a few months after.

That was definitely the hardest period of their marriage. A lot of things were tested, but they came out stronger than they have ever been.

She proved herself worthy of being a Zulu wife to many who thought she could not handle it, and that is why she is more respected than all the other Zulu wives in the kingdom.

“Mageba, please call your brother.” She’s been asking him for the past few days since he left, but he’s always busy, it always slips his mind. This annoys her, but she’s a patient woman, she won’t show it.

“Didn’t I call him already?” he asked, clearly his mind is jumbled.

“No you didn’t Mageba.” She was really frustrated now.

“Why do you want me to call Mandlenkosi so badly, he was here just a few days ago.”

“I see darkness Mageba and I’m not feeling well ever since he left.”

“So you think something bad will happen to him?” you can tell from the tone of his voice

that he is uninterested.

“Yes, or maybe something already happened. He didn’t call to say he arrived safely.” She’s lying, but what other option does she have, maybe this will wake him up.

“It’s late now wakwami. I’ll call him in the morning.” He shrugged it off.

She had a bunch of words prepared for when he said this, but they are hurtful, so she decided to keep them to herself and covered her head with the cover and switched off the light, leaving him in complete darkness. Lord knows what the hell he’s doing at this time of the night.

When he finally got under the covers, his feet were cold. He pressed his body against hers and he stroked her cheek from behind.

“Unhidinelwe yini mama?” she’s actually half asleep now.

“No Bayede.” Oh she is mad.

“I promise you mama, I will phone Nkosi in the morning. I know the seriousness of your aura checks and I fret on them. But it’s late now. I love my brother, he’s the only brother from my mother and he’s all I have.” He means that, and she knows that.

Now that her sleep has evaporated, she turns and faces him. He kisses her nose.

“I’ve been thinking about what you said to me a few years ago.” There’s only one thing that she has been saying to him, so she knows exactly what he’s talking about.

“And?” she asked curious.

“It’s not a terrible idea.” He said rubbing her hip.

“Oh, you have a side chick now?” she asked teasingly.

“Even if I had one MaMzobe, I wouldn’t want to marry her. A girl that would agree to be a side chick to a king who is married is loose and is

not fit to be Queen.” She laughed.

“Second Queen Mageba.”

“Yes, second. No one will ever take your place.”

She knows he means it. A lot has been done to prove that statement. It has been backed up more than once.

“So why now?”

“My father had eleven children, and as the king, I also have to have more than that, or at least two away from that. I only have 3 kids. You were right MaMzobe. Maybe if I had taken a wife then, I would be close to that number.”

“You can only have those eleven children if you have a real polygamy Mageba. The reality is your father had four wives. You only have one. If you take a second one, she will probably give you another three or four, depending on how fertile and willing she is.”

“That’s why I need a young one.” She visibly

agreed.

“I need you to find her for me. All that matters is that you love her, not me.” He said.

“No Mageba. That should be your choice. At the end of the day, we don’t want to mistreat the poor girl. At least if you choose her, I will know that you at least like her somehow.” She’s too considerate.

“I don’t want to love or like anyone else but you MaMzobe. I don’t need any other girl taking your place.” She shook her head.

“You are doing this for the kingdom and the future of the Zulu’s. As king, it is your job to grow the kingdom.”

“We already have the king who will take over if anything is to happen to me. You have given me three heirs.” That’s another reason why she is the most favoured Zulu wife. She only bore sons. It’s a pity she can’t bear any more.

“But you need more children Bayede. So we will find a wife.” She reassured.

“Where? Emhlangeni?” her eyes widened.

“You want a virgin?”

“Yeah, not too young though.”

“Yoh Zulu. Good luck.” She said and laid her head on his chest.

“My beautiful wife will help me find her.” She scoffed.

One can say that he really can't live without her. So it's a Zulu thing, this catching feelings easily. Both MaNdlela's sons are dependent on women, that also stems from the fact that they lost their mother to their father before they lost her to death. She was alive but she lived in depression and heartache from loving a man she had to share with three other women. Although Mhlabawesizwe love her more than all the others, visibly so, he still got other wives after

her, two more after her. That fucked with her mental health and she didn't play a motherly role to both of her sons. Mandlenkosi doesn't remember that part of her mother's life, he only has fond memories of her, that's why he loves her so much. With Banzi it was a different story. He was aware of everything, of how many nights she cried, or how cold she treated him. A part of him believed that she did what she did because he reminded her of his father. That's why he swore that he would never put the woman he loves through what his mother went through. Therefore, he treats his wife like an egg. Now that he's cornered and has to take a second wife, he feels like he's breaking his promise. If it were up to him, he wouldn't, but if his wife is up for the idea, than he'll do it for her.

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She's up before him as always and is preparing for the day ahead. She is the traditional wife that she was trained to be when she served her makoti period. Banzi appreciates it, but after eighteen years of marriage, he still hasn't gotten used to it.

"Zulu." She shook him.

"Come back to bed wakwami, it's a Saturday today." Since when has that stopped him from waking up and going to breakfast.

"We'll miss breakfast."

"Breakfast will miss us sthandwa sami. Come back to bed." He pulled her down and she fell on the bed.

He engulfed her in his tight embrace and kissed her passionately. He misses his wife, he's forever busy and tired, it feels good to slip into bed with her and relax.

"Banzi!" She said giggling as he flipped her on

her stomach.

He traced soft kisses on her back and she arched her back, lifting her bum in the air. He carefully admired her chocolate skin and gently sunk his fingers on her waist.

“I love you.” He said as he positioned himself on her opening.

“I love you too Mageba.”

They had a steamy morning session that was satisfying for both parties and he finally gave in to going to get ready for the day. She finished before him and was ready to head to the dining room to see if everything was in order for him to sit down and eat. She was shocked to find Mandlenkosi and Jama having a fat conversation over a table full of breakfast.

“Boys? When did you get here?”

“Last night. I think you guys were asleep by then.”

This is a pleasant surprise. Now Banzi doesn't have to call him.

"How was the drive?" she decided to sit down and join them.

"It was way longer than normal, but I think it's because we were both tired." Jama replied.

There is nothing she loves more than witnessing the brotherhood between these two, and just how much they are willing to do for each other. They certainly make a strong pair.

"So what did we do to deserve two visits from you in one month?" they both laughed.

"I was going to call bhuti, but it was already late. I want to do a tea for MaNdlela."

"OH." That's all she could say. It was an anticlimax for him to hear such a bland expression from her. She normally supports him in everything he does.

“Yindaba Ma?”

“And what about bhut’ Langaletu and Bayede?”
Jama gave him a stare, and she caught it.

“I just wanted to do one for my mom.”

“It doesn’t work like that Mandlenkosi. The ancestors won’t be happy about that. You don’t even know who is looking over you. It could be bhut’ Langa and you excluding any of them could earn you a tough time with the ancestors.” This is exactly what Jama was saying.

“So what must I do to get her to visit my dreams?” desperation filled his voice.

“Angazi. Let’s wait for Banzi. He will tell you what to do.” Jama got up.

“Please excuse me, I need to go see my children. Thank you for breakfast Ma, I’ll be back later.” It’s weird that two grown men call her Ma, but she’s gotten used to it.

They were left alone and Mandlenkosi focused his eyes on her.

“I asked your brother to call you and speak to you because I could read your aura and it was fairly dark, now you are here, so there is something wrong. Talk to me.” She held his hand across the table.

“I’m happy, I’m in love Ma.”

“But?” she sensed the but.

“She’s perfect, there’s no but.”

“So why do you suddenly want to host a tea?”

“Because MaNdlela visited her in her dreams, but she has never visited me.” Oh no.

“You need to bring her to the palace.” She said.

“That will not happen Ma, I’m sorry. I’m not ready to expose her to such. We aren’t your average normal family.”

“Does she know who you are.”

“Yes, she does, but that doesn’t mean anything.”

“Mandlenkosi you can do anything or you cant find the truth if you don’t bring her here.” He shook his head.

“I’d rather not know.” She’s shocked by his response. He was able to bring Jabulile to meet them, what’s so different about her.

“Khuluma noBhuti wakho Mandlenkosi. Maybe the only way this can be resolved is going to Celemba.” He hates that place with his whole heart.

“Yoh MaMzobe.” He exclaimed.

“Akukho okunye.” She said and continued to eat her food.

She knows exactly what that girl might be going through. She also had similar dreams when she first came to the palace. It means nothing but the fact that she might be the chosen one for

him.

They still need to find Langaletu's wife, she's somewhere out there. She also needs to be brought to the palace, a job that they have been neglecting for ages. It's only a matter of time before it catches up with them.

(Pre-orders are still open. I'm not going to be posting as often as I wish, exams are starting soon. I trust Ntsakisi to keep you company for those two weeks )

Chapter Sixteen

Amile Gumede

He kissed my cheek before he caressed it gently. His eyes were sparkly and his breath was sweet, I don't know how, but it was very

unique. I'm engulfed in his tight arms but it feels like I'm floating on a cloud. This is how I imagine heaven to feel like.

"Is this what heaven feels like?" I asked and moved closer to his warm body. I don't feel close enough, yet I'm pressed up against his chest.

"I don't know my queen, I've never been there before. All I know is, anywhere with you is heaven." He always knows what to say.

I don't know why I love him so much.

"When will you come visit me again?" I asked tracing my finger on his chest.

"Soon my queen." I miss him when he's not around. I feel incomplete without him.

"Why can't I visit you?" I asked feeling a flood of emotions overcome me suddenly.

"Because I live in a dangerous place, my brother

must come get me out of it.” I frowned.

“Does he know where you are?” I asked. He kept quiet.

His body suddenly became slippery and it felt like I letting go. I screamed.

“My king!” I heard the hissing of a snake, only to look up and find that I’m wrapped up inside the snake.

“Nkosi! Nkosi!” It felt like I was drowning in a pool of water and there was no bottom. The snake laughed loudly in my ear and it sounded all too familiar.

Why am I calling for Nkosi’s name!? He can’t help me.

“Nambitha! Yonela! Help!” I tried to shout but my voice wasn’t coming out.

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“Ahhhhhh!” my eyes shot open and I held my

mouth.

My mother came rushing into my room, panic all over her face.

“Amile, what’s going on?” I couldn’t hold it in, I cried and she caressed me. It feels like my heart will jump out of my mouth.

“I’m having a bad dream mama, a snake.” There’s something stuck in my throat and it feels like I might throw up at any moment.

“Okay, let me go get you water so you can tell me about it. Ehlisa umoya sthandwa sami.” She brushed my head.

Out of all the dreams I kept having, this one definitely takes the cup for being the scariest. It’s three in the morning, I have my final trial exam this morning, worst of all, it’s a physics paper. Nkosi and I have worked very hard to get to today and this dream can’t fuck this up for me.

Mom came back with a glass of water and I drank all of it.

“What was the dream about?” she sat next to me and held me tightly.

“That man...I was in his arms and he called me his queen and told me I can't visit him because the place he lives in is dangerous and his brother needs to come and find him. When I asked him does his brother know where he is, he turned into a snake, and he was drowning me under water.”

“Who is that man?”

“I don't know mama, but I always dream about him. The first time I did was when I met Nkosi for the first time. He had sex with me in my dream mama.” Her eyes widened.

“Hhayi Amile, why didn't you say anything.” She was utterly shocked.

“I didn't think it was serious, but I dreamt about

him the second time and I was on my knees, begging for him to forgive me, I don't know what for, but he had the cane that the King carries. He didn't speak and when I go up, he disappeared and I was dressed in a white dress. A woman told me to go and fix the Zulu family." She looks worried, I am too.

"Did you tell Nkosi all about this? This clearly has to do with him, you only started having them after he came around right?"

"Yeah. But I only told him about the one about his mother."

"Kufanele umtshela." I started shaking.

"Ngiyasaba ma."

"you can't be scared Amile. This is your boyfriend and these dreams are clearly about him."

"But this man is not him." I said trying to convince myself.

“Yes, but it might be the king. Ayy Amile angisazi mina. I’ll call gogo in the morning. I’ll give you pills. Sleep, I’ll wake you up so you can get ready for your paper.” She made me lie on the bed.

“Give me your phone.” She opened her hand.

“Why mama?”

“I want you to sleep. Letha.” I sighed before taking it and handing it over.

She opened my drawer and gave me some sleeping pills. I only have three hours of sleep left, its pointless. I might as well sit up and study. But I don’t want to upset MaMchunu so I’ll sleep and pray that I wake up fresh enough to write this paper. It would be a pity to fail after Nkosi put in so much effort to teach me this section. He’s really smart, and he was very dedicated. His passion is refreshing.

He spent the first two weeks of my school

holidays in Zululand and I missed him terribly. The only way we communicated was via calls and text because after this long, he still refuses to download WhatsApp. He would help me with studying when he had time, but he was busy with his parents ceremonies. He only came back a week before we opened and then we got to doing some real work. I appreciated his efforts and we did more studying than chilling, not forgetting that he has turned me into a sex addict without even sexing me.

I finally feel like in ready to give it up to him, to be honest, I've been contemplating it for a while now, and I know that I want it to be him that I give myself to. I don't care what he thinks or feels is right about it. I want him to be my first. So I'm definitely going to use this little trick up my sleeve. Last paper before finals celebration type of thing.

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I woke up when I felt my mother hovering over me.

“Go bath. Your boyfriend is taking you to school.” She looks stressed. More than I am.

“Nkosi?” I’m very much half dead.

“That’s the only boyfriend I know. Vuka.” I got out of bed and my head was very light. It’s the pills.

I attempted to make the bed, but she stopped me and told me to go bath. Okay? I rushed to the bathroom and did a quick one two in the shower before going back to my room to get dressed. I took out my flashcards and revised while I dressed and I was feeling extra confident about my work. Something I hadn’t felt in a while.

Mom barged in again with a bowl of food for me to eat.

“You are going to be late. Hurry up.” I don’t even know what time it is right now, but if she’s rushing me like this, then I’m late.

“Is Nkosi here yet?”

“No, he’s on his way. I want you to be at school before the exam starts.” That’s my mother for you. Physics comes first.

I grabbed the bowl from her and started multi-tasking, eating, getting dressed and going over flashcards. When I was done with everything, I took my bowl to the kitchen, packed my bag and sat in the lounge waiting for Nkosi to come.

“Nkosi is here. Go and good luck on your test.”

“Thank you mama.” She gave me a kiss on the cheek.

I don’t get mouth kisses anymore because she

says I kiss boys so I just have to settle for cheek kisses.

I walked out of the building but she was following behind me. Jeez Mzali. I opened the door to the front seat and climbed in. I closed the door and mom leaned in through the window. I didn't even get a chance to greet my man.

"MaMchunu." He said politely.

"Morning son. Please get her on school on time and bring her back home right after." Son?

"Yes ma." She nodded.

These people are only six years apart, just so you know. When she walked away, he closed the window and started the car.

"Muntu wami." He glanced at me before taking off. I blushed.

"Ndabezitha, how are you?" he looked tired.

“I’m good, how are you, are you ready for your exam?”

“Yeah, I’m good, I’m ready too.”

“Ngabe uyaganga vele ukube uthi cha.” I laughed.

“I was taught by the best, how would I not know.” He smiled.

“What did you do to MaMchunu, why is she so edgy?” I shook my head. I definitely won’t tell him about the dream.

“I don’t know, even when she woke me up in the morning, she was like this. Maybe it’s because it’s my last paper.” I’m getting better at this lying thing.

“She mustn’t stress herself too much. I believe in you.” That sounds refreshing! I leaned in to give him a little kiss on the cheek.

We were driving in complete silence, there was

no sound of the radio or music. I think he did that to keep concentration because all I can think of is formulas and numbers. I'm not as smart as he is, I could only dream of it, but the tricks he taught me to work without a calculator really paid off in class and those little tests we wrote. I don't remember the last time I got a B in physics. I'm aiming for at least an A for this paper though, because we have been studying for months for this section. Chemistry I get, but physics is a different story.

We got to school and I was almost an hour early.

"Are you going to go in now?" he asked as he turned off the car.

"Yes, but can I have my good luck kiss." I gave him puppy dog eyes. He laughed.

"You are very manipulative." He leaned in and gave me a peck on the lips. Come on.

“Come, let’s pray.” I was shocked and he saw it on my face. Last time I checked, he didn’t know how to pray.

He held my hand and told me to close my eyes. Okay, he’s not joking.

“Dear God, father of Jesus, I come to You this morning with Your daughter and I humbly ask You to be with her as she goes to write her final trial paper for the year. I ask that You help her do her best in that exam and ace it, I ask You to help her remember all that she has been taught so that our hard work is shown in her results. I ask all of this in Your name, Amen.” The girl was too stunned to speak.

I didn’t know he knew how to pray. Well, okay, everyone knows how to pray, but...

“I may not go to church but my mother was a Christian and she taught me how to form a relationship with God.”

“A few months ago, you were shocked when I prayed, why?” He chuckled.

“I told you, no one had ever prayed for me before. That’s how I knew you were mine.”

Butterflies!

“Thank you my love.” I said and pulled him closer to give him a real kiss, not what he gave me.

“I love you MaGumede.” He looked directly into my eyes while his forehead rested on mine.

“I love you too.”

He hopped out of his seat and walked around to open the door for me. That is the first time he’s done that.

“Hug?” he asked blocking me from coming out. I giggled at the silly look on his face.

I got up and wrapped my arms around his neck and he picked me up.

“Zulu, you are going to crease my uniform.”

“I’ll wait for you here okay.” I nodded and he put me down. “Hamba ke.” He moved out the way after giving me my bag and I walked away from him. I was stunned to turn around and find him still standing staring at me. Is he not afraid that people will recognize him?

I feel twice as confident now, but I take out my flashcards anyway and revise, just to check if I still know my stuff. I startled when I felt some settle next to me. I almost puked when my eyes met with hers.

“Amile please, just sit and listen, you don’t have to say anything.” Is she trying to test me. No, not today of all days.

“I’m sorry for what I did, I shouldn’t have. You were my best friend, you loved me and I threw that in your face like an ungrateful bitch. I regret it. I shouldn’t have taken Siya’s side, I should

have been on yours. I should have supported you in any relationship you pursue. That's what a real friends do."

"Are you done?" I asked standing up.

"Come on Amile."

"First of all, you sound rehearsed, two, I'm not stupid. I've known you for years, I know you don't regret anything you do. You always have a reason for an action and you don't ever have to justify them. So save it for someone who cares Yonela. If it counts for anything, I did forgive you, a long time ago, but not for you, for myself, for my peace of mind. I don't need you as a friend. I should've see the red flags a long time ago. Don't talk to me ever again." I said and walked away.

An apple fell from the tree in front of me and it was dark red. I picked it up and looked back at Yonela. She had a hard look on her face. I

looked back at the apple. Why do they even have apple trees here at school? I threw it back on the grass and walked away. Maybe she is the snake I dreamt about.

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I feel so liberated and happy. That was the easiest physics I have ever written, I don't know if it's because I knew my work or because it was easy anyway, but I feel good, I'm confident that I will get good marks, if not an A then a B. I was happy to see my baby's car parked there waiting for me. There were a few guys standing far from it, admiring the car. Guys aren't supposed to gossip, but the boys from my school, trust them to talk about you! I will never hear the end of it after climbing into this car. They will be bombarding me with questions

tomorrow. I honestly can't wait for mid-term break, it's only a week, but I need it.

"You're done?" it looks like he was asleep. He looks adorable and his dimple is out to play.

"Yes, now you can take me home." I leaned in and gave him a kiss.

"How was the paper?" he stretched his long arms before starting the car.

"It was amazing. I flew through it." I said confidently.

"So I should expect 100% for this paper?" I shook my head.

"You are pushing it my prince." He laughed.

"Any mark above 70 is a good mark sthandwa sami." Definitely!

"I have a gift for you at the back." I looked back and it was a big bunch of roses and a white box.

"Aw Nkosi, you didn't have to." I kissed his

cheek.

“You’ve worked hard, now we will wait for the results. The hard part is over, now all you need to do is work just a little and you’ll pass your matric.” He says that because he’s smart.

“I still have finals babe.” I said taking the box from the back. I’m nosey like that.

“Yes, those are easy. The hard part is over.” He said it as if he’s not a mathematician.

I opened the box and it was a bunch of sweets and goodies for me to eat. This is so sweet.

“You want me to be fat?” I laughed taking out a slab of chocolate and opening it.

“That wouldn’t be bad.” I shook my head.

At this point, I don’t need anything but him.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She comes here as often as she can, just to clean and distress. She's weird like that, she cleans tombstones as a way to distress. She started at MaNdlela's tombstone, the cleanest one in the whole graveyard. Mandlenkosi comes here all the time, so it's always clean. All she had to do was change the flowers. 17 years later after her death, she's still treated like the egg of the family. But if it wasn't for Nkosi, that wouldn't be the case, Banzi doesn't do graveyard visits. The last time he was here was to leave flowers almost 3 years ago, after his father died.

She's now on Langaletu's tombstone, the dirtiest of them all. None of his siblings bother themselves with coming here, his mother doesn't even live in Zululand anymore, she moved away after his death. His death took a toll on everyone in the family, mostly because it

was unexpected and it happened right after the King. He died in a car accident after a chaotic night with friends. He was not the drinking type, but that night he was wasted. He had issues, and they all stemmed from his father's passing. He now had the responsibility of taking over his name and being the king, something he didn't want to do. Alcohol was his plan of escape but death took him instead.

MaMzobe had to be strong for everybody, but no one ever asked how she was. She was after all, the only woman in the family strong enough to hold everything together. Or so they assumed she was fine. She wasn't, she had demons of her own. A secret she vowed she would take to her grave. Now she would, because he did it too.

She got up and wiped her tears and packed her supplies. That's enough cleaning for the day, she thinks to herself.

When she got to the palace, it was busy as

usual these days. This is her favourite part of the year, but she hates the preparation part of it. There is so much going on and she just doesn't have the space to herself. People are going in and out. The Reed dance is only a week away, everything needs to be perfect.

"Sisi, we have been looking for you all over. We need you to approve the colours for the table setting for your husband." That's Balungile for you.

She hasn't even had a chance to breath but she's already being pulled left, right and centre.

"Didn't we agree on white and black?" she's tired.

"The décor lady has blue and white. The dark blue." Oh goodness.

"I'm coming." She's frustrated now.

She goes to the shed to put away her supplies and goes back to where she is needed.

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This is of the reasons she loves her husband like this, because he knows how to take care of her. It's been an extremely long day for both of them, all she wants is to rest. She has her feet up and he's gently massaging them.

"If your feet are this swollen than it means you were working too hard wakwami. Remember that you need to take it easy, you aren't as young as you used to." She rolled her eyes.

"What is that supposed to mean Zulu? Are you saying I'm old?" he chuckled.

"Just a little."

She's slowly drifting off to sleep.

"Don't sleep yet MaMzobe." She groaned.

"Why Zulu?"

“I want you to tell me about this girl that Nkosi is seeing. You can tell he is happy, who is this girl that is making him so happy?”

“I don’t know nami Zulu, he didn’t tell me anything about her although he talks about her all the time, he has never given me anything tangible about her. All I know is that she might be his future wife.”

“He wants to marry her?”

“Yes, he does, but he said he wants her to finish studying first.” He nodded.

“I would like him to marry first, before I take a second wife.” She sighed.

“I hear you Mageba.” She’s really tired.

“Ayy, lala MaMzobe, uyozele.”

He stood up and carried her to the bed and tucked her in the bed and covered her with the fleece throw.

“I love you okay?”

“I love you too Mageba.”

She fell asleep right away.

Chapter Seventeen

Amile Gumede

Last day of school in term three! It's my last term three. It's all becoming too real. I'm going to check my marks, we'll only get our reports when we come back. I'm very anxious about these marks. I know put my all into this, but you can never be certain. Now that schools are closing for the week, mom said Siviwe and I should go to Zululand to visit gogo. She wants to get to the bottom of my dreams, I don't know how that is going to happen. I still haven't told Nkosi about them, I want to tell him before I go

though. Jama is here to fetch me today, I haven't seen him in such a long time.

"Hello Jama!" I said as I slid into the backseat.

"MaQwabe, kunjani?"

"I'm good, I haven't seen you in a while."

"Ayy, bengisathe shwi emakhaya nami. Umuntu nje mele aye emhlangeni ayolanda umfazi." (I was still at home. I just have to go to the reed dance to get a wife.) I laughed.

"Udlala ngezingane zabantu Jama." (you are playing with people's children Jama)

"Mina ngizifunela uMaXulu nje kuphela." (I just want MaXulu.) Oh my goodness!

"Since when!?" he laughed.

"Your friend is a flirt, she drives me crazy." I can't believe my ears.

"You said you don't do children!"

“She’s not a child, she’s different.” I don’t want to think of him as a typical man who only wants to bed her, but why so suddenly.

“I’m shocked.” He laughed.

“Umtshele ayeke ukuzenza uCan’t get ngami.”
(tell her to stop playing hard to get.)

Jama has officially made my morning! I can’t wait to tell Nambitha. She’s going to die of laughter.

As soon as I got to school, the first person I went to was Nambitha. She was sitting alone reading a book.

“Girl put down that novel and listen to me!”

I snatched it and put it on the table.

“What now, so early in the morning.” She’s interested, she can’t even hide it.

“Jama!”

“Uggh, kanti.” She rolled her eyes and picked up

her book again. Oh come on.

“He actually likes you chomie!”

“I don’t care, he’s not my type. He’s also old, and ugly.” I laughed.

“Come on Nambitha, he was telling me in the car that he genuinely likes you but you are playing hard to get. He also said that he likes it, that it turns him on.” Again, when you tell a story, you must add spices.

“Angifune Jama la mina Amile. I definitely can’t be with someone who didn’t even want to tell me his name.” (I don’t want Jama Amile.) she rolled her eyes again. I suspect that she likes him back.

“But you two stayed the whole day at Nkosi’s house talking and laughing.”

“Because I was bored, duh!” oh she definitely likes him.

“Oksalayo, wherever Nkosi goes, he goes, and wherever I go, you go. Seeing him is the inevitable MaXulu.” Her cheeks turned pink but she shooed me away.

“Suka la. Mina ngiya emhlangeni, ngiyintombi eziphetha kahle.” (I attend the reed dance, I am a virgin and I am keeping myself.) that she is.

“Ufuna ukukhethwa inkosi, no thank you.” (you want the king to choose you?) I’m okay with the love of my life being the way he is.

“I don’t know what you are so afraid of, you are already a part of the royal family.”

“Nkosi and I aren’t married, and we won’t get married anytime soon. He doesn’t want me to go to the palace yet, he says his family is toxic.”

“Seriously?” I forget that she’s obsessed with them.

“Yeah, I don’t quite know the details, but I know that him and his older brother, or the King, are

not really that close.”

“King Zwelibanzi is scary though, not going to lie. I don’t know how the queen does it. How do you sleep with such a scary man!?” I laughed. I think him and Nkosi are alike though.

“Him and Nkosi are no different.”

“Yeah, feature wise, but his aura, I don’t know, ngathi uthwele or something.” (Oh jeez.

“I don’t think that’s the case.” If it were him that I was seeing in my dreams, we would be talking about a different story, but it’s a whole other man, and I don’t think that man is related to Nkosi in any way.

“What I’m saying is, your boyfriend is likeable, appealing. He reminds me of the late prince. The king is a whole different story.”

She lost me at late prince.

“What late prince?”

“Prince Langaletu kaMhlabawesizwe. He was supposed to succeed the king after he died but he died a few months before his coronation, that’s why Bayede is the king. I don’t want to lie, I wouldn’t be surprised if it came out that he killed his brother for the throne, these things happen all the time.”

“This prince Langaletu, how old is he?” my heart is beating fast.

“I don’t know, he’s a few years older than the king.” Oh lord. Maybe he’s the one that I’ve been dreaming about. Fuck!

“Do you have a picture of him?”

“No, all pictures of him were taken down from the internet after he died. He was in a terrible car accident.” Keep calm Amile, relax and breathe.

Okay maybe I need to tell Nkosi about these dreams. I know he’ll be angry so I need to do

something nice for him. Yeah no! Life is not living right now.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He's already parked, waiting for his princess to come so they can go to his place. He's dodging work more often than usual, and he's always dodging work. He got her another bunch of flowers, red roses again. He saw just how much she loved the ones he got the other day, and today he got more, a bigger bunch, with hundred rand notes rolled inside of it. He definitely is not the romantic type, but he has siri for a reason. Which better girl to ask than the smartest girl.

In the back of his mind, he's doing all of this because he wants to spend as much time as he can with Amile because he's leaving for

Zululand, this weekend is the Reed dance. Depending on how today goes, he wants to ask Amile to give him permission to ask for her hand in marriage. He doesn't know how he will make her understand though, she seems like she's a tough cookie, and he is low key afraid of her.

"Sthandwa Sami." She said when she opened the front door. Her sweet smell filled the car immediately and he smiled.

"Muntu wami." She leaned in and gave him a kiss.

She made sure to lock him in and the kiss had him running his hand up her thigh. He cursed under his breath and broke the kiss.

"You know what you do to me MaGumede. Please behave." She giggled and sat back in her chair. She looked radiant, happy.

"I have good news ke Ndabezitha."

“Do share beautiful.” She blushed.

“I got 99% for my physics exam!”

“I knew you would do it, well done MaGumede!
And what about your chemistry and maths?”

“I got a B for chemistry, and 88 for my life
science.”

“I asked about maths.” She hesitated.

“I got a C for paper 2, but I got an A for paper 1.”

“That is still amazing sthandwa sami, I’m proud
of you, you worked hard. I got you another gift
at the back.”

“Another one?” she turned and picked up the
bunch of roses. Her eyes widened when she
saw the notes.

“Oh my goodness Mandlenkosi.” He laughed.

“Do you like it?”

“How much is this?” at first, she used to feel

embarrassed when he would buy her nice things or spend money on her, but now, she warmed up to it. In fact, she loves it.

“I don’t know, I know it’s enough to do your hair and nails though.”

“I love them, thank you. Imama liyatotoswa.” (a woman gets pampered.) He laughed even more.

“Impela MaGumede.” She put them back in the backseat and he started the car.

“Okay, so what else are we doing today?” he glanced at her suspiciously.

“What do you want to do?”

“The mall first, I want to get something, then we can go kwami.” She said that and that made him blush like a little boy.

“I like that, kwakho.” She giggled and took her phone out from her pocket.

She connected her music and played a very

unexpected song, and she was singing along to it. He knows this song very well, although he was very young when it was released, he grew up listening to it. What does a 2000 know about Az Yet and Last Night. He laughed lowly.

“Last night, I was inside of you.”

“Inside of who?” he asked looking at her. She seems to be enjoying the song.

“While making love you.” She continued to sing.

“Wengane, what do you know about making love.” He’s laughing. This is amusing to him.

Sengiyingane manje Zulu? I’m not a child when you have you thing in between my thighs.” (I am a child now Zulu?) He cracked up.

“Wawungakazalwa kuphuma lenamaba wena, thula nje.” (You were not born yet when this song came out, just keep quiet.) He teased.

“And you were like what, three? What did you

know about making love and being inside of people?”

“You’d be surprised.” Her eyes widened.

“I’m joking MaGumede. But I’ll also be inside of you, and I’ll make love to you. Have a taste of heaven.” His hand travelled up her skirt and played with her clit over her underwear.

“Don’t do that Nkosi.” He breathing hitched and she grabbed his hands. He laughed.

“Intozami lezi.” (these are my things.) He grabbed her mound and squeezed.

“Zulu!” she laughed.

He continued to drive with his hand still under her skirt. She wasn’t complaining though, she loved it there.

Amile Gumede

He has no idea how easy he has made it for me to want to execute this plan I have in my head. I only had R200 to my name, and I was going to go to the mall and spend all of it, but I took a few notes from the bouquet. Some girls are lucky hey.

I went to an underwear store and got myself a sexy black lingerie. By fire by force, today, I am getting rid of that barrier between me and Nkosi, normal people call it virginity, I call it a nuisance in my life ever since I met Nkosi. I got a pair of heels just for the fun of it. If he asks what I was buying, I'll show him the shoes.

I didn't stay inside for long, I didn't want him to die of suffocation in the car so I went back. He looked pretty occupied by his phone when I got back.

"That was quick." He said switching it off and putting it away.

“I knew what I needed. In and out.”

“What were you buying?” he asked as he started the car.

At least now we aren't far from his place, or as I said earlier, kwami. I don't know where I get the courage honestly, but he loves it, that's all that matters.

“Some shoes that I liked for church. I'm glad I found them here.”

“How much were they?” why so many questions.

“R350. They were on sale.” He nodded. I'm praying to God this works.

We arrived at the apartment and he carried my shopping bags and I carried my roses. I want to take a picture of them, and with them. He'll do it for me with his ridiculously expensive phone.

It seems like Jama is not here, bonus!

“Are you hungry?” he asked me as he placed the

keys on the kitchen counter. I should be asking him, not the other way around.

“No, are you? I can make us something to eat.”
At the end of the day, I know he can't cook to save his life, so I'd rather make the food myself.

“Ngingakujabulela ukudla MaGumede.” (I would love food MaGumede.) Great.

“I'll go change.” I think he approves of that because he handed me my shopping bags.

I went upstairs and changed out of my uniform. I was smart enough to buy toiletries that permanently stay here, because I often spend my time here, especially after school, even when he's not here. The dynamics of our relationship changed in the last three months. Being with him feels like home, it's like breathing. Mom doesn't know about the frequent visits though because she is always working, and at some point, she was working

over time and Siviwe was spending most of his time at Aunt Lisa's house, its nights like those that I spent here. That's why I say ikwami. What I don't have here are clothes, I like wearing his, if you were to see my wardrobe at home, you would think he lives there, but as a matter of fact, that night I snuck him in and cooked for him was the first and last time he ever entered my place. He always waits outside the lobby for me to come out.

I put my surprise on after freshening up and threw on one of his big hoodies. It's all he owns, big sweaters and hoodies. He's actually into streetwear, not surprising because he listens to trap and hip-hop. His title really goes against his sense of dress and taste. It was only once or twice where I saw him in actual formal clothes like pants, loafers and a proper shirt. He's always in golf t-shirts with jeans and sneakers or tracksuits and sweaters.

He's in the lounge watching TV, he didn't even hear me coming down the stairs going to the kitchen. I never know what to cook for this man because he eats fancy food, his chef always out does herself in her cooking, she cooks things I can't even pronounce and every time I have to cook for Nkosi, I have to crack my brain first. I took it upon myself to buy cook books that I keep here and try new recipes all the time. I've gotten good at a few and he likes some of them. Not that he'd ever say he doesn't enjoy my food.

Things are simmering on the stove and smells are attracting people from the lounge.

"It's smells amazing in here." He held me from the back.

"It's almost ready." He ran his hand on my bare thigh.

"Why aren't you dressed? Jama might waltz in here at any moment." Well?

“You don’t like me like this?” I kissed his cheek.

“You look sexy.” He planted kisses on my neck and I slightly arched it to give him room.

I have to exercise self control, his hands are traveling up to places where they shouldn’t be in yet.

“Okay Mr touchy touchy. Can I finish my pots first.” He chuckled and let go of me.

“I’ll behave, I’m sorry.” He went to sit on the kitchen stool and watched me cook.

“Please borrow me your phone so I can take a picture of my flowers, and my food, and myself.” He laughed.

“I’m tired of you flooding my phone storage with your aesthetic nton nton. I should get you your own phone manje.”

“Come on baby. I don’t need a R28000 phone. Why should you buy another one when you

already have it. Asikho nje isidingo.” (there is no reason.)

“Then stop using my phone and use yours.”
He’s doesn’t get it does he.

“Aww baby! Please.” He took it out of his pocket and gave it to me. I knew he wouldn’t resist me.

“Thank you.” I kissed his cheek.

This man doesn’t even have a lock on his phone. He said something about it being too much admin, and he said he has nothing to hide. I finished cooking, plated my food carefully and took a picture of it. He looked at me and shook his head.

“Yonke into nje niyayishutha.” (you take pictures of everything.) I laughed.

“Capture every moment sthandwa sami.” I snapped a picture of him frowning and it came out perfect. I’ll definitely send this to myself.

“Cela ukudla kwami ke mina MaGumede.” (Can I have my food please MaGumede.) He really is hungry.

I gave him his food and something to drink. He likes cranberry juice, he always has stocked up in his cupboard and fridge. I think it's because he doesn't drink a lot. He has his occasional beer here and there, but that's only when he's with Prince Dumisani and Jama. Bad influences I tell you. He never smoked another cigarette after that day though, I don't know about Jama, but I'm glad he listened to me. I like someone who listens.

I went upstairs and took pictures of my flowers and myself, because I look too pretty to let it all go to waste. I took them until I was satisfied and when I went back downstairs, he was already loading the dishwasher.

“I was going to wash those.” I said wrapping my arms around his waist.

“No, siyolala manje.” (We are going to nap.) One part of our afternoon sessions that I love the most are our naps. They give me happiness, but today, there are no naps today. He has a job to fulfil.

“Let’s go.” I pulled him and he wrapped his arms around my waist from the back, then he picked me up.

“Yini le oyifake ngaphansi?” (What are you wearing underneath?) he ran his hand over my stomach, feeling the material of the lingerie.

“Uzobona phezulu.” (you’ll see upstairs.) I kissed his cheek as he carried me up the stairs.

Chapter Eighteen

Nambitha Makhathini

She’s at home trying to revise her work. She’s

one of those students who need to work hard to get astounding marks, and if she wants to be the first one in her family to get that degree, and to have that proper job, she has to work twice as hard as others. Her parents are not struggling, they can afford to send her to good schools, and pay for the education she deserves, but the stigma around her family, both maternal and paternal have put heavy strain on her to make it. None of her siblings made it through high school, the one who actually finished high school dropped out the first week of university. All her sisters are good at doing are popping babies and leaving them behind with her parents to take care. He won't even mention his older brothers.

In total, there is five of them. Two sisters, two brothers. She is the last born, the last hope that maybe her parents may retire and get to enjoy the fruits of their womb, or at least her mothers

womb. That's why she works hard.

She's so focused on her studies, she literally has no time for anything else. Yes, she occasionally parties with her friends, and does make-up as a hobby, but that was earlier in high school, now its crunch time, and the busy has started. She has never had a boyfriend too, not that no has never taken an interest to her, she is a beautiful girl, many guys have tried their luck, but boys are the last thing on her mind. Unlike her sisters, she has a clear path. The oath they made with Amile to keep themselves for marriage is still her number one pet peeve.

To encourage herself to keep her precious gem in tact, she attends the reed dance every year. Last year she missed it, and she was supposed to miss it again this year because of exams, but her heart won't let her. She has to go. Her mother is very supportive of this initiative that she puts in into celebrating her culture and her

purity, it's every mother's dream to have a daughter who is proud of their purity like this.

But life always has trials and tribulations right? And her stumbling block is none other than the creature of Satan called boys. She doesn't hate them, they surround her from all angles, she just doesn't like the boys who like her.

Prime example, a nuisance in her little boring life, Jama. She's definitely not against boys, and she does have feelings, she has a few likes and crushes on people here and there, but it doesn't grow into anything serious, it never does. She's not going to deny liking him, besides his looks, she thought he was an amazing person.

Besides the fact that he is 14 years older than her, she liked his charismatic personality and how well-spoken he is. But that's all she thought she liked about him. She didn't want anything more from him, she didn't need anything else from him, especially a distraction.

He's been chasing her. At this point, she even regrets giving him her number, because all he does is call her non-stop. Sometimes she doesn't bother to answer, but he gets persistent, and it annoys her. She answers to get him off her back. Some men are brave, what makes him think that he stands a chance with her, she doesn't even know his name. He's calling now, and she dreads talking to him, but she answers anyway.

"MaXulu."

"Bhuti please, you are distracting me."

"Bhuti?" she rolls her eyes.

"It's not like you ever told me your name." she says with attitude.

"Come out so I can tell you my name." she's shocked.

"What?" she asked peeping out the window of her bedroom. Her impulsiveness forced her to

do that, know very well that all she sees from her bedroom window is a boring wall.

“I’ll tell you my name, come out.” She has to see this with her own two eyes, that’s the only reason why she’s going out.

“How do you know where I live?” she’s on a frantic search for her shoes.

“I have my ways I don’t like to be kept waiting MaXulu, I’m counting to ten.” The line dies. This is unbelievable.

“Sdudla, I’m coming back, don’t leave the house.” She said as she walked passed her ten year old niece who was concentrating on the TV. She barely even heard what was said to her. She just gave a low okay and continued with her cartoon watching. The gate is locked because the parents are away and on thing her mother always preaches is, “keep the gate locked, we don’t want any surprises.” That is a low key hint

that no visitors allowed. Announced or not. This man right here, he's a surprise.

It doesn't take her a long time to spot the Golf 7 parked a few houses away. At least he's somewhat respectful of her home. He standing leaning against the car cross legged with a cigarette between his lips. Red flag number one, a man that smokes a cigarette to the size of a stompie. She shook her head in displeasure when he threw it on the ground and stomped on it.

“Waqhamuka usunikina ikhanda nje MaXulu?” (Why at you shaking your head MaXulu?) she's not afraid of him.

“Indoda ebhema ugwayi ayibukeki, ayithandeki nje futhi.” (A man who smokes cigarettes doesn't look good, he's not loveable.) He chuckled.

“So it's a good thing that you love me.” She

blushed and felt something light and feathery in her stomach, but she quickly looked away. He got her.

“Did you lose something on this side of town bhuti?” she crossed her arms across her chest and tapped her foot on the ground impatiently.

“Yes, the love of my life.” She rolled her eyes.

“I don’t think she’s here. Can I go back home?”

“Ima phela MaXulu. I haven’t told you my name, that’s what you came out here for.”

“Yet you stand here and waste my time.” He laughed.

“Okay. Get in the car. I have a little gift for you.” She’s hesitant, but he’s not budging. That look tell her that she has no choice but to get in the car and receive the gift, whatever it may be.

He opened the passenger door for her and she climbed in. It’s a beautiful car, and it suits him

terribly. It is so clean, it smells fresh from the car wash and the smell of his expensive cologne is competing with the car perfume. We can say that the cologne is winning. He got in on his side and leaned back and took a Woolworths bag and handed it to her.

“What’s this?” she asked looking through it.

It was snacks, sweets, chips, a tub of ice-cream and cookies.

“Snacks for when you study.” She looks up and he’s smiling at her.

“Thank you.” That’s all she can say. Now she feels bad for being mean.

She put the bag by her feet and played with her fingers. Where is miss attitude now?

“I don’t want to get you in trouble with your parents so I won’t keep you for too long. Can I see you tomorrow?” her eyes met with his.

“I’m leaving tomorrow.”

“And what about Saturday?” His hand is hesitating to hold hers, she can see it hovering over hers.

“I’m going to the reed dance this weekend.”

Even better!

“Kwakhule lokho MaXulu. I’ll take you. I wouldn’t want my love squashed up like sardines in bus.” She chuckled.

“I’m fine being squashed up in the bus, thank you. I don’t trust men like you.” He also chuckled.

“Kulungile phela, kodwa nami nginegunye lokukhetha njalo intombi. Usungisizile ke we MaXulu, sengiyazi nje ukuthi nginesithandwa sami esingilindile.” (That's fine, but I also have a right to choose a wife at the Reed dance. You have helped me, MaXulu, I just know I have the love of my life waiting for me there.) Her heart

sank to the pit of her stomach.

She chose to ignore him and look up. There was a lanyard hung on the rear view mirror and on it hung a card. She pulled it and read it aloud:

“Nkululeko Clive Dlamini, 30 years old. UNISA. You are studying?” she still wants to laugh about his second name, but she’ll hold it in.

“Don’t I look like a student?” she rolled her eyes.

“Nkululeko. It suits you.” She said absent-mindedly. That put a massive smile on his face.

“Really. I think Dlamini would sound amazing against yours.” She’s blushing again, and this time, she’s not hiding it.

“Clive, I need to go. Thank you for the snacks.” He laughed.

“Kubonga mina MaXulu.” She opened the car door.

“Hug nyana?” he asked giving her the softest

eyes.

“Sobonana emhlangeni Nkululeko.” (We’ll see each other at the Reed dance.)

“Don’t make me regret telling you my name nana.” Her insides melted. Where did that come from!?

“Bye Jama.” She got out of the car and carried her bag as she walked down the street back home.

Playing hard to get is going to be hard now. He’s too charming.

Amile Gumede

He disappeared to the bathroom and now I’m sitting on the bed waiting for him to come back. He waltz back in topless and smiles at me.

“Nap time?” I stand on my tippy toes and wrap

my arms around his neck.

“Nope.” He was brushing his teeth. He’s compulsive like that. He brushes his teeth after every meal. I don’t know how to keep up with him.

“Then what are we doing?” he grabbed my bum and pressed me against his body.

“This.” I rubbed myself against his front and he groaned.

“You naughty girl.” He picked me up.

“Zulu.” I looked at him in the eyes.

“Yebo sthandwa sami.” He can see that I want something.

“Can you please make love to me.” That on its own was hard to say. He caressed my cheek.

“Amile.” He hesitated.

“This is what I want, please. Just give me what I want.”

“Are you sure?” he asked again.

I’m obviously on the verge of tears, but he’s still asking me such questions. What kind of man deprives himself like this?

“Yes, I’m sure.” Hes still hesitant, but I kiss him anyway.

He helps me take off my sweater and throws it on the sofa by the window. He throws me in the bed and I use my feet to pull down his pants. He gives me a deep throat groan, his eyes are turning red and are shrinking into slits. I won’t even begin to speak about his manhood, its doing the exact opposite of shrinking. He looks ready to attack.

He starts with the straps, and works the back like magic. He lies me on my back and lifts my knees. I’m not scared, partly because he’s seen this view a thousand times, but I’m not scared because I love him, and I’m ready to do this with

him.

My leg involuntarily starts to shake as he climbs on top of me.

“You can always tell me to stop if you aren’t ready sthandwa sami.”

“I want this as much as you do Nkosi.” He looks scared. Shouldn’t I be scared.

I’m lying naked under him, and he already his hip flexed, his manhood pointing up by his naval. With my eyes closed, I grab it and stroke it a few time. He closes his eyes and arches his head back in pleasure, giving out low moans of pleasure. He started kissing my breasts and massaged my nipples, my soft spot. Now I’m ready for the real thing. He positioned himself at my entrance and I wrapped my arms around his frame. I felt my walls expand, and shit load of pain as his girth filled me up. I pushed him back. I have an extremely low pain tolerance

and I have never felt anything so painful.

He didn't budge, he rolled off me and held me in his arms tightly. Okay, I can do this.

"Try again." He's breathing heavily, and I was almost on the verge of tears.

"No, I don't want to hurt you." He sounds concerned.

"You won't hurt me Nkosi, I want this." He got off the bed and he looked for his pants.

"Did you not just scream under me and push me off, I hurt you Amile and that's not what I want. That was nothing, it hurts way worse when I go all the way in. No." he looks pissed. I've never been so conflicted my whole life.

"But I want this, I want you."

"I know you want me Amile, and I want you to, but you aren't ready. Don't force yourself to be when you aren't. I'm not!" okay, he's shouting,

something I've never seen him do. I seriously fucked up.

"I'm just afraid Nkosi." I said lowly. Now the tears are starting.

"Then wait, I'm doing it, it doesn't kill me, why can't you..."

"No, I'm not afraid of that, I'm afraid of losing you." His eyes soften.

"You won't lose me Amile. What makes you think you will lose me." He comes to sit back on the bed. What a way to ruin everything Amile.

"I have dreams of another man, and he constantly has sex with me in my dreams. I'm in love with him in these dreams, but he isn't you. That's what I'm afraid of. That I will lose you to some man I don't know." I'm crying now. This affects me more than I make it out to be, it's a serious matter.

"Why didn't you tell me all this time, do you

know him?" he asked concerned.

"No, I don't. But I call him the king. I don't want him, I want you." My heart is racing, so is his, I can feel it against my ear on his chest.

"I need to take you to the palace." My eyes widened like saucers.

"What!? No, I can't go there, what business do I have there." My voice is breaking now. What happened to the normal life I had 5 months ago?

"I refused to listen to MaMzobe. Maybe she was right." I frowned.

"Right about what?" he smiled.

"Maybe you are my chosen one." Did he not hear a word I said?

"And the dreams?" he shook his head.

"I don't know sthandwa sami, angazi." He kissed my forehead and stood up to go to his drawer.

Why is he downplaying the seriousness of this issue?

“The ancestors are never wrong, and if my mother is visiting you, then it means you are deserving of this.” He turned with a box in his hand and he kneeled in front of me. He popped it open and inside was a beautiful diamond ring. I panicked.

“Nkos...” he interrupted me.

“I know, you aren’t ready, you are young and you want to finish school first, but I’m not standing in the way of that. I love you, and I want you to achieve all you dreams, but I want to be by your side.”

“Nkosi...” again I was interrupted.

“I’ve been wanting to do this for a long time, all I needed was courage. I need you to say yes MaGumede.” My brain is not working at this point.

“Nkosi I can’t.” His face fell.

“No listen to me. It’s not that I don’t want to marry you, I do, but that wasn’t part of my plans now. Marriage is no where in my plans Nkosi and I love you, very much, but I’m not ready. Next thing you will be asking me for kids, something I can’t give you.” He closed the box and stood up.

“Don’t leave.” I stood up too.

“I’m not thinking straight Amile, there’s a lot going on in my head right now.” He said and paced around the room.

“Okay, maybe I should come to the palace.” He stopped pacing and looked at me. I’m still completely naked just so you know.

“I’m going to KwaNongoma these holidays to visit my grandmother. She also wanted to get to the bottom of these dreams, I don’t know what she wants to do to me.” He was pacing again,

and he's making me dizzy now.

"Come to the reed dance." I frowned. He stopped pacing.

"Why?" I went to the couch and took the hoodie I was wearing and threw it on.

"So you can meet my family." Oh no, sorry.

"I can't." I sat on the bed.

"Why can't you Amile?" okay, it's frustrated Nkosi now.

"I have major social anxiety, large groups of people scare me, I can't surrounded by so many strangers." He gave me that look.

"This is your culture, it's not just some game."

"It's not mine, it's yours." Okay, now we are arguing. I don't like this.

"Manje ufuna ukwenzenjani ke?" (So what do you want to do?)

“You’ll fetch me like your girlfriend and take me to the palace, why do you want to complicate things?” he sighed and rubbed his forehead.

“Fine. I’m leaving later tonight.” He spoke in a breathy tone.

“I’m leaving tomorrow.”

Silence passed between the two of us for a while and then he came and sat next to me.

“I don’t want to lose you too.” He said.

I laid my head on his shoulder and breathed out. What was I doing. Our relationship is perfect, I have the love of a man that many don’t have, that many dream of. A man who is patient with me, who cares and loves me for who I am. Why am I not doing the same.

“I was selfish, I’m sorry.” I said lowly.

“I will never force you to do something you aren’t ready for sthandwa sami. “

I hugged him tightly. Now I owe him.

“Do you want a blowjob?” I asked looking at him.
He nodded.

Not everything will work out the way it should,
but that’s life right?

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After a long day of failed sex attempts and rejected proposals, I’m finally home. I found mom at home for a change and I was quite shocked. She didn’t harass me about my whereabouts though, but I found her pacing Siviwe’s suitcase.

“Have you packed, we are leaving early tomorrow? Ugogo wants you to prepare for the Reed dance.” My eyes bulged out.

“What!?”

“Yindaba, wababaza ibhadi, lomfana usengenile yini esibayeni sami?” (What’s wrong? Why are you exclaiming, has this boy invaded my palace?) she raised her eyebrow.

“No mama, but why didn’t you tell me earlier.” She has to be joking.

“Your granny only told me today. I didn’t even know it was on Saturday. She said she already spoke to iqhikiza lendawo and she saved you a spot.” Someone shoot me now.

“And what about my dreams mama, that was the only reason why I’m going to KwaNongoma.”

“Angikwazi utetemiswa yini kangaka ngokuya emhlangeni. It's not anything terrible. It’s not like the king will choose you, you are already dating the Prince.” (I don’t know what’s bothering you so much about attending the Reed dance.) She doesn’t get it.

But I can't get away from my mother she has the final say in what happens in my life. I am technically still under her supervision and whatever she says goes, and if she says fuck my social anxiety, then fuck it. Lord I'm not looking forward to this at all.

Chapter Nineteen

Amile Gumede

The only thing getting me through this dreaded drive is my music, otherwise I would have yanked out my hair a long time ago. I've been falling in and out of consciousness and I have seriously had enough. I didn't know that it was this far, are we still going to a place in KZN or are we leaving the province?

"Ma?" I whined.

“I’m not stopping for anything now Amile, we are almost there. It’s almost dark, your granny is waiting for us” she still needs to go back by the way.

“How far are we?” I’m frustrated.

“We are almost there. You are acting like a little child, even your brother is way too relaxed. You should do the same.” Yeah, because he’s comfy in his booster seat, sleeping.

Mom still puts him in a booster seat, some lady at the shop where she bought them made the mistake of telling her that they make them up to twelve years old and the technically should be sitting in them for that long. Now my poor brother is subjected to that nonsense.

I’m cranky because there is no network here. It explains why I couldn’t get a hold of Nkosi last night, he probably drove the whole night. I couldn’t stop thinking about him, I wanted

nothing but to live in his head for that night just to see what he was thinking.

A lot of emotionally taxing things happened yesterday, and yes we talked about them, but I don't think it's something that we can just talk about and move on with it just like that. I

haunted me all night, I kept replaying that scene in my head when I pushed him off over and over again. I could still feel my walls expanding every time it came to my mind and I got chills. I don't know which ancestors are working like this, but they deserve an award. I know my granny would have been disappointed that I wouldn't be going to the reed dance.

I gave it a thought, and it's really not that bad of an idea, my issue is just the many people that I will be around. I hope I get to go home, or I don't get lost because being in big groups of people gives me anxiety. I tried calling Nkosi but his phone wasn't going through the whole night and

this morning. Now I don't have service.

I'm seeing more buildings and people! Yay, we are in town. Okay, I know that my grandmother's house is in a little township-ish place here, not really rural, I just don't know because I haven't been here in over 10 years. Granny always comes up to visit us in Glenwood.

We drive through a gravel road and I can see the white house and it digs up pictures from my childhood. Damn!

"That's the house right?" I asked mom leaning out the window.

"Yes, we are here." Finally.

When we park in front of the gate, two of my cousins came rushing to open it for us. They look so excited. I see gogo coming out the house and she has a doek in her hand, she is ululating and waving in the air. I feel like royalty

right now.

“Oh my sweet grandchild, you have grown so much.” She holds me tight in her embrace and kissed me a thousand times.

“Hello gogo”

“Oh mntanomntanami. I’m sure you guys are tired, it’s been a long drive. Where is the little one.” She let’s me go and head to the car.

Mom and her mother embrace and she also kisses her. Our granny is like that, she is very affectionate, but I think it comes with old age because she didn’t raise mom to be this affectionate, she had to learn that on her own. My cousin comes and tap my shoulder.

“Hello.” She says lowly and waves.

There’s two of them one is almost my age and the other one is just a little older than Siviwe. I don’t know them that well, they are my uncles children.

“Hi, how are you?” I give the one my age a hug, she hugged me back.

“You smell so good.” She said surprised. I laughed

“Thank you.” I’m wearing my Dior, courtesy of Mr Zulu.

“Can I also have a hug?” the little one said. She’s so cute. I leaned down and hugged her.

“You are such a beautiful girl.” I whispered in her ear, she giggled.

“I want to look like you when I’m older.” Ncooh, somebody looks up to me.

“Okay Tutiza, leave sisi alone now.” I laughed at her. I’m such a bad cousin I don’t even know their names.

“No its fine. What is your name?”

“Tulip, but gogo calls me Tutiza because she said my name doesn’t make sense.” I laughed.

“Your name is beautiful sweetie, it’s the name of a beautiful flower, and it suits you.” She blushed and looked away. She’s so adorable.

“Tutiza go inside, Buhle, help Amile with her bags, its cold out here.”

“Yes gogo.” I think I remember Buhle now.

Siviwe is grumpy, much to Tutiza’s disappointment. She was looking forward to playing with him. But he’s like that when he wakes up, he’ll loosen up after a bath. Buhle helped me carry my bags and some of Siviwe’s and we walked inside. The house is bigger inside and it looks very spacious. The lounge is an open plan lounge with a big dining table in the middle of it all. It’s a beautiful house.

“Come let me show you our room.” Buhle led me to one of the rooms. There were two single beds and they were neatly covered with white duvets.

“This is where we will be sleeping.”

“What about Tutiza and Siviwe?” I placed my handbag on the bed and sat down.

“Siviwe will sleep with gogo and Tutiza sleeps with mom.” Oh yeah.

“So you sleep all alone here?” she also sat down on the bed opposite mine.

“Yeah, it helps me talk to my friend better.” She put emphasis on the word friend and winked. I laughed.

“Oh heeh. And this friend, is he a boy or a girl?” she blushed.

“He’s a boy from school.” How sweet. I think I’m going to enjoy my stay here.

“Are you ready for the Reed Dance tomorrow?” I asked taking out my phone checking the signal.

“I’ve been preparing for it since the beginning of the year. Gogo got us matching outfits, I’m so

excited.” She squealed.

“Is it your first time going?” I asked her.

“Yes it is, you?”

“Me too.”

There is no signal in this God forsaken place.

“Amile, Buhle, come get your plates.”

That is Gogo calling us. When did she fix the plates? We went out the room and headed to the kitchen. We choose our plates and just when I was about to follow Buhle out the kitchen, a couple of messages came through on my phone. Great, signal!

“No cellphones during dinner time young lady.” Gogo snatched it out of my hand before I even got a chance to peep at my messages.

Great, just when I have signal. She slid it in her pocket and told me to come to the dining room. Everyone was sitting in front of the TV eating

and Siviwe and Tutiza were gracing their butts on the floor.

“Buhle are you also going to the Reed dance?” mom asked.

“Yes aunty, I’m going.” Mom gave me that look that I was overreacting.

“This one was dead set that she was not going at all. She says she’s afraid of too many people. At least now you have Buhle.” Mom pimped me out. Isn’t she supposed to be my mom?

“I told Buhle the same thing. Going to the Reed dance is not only about virginity but it’s a place where you learn about other things as well, see different people, and find different types of people from backgrounds different from yours. It’s a place where you makes friends and find sisters. The bonds you create there last forever.” That was gogo.

“Did you also attend gogo?”

“Yes, I attended every year until the last one where I finally married your grandfather.” That is beautiful.

“What she isn’t telling you though is that she almost married the King.”

“No, Makhosazane, don’t get it twisted, he just asked me out. I was never going to marry a man like him, a skirt chaser. Tell me how he ended up with so many wives after me, yet he promised that I was going to be his one and only.” We all laughed.

“But men lie all the time mama.”-Mom

“Not like Mhlabawesizwe. I’m glad I didn’t marry him though. I was very happy with your father. Listen my grandchildren, never compromise your happiness for tangible things. Any other woman would’ve thrown themselves at him, only because he’s the king, but I choose my happiness, if I was blinded by that, I would be

unhappy.”

“Why didn’t he choose you at the Reed dance gogo.”-Buhle.

“He wasn’t King yet, he didn’t have the right to.”
Shame.

“And even if he did choose me, I would have run away.” We all laughed. I’m definitely enjoying being here.

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We just said goodbye to mom and Siviwe is sleeping in Gogo’s bed. Buhle and I are washing dishes and listening to music. Gogo comes into the kitchen.

“Amile, come here.” She got herself a glass of water.

I wiped my hands with the dishcloth and

followed her to her bedroom.

“Close the door behind you and come sit down.”

I did as told and found a spot below Siviwe’s feet.

“Usukhulile manje, and your mom is telling me that you are having dreams, tell me about them.”

“I dream about a man I don’t know gogo, I always call him the king and if we aren’t doing adult things in the dreams, then I’m on my knees apologizing to him.”

“What do you feel when you do adult things in your dreams? Do you let him or do you ever fight him?” I shook my head.

“No, I don’t fight him, but I feel like I want him to do whatever he is doing.”

“Do you ever feel anything when you wake up afterwards?” okay!

“I once woke up and my underwear was soaking wet.” How uncomfortable is this. She is shocked, but she quickly composes herself.

“Does he talk in the dreams?”

“Yes, we always have civil conversations. It was once or twice where he was mute. But the most recent one, he was telling me that his brother needs to come fetch him because I need to visit him and I can’t come where he is now because it is dangerous. He turned into a snake when I asked him where he was and he started wrapping himself around my body and drowning me under water.” I get the chills just talking about it.

Her reaction, although she is trying as hard as she can to cover it up, is scaring me.

“What were the other dreams about?” she asked again

“One of them, I was kneeling in front of him,

begging him to forgive me, I don't know for what but I was only wearing red cloths and they only covered my boobs and bums. The only time he spoke, he was telling me to stand up. When I did and looked up, he wasn't there, but there was a mirror in front of me. I was now dressed in a white dress and I was holding his cane, the one the king holds. In the background, there was a woman saying I must go build the Zulu home." She rubbed her forehead in frustration.

"Akusiyona into encane le mntanomntanami, we need to go see a prophet, and thy will access these dreams properly, I can't even come up with one solution. They are confusing me." (this is something serious my grandchild.)

"Definitely gogo, I also want clarity."

""Don't go around telling people about these dreams because people are very evil and they can use your dreams against you. Just keep

this between me and your mother, okay?”

“Yes gogo.”

“Go and rest, you have an early morning tomorrow. Your outfits are in the wardrobe.” She showed me where they are and I went to take them out.

“Thank you gogo. Goodnight.”

“Good night baby.” She kissed my cheek and I walked out her room.

I pray for a bit of normalcy in my life again, that’s all that I wish for.

I went back to the kitchen and Buhle was already done with them and she was eating some biscuits, busy typing away on her phone.

“I’m done, we can go to bed.” She handed me the packet of biscuits and we walked out the kitchen.

She’s glued on her, wish I was her, gogo took

mine and didn't bring it back.

"How come you have network?" she laughed.

"Because I live here, visitors often complain about the network, but it will pick you up soon."

"Gogo took my phone anyways." I said fixing my bed so I can sleep.

"She does that all the time. She'll probably give it to you tomorrow when we come back from the reed dance."

"Does she open it?" okay, I have secrets on my phone.

"Oh no, she doesn't know how to operate a phone. Don't worry about her." I laughed.

Gogo acts smart but she doesn't even know how to use a phone. I had faith in her. I miss my man now, there is literally a zero percent chance that I'll get to see and talk to him tomorrow. I'll probably see him with his family,

that's if we get to see the royal family. There are thousands of girls that attend, I should actually forget about seeing him.

"Are you asleep?" she asked shining her phone screen my direction.

"No, I'm thinking."

"If you are afraid about tomorrow, the worst case scenario is them telling you that you aren't a virgin." I laughed.

"I'm sure that must be embarrassing." She rolled her eyes.

"No, those girls set themselves up for embarrassment because they go there knowing exactly that they were visiting oSipho noJabulani in their cramped up dirty backrooms. I hate girls who like playing victim." She has a point though.

"Most of them bribe their way out though, and probably half of the girls there are second or

third time virgins.” I cracked up.

“Shh, you’ll wake gogo.” Oh my goodness. Where has this girl been all my life.

“Buhle, you are hilarious.” She blushed.

“Your friend, where does he live.” I really am not sleepy, I slept throughout most of the trip here. Longest four hours of my life.

“He lives down the road, kaMkhize.” She opened her phone and showed me his pictures.

He’s a boy, a schoolboy. He’s those guys that wear grasshoppers and like putting that black stuff on his hair after a hair cut and if he had the guts, he would probably get a piercing. He’s not ugly, but he’s not cute too. The low quality pictures are not making it any easier for me to point it out too.

“He’s cute.” I said faking a smile. I’m glad she’s so in love with him that she can’t see what my face looks like.

Even Siya and his skrr skrr tendencies was way better than this.

“I know. Every girl in school wanted him, but he liked me.” Oh nkosyami.

They still need to leave this little place and see what real men look like. What am I saying, I found my own in this little place. But that’s different though, right?

“That means you have something that those girls don’t have.” I definitely am an advocate for happiness and if that’s what makes her happy, then so be it.

“Do you have a ‘friend’?” that’s what we are calling it now?

“Yeah, I do. He’s a bit older than I am though.”

“How old is a bit?” I laughed.

“Just a little over 7 years.” I’m making it sound less. The 11 years between Nkosi and I is

drastic.

“You have to be kidding!”

“Yeah, but I love him and he loves me, that’s all that matters.” She nodded along.

“And does he work?”

“Yes, he’s very smart too.” And maybe one day, I’ll be able to tell her who he is.

“Does he have children?” I froze.

“Not that I know of. He said he doesn’t like kids so...” I never knew what he meant by that though.

“Okay, that’s good.”

This has been the most private relationship I’ve been in ever. I don’t have any pictures of him on my phone, the only ones I have are of us together, and there is only a few. He still doesn’t have social media, and as hard as it is, I haven’t even posted a picture of his feet. I don’t even

have the desire to. I'm enjoying the benefits of a private relationship. It's the most peaceful things ever. Nambitha and Jama are the only people that know. And my mother obviously.

"Good night sis." I said turning my body to the other side.

"Good night sis." She said and switched off the bed side light.

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I'm so thirsty, and from here, that bottle of water looks far. It's scorching hot too, why the hell did I decide to take a hike on such a hot day.

"Its not that long of a journey my child." I turned back.

"Who are you?" I asked panting, resting my hands on my knees. He laughed

"The man who is here to help you. I'm telling you it's not far. You are not far from that place

you seek.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about. I only want that bottle of water.”

“Yes, as long as you can see it from here, than it means it is not far from your reach. Just walk a little longer and you will get to where you want to get.”

“I don’t think I can make it.” My chest is literally drying up now.

“What you will find up there will be worth it, and the journey will mean nothing. I promise. I won’t lead you astray.” I turned back and finally saw his face.

I felt tears building up in my eyes and blinding my vision.

“Daddy?” I rushed to him and gave him a tight hug, he hugged me back.

“It’s me my baby. Just know that I love you so

much and I'm always here for you." I have so many questions, but being in his arms only makes sense and all the things I wanted to ask just went out of my head.

"Go and get your water my child." He let go of me.

"Will you wait for me here daddy?" he gave me a soft smile and nodded lowly.

"Okay, go. Don't rush, take your time, feel the journey. I'll be right here."

I trust him. He's a part of me. I'll go fetch that water.

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Chapter Twenty

Amile Gumede

3 hours, that's all the sleep I got. Trust that I'll be falling asleep today, and I'll most probably be grumpy. The only thing motivating me to wake up is because I had a dream about my father, for the first time since he died. I only know it's him because mom kept a few of their pictures. I need to tell her this. I always get jealous that he visits her in her dreams all the time, but never comes to mine. Now I can finally say that he's done the same.

"Gogo, I had a dream about my dad." I said opening the door to her bedroom. She turned and looked at me with a smile on her face.

"Really? What did he say?" I went to sit on the bed.

"I don't really remember, it's all blurry, but I saw his face and I hugged him."

"Hawu, how don't you remember your own dream."

“I know gogo, I always vividly remember my dreams, but this one it’s distant, like a memory. I don’t even know what I was doing. I just remember hugging him.” She nodded.

“I’m glad he finally did visit you my grandchild, he’s a good angel, your mother always says so.”

“Go get dressed ke my baby so we can go. Im so proud of the both of you.”

I still don’t know what the plans are for today, all I know is that the reason we are up so early is because we are going to the river to for virgin checks. I’m definitely not looking forward to that. Physically I am a virgin, but things have been inside of me, tampons and all.

It’s bloody cold outside, and you can see all the other girls from the area are standing at the bottom of the road waiting for the bus to come. They are singing loudly and some are dancing. Some are happy, some are crying. I thought this

was supposed to be a joyous occasion.

“Why is she crying?” I asked Buhle in a hushed tone.

“She probably has been chosen to marry one of the men and this is her last reed dance.”

“Is that allowed?”

“Yes, her family is probably struggling and the only way to save them is for her to be married off to a wealthy family who will be able to look after her and the rest of the family’s needs. That or she knows she’s not a virgin and she’s fucked.” That’s tough.

“That is terrible.” I sighed feeling sorry for her. Not that I know what her problem is.

“I heard the king might be choosing a second wife this year.” One of the girls we were standing in front of spoke loud enough for us to hear. Everyone flocked around her.

“Where did you hear that?”

“Yeah, can you back that up Nozipho?” Buhle shook her head next to me. Okay, I interested now.

“Yes, I can. My aunt works in the palace remember, she’s a maid there and she overheard the queen talking to princess Balungile saying that the king finally agreed to a second wife. Oh my God, I want to be in the front line so he can pick me.” Buhle and I laughed. She turned and looked at us.

“What, you think it won’t happen?”

“The king would never marry a gossipmonger like you, just saying.” Buhle is sassy!

The gossipmonger was more than ready to start a fight.

“Asazi nje futhi wena ukuthi uyaphi emhlangeni, usekuqedile nje uSanele.” (We don't even know where you are going to the reed dance, Sanele

has finished you.) Oh it's a fight now! Everyone is chanting for it.

"Okay girls, stop it. What happened to acting like ladies." A lady dressed in black traditional attire came and separated what was to become a heated fight. I held Buhle back.

"Okay, calm down sis. Don't let her get to you."

"The sad truth is that she knows no man in the village wants her and her ugly heart." That's is not hard to believe.

"I'll get you Buhle, and that's a promise." She pointed at the both of us as she was dragged away by her friends.

Not me almost being caught up in a village bitch fight. Welcome to KwaNongoma Amile!

They gossiped about us in the bus. They made it obvious because they kept pointing at us the whole time. Especially me. I heard one of them say that I was a spoiled girl from the city and

they were going to squash me like a little ant when they have a chance. I'd like to see them try, not that I know how to fight, I'll learn on that day.

It's fucking freezing here, and we are sitting here in the bushes waiting for the leader to come fetch the next group of girls for check-ups. I don't think this should be legal though, this is an invasion of privacy for most part of it. First we parade our naked bodies, and as if that's not enough, women stick their fingers in our vaginas because they feel entitled to the state of it, only because they 'raised' us. It's a weird culture I tell you.

"Nina, wozani la." She came back with the other girls, and they all had the white dot on their foreheads. So far, no one has disappointed their families.

We are in the same group as the bully, I think she did that on purpose, that's why she's so

violent when she calls us. We are definitely in trouble.

“Nozipho, on the mat.” Great, she’s going first. She looks overly confident and that isn’t a good sign.

When Ma was done, she dipped her finger in the red powder. When he eyed say that, she wailed out loud.

“Hhayi Ma there has to be a mistake.” She’s not hearing any of it.

“Suke ecansini lami ntombazane.” (Get off my mat, girl.) How embarrassing for her.

I was next, now I’m scared.

“Wena uyingane kaGumede?” (Are you Gumede's child?) she asked as I laid on the mat.

“Yes ma.” Gumede is my dad.

She opened my legs and I started shaking. This is so uncomfortable, and I can’t wait for her to

finish. I was ecstatic when she dipped her finger in the white powder. The worst is over.

“Ihlo alikho, kodwa uyintombi. Awumazi umfana.” (The hymen is not there, but you are a virgin. You’ve never been with a boy.) The crying one stops like she was being controlled by a remote. She stands up and comes to where I am.

“How, that doesn’t make any sense.”

“Hlala phansi Nozipho. I’m going to call your grandmother.” (Sit down Nozipho.) She’s back to crying.

On to the next. Both Buhle and I got our white dots and the bully got embarrassed in front of everyone. I would feel sorry for her but she was mean earlier, so no.

I saw that coming though, me not having a hymen. I wear tampons, I’ve been on a horse, and I’ve done bicycle riding too. Lots of it. I’m

not going to talk about Nkosi's long ass fingers, they don't fit the criteria. Lol.

"We are running behind schedule. The rest of you can go and get your reeds and start the walk to the palace. It's going to be a long one." The lady announced and we stood up walked up to direction we came in.

There were so many other girls, I started feeling overwhelmed. I held on to Buhle.

"My anxiety is shooting up." She rubbed my back.

"You'll be okay. Let's go take a reed."

We walked in silence as if there weren't people around us singing and having fun. This is why I avoid big crowds. I'm not walking barefoot and I'm loving the feel of the soil in between my toes.

"Oh my goodness you are so beautiful." A bunch of girls that we standing in front of us

said to me. I blushed and looked down.

“Thank you so much. You are also gorgeous.”

“Uvela kusiphi isigodi.” Another one with a beautiful neat ponytail asked me. They are absolutely beautiful too, and they have a strong Zulu accent.

“I’m from Durban. I’m visiting my family here in KwaNongoma.” They both giggled.

“You guys are so cute. Let’s walk together.” They gave us both reeds and we joined in the walking.

“How far are we going?” Buhle asked when we joined in.

“It’s not that far, it usually takes us over 20 minutes to get there by foot though, especially because of traffic. There are thousands of girls already in front.”

“That’s a lot.” I complained.

“Is it your first time here?” the ponytail asked. I don’t even know their names.

“Yes, both of us.”

“Look at us, not even asking your names...”

“She’s Amile, and I’m Buhle.” Buhle introduced.

“Are you Xhosa Amile?” I shook my head.

“No, I don’t know who decided to give me a Xhosa name. And what about your names.” Did I mention that we are half shouting because we can hardly hear ourselves over the noise of the singing.

“Sbahle.” The ponytail said.

“And I’m Ungiphile.” That is such a beautiful name.

Look at me making friends like I’ve been here for years. I’m social anxiety doesn’t let me make friends this easily, and now having had the Yonela experience, I can’t just trust anyone.

They seem like lovely girls, but I'll probably never see them again after this. So we will live in the moment.

We are getting closer to the palace, and the girls have taught us a few of the songs and the dances too. The sun is out now and its beginning to be humid. It doesn't change that fact that I'm walking around naked, well, half naked. Gogo's skirt barely covers my thighs, I'm not wearing underwear and my boobs are all out. The only thing covering my upper body is the beaded necklace. The only solace I have is that some girls are only wearing white beads. My skirt is much better than that I should think. I felt something slither up my leg and it was wet and slippery. I tried to shake my leg on the ground without looking down, but it just wrapped itself around my legs. I looked down and my heart stopped beating.

I don't know how I managed to scream like that.

I never knew I had so much air in my lungs. I let go of everything in my hands and I fell to the ground.

“It’s a snake! Everyone move.” One of the leaders that were near by came and moved everyone out of the way. People were now crowding around me. At this point, I couldn’t even breath from the fear.

“Its off you Amile. It’s a harmless snake.” She had it on her arms and literally everyone who was in the vicinity moved away.

I don’t think I can continue on this journey, and how the hell did she know my name?

“I want to go home.” I said wiping my tears. Buhle helped me up and picked up my reed for me.

“You can’t go Amile, we are almost there.” I shook my head and wiped the endless tears.

“I said I want to go home.”

“That snake was harmless, I might even be a good sign of the ancestors telling you that you are on a good path.” That is the biggest load of bullshit I have ever heard.

“Come let’s go.” She pulled my hand and we continued walking and singing.

I don’t hate anyone, but you see this woman right here, I don’t know her, but I hate her with my whole heart.

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We have arrived at the palace and I can see the Royal family lined up by the shelter looking regal. I’m really not in the mop anymore, I just want to go home. I feel filthy and I’m terrified of this place now. Girls are placing their reeds right by the place where the king is sitting, I’m guessing that makes it easier for him to pick his

targets.

“Nathi fanele sidlule lapha?” I asked looking at them with bored eyes.

“Yes.” They all said in unison and they pushed me towards it.

I don't see Nkosi anywhere by his family. Now I'm looking around like I'm crazy as we walk towards where the reeds are.

“Uqalazani?” Buhle asked. I faced the front quickly.

“Nothing.” I continued walking.

I put my reed down and when Sbahle put hers down, she started a song.

“Ngiyintombi mina!

Khululeka mawami

Khululeka mawam

Ngoba ngiyintombi.”

She has a beautiful voice and everyone who was behind us followed her lead. We joined in and sang and dance together. I can fully say with a mouthful that this is the only part of the day that I have enjoyed.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He's bored at the Reed dance, all he sees are girls and boobs, he doesn't want that. Amile's phone is still not going through and he knows that this place has zero network so he whispered inside Jama's ear and said he was going out to get some air. Kind of stupid of him to say, judging from the fact that they are already outside, and there is infinite amounts of air, but Nkosi is selfish and he needs more, so he will get it.

He's driving around town, he has no idea where

he's going to start looking for her. She did mention that her home is in the township part so that's where he is heading now. He just doesn't know where to start so he parks his car on the side of the road and tries to call he phone. It rings for the first time since yesterday and it goes to voice-mail. Great.

He rolls down the window and stops a lady walking past him. She drops the things she is carrying on her head and bows.

"Wena wenkosi."

"Sawbona Ma, I was wondering if you could direct me to the Mchunu household."

"KunoMchunu abathathu endaweni, ngabe inkosana icinga muphi?" he rubs his forehead in frustration.

"Lapha kukhona khona ingane yakwaGumede." That's the only way he can describe it.

"Oh, kaMakhosazane. You'll continue down the

road and take a left. It's that second house on the right."

He was so grateful. He didn't think it would be easy to find her. He gives her some cash and she goes on her knees and thanks him before she journeys on. He starts the car and follows the direction and finds himself parked opposite a big house painted in white. The yard is huge and probably the cleanest in the whole neighbourhood.

He doesn't have a game plan. Calling her is not an option, she's not answering. So he chills and waits until he sees her at least coming outside to throw something out or take down the laundry. He spends over an hour waiting, much to his frustration. Not even a chicken is walking around the yard.

He's definitely not leaving before he sees her. He will see her come hell or high waters. He sums up the courage and climbs out the car

and heads for the gate.

The streets are awfully quiet, everyone is at the palace celebrating the virgins. He's glad that Amile didn't go. He told MaMzobe that after everything has settled, he is bringing his girlfriend to meet them. He's not completely ready, but it has to happen now, especially because she's having dreams about his mother, the king's mother.

His phone rang as he was about to open the gate. It was Jama. He's not going to answer, he specifically told him that he's going to get some air, what is he calling him for. He slipped his phone back in his pocket and continued to fiddle with the chain until he successfully opened it and let himself in the yard. When he got to the front door, he hesitated for a while, but he eventually put his knuckles to the wood and knocked. He had to knock twice before a little cute girl appeared. She gave him a big

smile.

“Hello.” She said innocently looking up at him.

Something in the pit of his stomach moved when her big eyes bore into his soul. She is so cute.

“Hello.” That’s all he could say.

She was just as flabbergasted so she blushed and ran down the passage calling her gogo in her sweet squeaky voice. He laughed to himself.

“Who is at the door Tutiza?” he heard a woman’s voice approaching. He straightened his shirt.

When the old woman saw who was standing on her doorstep, she almost fainted.

“Wena Wenkosi.” She bowed her head, panic was evident on her face.

“Sawbona ma, angazi noma ungangisiza yini. Ngihamba ngibheka kaMchunu.” He held her

head.

“Asenzeni lamantombazane, asebukise ngami lapha ebukhosini. I’m sorry my prince, please come in.”

“Ma angihleli, I was looking for Amile.”

“She’s not here, she’s at the Reed dance. If the prince doesn’t mind me asking, has she done something.” His head started spinning when he heard reed dance.

“I am her tutor for science and maths back in Durban and I have notes for her.” Gogo clapped once in disbelief.

His phone is ringing again, and it’s still Jama.

“Ma, can I take this quickly.” She nodded. “Jama, what!?” he’s frustrated.

“You have to come back. Now.” He doesn’t need this now.

“Apparently Amile is there at the palace.” He

whispered so the woman behind him doesn't hear.

"I know. I'm looking at her right now." His heart started racing.

"What is she doing?"

"She's talking to the king. Come here right now." He drops the call.

"Ma, thank you. I need to rush back to the palace. Please tell Amile I was looking for her."

"Where are the notes?" she asked curiously.

"They are in my car Ma, I'll give them to her when I see her. Thank you." She bowed her head to him and he ran as fast as his legs could carry him to the gate.

What is this girl doing at the Reed dance when she was the one who refused to go in the first place? Why is Banzi talking to her? Lord let it not happen, not what he thinks might happen.

Chapter Twenty-One

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

The deal was that she would choose the girl, and she had seen several that she liked and thought looked decent enough to be Queen of Zululand alongside her. There was one specific lady that she liked the most. She was short, light skinned and very confident, she liked her for him. But it seems like she knows nothing about her husband.

“Baba?” she’s been trying to get his attention.

“Her.” That’s all he said.

She followed his eyes and her eyes landed on the group of girls that are singing, now which one is he looking at?

“The one in red, that’s my wife right there.” He

looks hypnotized, she thinks to herself.

She's beautiful, a caramel skinned girl, a young girl.

"She's young Zulu. Look at her." She's concerned.

"Mgabadeli, ngilandele leya ntombi emhlophe."
He totally ignores his wife. She's lost all hope.
He's taken.

"Zulu, are you sure?" she's definitely not threatened, but concerned, that's all she feels. Something about this doesn't feel right.

"Yes, I'm sure wakwami." He leaned in and kissed her cheek.

She can see her maid talking to the girl and her facial expressions show that she is terrified. The girls around her have stopped singing and are looking at her walk up to where they are sitting.

She's prettier and more perfect up close. Her skin is radiant and she has the body of a goddess. She clears her throat and sits up as the girl goes on her knees in front of her husband's feet.

"My king." He stands and asks her to do the same.

He towers over her and she does not dare lift her eyes. She hates to admit it but they look perfect together already.

"What is your surname?" she cleared her throat before she spoke softly.

"Gumede." She bent her knees.

"MaGumede, Qwabe, Mguni, Mguni kaYeye, Osidlabehlezi bakaKhondlo kaPhakathwayo. Where is home?"

"I live in Durban my king. Glenwood, but I'm visiting my grandmother kaMchunu." She bows her knees again.

Okay, she's heard enough. She signals her husband. He nods.

"Mgabadeli, bring me the letter."

She stops Mgabadeli and she goes to fetch it herself. When she comes back, she goes to the girl, and hands her the letter.

"My queen." She bows.

"This is for your elders, keep it safe until you get home."

Her face changes, she looks scared.

"Thank you."

"You may go." The king declares.

She bows again and walks back to her group. Even the way she walks is poised, she's such a lady.

"She's beautiful." She said back on her seat.

"Indeed she is. But there's something about

her.” The king says still looking in her direction. She holds his hand and he snaps out of it.

He also finds his seat beside her and he tightens his hold on her hand.

“I promise you wakwami, this won’t change our relationship. You are still the only woman I love.”

“I know Zulu. I know. “ maybe she is trying to convince herself more than him.

Amile Gumede

“Open it.” Buhle is such a bad influence.

“No, I’m not doing that.” I’m shaking on the inside. I’m glad we are almost home.

Maybe this has something to do with Nkosi. Or I hope it does. The way Jama was staring at me, it make me nervous. I need to call Nkosi and

find out what the hell is going on.

When we opened the gate, gogo abruptly opened the door and stood on the stoop with hands on either side of her waist, tapping her foot on the ground. Somebody looks unhappy.

“Buhle, go inside, wena, come here.” She pointed at me. Oh my what have I done now?

Buhle hurried inside and left me, so much for having my back. So giving her this letter is probably going to make things worse for me.

“Why was the prince here looking for you?” what?

“Angizwanga gogo?” I asked nervously.

“You heard me, what was the prince doing here?” I cleared my throat. Why was Mandlenkosi here?

“Which prince gogo?” im pissing her off, that’s what I’m doing.

“You know what I’m talking about Amile. The

prince was here earlier and said he teaches you back in Durban. Is that true.” That man is crazier than I thought.

“Nkosi gives me extra lessons on Physics and Maths gogo.” She clapped once in utter shock.

“Uze umbiza ngegama. WeAmile!” I looked down.

“Yebo gogo.”

“I may be old but I’m not a fool.” She warned

“I’m not making you a fool gogo, you can even call mom and ask her, he helped me with my trials too.” She sighed.

“So why is he looking for you here, why didn’t he give you the notes you needed back in Durban?”

“I don’t know gogo, I didn’t know he was going to come here.”

“Yini pho le esesandleni?” I looked at the letter before handing it over to her.

“The king called me and said I should give this to an elder at home.” She frowned.

“Why?” I shrugged my shoulders.

“I don’t know gogo, but he sent a maid to call me and him and the queen just asked for my surname and where home is.”

“Hhayi Amile.” She said opening the letter.

“Go inside.” She instructed before she started reading the letter.

I want to see her reaction because I’m also curious to know what the hell is in that letter. I’ve never been so scared in my life.

“What did you do?” Buhle asked pulling me into the bedroom.

“Its nothing important.” I certainly can’t tell her about Nkosi.

“And did you give her the letter?”

“She’s reading it now, she told me to go inside.”

“What do you think its about?”

“Yoh sis, I don’t know. I’d like to think the King doesn’t know me.”

“Maybe he does.”

I need to call Nkosi and find out what the hell his brother wants from me. Maybe he’s behind all of this. Maybe that’s why he was here.

“Gogo can I please have my phone.” I asked as I walked into the lounge. She’s glued to the letter and she looks shaken.

“Amile go back to the room now. I’ll call you. Tell Buhle to come here.” Okay, she’s scaring me! I’m scared now.

“But gogo...”

“Hamba Amile!” she shouted and stood up.

I rushed back to the room.

“Gogo is calling you.” I said hurriedly.

“What’s wrong.” I shrugged my shoulders.

“Yoh!” she wore her shoes and walked out the room.

I plopped my body on the bed and tried to put possible ideas that could make sense. Why was Nkosi here. He’s obviously lying about notes, what could it be. Did he tell his family about me, or the proposal. Does he want to marry me now? I’m scared.

Sitting idle like this is giving me anxiety so I stand up and change into something warm. I was told to stay in here so I looked through some of Buhle’s piles of books and I found a novel that looks interesting so I took it and sat on the bed and scanned through the pages. I don’t like reading, my low concentration span doesn’t allow me to read books, novels especially. That’s why English is my least favourite subject. I’m a practical kind of learner, and I prefer working with numbers and

diagrams instead of words. This story is interesting though, she's being stalked by a taxi driver with big eyes.

"Where were you?" I asked when she barged in. She's breathless.

"Gogo sent me to ask her best friend to come over, apparently there's something urgent." Okay, I'm worried.

"Do you think its about the letter."

"I don't know sis." She sat on the bed and tried to collect her breaths.

"This book seems nice." I said showing her the cover.

"It really is. Have you never heard of it?" she asked with a frown.

"No, what, is it famous." She laughed.

"Everyone knows Hlomu Amile, come on."

"Well, I don't. And that's fine." She rolled her

eyes. I closed the boom and put it aside. I can't take my mind off this thing.

"Do you have network?" I asked her.

"Yeah, why?"

"Can I please make a call, its urgent." She nodded and handed me her phone.

Okay, I have never learnt Nkosi's number. It's dumb of me. I only know a few of the digits, or I mix them up. I'm trying several combinations and I'm crossing my fingers that at least one of them work.

"Do you have Tru-Caller?" she shook her head no.

"Do you have data?" she nodded.

"I'll top you up sis, this is important."

"It's okay Amile."

"You are the best, thank you."

I downloaded the app and I punched every single digit that I know on his number until Nkosi Zulu came up. Great! I called him and it went straight to voice-mail.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Voice-mail.” Does he not understand the importance of having his phone on. I need him right now and his phone is off!?! I don’t understand.

“Try again, maybe it’s the network.” I tried again and it still wasn’t going through.

“This man is trying to kill me.” I whispered to myself and slammed my palm against my forehead.

“Your boyfriend?” I nodded.

Mandlenkosi Zulu answer the fucking phone!

Zwelibanzi Zulu

He didn't think that it would be this easy to find a girl he likes. Never in his wildest dreams did he believe that he would ever look at another woman and see a wife. He has his wife, he loves her. More than he has ever loved any woman. They all never mattered, that's why they all came and left. They weren't for him. Nontuthuzelo has always been the reigning woman in his heart.

But now there is MaGumede, he's drawn to her pretty face and her poise. She young but she's a lady, nothing like he has seen in a lady in a while. She is soft spoken, but she looks feisty and possesses all the qualities of a queen. That's what he sees when he looks at her.

He's called a meeting with his council, it is urgent that he lay this matter to the table. He

wants her in the palace as soon as next week, as his wife, the queen.

“Gentlemen, I’ve called you here because I have spotted a flower at the Reed dance and I want to bring her to the kingdom, to be my wife.” The men around the table all clapped their hands.

They all have been looking forward to this day, it is absurd that the ruler only has one wife. They have been advising him on taking a second for years, but only now does he consider it. They are happy.

“What is her surname My King.” One of the men asked.

“She said she is a Gumedede, but her grandmother is Mchunu. Perhaps someone know where her home is?”

“My king, the only Mchunu I know around here is Falakhe Mchunu. He died almost 10 years ago and left his wife.”

“The one who was a chancellor of the area?”

“Yes my king.”

“I sent her home with a letter. We are expecting her back here tomorrow morning.”

“Inkosi ibingamuthwali ngani njengokwesiko?”
another member asked.

“I didn’t want to. I don’t want the girl to hate me.”

The all laughed. He continued to brief them about tomorrow’s agenda before dismissing the meeting and retiring to his chamber. He found his wife already snuggled in bed. He went over to the bed and gave her a kiss on the cheek. She fluttered her eyes open and looked at him.

“I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“I wasn’t sleeping. How was the meeting?” she sat up and stretched her limbs.

“It was okay. They were happy about the

decision.” He said and loosened his tie.

“And are you happy?” she asked him and helped him remove the tie. She started unbuttoning his shirt for him.

“She seems like a lovely young lady, you and her are going to get along.” She shook her head.

“You didn’t answer my question Zulu.” He chuckled.

“Yes, I’m happy that I found someone MaMzobe.”

“I saw how you looked at her.” It’s not coming from a jealous place, but she’s mocking him.

“Come on, I wasn’t looking at her in anyway.” She rolled her eyes.

“It’s okay to like her Mageba, if you want her to be your wife, you have to like her, you have to learn to love her.” He shook his head and cupped her face.

“I told you MaMzobe, my heart is only reserved for you, no one else. It belongs to you.” He kissed her passionately and she responded with a low moan.

“I love you wakwami.” She nodded and kissed him again.

Amile Gumede

“Vuka sisi.” Gogo soft voice wakes me from a deep sleep, the lights are on and she hovering over me.

“Get dressed and come to the lounge. We need to talk to you.” We?

What time is it? Buhle is fast asleep on her bed and it's so cold outside, the breeze coming in from the open window will give me flu. I close the window and put on my gown and drag my

slippers down the passage.

Who died, its all sorrowful faces in the lounge. It's all faces I don't know. The last time things were this sour was when my uncle was reported dead and they had called a meeting like this in the early hours of the morning.

"Sit down mshana. We are sorry to wake you up so late."

I slowly lowered myself on the couch and greeted them.

"I am your father's brother, ubabomdala and this is your aunt and granny, your father's mother." I looked at gogo and frowned. I don't know these people.

"Gogo?" she couldn't hold eye contact with me.

"Amile, I was going to call your mother in the morning, but I had to let them know first because they will be in charge of everything, they are your family."

“In charge of what gogo? What’s going on.” Did they seriously wake me up to speak I riddles?

“In charge of your lobola negotiations. The king has asked for your hand in marriage.” What? Excuse me?

“Aibo, and who said yes to that?” I laughed.

They all gave me blank stares. My so called grandmother spoke.

“When the king chooses you my child, he has chosen you. You can’t say no.”

“What is this, a cult. Gogo you too? I thought you were my grandmother. Why are these people here, I don’t know them. Are you selling me to them.”

“Amile that’s not how you speak to your elders.” She warned.

“No gogo. There is no such. Tell me you are joking.” My heart is beating fast. Maybe I’m

dreaming.

“I wish I was mntanomntanami. You have to be escorted to the palace first thing in the morning. The king is ready to come pay lobola.” None of this is making sense.

“He doesn’t know me.”

“He doesn’t have to know you, but he saw you today, took a liking to you and wants to make you his wife.” I thought she was mute.

“No gogo.” I looked at her in the eyes. They were tearing up.

I shook my head. Someone wake me up. I’ve been asleep for too long. I want to wake up!

Chapter Twenty-Two

Makhosazane Mchunu

If someone speaks about the most civil and happy co-parents, Makhosazane and David's name should always come on top of the list. Lovers they are not, friends, that's what they are. The best of friends and they love each other to the ends of the earth, that's why they go out and sometimes do sexual favours for each other sometimes.

Siviwe came about when they still thought they had it in them to push a relationship, a love relationship. It didn't work out. Makhosazane may love him like she states, but a part of her died and is buried with Vumani, a part that allowed herself to fall in love. That's why none of her relationships work, none of them ever will. That is why she holds on to David and much as she can. He's the only man who understands her the way she needs to be understood.

She's moaning at the top of her lungs as she presses him down in the bed by his chest and

moves her hips in a circular motion. He's not in control, she is, she needs it more than he does so he let's her. When she gets her happy ending, she climbs off him and catches her breath while lying on her back beside him. He has a date with his hand later, that he knows.

"I'm sorry David." He gets off the bed and rolls of the condom and goes to the bathroom to flush it.

"Don't fret." He doesn't feel used anymore. Before it used to hurt, now its normal, she's not your normal woman. She's a single mother who has been through the most. He's heard it more than once. He knows.

"When are my children coming back. I was hoping to take them out before school opens." He's a wonderful man, that's another thing that she adores about him.

No man would ever care for her daughter like

this. Men out here are cruel.

“I’ll talk to mom. Amile still needs to go somewhere before she comes back.” He frowns.

“Where does she need to go? Why don’t you take her?”

“To see someone. I don’t know much about the Zulu culture and dreams so I’m putting it in my mother’s hands. I don’t think it’s anything serious though.” He nods.

She gets off the bed and goes to where he is standing. She stands on her toes and kisses his cheek.

“Are you staying the night?”

“Only if you want me to.” Words fail her, so she uses her lips to say yes.

She tries to be affectionate. It’s not easy for her, especially towards a man. Having had dated an older man who lacked affection in bed, and I

lovmaking, all she knew was rough. The only affection she has to give is for her children. The only exception. She can never put her daughter through that, deprive her of love and affection only for her to go searching for outside like she did. Things like that lead to mistakes. A lifetime of unfixable mistakes.

Her phone rings persistently and she gives in to answering. Before she can snap at her mother for calling her at such odd hours, the loud shrill cry in the background pierces her heart and breaks into a million pieces.

“Ma why is Amile crying.” She has no time greet anymore. David taps her and she removes the phone from her ear, his eyes widened when he heard the cry. It is gut wrenching.

“Ma!” she’s panicking.

“Ma, speak! Say something, why is my daughter crying like that. What happened.” Her voice is

breaking and she's starting to lose her mind.

"You have to come home before tomorrow morning." That's all she says

"Tell me why she is crying ma!" She shouts.

David squeezes her shoulder to calm her down. She takes a deep breath.

"Come home. She needs you." She ends the call.

She's not wasting any time, David is on her tail. She's trying to crack her brain and figure out what the hell could be wrong.

"Makhosazane you have to calm down." Her breathing is uncontrollable. She sits on the bed and buries her head in her hands.

"Why is she crying like that. What did she find, what did mom do to her?" she's also breaking down.

"We won't find out if we don't leave. Come, get dressed." He's scrambling around to look for

some warm clothes for her to put on.

There is no time to wash up, they need to get to Zululand as soon as possible. If they could fly they would. David has to be the sane one, for the sake of their safety. He can't afford to let it all go to his head. He will deal with it when they get to Zululand.

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She's been sobbing the whole way. Four hours of travel time was cut to two and a half hours on the road. They probably have a number of tickets to pay for. It's sombre as they drive into the drive way of her childhood home. The sun is starting this rise. She refused to stop anywhere, that's why they got here at this time.

If it were up to her, she would have rolled out the car and ran to the house to see what was

happening, but she had to wait for it to park, and the irritated her more.

She didn't wait for him to climb out, she left him in the car twiddling his thumbs and went in.

Amile was still crying. Two hours later she's still crying. That's no life right there.

She's curled up on the floor, her mother is sitting on the couch opposite her and there are other faces in the lounge. Faces she didn't expect to see. That's not her line of concern right now.

Her loud sobs have turned to low grunts and cries with hiccups in between. And as soon as she sees her, she starts all over again. The only difference now is that the voice is gone. There's no more voice for her to cry like the world is ending. Only the tears are proof of the pain. The consistent throbbing in her heart is unbearable.

“What have they done to you my love. Talk to

mommy.” She shakes her head and hiccups. She can’t formulate a single word..

“Someone say something. What happened!?” the man stands up.

“Makhosazane, we need to take her.”

“You, don’t you dare speak.” She pulled Amile close to her as her voiceless cries got louder and louder.

“Aniyazi nokuthi igqoka usize bani lengane. Niyithatha niyisaphi!?” disgust dances on her face.

“The King. She has been chosen by the king to be his wife.”

“Mother why are these people inside my home! Why are they here talking nonsense, trying to take my child away, making her cry like this. Why would you let them.” Her mother sight and stood up.

“Amile came back from the reed dance with a letter from the king that stated that she had to be at the kingdom by the break of dawn as she is to be wedded to the king.” It’s a nightmare, she thinks to herself.

“Izono zakho ma azingaweli enganeni yami!”

“Akukho zono la Makhosazane.” She’s crying too.

“It was you! You didn’t marry the king like you were supposed to, now my child, from my womb has to suffer the consequences for you, all because you chose love? Does she not deserve love mama? What about my child’s happiness. Do you want to do the same thing you did to me, and feed her to the dogs like you did when you allowed baba to send me to them? Are you that heartless mama.”

She can see the heartbreak written on her face. The truth in her words are enough to bring her

guilt and shame.

“The king wants her. It’s not my call. She can’t say no.”

“Over my dead body Caroline.” She said, abhorrence burning in her eyes.

It’s first instincts as a mother, as soon as you hear that cry, and hold your baby in your arms, to protect. She will protect her baby, no matter how hard it gets.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He waked up when he feels something rising from the pit of his stomach and he even in his deepest sleep, he find the toilet. He stubbed his toe in the corner, it fine. He hit his elbow on the wall, its alright, he’ll deal with that later, now, he’s dealing with the puke.

This is why he doesn't drink. Once he starts, he can't stop, he drinks himself into a stupor and gets sick the whole day afterwards. His chest is burning as he kneels in front of the toilet seat and puke gushes out from the pits of his stomach. Nkululeko and Dumisani are not the best combination, they are not people to go out with.

He sits on the cold floor with his knees up and he tries to catch his breath. His head is pounding and his eyes hurt. Fuck his whole body hurts, and that toe man.

He gets up from the floor and rinses his mouth in the sink before dragging himself back to his bedroom. Today will not be his day. He has the mother of all hangovers.

His phone is in the charger, he takes it out and turns it on. Almost 15 missed calls get reported when he opens it, but none from Amile.

Something is up. He needs to talk to his brother

about bringing her here.

How they ended up out drinking you ask, peer pressure. He's quite old to be pressured into anything, he didn't do it because he didn't want to, he did it because he wanted to. It was supposed to be one beer, but one beer turned to a bottle of whiskey and a bottle of whisker turned to shots and the aftermath is here, in his bathroom floor.

There's ululating at the gate. This is Zululand, its not something unusual, people ululate for everything. This though, it's sounds like there are bands of people here. It's literally 05:00 in the morning, why are people ululating?

He buries himself under the cover and tries Amile's number. It rings straight to voice-mail. This is the longest he's gone without talking to her and it's killing him. Jama said the king just had a harmless chat with her, there were other maidens he spoke to. It calmed him down. This

gives him an upper hand. Maybe they'll like her even more when she's introduced as his girlfriend.

He tries her again, several times. By the sixth time, he knows what to expect so he stops and puts his phone down. He's not giving up, he'll try again later, but this ululating is getting to his last nerve. It doesn't help that his room is right by the window that is directly facing the gate.

It goes quiet and he couldn't be happier to go back to his peaceful sleep. He'll wake up later.

Amile Gumedede

Mom took me to Gogo's room, locked me inside with a sleeping Siviwe and left. The house is quiet, and I can't think of anything else but to leave this place. My mother is strong, but she's not strong enough to fight this battle alone. No

one is on her side. I hate this place. I regret coming here, I hate everything, I hate gogo for sending me to that reed dance, I hate her for not marrying the king when she had the chance, I hate. I hate Nkosi for not answering his phone when I needed him and I hate Jama for not fighting for me. He saw everything but he stood and stared like a statue.

I don't know this place. But I'll learn it today, there is no way I'm staying here. I cracked open the window as quietly as I could and jumped out. A house with no burglar guards is essential in every house.

I'm hungry, I'm exhausted and I have no strength in me, but I will run as far as my legs can carry me because there is no way in hell that I will surrender into marrying the king. I can't marry a man almost thrice my age, a man grown enough to be my father, the brother of the man I love!? I can't! It will never happen.

It looks like I'm in town. I don't even know what time I is, but people are dressed already and it looks like they are heading to work, some look like they are coming back. It's probably six.

"Hi sisi, how much are taxis to Durban?" she looked at me.

"Please, I need to go home." She's looking at me like I'm mad.

Okay, I'm not wearing shoes, my hair is probably a mess, I have the sleeves of my gown tied around my waist because running all the way from home to here, it gets hot.

"Are you a prostitute?" She asked, looking ready to judge me.

"What!? No, I'm not. I really need to get home." She looked at me.

"How did you get here."

"I ran away from home." She laughed in a

sarcastic laugh.

“You seem like a spoilt brat. Go back home.”

She tapped my shoulder and turned back to her taxi line.

People are brutal out here. Is this going to work? I didn't think this one through. Maybe she's right. Maybe I need to go back home. But where is home?

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I don't know this place, now I'm overwhelmed and scared. I don't know anyone in this place, and I swear this is far from home, it can't be near where I was. I don't know if I'm walking in circles or what but what I know is I'm too old to be lost. Way too old.

I'm so hungry I might just faint and die right

here. I wonder if they've realized that I'm missing. Who am I kidding? They probably did already. It's scorching hot outside, the sun is burning through my clothes, on to my skin. The only reason why I'm still alive is I found a tap and drank water as to not get dehydrated. I could probably survive in the wild.

People are looking at me like I'm crazy. I've never met people who mind their business like this. No one is pointing at me or coming to ask if I'm okay or what. It's the craziest thing ever. I sit on the side of the gravel road and drown in my sorrows. My feet are aching from and I probably have cuts and scabs from the rocks and thornes I've been stepping on. My stomach is growling and the biggest problem of all, the king wants to marry me.

I was able to say no to Mandlenkosi, the man I love, what makes him think that I would ever agree to his madness. Nkosi better back me up.

Ugh!

I feel eyes piercing my back. I turn around and two men standing next to a tree are looking at me. They see that I see them but they don't break eye contact. Oh no, not this.

I stand up and walk fast in the opposite direction. I turn briefly to see how far they are from me and they are following me. As painful as my feet are, I pick my pace up and soon enough, I start running and screaming.

"Help, anyone. These men are chasing me."
They are also running.

I might lose my life today. They are faster than I thought, and I'm weak, my feet can't carry me anymore.

"Help!" I tried to scream but my voice is strained from this mornings crying.

Fine, I admit it, I regret running away. God please, if this is my punishment for running

away, please, just forgive me. I'll marry the king, just make these men go away, or let them no hurt me.

A white bakkie parks in front of my, a man dressed in jeans and a shirt jumps out, carries me like a sack of potatoes and throws me in the back. I scream before he closes the door, but I doubt anyone will hear me. Have I just been kidnapped?

"Please don't kill me. Please don't hurt me please." I begged.

I think I prayed for the wrong miracle. God kanti do you choose how you want to hear our prayers?

There are three men in this car. The one that took me, ones driving and the other is in the driver's seat. I'm scared.

"Are you going to kill me?" I asked sobbing. Nothing.

“Please say something. Threaten me or something. Do you want money? I can get you that, although I’m just a student and a minor, I can try get it. I was running away from marrying the king but if you want money, I can marry him so he can pay you. Please. Say something. Don’t kill me. Don’t rape me please.” Silence.

I want to scream. I’m making promises I can’t keep, I’m so scared, I start shaking.

The way is looking very familiar. I’ve cried until I stopped, now I don’t have any tears to cry. It’s not working one these men.

“Are you even going to answer me at least?” I have hiccups.

“Fine, kill me. It’s fine. I’d rather die than live a crappy life kill me.” I forcefully pulled the gun that was peaking put of the man’s waist.

I banged my head on the seat in front of me when the driver hit the brakes. The gun fell and

slid under the seat. Fuck! Did we just die! I should have died. I don't want to live! They at least owe me the decency to tell me where they will kill me at. What has become of my life?

Chapter Twenty-Three

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He's up. His phone his ringing persistently next to his head and it is slowly getting on his nerves, so he's waking up, and he'll answer. His blood goes cold as soon as he sees who is calling him. He sits up right and answers.

"MaMchunu."

"Where are you? How are you letting this happen, was thus your plan all along?" she's crying, her voice is breaking. His heart races.

"What's wrong ma, has something happened to

MaGumede? Where is she?"

"I don't know Mandlenkosi. I should be asking you, she ran away from marrying your brother and now we can't find her anywhere." He freezes.

"What do you mean?" his hands start to shake.

"Don't act stupid, I don't need that right now. I need you to find my daughter and stop all this madness. You promised to protect her." He gets out of bed and scrambles around for his pants.

"I'll do everything I can to find her." He assures, but it sounds like he's trying to convince himself more.

"As you should." She hung up.

His head started spinning and his eyesight went blurry in an instant. His legs couldn't support him so he temporarily lost balance and fell to the ground. His chest was closing in on him. He

took a deep breath to try calm down but it didn't work. Tears cascaded down his face and that seemed to anger him.

He hadn't even started but he already felt hopeless. He can't compete with Zwelibanzi Zulu, blood sibling or not. He got up from the floor when he heard a commotion inside the house, a woman screaming faintly and others ululating. He ran to open his door, only to be met by Jama, his eyes were bloodshot red and he looked ready to kill somebody.

"Get back inside." He pushed him back. He fought him.

"Amile bafo, my girl. They want my girl."

"Go inside you can't come out like this." He slapped both sides of his face and pushed him inside the bedroom. He closed and locked the door behind him.

Nkosi sits on the bed and cries like a little boy.

“Why are you crying? MaGumede is there in that room. Bamuthwalile and they are going to send cows to her home. You can stop all of that, tell them that she is yours.” Jama encourages his brother.

“I always lose things to him. He always get all the things I want. All the things I should have. He has power Nkululeko, I don’t.” Jama frowned.

“I won’t fucking sit here and listen to you tell me you are giving up. Didn’t you say you’d always protect and fight for Amile. This is how your prove yourself.” He holds his head in frustration and rocks himself back and forth.

“Okay, I go there and I tell them she’s mine. Banzi is king. He’s already taken her. I’ve already lost the fight. “

“How can you lose a fight you didn’t fight?”
Jama is fuming and kicks his leg. He sits still. He doesn’t move.

“He always gets what he wants.” His voice is filled with sorrow. He breaks down and cries.

This sight is disgusting to Nkululeko so he pulls him up and drags him out the door.

“Nkululeko leave me alone!” he screams.

He’s on the ground and Jama is trying to pull him up but he’s dead weight. The door opens and MaMzobe comes in concerned.

“Nkululeko, Mandlenkosi! What are you doing, leave him alone!” she shouts at Jama who is holding up his hand, the other one is crying.

“Tell her the truth! Say it Mandlenkosi!” he pesters.

He let go of his hand and angrily stomps out the door. MaMzobe tries to help Nkosi up but he’s in a state.

“Please say something Mandlenkosi. Tell me what’s wrong.” She stoops down to caress him.

“Tell Banzi I said congratulations on his new wife.” He used a forced hard voice.

He was two minutes away from having a mental break, or maybe death from a headache and heartache. She has no idea what this is about so she'll sit with him until he calms down.

He's failed MaGumede. He's failed MaMchunu. He's failed as a man. He didn't protect her and now she's going to suffer. He knows very well that he can do something about it. But even the thought of Amile hurting is not motivation enough to try. He knows he won't succeed, not against Banzi he won't. Banzi gets all he wants. He got MaMzobe from his brother, what's getting another wife from his brother.

Amile Gumede

Seeing Jama's face when they carried me

inside the palace, seeing how angry he looked, it gave me hope. He's going to get Nkosi, they are going to get me out of this shit and it will soon all be a little misunderstanding.

I'm in a dark room, on a massive bed. It's lit up with candles and there is a cool breeze. I'm wondering how the candles are still lit up. They gave me toiletries, I don't know who they belong to so I won't use them. They also gave me clothes, food and blankets.

I ate the food because I was hungry, but I'm not going to use all the other things. I decided to stop crying a long time ago. As soon as I saw that they were taking me to the palace, it's like they opened a tap of a fresh batch of tears because I started crying and screaming again. My voice was revived. I could scream again.

I saw the queen watching me. I don't know how she feels about this, but that look, it made me think that maybe she's against this. Maybe she

hates me. And now that I'm here, and if the king marries me, which will not happen, I'll be forever unhappy because of her. No way, not happening.

The door opened and the maid that had come to give all these things came to collect the plate. Apparently, she's not allowed to talk to me.

"Sisi, please, can I just please ask a favour. I won't run away or get you in trouble I promise. Can you please help me." I begged. She ignored me and continued walking to the door.

I got up from the bed and ran to her as painful as my feet were and got on my knees and tugged on her uniform. She gave me remorseful eyes.

"Do you know Jama?" she nodded. Good, she co-operating.

"Please ask him to come see me. No one will no you asked him to come, please. I just need to talk to him, its important." Her eyes showed that she was hesitating.

“Please, I beg you.” I have nothing to bribe her with, that often works.

She nodded in the end. My face is bribery enough.

“Thank you thank you, I’ll forever be grateful. Thank you.” She walked out and I limped back to the bed.

I refuse to use anything they give me though, maybe that will show them that I don’t want to be here since screaming wasn’t enough for them. I only ate the food because I was starving and I probably would’ve died if I hadn’t eaten.

“Thank you.” His hoarse voice whispered before he closed the door.

I’ve never been so happy to see his face. It gives me hope!

“Jama, get me out of here please.” I got off the bed and tried to limp to him.

“Stop, sit down. You’ll hurt yourself further.” My feet are fucked up.

“Where is Nkosi. Did he tell them that we are together? When do I go home?” he rubbed his already red eyes. It looks like he hasn’t slept in days.

“Mandlenkosi is...uhhm, he’s not okay.” You can see that he’s pissed off.

“Why, what’s wrong with him? Has he spoken to his brother?”

“He’s refusing. I’m sorry Amile. I tried to talk to him, but he’s giving up and I hate him for that.” I shook my head.

“Nkosi wouldn’t do that.” Pity is written all over his face.

“Don’t look at me like that Jama and tell that man to set his ass here right now and tell me that to my face.” I got up.

“I can’t. He’s not allowed here, no one is.”

“You will bring him here Jama do you hear me! You will bring him here to me now!” my heart is racing.

“I’ll bring him MaGumede.” It’s called a bitch fit, that what I’ve just had.

He scrambled out the room and I was left alone to sit and dwell in my thoughts. I don’t understand what Jama means when he says Nkosi gave up. That can’t be the case. That loves me. He promised to fight for me. This is his chance.

How sure am I that Jama was behind all of this. He never liked me from the beginning. Maybe he was pretending me this whole time.

The door opened again and Jama pushed Nkosi inside violently. He stumbled and when he saw my face, he turned cold.

“Mandlenkosi, get me out of here.” I climbed off

the bed.

“Amile sit down you’ll hurt yourself.” Jama spoke behind him.

He must shut up. I ignored him and stood up. I limped to Nkosi who was just staring at me like he was seeing me for the first time. I went closer and when I tried to put my hands on his chest, he moved back.

“Nkosi?” I called out stunned that he has the nerve to do that to me.

“My brother has chosen you to be his wife.”

“Can you hear yourself? Sthandwa Sam this is me. Look, it’s not hard. We’ll go talk to your brother, and you’ll tell him that we are together, that we love each other. We love each other Nkosi, remember?” I never beg, but him, I’ll beg him because if I lose him, my life is meaningless.

“Amile...” he removed my hands from his chest.

I feel rejected. This is what rejection feels like?

“So you are going to stand here and break the promise you made to me? Are you going to stand there and break my heart Nkosi, is that what you are doing. This is all your fault, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you, if you hadn't refused to take my fucking virginity. Was it your plan? Have you been conspiring with your brother all along! I hate you!” I limped back to the bed, feeling an intense amount of pain inside my body.

It feels like my spirit is detaching from my body slowly and I can't do anything about it. This is the same man I have laid with and looked in the eyes and said I love that is telling me to marry his brother. This is a cult.

“Get out.” I said softly, trying to push back tears.

I won't give him the satisfaction of seeing me cry. He doesn't deserve it.

“Jama take your friend and get out of my room.” My voice is strained.

I buried my head on the pillow and I heard Jama asking him to leave. The door slammed shut and I screamed out from the pain in my chest. I felt empty.

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“MaGumede, wake up sisi.” I don’t know the voice, I don’t know the smell. I’m not I’m my bed. Where am I?

“Vuka sisi uhlale ngezinqe.” I fluttered my eyelids and I was reminded of my horrible life. Why couldn’t it have been a nightmare.

“Your name is Amile?” she asked. I blankly stared at her.

“Your family is here to get you. Your dowry has

been paid and next week you will be getting married.” She chocked down that word.

I’m glad she realizes that we will be sharing a husband from now on. Do I care about what she is telling me, no, I don’t. Does it hurt that I am technically someone’s fiancé without my consent, no, not anymore. The one I love doesn’t want me. He didn’t fight for me. Life is meaningless.

“I’ll get Mgabadeli to come carry you to the car.” Right, because I’m disabled.

She held and squeezed my hand before standing up and walking out. I sat up and stretched my limbs. I looked at the very spot Nkosi was standing in and I felt the hurt all over again and tears found themselves down my face.

I hate the fact even after this, I still love him. Why can’t I hate him, or be angry at him like any

other woman that's been left by her lover.

Mgabadeli came in after knocking and asked to carry me out. I agreed. I need a bath and eternal sleep, a sleep where none of this will be real, it won't matter.

He carried me out to Siviwe's dad's car. I didn't know he was here too. He opened the door for me and Mgabadeli placed me in the backseat. The atmosphere is sombre. Mom is quiet, and occasionally she sniffs. Siviwe's dad is talking to Mgabadeli about something and after what feels like forever, he comes back and starts the car.

"Amile baby girl. How are you feeling?" He looked at me briefly. I don't even know how I should feel.

"I don't know how I feel Tata." That's what Siviwe calls him, especially when he comes back from visiting his family in the Eastern Cape. So he is Tata.

“We tried all that we could to stop them from coming. I promise you we did.” That seemed to trigger my mom because she burst into a loud sob. My heart shattered into a million pieces.

“We have failed to protect you Mile and as a parent, I feel useless. I’m sorry mntanami.” My heart hurts for them. I can’t begin how it must feel to be them, mom is breaking my heart.

Everything is just too real right now. But things don’t just happen. They happen for a reason. Maybe meeting Nkosi was meant to be, maybe he was meant to be the bridge for me too get into the royal family. That’s why it was so easy for me to reject his proposal. Maybe that’s why he didn’t take my virginity. I’m not meant for him, but his brother. That’s why I had a dream about their mother. Maybe it’s just fate and he’s the king I dream about.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

Her husband is lying on his back in the bedroom, still fully clothed and he looks stressed. She relates on hundred percent. It has been a very stressful day, its been a stressful week. She throws herself right next to him and heaves a sigh.

“I knew young girls were stubborn but not this hard.” He sighed.

“You should understand Mageba. She’s young indeed, and she probably had plans, now this is like a hindrance, a distraction, something that will draw her away from her plans. Her life was yet to start.”

“How old is she?” he doesn’t know all of this. He left it to his wife to find out.

“She’s 17.” He’s surprised.

“I knew she was young, but I didn’t think she was a minor young.” He said shamefully.

“That’s why her family fought so hard. But what’s done is done Mageba.”

“Yeah, you are right. I heard Mandlenkosi was throwing a tantrum.”

“I think he was just disappointed that you didn’t tell him you were taking a wife, that he had to find out from other people. And his girlfriend broke up with him.”

“Kanti kuqala ngaye yini ukulahlwa. Ayy uMandlenkosi uyatetema.”

“Come on baba, can you be less insensitive. He’s still your little brother at the end of the day.”

“That’s why he is the way he is, because you treat him like a baby. He forgets that he’s a man and one day he has to have a family of his own. At this moment he has a vasectomy, how will

he start a family? He has no direction.”

“Baba I just told you that his girlfriend left him.”
She defends him.

“I’m not surprised. The boy needs to grow up.”

She gives up. Fighting him when he’s like this is futile.

Nambitha Makhathini

She is exhausted, traveling by bus is no joke. The first thing she did when she got home was to sleep. Her mom didn’t pester her about waking up and cooking and whatever. She was happy she came back with that certificate that says she’s a virgin. She’s been sleeping for hours now, it’s dark outside and her mom walks in to wake her up.

“Wake up, you’ve been sleeping for too long. Go and wash your face so you can have supper.”

She wakes up.

She was still having a dream about Nkululeko. He's not an ideal person to dream about, but he occupies her mind a lot lately. That's not healthy. She doesn't want to want him.

Her phone rings just as she is about to go to the bathroom to rinse her face. It's him. She doesn't hesitate to answer.

"Nana wami?" He calls out. She has the tendency of answering the phone and keeping quiet. Sometimes he has to check if she really is on the line.

"Hello Nkululeko." She yawns.

"Did I wake you from your beauty sleep?" he sounds just as exhausted as she is.

"No, mom did."

"So I'm assuming you got home safely princess."

“I did, thank you, wena usala kanjani, did you find your wife.” He gives a lazy chuckle.

“Yeah, I’m speaking to her.” She blushes but quickly straightens her face. It’s getting harder and harder to exercise self control around him.

“Yeah right. You sound tired.” He sighs.

“I’m glad you can tell nana. I am tired. Both emotionally and physically.” She’s afraid to ask him what the problem is.

“You need to rest.” She tells him.

“I will. I don’t have good news for you though.” She frowned.

“What’s wrong?”

“Your friend, Amile. The king choose her to be his wife.” Her heart immediately stopped beating for a second.

“What?”

“It’s not looking good back here.”

“That doesn’t make any sense. Amile wasn’t at the Reed dance.”

“She was, and the king spotted her.” She’s in a state of shock.

“And the prince? What about him?” he sighed.

“He let her go. It’s the end of them. Nambitha I don’t know what I would do if that were to happen to you. You may not take me seriously but you have grown on me and although it’s not love just yet, it’s quite close to it, and I don’t want to lose you.” She shakes her head.

How easily can a man break a promise. Even the prince, a man who was so in love with Amile could just let her go just like that.

“Nkululeko, I...” he shushed her.

“I need to see you when I come back. I’ll try my best to come back before Wednesday okay?” she nodded, but he can’t see her.

“Uyezwa MaXulu.”

“Okay.”

“Ulale kahle yezwa.”

“Nawe ulale mahle mesulala.” She said in a low voice. That made him happy.

He ended the call. She sat there in disbelief. Amile must be feeling like shit wherever she is right now and she feels bad for not being there with her. It hurts that her happiness was short-lived like that. This makes it harder for her to want to pursue a relationship at all, especially with an older person. If such a perfect love story ended in tragedy like this, what is her relationship to be like?

Chapter Twenty-four

Nambitha Makhathini

School is not the same without Amile. Now I have to put up with Yonela and everyone else asking me questions about her whereabouts as if they didn't see it on the news and all over the television last week. I hate fake people, that's what all of these people are. They are fake and are chasing clout. Now they want to pretend as if they care about Amile when they didn't even share a single word with her. Bloody leeches.

I miss my friend. Not just at school, but just being with her and hanging out with her. Now she's literally four hours away, living a whole different life, it unusual. She doesn't even have a phone where she is, I can't call or text her. Nkululeko is also back in Durban and the only reason I was able to reach her was through him.

She said she was okay, but okay doesn't mean happy. Okay means surviving, but barely coping. She's putting up with it, but she doesn't desire to be there.

When I last spoke to her, she said the king, her husband, hadn't touched her yet. The last they actually spoke to each other was the wedding, and he was doing most of the talking.

It was definitely a beautiful ceremony, and I'm glad I witnessed it. It was very emotional, there was more crying than happiness and joy from our side. Only if it had been with the right person.

"Why are you so deep in thought?" she sits down next to me.

I hate my heart sometimes, because I will dislike you to the ends of the earth, but I still can't say no to you. Of all the places she could sit, she choose to come violate my peace and sanity, but I won't say anything to her.

"Yonela."

"I don't know why you are mad at me, I didn't do anything to you." I sighed. This, it's things like

this that I don't like about her now.

"Overall Yonela, you still don't see anything wrong with what you did?" she rolls her eyes.

"I apologized. Is it my fault that she didn't accept it, I don't think so." Again, my peace and sanity come first.

"I'm not going to get in between you and Amile's problems, they are yours. But I made my own executive choice to distance myself from you because your heart is that of the devils and if you were able to do such to a friend of years, then what am I to you? Please respect my decision and tone it down. Running into you is the inevitable, but talking to you, that is a choice." I stood up.

If she still doesn't see that she is the problem, the toxic one, than that's her problem. There is that Golf 7 that is going to draw me eyes.

Kodwa Nkululeko. I did the walk of shame all

the way to his car when he parked and rolled down the window. He smiled when he saw me coming. That toothy smile that tells me that he wants attention.

“Where is your bag, I’m here to pick you up.” He said as I leaned in against his door.

“No, my parents are picking me up.” He blew me a kiss and winked.

This is my biggest predicament. Nkululeko Dlamini. A man made in God’s image, because I refuse to call him ugly like Amile does, who is so charming that I feel so much for him in so little time. The butterflies should have stopped now. In fact, they shouldn’t have been there from the beginning.

“We have an ice-cream date remember nana. You promised.” You see what happens when he makes me promise things in my sleep.

“You know that’s unfair and you know it. You

called me when I was asleep.” He laughed.

“Come on nana. When are your parents coming?”

“I don’t know, mom leaves work at five.” He looks at his wrist watch.

“We’ll be back by then.” He gives me a dashing smile. I can’t say no to that now can I?

“Fine. Wait for me here.”

“Thank you nana.”

I don’t want him to see me blushing so I turn around and go get my bag. I hate being light skinned, I’m practically see through.

“So now you are busy with him.” You see, it’s things like these that make me lose interest in living.

“You can have him Yonela if you want if. Now the question you should ask yourself is does he want you.?” I raised my eyebrow.

She clicked her tongue looking behind me, I'm assuming at the car. I turn around and the man made in God's image is looking at me. Oh gosh. I went back and climbed in the front seat.

Those who want to talk, ie Yonela, they must do it to my face. She will never post anything derogatory on social media though, she got the sour part after doing that to Amile.

"What's the story with your friend. She's always bitter." He starts the car and revs it. Show off much?

"Once upon a time, she told us that she likes a certain somebody and she will get them." I said looking at myself in the little mirror. He laughs.

"I told MaGumede. Her friend is forward. I don't like forward girls, ubufebe lento ayenzayo, she's too young to be lusting over men." I stole a glimpse at him. He genuinely looked pissed. I'm surprised.

“Where are you taking me?” I swiftly moved on.

“There’s thus ice-cream place that I love so much and I want you to try it with me, maybe I’m crazy for loving it so much.”

Uhhm, hello, is this a Hlomu and Mqhele relationship. He’s a driver, he smokes, he’s dark skinned and he loves ice-cream. Someone scream with me!

“You have a sweet tooth?” I looked at him.

“Yeah, I do.” How unfortunate that I don’t.

“I actually don’t like sweet things.” He looked disappointed.

“So no ice-cream?” he gave me those eyes. Those eyes I can’t say no to.

“We can have ice-cream Nkululeko. I’ll try it but I’m not really the best judge.” He smiled again.

“I promise you won’t regret it. They make the best ice-cream ever!”

Yes, I'm not normal. I'm not that girl that craves chocolate when on their periods, or eats buckets of ice-cream when heartbroken. Not that I ever have been heartbroken. That's Amile, not me.

"How is my friend doing?" I asked him. He sighed.

"I don't know, but Mandlenkosi said we are going to Zululand this weekend so I might see her. I'll give her the phone when I see her." I nodded.

"Is she going to come back to school?" finals are approaching, we've been working hard since grade 8 for this and now she just doesn't get to write them. It's unfair on her.

"I don't know. I do know though that there is a high chance she may be staying at the palace full time and might be enrolled into a school that side so she can write." My heart shatters.

“I miss her.” I said lowly.

He put his hand on my thigh and squeezed reassuringly. I looked at his hand and he quickly removed it.

I don't think he did that on purpose. He was just trying to comfort me. I really am not used to boys, men touching me. I don't think I'll ever get used to that. Now I feel like my uniform is too short.

He parks by a shop and he climbs out to open my door for me. He left his phone lying face down on the seat and it's vibrating. I take it and when he opens the door, I hand it to him. 'Maka Azande' he looks at me in the eyes and tries to read me before looking at his phone, declining the call and sliding it in his pocket. Sus.

He takes my hand and closes the door behind me. I pull down my skirt and wait for him to lead the way. He held my hand and led me into the

shop. His hand is very warm, mine is cold. I hold on to it tightly.

He gets to the counter and orders the ice-cream. All these flavours are labelled in French but he says them so fluently. He comes here regularly.

He's also very well spoken, his English is top notch, and his accent is intimidating. My mother tongue is Zulu so I often use it at home, I also learnt to speak English at a very late age, so I don't have the most fluent English accent. For someone who was born and grew up in the rurals, he is very well spoken.

"Do you eat nuts?" he squeezes my hand again. Oh, he was speaking. The lady at the till laughs.

"Yes, I eat nuts." Oh my gosh, that is so embarrassing. Was I staring at him?

"You are going to enjoy this one MaXulu, I swear." Oh and when he calls me MaXulu!? I love to hate it.

“Which one did you get me?” I asked looking at the menu.

“The vanille noisette.” I frowned and he laughed.

“Vanilla hazelnut. I promise you it’s out of this world.” He really loves ice-cream doesn’t he.

He shows me all his other favourites and that is almost everything on the menu. That is so unlike him, I’m still stuck on him being a Mqhele Zulu vibe. We get the ice-cream and we sit down to eat.

He waits for me to have the first spoon before he eats his. I have to say, I’m impressed. It actually tastes good, and I’m used to Steers and KFC ice-cream.

“Nice?” he asked giving me a silly face.

“It’s out of this world.” He was impressed with himself.

I was enjoying the mini date-like outing. We

were having the most basic conversation about nothing, but it was so much fun, it just made sense and I was happy. He's fun to be around.

"I don't know about you but I'm going to get a cup for the road." He said standing up.

"Go ahead, I've had enough." He looks happy.

He stares at me for a short while before going to the counter. This eye contact that we keep sharing is slowly but surely getting me to go somewhere I don't want to go.

He left his phone on the table. It's vibrating again. It's still the same person who was calling. I look at it and it rings until it stops. One thing I've learned from reading adult novels is never answer a man's phone, never go through it, because you will find what you are looking for and it will hurt way more than the thought of it.

It rings again, this time, he's walking back to the table with his ice-cream. I stand up.

“We can go?” I ask.

He stares at his phone, switches it off and slides it in his pocket.

“Yes, let’s go.” I won’t ask, it’s not my place. Nambitha don’t ask, it’s not your place.

It’s almost half past four, we are on time. I’ve chosen silence as we drive back to school. He’s eating his ice-cream and he keeps glancing at me.

“Thank you for the ice-cream, I enjoyed it.” I said in gratitude.

“You are welcome MaXulu, and thank you for your time. I appreciate it.” I smiled.

The drive back to school feels shorter than it was when we left, maybe its true what they say, time flies when you are having fun. He parks the car and sits and stares at me. I look at the scar under his eye. I wonder what happened there.

“Got it from my father.” He said looking at me. He’s trying to lock his eyes with my but I keep moving them away from his. I didn’t mean to stare for too long.

“I’m sorry.” I don’t know if I’m apologizing for the scar, or for staring at it.

“Don’t apologize for things you didn’t do.” He touched it briefly, and it didn’t seem to faze him.

“You remember what I said to you Nana?” I shook my head. Nkululeko says a lot of things.

“When I said you’ve grown on me, I wasn’t lying. I like you, a lot. I’m not a perfect man, I’m not a perfect human being, but all I’m asking of you is a chance, and maybe I can grow on you, and we can grow together and maybe make love.” I looked at him and he realizes what he said. He chuckled.

“Nalokho sizokwenza phela, kodwa phela sizogala kancane, sicothoze nje MaXulu.” (We

will do that, but we will start small, just take things slow MaXulu.) I nodded. Anything he says in Zulu has me nodding. Sometimes the urge to go on my knees as say “yebo baba” is there, but we are feminists this side and we don’t submit to men!

“What does your nod mean?”

“It means I hear what you are saying.”

“Which part of it?” I chuckled.

“All of it Jama.” He smiles. I think I just pushed the right button.

“What are you trying to do to me Nana?” I smiled and looked away.

“Ngibuke.” (look at me.) I turned my head and looked at briefly before dropping my eyes.

He lifted my face and leaned in. My heart started racing. He closed his eyes and planted a soft kiss on my lips. I’ve stopped breathing, and

for a second I have my eyes wide open from the shock. He latches on to my bottom lip and softly sucks on it. My eyes automatically close and I let him.

I'm not kissing him back, I'm still very much in a state of shock. When he pulls out, I feel him staring at me. I have my eyes tightly shut. He laughs and I open one eye and look at him. He wipes the corners of his lips and laughs even louder.

"Nana?" I open both my eyes but I can't look at him. I'm shy. He stops laughing.

"You are the cutest thing ever." I rolled my eyes and turned my body to face the other side.

"I'm sorry I caught you off guard, but you just look so beautiful." I nod and touch where his lips just were.

"When are we doing this again?" the kiss or the date? I want both, very soon!

“I don’t know.” I said.

“Let it be soon nana. I enjoyed today.” He turns my face around. I look at him, his lips especially.

“We will talk.” I reassured. He nodded.

“Another one?” he asked when he saw me hesitate to get out the car.

I leaned in and gave him a soft peck on the cheek. I moved away in time, just as he was about to kiss my lips. He chuckled.

“Bye nana.”

“Bye Nkululeko.” I opened the car door and got out.

It’s another walk of shame. It feels like everybody is looking at me. Fuck I can finally breathe!

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I've been studying since I got home, locked up in my room. I need a break so I got my phone out the charger and I have a message from Nkululeko.

I can't stop thinking about you.

That involuntarily put a smile on my face. My door opened and mom walked in.

"You said you were studying but you are busy on your phone." Timing, the timing is off!

"I was mom, I just took a break now."

I was expecting her to say whatever she wanted to say, close the door and leave as always but she comes in, closes the door and sits on the bed. I switched off my phone.

"My daughter..." okay, what's wrong?

"I'm concerned about your life." I frowned.

"What's wrong with my life mom?"

“By this age, all your sisters were already caught having boyfriends and all of these silly things, and yes, I know I told you that boys are wrong and you have to concentrate on your studies, but do you even have a social life.” I laugh. She’s actually serious.

“Mama where is this coming from.”

“Amile. She just gave up her whole life now and I’m sure she hasn’t lived. I know I shield you away from all these things but kumandi ukuphila sanalwami.” I sighed.

“I know mama. And I do as much living as I can. What happened to Amile is very sad mama but it doesn’t happen everyday, I guess she was just unlucky, or maybe even blessed.”

“I don’t want you to miss out on life. Don’t deny yourself life.” Maybe that’s why my sisters all have babies, mom is strict only for a period. What happened to Mrs Makhathini?

“I’m still focusing on school mama, don’t worry about me. I’m living more than I want to.” Her eyes widened. I laughed.

“I’m living the right amount. And I’m not like my sisters, I’m not forward.” she laughed.

“They got it from their mother, I can’t complain.”

That part is definitely true. Mom had my older brother at 16. She was just lucky that dad married her. My sisters though, they weren’t as lucky.

“At this point mama, I’ll marry my first boyfriend.” She laughed.

“That’s good. But don’t rush into marriage. It’s a trap.”

I wonder what is making my mother speak like this, yeah her and dad fight sometimes, but it’s never anything hectic. They love each other. Maybe all married women speak like this.

She told me supper is ready before leaving to room. I pick up my phone and stare at Nkululeko's message.

I can't stop thinking about you too. I type and send without thinking.

My heart beat quickens and I throw it on the bed as of it's heating up in my hands. Let me run away and maybe I'll find a whole to hide in.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Amile Gumede

My body is in knots, both from last night and sleeping in one cramped up position. I slept on my side the whole night and I didn't dare move. The cold space is still there, but the bed feels emptier. He's not here, good.

I can feel something moist in between my legs

so I get up from the bed. The towel I placed on top of the bed is soaked with blood. I panic, there is blood all over my thighs. Fuck!

I run to the bathroom and open the shower. I stand under the cold water and let it wash over me. If I wasn't so numb, I would be freezing from the coldness of the water, but I'm broken to the point where cold water doesn't faze me. I gently washed my palace, I've never felt it thus sensitive, this painful. A tampon definitely won't work here, and I hate pads with my whole heart.

I get out the shower and get dressed right there in the bathroom. Okay, now I need to go and change the bed.

I find the bed changed and made neatly. Oh hell no, she's overstepping now!

"Sis Melo!" I stand at the door and call out. She's not appearing. I don't want to leave the room just as yet. I call her again and instead of

her appearing, the last person I wanted to see comes to me.

“Morning MaGumede.” I stood up straight.

“Good morning my queen.” I did the little bow.

“Come join us for breakfast.”

“I’m not really hungry yet Ma. Have you seen sis’ Melo around here?” she shakes her head.

“No, I didn’t. I can go look for her. And please, stop calling me ma.” I internally roll my eyes.

Yeah, she’s sweet and all, but she’s still old enough to be my mother so I respect her like my mother.

“Yes my queen.” I bowed.

She shook her head and chuckled before walking down the passage. Where the heck is this lady and my sheets. I was going to wash those myself, imagine having bloodied towels and sheets thrown into the laundry room like

that, the whole staff will be gossiping about me and when the staff knows, the news will quickly spread that the king's new wife is lazy and unhygienic. I can see it already.

"My queen, you called for me?" she comes in carrying a tray of breakfast. I stand up to meet her halfway.

"Yes, good morning. I was wondering where you took my sheets?" she curtsies when I take the tray from her. Yes, I'm hungry.

"I changed them and put new ones, my queen." I've given up on trying to tell her to stop calling me her queen. But she insists.

"Sis' Melo I know you were told to look after me and clean up after me, but I am more than capable of doing that myself, and no, I'm not trying to take away your job, but some things I need to do for myself, as a girl. I can't have you taking away my dirty linens. Especially those

types of dirty linens. Those are private and sacred.”

“I’m sorry my queen, but it’s just that the king sent word for me to change them and bring them to him. I’m sorry for overstepping.” Oh hell no.

“Did he say why he wanted them?” she shook her head.

Obviously, she wouldn’t know that. She would never question the king, even I as his wife would never do that.

I’m someone’s wife, I can never get used to that.

“Okay, it’s fine. Thank you.” She nodded and bowed.

It’s weird that I’m getting this treatment. I’m only 17, if my instincts are right, she might be in her late twenties or early thirties, she’s lived longer than I have but she lives to serve me. That shit right there scares me.

I won't say I'm getting used to being here, but the comfort of this room, I'm getting used to that. This is where I want to stay forever. Just like how I refused to go and eat breakfast with the rest of them.

I personally won't stand to look at that man after last night. The most painful night of my life. I should be crying and tearing this room apart, but instead I don't feel anything.

Everything feels completely different and I feel like a brand new person. Maybe this is what it feels like to be a woman. I'm just bothered about the sheets. What does he want to do with them, does he practice witchcraft? That is the only reason why he would want bloody sheets with his cum stains.

Nkosi, he's not someone I want to think about, I avoid and block him out of my thoughts as much as I can throughout the day. He must stay wherever he is. I will search for happiness until I

find it here, whether it is in this, or hidden in the garden, or maybe the piles of books I've finished, I'll find it. Maybe I'll find happiness in my husband. I don't want to, but maybe I will.

I sum up the courage to take my tray to the kitchen. I do a little run down the passage, but it's hard to sneak through here because the floors are wooden, every little sound can be picked up very quickly. I get to the kitchen, and the helpers are sitting around the little table having breakfast. I don't like calling them maids, it feels degrading.

"Good morning." I greet as I walk in. They all stand up and bow.

"Good morning my queen." Sis Melo is standing there looking so guilty.

"Sis Melo please don't worry. Continue having breakfast, and show me where the broom is please." They all looked at me.

“No my queen, I will clean the room.” She stood up.

“Sit, that’s an order. Please show me the broom and the mop.” She sits down.

I don’t know her name, but she stands up and she goes to fetch the things for me. She brings them and bows.

“Thank you so much.” I take the things and go back to my chamber.

This is the best way to keep myself distracted because if I constantly sit and just not do anything, I will think of too many things and then I will start crying and I don’t want that, so I’d rather keep my mind off things. I’ve changed a lot since I came here. I’ve started reading, and I hate to admit it, but I’m enjoying it. I’ve spent less time studying for exams, because at this point, I don’t even know if I’ll continue with school as a whole. That’s not in my hands to

decide anymore, I belong to a man. I have to start thinking about kids, and starting families now, I'm someone's wife. The hardest part though, has to be that I'm the king's wife.

At only 17, I'm now forced to sleep with a man, I'm expected to fall pregnant for him multiple times after the other and grow his legacy. It is emotionally taxing, and last night was the beginning of a very long, hard and emotionally taxing journey. When he slapped my thighs and made me lift my knees up in the air, it confirmed to me that it will never be about love, that I only serve one purpose, and that is of a sperm dish and a child bearer. Brains and beauty don't even matter at this point, only the fertility of your womb.

"Amile what are you doing?" what happened to MaGumede?

"I asked sis Melo to leave it. I wanted to keep myself busy." I turned to look at her. She looked

astonished

“Leave that, she will continue. I want us to talk.”
Not this again.

She’s not a bad person, but I don’t like her too. She didn’t do anything bad to me, I just don’t like her. She led me to her husband’s office. Oh no, I don’t want to see him.

“Don’t worry, he’s not here.” I sighed out in relief.
She stared at me. Wow Amile!

She opened the door for me and led me inside. I waited for her to sit before I settled in the chair.

“Why do you always lock yourself up in the room. You should come out sometime, maybe take a stroll in the garden, get some fresh air.” She looked me in the eyes as if she’s studying me.

“I love my space Ma, but I’ll take a walk one of the days.” I’m lying. There is no way I’m leaving

my room.

And there is no way she called me out so she can tell me I'm being anti-social.

"I wanted to speak to you about school.

UMageba asked me to ask you if you want to go back. He said he's afraid of you." I cracked up.

She also joined in and laughed. What a joke.

"Its good to see you laughing." She's looking at me smiling.

Yeah, it also feels good to laugh. I haven't done that in a while.

"So what do you want to do?"

"I would love to go back Ma, I've been working hard to get her and I've been looking forward to it. I've already studied hard." She smiled in pride.

"I understand, and it's a good thing that you want to go back. You kids of nowadays hate school. If my son was given the option to drop

out he would do it in a heartbeat.” I chuckled.

It’s not even about that. If I wasn’t so close to writing my finals, I would’ve dropped out, but I’ve been working since grade ten for this, giving up would mean that I was wasting my time.

“Okay, I’ll talk to him and we’ll pull some strings.” Must be nice.

“Thank you Ma.” She nodded.

“The children are here visiting for school holidays and they can’t wait to meet you.” She says standing up.

“Schools opened last week ma.” I’m confused.

“They don’t go to school here. They are in a boarding school in Swaziland and the terms are different.” Oh okay, makes sense.

I stood up and followed her. As we were walking down the passage, I could hear little voices making noise. Kanti how many are they?

“Hey, why are you guys making so much noise!” she banged the door.

“Amile, these are the Zulu rascals. That one in the corner is Vukani, my hormonal first born...” she introduced them.

I don't remember all their names because there's so many of them but they all gave me such a warm welcome and they gave me hugs. I feel so loved, Vukani was the only one who didn't bother to greet.

“Don't mind him, he's still angry at his father for missing the wedding. He'll warm up to you.” I nodded.

I don't even think it's about the wedding, maybe it's because him and I are the same age.

“Mamncane, can you please play with us?” one of the youngest rascals asked tugging at my dress.

“No, mammcane is an adult, she doesn't play

with children.” They all give me pleading eyes.

“It’s okay Ma, I’ll play with them a little bit. What do you want to play sweetie?” it’s no secret that kids love me, and I love them back just as much. And technically I am their step-mom and aunt.

“Skipping rope.” Oh goodness. Lord help me.

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I’m actually having fun playing with them. They are so energetic, and I can’t match their energy, but I feel so alive. I haven’t had this much fun in a long time.

“Okay, I’m tired now guys.” I put the rope down.

“Lulu please get me a chair to sit so I can watch you.”

She ran inside the house and came back with a plastic chair. I sat down and watched them play.

I wish I could go back to this age, and have no problem, whether it be about it school, or adult life problems, adult problems that I am now a part of. I've been forced to grow up without my permission.

And there comes the source of my adult problems. Grow up Amile, he's not a factor in your life, don't let him be a factor in your life other he will have power over you. What in the fucking world is he doing here? Yes, it's his home I know, but it's my home now too, and he has to respect my boundaries.

MaMzobe comes running out the house as soon as the car parks in the yard. She's so happy to see him.

"My son!" she engulfed him in a hug.

I assume she's giving him such special treatment because of the last time he was here. Man's was kak drunk he didn't even know how

to spell his name. I was so disappointed in him, and more than anything, I pitied him. The state he was in was disgusting.

All the kids were happy to see him too, I can't say the same about myself, I'm only happy to see Jama. After greeting MaMzobe he came to bow in front of me. I smiled.

"My queen." He's mocking me, haha very funny.

"Hi Jama. How are you?"

"I'm amazing, I should be asking you." He really looks happy.

"I'm okay." He bowed again.

The helpers are coming out to get their bags. Must be nice being royalty.

The prince walked passed me like he doesn't even know me. I knew seeing him again would be hard, but I didn't anticipate it to be this difficult. There are a thousand daggers in my

heart.

“Let’s go inside now, it’s late and it’s getting cold.” MaMzobe announced.

I agree, that’s enough playing for the day, I need rest.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

It has been established that Balungile doesn’t like Amile. She saw it in the way she was looking at her playing with the children. She kept throwing little comment like: ‘a makoti doesn’t jump around like that,’ or ‘she’s too glamorous to be a Zulu wife.’ Personally, she’s happy with Amile’s conduct, and as a human being in general. She loves her like the daughter she never had.

She won’t tell her husband, because he knows

how Banzi can be sometimes, he is very quick to call someone out for nonsense and anything that has to do with his precious Amile will be sorted out in a hurry. He doesn't say it, but he cares for her. She can see it in the way he talks about her, and how he worries about her. The feeling between them is pretty much mutual.

"Do you ever sit down my love?" she didn't even hear him come in.

"If I want things to be perfect, then I have to do them myself." Her hands are dirty. She's making chicken.

"I saw Mandlenkosi's car outside." He asked leaning against the counter.

"Yes, he's home. That's why I'm cooking."

"Some people are lucky. My wife never cooks for me." She laughs.

"Since when do you know your way to the kitchen my king." He laughed.

“I live here MaMzobe.”

“Okay, fine. Have you gone to greet your wife. There’s two of us and you vowed to treat us the same.” He brushed the back of his head and looked down.

“Hambake Zulu. You’ve seen me.”

“Where is she? Did you talk to her about school?” He’s trying to avoid going to her.

“Yes, I did. I’ll tell you later. I’m cooking for my son, go to your wife.” She nudged him with her elbow he laughed.

“Okay, can I get my kiss first.”

“Come.” He leaned in and gave her a lingering kiss on the lips. She nudged him again.

“Go.”

He forces his body to leave the kitchen. Where have you ever seen a grown man, a king nogal, scared of a teenage girl. Wonders never cease.

Amile Gumedede

Unlike Gogo's house where you have to hurry up and shower before the hot water is finished, I can shower for as long as I want. It would be better if I had a bathtub. Yes I appreciate showers, but baths are life. We all need to soak once in a while.

I step out and realize I left my towel in the bedroom. Great, now I'm going to make a mess all over the room. I tip toe to the bedroom. I was shocked to see the king sitting on the bed looking at his phone. I literally got such a fright that I slipped and fell on my buttocks.

"Ouch!" I could've shut my mouth but the intense pain I felt was insane.

He got up in a hurry, worry lines etched on his forehead. He assessed my naked body.

“Oh my goodness are you okay?” he held out his hand for me to hold.

I started crying. I’m not crying because I’m hurt, but because this is so embarrassing.

“I’m okay, this is embarrassing, I’m so sorry.” He laughed but I had tears in my eyes.

He leaned down and picked me up. He smells amazing.

“What were you doing?” he placed me on the bed. Someone dig me a hole so I can crawl in.

“I forgot my towel on the bed.” He laughed and shook his head.

“Are you sure you are okay? Are you hurt?” he touched my thigh.

“No my king, I’m okay. Honestly.” He nodded and moved away from me.

Only then did I remember that I am naked. I probably should start getting used to this, he

saw me naked last night, it was the first of many nights.

“Are you going to join us for dinner today MaGumede.” I wrapped the towel around my body.

I’m still afraid of him, just like he is of me. So this is awkward for the both of us.

“Yes my king. There is no thunder storm today.” He laughed.

I wasn’t trying to crack a joke. I tried to stand up to fetch my toiletries but he stopped me.

“Where are you going?”

“To the bathroom to fetch my toiletries Bayede.”

“Sit down, I’ll get them for you.” I nodded and looked down.

Now people are going to say that I’m making him weak. Oh no. Not that they see what goes

on behind the walls of this chamber. He loosened his tie and undid the first two buttons of his shirt.

He looks so much like Nkosi and having to see him in the man I supposedly have to spend the rest of my life with, it's crippling. I don't know the king that well, but their personalities aren't the same, it's their looks that have me thinking of Nkosi all the time.

He handed me my toiletry bag and a pink dress. How cute, he picked out my dress for me.

"Thank you Bayede." I bowed my head.

I've noticed that he doesn't say anything when I call him like that, but whenever I bow my head or bend my knees as a sign of respect, he laughs or scoffs at me.

"Can I also freshen up here wakwami." I looked up. Why is he asking, and what did he just call me?

“Yes my king. I will go get your toiletries.” Am I not fooling myself.

“Thank you wakwami.” He said it again.

There you go, I’m someone’s wife. I started getting dressed and he sat on the bed. Why isn’t he going to take a shower?

He’s probably waiting for me to go get his toiletries. Right. I get dressed in a hurry and leave the bedroom to go find MaMzobe. I find her in the kitchen and she is cooking up a storm.

“Lucky you have taken a shower.” I chuckled.

“Ma, I’m sorry to disturb you but I’m here to ask for baba’s toiletries. He said he wants to freshen up.” She smiles.

“Oh okay, come with me.” She wiped her hands and led me to their bedroom upstairs.

Wow, it is stunning. It perfectly lit up, so neat and clean. Not to mention that the bed is

massive.

“He needs to get toiletries that will stay downstairs so he doesn’t have a problem.” She said looking through the wardrobe for his things.

“You should also start redecorating your room. It’s always been a vacant room and no one used it so no one bothered to decorate it. Now that you are here, you can give it your own touch, just while you live here.”

She’s basically talking to herself. I don’t have responses to all the things she’s telling me. Talking about redecorating and him having toiletries in there is a reminder that I’m actually here to stay. Oh hell no.

“Thank you ma.” I bent my knees when she gave me his things.

She led me put the room and she was rushing to go back go the kitchen. Why is she cooking when there are helpers and a paid chef in the

palace.

I could smell his cologne even before he appeared and I wanted to turn and go hide but it was too late. He's heading my direction and he's wearing a very bored expression. My heart started racing and all those feelings surfaced. I looked down and listened to my heart beating in my ear. I walked past him and I thought I was done with the hard part...he grabbed my hand.

"Nkosi." I whispered.

"I'm sorry." I looked at his hand that was gripped around my wrist. He looked at it and let go.

His eyes, he looks broken, almost dead on the inside, but he bought that upon himself when he as a man that promised to love me, failed to fight for me and our love. He let me down. I walked away and I could feel his eyes drilling the my back. Ozenzile akakhalelwa, kukhalelwa

ozumekile. He didn't fight for me when he had the chance. His sorry means Nothing to me.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Amile Gumede

It feels like I've taken five steps backwards from what I thought was healing. He triggers me, I wish he wasn't here, I wish he would just disappear from the face of the planet. And I think the hardest part about this is that I have to be strong, and pretend like everything is okay because if I ever break down, everyone will be in my face asking me what the problem is, and I want to keep to myself for as long as I can.

I gave the king his belongings and he went to take a shower. I might just start considering the redecorating idea MaMzobe suggested. This isn't my style, it's too dark for my liking. I like

light, this place feels like a dungeon.

Why out of all days did I choose today to attend dinner, on the day that this man is here. I can't say his name anymore, it triggers me, everything triggers me. He's sitting directly across me, and he's making things hard for me because he keeps looking at me.

"MaGumede, I was looking at schools around Durban and I found a few good ones. I'll call the principals tomorrow." So I'm not going back to my old school?

"What about my old school ma?" the unidentified man stole a glance at me.

"We need to find a school I'm Durban North." I frowned.

"What were you thinking MaMzobe?" the king asks.

I need to start referring to him as my husband, that's what he is. But who am I kidding, he's

almost triple my age, I should be calling him baba.

“She should move in with Mandlenkosi. That way, he can also help her with exams. Do you know that this one was a straight A student?” I know all about it, in fact I’m a straight A student too because of his magical powers.

“I don’t have a problem with that.” It speaks.

Couldn’t he have run his mouth like this when his brother told him he was marrying me. Let me guess, he also didn’t have a problem with that.

“Do you know any good schools in the area?” the king asks.

“Yes, there’s quite a few. She’ll find a school.” I internally roll my eyes.

He’s good at pretending, and I’m dismally failing. Maybe he isn’t pretending, I just fooling myself. Maybe I’m here suffering on my own, and he’s

fine.

“Where is your girlfriend, the one who you said you would introduce to us.” I choked.

This chicken is spicy, and the king’s question is just as spicy.

“Are you okay?” he touched my back. I’m coughing hysterically. He hands me a glass of water.

“I’m okay, thank you.” I wiped my mouth.

MaMzobe is looking at me. I’m sure my face has turned red. I hope she doesn’t suspect anything.

“Did I make it too spicy?” She asked concerned.

“No, it’s okay Ma. It’s delicious.” The man clears his throat.

“Well Bhuti, she left me for a better man, richer and much better than I am.” He looked directly at his brother, he avoided all eye contact with

me.

Oh no, he wouldn't dare.

"How do you know that?" MaMzobe asked.

"She told me. I still see her. I saw her today and she looks happy." He steals another glance at me.

I won't let him win this, no way.

"Can I please be excused, I'm exhausted." I pushed my chair back. MaMzobe chuckled.

"As you should baby. You were very active today." I laughed with her.

"I'll join you just now." Shivers ran down my spine when he said that and grabbed my hand.

In fact, my whole body went corpse cold, but I smiled and bowed. I looked up to see Nkosi's hard face.

Mandlenkosi has suddenly become my worst nightmare, how does that even happen, how

does the man you love become your worst nightmare? In my case, he didn't keep his promise, he didn't honour his end of the deal.

And yes, he didn't owe me anything, he made a promise, but he wasn't forced to keep it because nothing was binding us together. The only man who has vowed to protect and keep me forever is my husband, his brother. I'm just stupid for believing he would actually fight for me. Were there any signs? Maybe I missed them.

Our relationship was perfect, we were happy. Or at least I was happy with him. This, it makes me question every single moment we spent together, it makes me question whether he ever loved me or not. This has to be the worst heartbreak, and I don't think I will ever heal from this pain.

"Wakwami, are you asleep?" he's sitting by the foot of the bed, taking his shoes off.

I'm buried under the covers crying. I don't want him to see me. He taps my leg.

"MaGumede?" he calls out.

Maybe if I ignore him long enough, he will leave me alone.

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I'm walking barefoot again, and I vowed never to do that again after that day. It took a while for my feet to recover, but that was only because I had to dance at my wedding a few days later. That's a day I don't want to talk about.

I'm now standing in front of a big black gate, and I can't see what's on the other side of the gate. All I can hear are the beating drums, like the drums of sangoma ritual. They are very hypnotizing. The question I should ask myself is what am I doing here, every journey has a purpose.

“Someone please open for me!” I shout.

I can hear footsteps and they are growing closer and closer to where I am. I don't even know why I'm setting myself up for a trap like this one.

“Who are you and why do you dare shout at the gate of the ancestors.” A bold voice registered in my ears from the other side.

“It's Amile Gumede.” I have no idea how they will know me.

But I guess they do because the gate opened and I was met with a woman draped in cloths. The traditional sangoma printed cloths.

But I guess they do because the gate opened and I was met with a woman draped in cloths. The traditional sangoma printed cloths. She smiles.

“We've been expecting you.” Expecting me, does she know me?

I followed her up the driveway. This is a very big fancy house. Nothing like I've seen before, and it only has one story. It is absolutely beautiful, and extremely clean.

I follow her to her hut. There's a drum being played on the inside, and it's very loud. I stop at the door and look at my feet. Yes I'm barefoot.

"Come inside." I bow my head and go inside. The first thing my eyes land on when I look up is his body laying on the mat. Only his upper body is on the mat though, his tall self can't fit on the mat.

I hurriedly go kneel in front of him. He looks like he's asleep.

"Is he alive?" I touch his cheek, his body is warm.

"Yes, but he's not well. I'm glad you came. He's been asking for you." I felt a wave of emotions come over me.

"What's wrong with him, will he be okay?" My

voice slowly breaks.

“Only when you take him home. He needs to go home, and be with his wife.” I sniffed and wiped my tears.

“I can’t take him with me, he’s too heavy, and I came here by foot.” I feel so useless. He looks so peaceful, he doesn’t look sick at all.

“Then it’s going to be the longest journey of your life my girl. He has to go home. Take him home or he’s going to die.” I shook my head vigorously.

“No, don’t. I’ll go with him, but what happens if he dies on the way?”

“He won’t. If he knows he is headed home, he won’t. Just take him home before it’s too late.” My hands are shaking and I feel weak all of a sudden.

I got up and pulled his hand. How the hell am I going to carry this man, he’s so tall, so heavy,

my body is going to snap like a twig.

He's so heavy on top of me, I'm dragging his legs on the ground, this will definitely hurt when he wakes up.

"My Queen." He mumbles. That seemed to give me strength.

"We are going home." He coughed.

"I love you." He declared.

"I love you too." I rubbed his back.

I made it to the gate by the grace of God, but this is only the beginning, the journey back home is very long.

I felt something dripping in between my thighs and I looked down. What the hell is happening!?

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I shot my eyes open only to find this man huffing and puffing on top of me. What the hell is he doing?

“Shh, go back to sleep.” He kissed my cheek.

I tried to push him off but he’s heavy. He lifted my leg and placed it on his shoulder. I felt him go in deeper and he gave a loud throaty groan.

“Bayede!” I don’t know if I should be screaming his name like this, but it kinda feels good.

“You are so warm MaGumede. I love it here.” He confesses and I almost burst out laughing.

But I can’t take my mind off what he’s doing. He keeps hitting this one spot and it’s driving me crazy. I dig my nails in his butt cheek and lift my bum to meet his strokes.

“Fuck!” He shouts.

Oh no, I made the king swear. That means I’m doing something right.

It slipped out and he rested his forehead on mine, his sweat is dropping down my boobs.

When the hell did he undress me?

He slipped in back in and I moaned out, biting my lower lip to suppress them. I don't want the whole house to know what I'm doing.

He's moving his waist in a slow motion, almost like he's making love to me, he's moaning in my ear and I'm loving it. I could feel my blood rushing to my lower body and I knew I was close. I wrapped my legs around his waist and he went deeper.

"Bayede!" he locks his lips with mine for the first time and his lips are soft.

I moan in his mouth and my legs start convulsing. He presses my skittles as he continues to move slowly inside of me.

This has to be hands down the best orgasm I have ever experienced, and I've had quite a few!

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I'm afraid to open my eyes, I know he's still next to me. Why didn't he leave? I can't face him after last night. I willingly had sex with him and I enjoyed it. There's a lot going on.

He rolled out of bed, great! I heard his footsteps heading to the shower. This is the only chance I have to run away, but where can I go, he's going to be suspicious if he doesn't find me here, and I can't go anywhere without taking a shower, I'm reeking sperm and sweat.

I sit up. My linens need changing again, they have cum stains all over. That dream I had before I woke is creeping me out. This man is constantly in my dreams, and I always confess my love to him, and he loves me back. I'm his queen. These dreams are slowly becoming too common, and they are slowly linking up. First he 'broke' my virginity, then he made me the queen, after that he turns into a green snake that

wraps itself around my body, threatening to kill me, which almost happened in real life at the Reed dance, now he's sick and he wants to be taken home. Who is this man, why does he have such an impact on my life, why does he control me like this? Is he the reason why I'm here?

"Good Morning MaGumede." I look up and he's already dressed. He's avoiding eye contact with me.

The feeling is mutual.

"Good Morning my King." I bowed my head. I don't think I'll be able to get off this bed. My legs have no feeling and my coochie is burning up.

"I'll get your maid to bring you breakfast." He said looking at himself in the mirror, fixing his collar. I should be doing that.

"Thank you my King." He turned and looked at me.

“I’ll see you later wakwami.” He gave me a little smile. I returned it.

Our eyes still aren’t meeting. How awkward.

He came to give me a kiss on the cheek. Before he walked out the room. I think this has sealed the deal, and it has made it much clearer to me that I am actually someone’s wife, that I have obligations to fulfil as a wife, one of them being sexual pleasure.

At least last night he wasn’t selfish like the other day, he actually let me enjoy myself. I’m surprised he’s got good stroke game. It’s amazing actually, I literally have nothing to complain about. He doesn’t look very promising with his little pot belly.

Nkululeko Dlamini

“Babana” little hands are slapping his face gently. He’s been trying to ignore him but she’s persistent.

“Daddy is up Azande, I’m just resting my eyes.” He said in a sleepy voice.

“Azande stop bothering your father, he’s tired.” She came into the room.

He opened his eyes and he saw his daughter who was sitting on the empty side of the bed.

“Come, let’s go.” Her mom tried to pull her away but she started crying.

“Leave her. Come here princess.” He carried her and she snuggled on his chest.

When he arrived last night, she was asleep and she didn’t get to see him.

“Must I bring you breakfast?” she asked staring in awe at her two favourite people.

“Yes please mama.” The only reason he loves

coming here is because this lady treats him like a king. But he loves his daughter to the ends of the earth.

“How are you my baby. When Daddy got here last night you were sleeping.”

“I was so tired Daddy. Mommy took me to the mall and we played many games...” she continued to babble to her father.

Azande is only 5, but she has stories for days. Her and her brother are only a few months apart. His players tendencies got him where he is now. He loves his children though, and he went back to school just for them, all he does us for his little family.

“Azande let Daddy eat his breakfast.” She handed him the tray and sat on the bed. Azande climbed on her lap.

“Nisheshile ukubuya this time around.” She starts the conversation.

“Yeah, I wanted to see my Azande and Banele.”
She gave a faint smile.

“I know I don’t tell you this often but you are a good dad.” He smiled.

“Thank you.” He doesn’t hear it often because she’s always bickering with him.

She bickers with everyone, she was the main reason why her and Vumile didn’t get along, and still don’t get along. She’s feisty, he likes them feisty.

“I wanted them to come visit me in Durban soon. I already spoke to Vumile and she agreed.”

“Are you trying to pressure me by saying that?”
he laughs.

“No, Nontando, I’m not pressuring you. I’m just letting you know. I’m close to writing my exams and I just want to spend as much with them as I can.” She nods in agreement.

“It’s okay daddy.” That’s what she calls him, only because Azande calls him that.

“Thank you mama.”

He handed her the tray when he was down eating and she took it back to the kitchen. When she was gone, he took his phone and called Nambitha.

“Good Morning Nkululeko.”

“What happened to Jama?” she giggled.

“I like Nkululeko, not Jama.” He smiled.

“I had a dream about you MaXulu.”

“What was it about?” she asked curiously.

“In this dream, you told me that you love me, and that you would give me a chance to love you. Won’t you make my dreams come true nana.” She laughed.

“I’m not God Nkululeko, I can’t make dreams come true.”

“You can make mine come true by saying yes, say yes nana.”

“You’ll get your answer when you come back.”

“is that a yes MaXulu?”

“Go clean out your ears Nkululeko, I said I’ll tell you in person.” He laughed.

“Okay, it’s fine nana, tease me. I’ll call you later okay?”

“Bye!”

“Daddy look at this!” Azande screamed running into the room.

He quickly dropped the call before she spoke any further. He’s crossing his fingers that she didn’t hear anything.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

Last night was the second night in a row he didn't sleep in his bed. It gives her comfort to know that he's with Amile, and not out where he can't find him catching diseases and whatever else there is to catch. They have to visit Celemba.

"Excuse me mister." He was trying to walk past her in the dining room but his sneaking skill aren't that good.

"Wakwami." He looks so guilty, it's amusing.

"Good morning." She mocked.

"Good morning sthandwa sami." He gave up and went to where she was sitting and gave her a kiss on the lips.

"How did you sleep?" he asked her standing behind her.

"I slept like a baby. It's nice having the bed all to

myself.” He laughed.

“So you don’t want me anymore?”

“I didn’t say that my love, I’m just suggesting that you sleep out more often.” So it doesn’t bother her that he was making love to another woman the whole night.

“Its fine MaMzobe.” She stood up and fixed his tie.

“You did this yourself right.” He chuckles.

“You know I can’t live without you.” She pecked his lips.

“I can’t live without you too, and wherever you go, I’ll go.” It is very seldom that you find true love like this one, and she thanks God every night that she found a man that she loves and loves her back.

“We need to go visit Celemba before MaGumede goes back to school. I’m hoping to

fund her a school by next week so she doesn't miss out on much. Exams are fast approaching."

"I'll let you handle that, but why do we need to go see Celemba?"

"Just for a consultation to see if we are still on the right track. We also have a new member of the family that has been introduced to the ancestors and we have to know how they feel about that. And you haven't done a tea for Bayede and Bhut Langa." He nodded.

"There's been so much going on, but you are right, we'll go see him today when I come back from the council." She nodded.

"And tell Mandlenkosi that he has to come with us."

"Last time he refused, he definitely won't agree now."

"Tell him it's an order. Last time it was all about

him and he wasn't there. I don't want that again."

"Okay Mageba. I'll talk to him. Have a good day." She gave him another kiss.

"I love you." He said.

"I love you too."

He was about to leave when he remembered something and turned back.

"I need a favour." He looked desperate.

"What my king?" she laughed at his facial expression. This definitely has something to do with Amile.

"Please ask her maid to bring her breakfast."

"No problem." He exhaled.

"Thank you."

He's warming up to her now. The fact that he can spend a whole night with her means they

are taking a step in the right direction.

Mandlenkosi rushes into the dining room.

“Has bhuti left?” he doesn’t greet.

“Yes, he just walked out.” He sighed defeated.

“Good morning.” He said a while after.

“Morning son. Did you have a good night.”

“I did my best Ma.” He joined her at the table.

Soon enough, the maid was here to serve him with breakfast. She sent out the message to Amile’s maid for her breakfast to be sent to her room. That seemed to spark Nkosi’s interest.

“Why isn’t she joining us?”

“She said she doesn’t like coming out her room. I understand totally, she’s new here and it’s not easy adjusting to this life. We just need to be patient with her.” He nodded.

“Talk to me about this girl. What did you do to

her?” he chuckled nervously.

“Why do you assume that I was the one that did something to her?”

“I know that no girl would up and leave you for a better man. No man is better than you.” He laughed again.

“I guess that it was both our faults then Ma, because I didn’t fight for her as hard as she didn’t fight for me.”

“So you didn’t love her?” he sighed in distress.

“I loved her. I still love her with my whole heart, but the way things happened, there was no way I would’ve been able to get her back. It hurts but I’m a man. I’ll get over it.” He brushed it off.

“Don’t brush off your feeling Nkosi because they will eventually catch up to you and you won’t be able to deal with them. Attend therapy if it gets too much for you.” He believes in therapy, he’s done it before and it worked. He

really might need it again.

“If she was the one for you, she will find her way back to you, no matter how strong the forces keeping you apart are.”

She had to learn that the hard way, so she makes no mistake of not telling someone in the same situation about it.

“We are going to see Celemba today, and your brother has asked you to come.” He shook his head.

“No.” that’s Mandlenkosi for you.

“He doesn’t want a repeat of last time.”

“First of all, this nyanga of yours is fake, all the things he prophecies don’t come to life. He’s using you guys to get money. Secondly, none of the things he said would happen to me have happened. I have no reason to go there. You also shouldn’t go back.”

“You say this because you’ve never believed in all these things. You are a scientist Mandlenkosi, and we understand that you don’t believe in it, but it’s your culture. And your brother believes in it. You have to support him.”

“I do believe in sangoma’s, just not Celemba. That one is a fake nyanga. I won’t participate in things that don’t bring essence into my life.”

She laughed. Mandlenkosi is just being himself. Celemba has been the royal seer ever since Banzi got on the throne, and nothing has gone wrong. His only downside is that he can’t seem to find Langaletu’s wife, but they do believe that it will happen soon, she can’t be that far.

Amile Gumede

I was able to take a shower and change my linens before sis’ Melo brought my breakfast. I

need to stretch my legs and the best way to do that is to go to the kitchen and leave my tray, but I don't want to run into certain people. At this point, I'd much rather run into Baba instead of him. Baba, I think that's what I should call him.

All of this is awkward for me, but I have no choice but to adjust, this is after all my new life.

I made it to the kitchen without running into anyone, and I thought I had succeeded, but the devil knows my name.

"Amile, please." He blocked me from leaving the kitchen.

I'm not worried about the shit he has to say, I'm worried about someone walking in and suspecting something going on between us.

"Mandlenkosi, let me go. I don't want to talk to you. I have nothing to say to you."

"Okay then listen." I tried to push him out my

way but he's standing still.

"Desperation doesn't suit you..." he interrupted me.

"Look I'm sorry for what I said at the table last night."

"Are you done? I don't anyone walking into this." At this point I'm defeated.

"Meet me in the garden please, just so I can explain." I really want to say no, my pride wants to, but my heart is saying something else.

"Ngiyacela MaGumede." I got instant butterflies, but I don't want them.

"Don't call me that." He lost the privilege to call me that.

"I'll stop calling that if you say yes."

"Fine, move." He moved out of the way.

"Thank you." I was already half way down the passage. His more of an idiot than I thought.

I thought I was safe, but no, I just has to run into MaMzobe.

“Morning ma.” I faked a smile.

“Morning sweetie, why do you look so flushed, did Melo bring you breakfast?” I touched my cheeks as if I would see them.

“Yes ma, she did. I’ve eaten already.”

“Oh okay. Maybe you should get some fresh air.”

“I’ll go to the garden.” She smiled.

“We are going to go to see the royal seer later, will you join us?” she’s giving me a choice?

“I don’t know ma. Am I needed?” she laughed.

“You are a member of this family, of course you are needed, but I don’t want to force you to go if you don’t want to.” I might as well start participating then.

“I’ll go, it’s fine.” She looked happy, relieved.

“Thank you. Now I have to convince Nkosi before Banzi comes back otherwise he won’t be asking.”

She said that to herself more than she was to me. Like she drifted away for a bit.

“Okay, as you were.” She patted my shoulder and walked past me.

Where was I? I was on my way to the garden. Before that I need something to keep me busy. I know Nkosi is going to irritate me when he gets there. How did I even agree to this? My heart is a stupid organ.

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I found a very pretty serene spot here, it has a bench and everything. There’s a hedge right next to it and there are white roses growing

from it. MaMzobe was right, this is the most exquisite garden I've ever been in. I don't really pay attention to nature, but being here, it is amazing. There are other houses similar to this one in the far distance but you can barely see it with the mist. I don't understand how there is mist at this time. I'm guessing those are the other wives houses.

I'm here with my book. The one that is taking me years to finish. I'm a slow reader, I take my time and stop literally every two minutes. I'm not used to words, I like numbers better. That's why I read a page, then stare at the nature for relaxation.

"Thank you for coming." He slides onto the other side of the bench.

I seriously can't believe this is the same man who claimed to love me just a few weeks ago. We are acting like strangers.

“A lot has happened between us Amile.”

“Not a lot Mandlenkosi, you happened to me. You didn’t fight for me like you promised. We are here because of your cowardly behaviour and empty promises.” He kept quiet so I also shut my mouth.

He exhaled loudly like he wanted to say something, but kept quiet again.

“Amile.”

“Stop saying my name if you have nothing tangible to say.”

“My apology doesn’t mean anything I know, but there isn’t anything I could’ve done.”

“Nothing? What do you mean nothing Nkosi. He’s not some stranger or monster, he’s your fucking blood brother. He wouldn’t wanted you to be unhappy. He wouldn’t have taken your girl. But he didn’t know. You didn’t tell him.”

“Zwelibanzi always gets what he wants, I knew I didn’t stand a chance Amile. You have to understand.”

“No, I don’t understand. And you know what Nkosi, I don’t even want to understand anymore. You have proven to me that you aren’t a man, that you make empty promises, promises you can’t keep up with.”

“Amile...”

“I said don’t say my name. I’ve been trying to play this moment out in my head for so long, I had so many things to say to you, but I literally have nothing to say to you. You have broken me Mandlenkosi, I hope you can see how much you have hurt me.”

I didn’t want to cry in front of him and give him the satisfaction of seeing me hurt, but it hurts like hell and I’m done pretending like it isn’t.

“I hate you for putting me in this situation.”

He sat there quietly. Like always he has nothing to say.

I can't be blamed for anything that happened. There isn't anything that I didn't try. He just didn't want to fight for me, and that is entirely his fault. It's a pity I had to suffer.

My first heartbreak.

Now I have to leave my serene spot because he is filling it with negative energy. I wipe my tears as I head to my room. I'm taking long strides hoping to get to my room quicker, I just want to let this lump stuck in my throat.

"MaGumede." She called out when I walked past the office. Can't this woman let me be.

I hate these loud wooden floors. I hate this whole house.

"I've got great news for you sweetheart. I found you a school and you will be starting next week." My heart sank.

She looked at my eyes and noticed that I was crying.

“Are you okay?” that question was just all I needed to hear.

As I was shaking my head, the tears involuntarily cascaded down my face. She pulled me into her embrace and rubbed my back. I miss my mother, I miss my life, my life where I was just Amile, not MaGumede, not Nkosi’s girlfriend, not the king’s second wife, just Amile Gumede, just a girl doing her final year in school, getting ready to go start her new life of independence in university.

Makhosazane’s only daughter.

“Do you want to have some rest maybe, and then we can talk when you wake up?” she asked me in a soft motherly voice.

I nodded. I don’t think I have a voice to speak.

I feel so out of place, I feel overwhelmed and I

miss my family, I miss my life. Nothing is going to take this feeling away.

She walked me to my room and helped me lay down. She covered me with a blanket and told me to rest. She's probably the only reason why I'm still alive, she's making this bearable. I appreciate her presence.

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He's looking at me with hope in his eyes. He's sitting so far from me, I want to get closer but it's like he keeps moving away. I want the meaning of the look in his eyes. I want to understand why he looks like that when I've given up. When I have no bone in my body that tells me to go on.

"My king?" I call out to him.

"A queen doesn't give up. My queen doesn't give up." I shook my head.

"Nothing is going right my king. Why can't you

just help me?”

“I’m here. Just come and find me.” He waved his hands in the air. He had that dapper smile if his that just told me that everything is going to be fine.

He looks healthier here, but I want to get closer to him. Why can’t I get closer to him.

“Don’t come here.” I frowned. Why is he stopping me?

“Why can’t I come? I want to go wherever you go My King.” He flashed a smile.

“I’ll be back my queen. Wait for me there.”

“Wait? You said I must come find you but I must wait too?” he laughed.

“You aren’t hearing me. It’s okay. Sit there and look pretty my queen. Wait for me, don’t move a finger. When I come back, we will go home.”

“You’ll come back?”

“Yes, I will. I promise.”

Oh lord how I hate that word.

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“MaGumede.” His cologne has filled the whole room. I don’t need to open my eyes to know who it is.

“I’m sorry I wasn’t here earlier. How are you feeling?” he rubs my arm in reassurance. He cares.

“I’m okay my king.” I have become a professional liar. Officially.

“I think maybe before you go back to school, you should go visit your mom in Durban. How about that?” his eyes show nothing but concern.

The tears started again. He looks like he’s just committed the biggest crime. He looks guilty.

“Please don’t cry.” He pulled me to his chest and I cried. His heart is bulldozing his chest by

the way.

“Thank you my King.” How ironic.

He kissed my forehead and rubbed my back.

When did we get here? I didn't think we would get here.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Amile Gumede

Durban here I come!

I can't wait to see my family, I'm super excited. I don't even mind sitting in the car with these people in silence. It's fine, as long as I get to see my family.

The silence is awkward though, we've been driving for almost 3 hours now, in this car its just Mgabadeli, the husband and myself. He's

sitting on his side and I'm sitting in mine.

The king always travels with escorts so there's another car following behind us and it has the guard and Sis' Melo.

He insisted that he was going to escort me, and help him settle in before I start school next week. I don't know why MaMzobe didn't come. Maybe it's because the children are still home, but I would've loved if she were here.

"Mgabadeli." His baritone voice echoed in the whole car.

"Yes sir." I don't know why he calls him sir, everyone else him calls him Bayede.

"Can we make a stop at the shopping mall."

"Yes we can sir."

"Thank you."

He opens a compartment on his side and took out a gift bag. I don't want to look at him.

“MaGumede, nakhu okwakho. I hope you like it.”
I turned and took it with both hands.

“Thank you my King.” I wasn’t planning on opening it but he was looking at me with those eyes.

“You can change it if you don’t like it.” Why is he so scared I won’t like whatever it is that’s in here. It seems expensive, especially because it’s heavy.

I took it out of the bag and it was a box. When I looked down on it, my heart leapt. A whole Apple nogal!

“You don’t like it?” he’s asking because of the shocked look on my face.

“No, I love it, thank you Bayede.” He smiled.

I don’t want to act over excited and tell him that it’s what I’ve always wanted, he doesn’t need to know that.

“Your other gifts didn’t arrive on time so I asked Mandlenkosi to get them for you so he’ll give them to you.”

Such an anti-climax, why did he mention his name.

No, I’m not letting that ruin my mood, I’m happy. He’s buying my happiness and I’m perfectly okay with that.

We are back to silence, he has his phone out, doing whatever he that he’s doing.

We arrived at Gateway. Mgabadeli came out and opened my door for me. I’m assuming the husband is not coming with me.

Understandable.

“I’ll wait for you here MaGumede, go get anything that you might need.” He handed me a card.

Not just any card, a private wealth card. I’m used to it, Nkosi gave me his all the time. I

looked at it and it had my initials. I frowned.

“Go wakwami, we are going to be late.” He chuckled at my facial expression. It really isn’t funny.

I thanked him and followed Sis’ Melo into the mall.

“Do you need anything?” I asked her as we walked.

There’s a guard walking behind us. That is what has become of my life.

“No, I don’t my queen.” I will never get used to this treatment.

In fact, many people in here are staring at me.

I haven’t had a phone to go on social media these past three weeks to know what they have been saying about the kingdom and the King’s new wife. But from the way they are looking at me, they know me very well.

I thought this was where rich people shopped, and rich people mind their business, don't bother themselves with looking and talking about people like me. This is making me uncomfortable and I don't think I like being I public anymore.

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I just decided to get some snacks for my mom and toys for Siviwe. I couldn't wait to leave that place. More than anything, I wanted to run away from the piercing stares and the different treatment I was given.

They literally cleared a whole teller so I could pay without standing in line. It's ridiculous, but it saved me time. Now I get to go and see my family.

We are finally on our way home. I can see my

old school, and all the places I loved going to. We really could've just bought all of these things at Musgrave, but if the husband prefers Gateway, then Gateway it is.

The air here is different compared to Zululand. It's much more polluted, there is a mixture of smells in the air, it feels like home. Three weeks away from home is way to long.

Mgabadeli comes to open the door for the husband as soon as he parks I'm front of my flat building. When he's out, he reaches out for my hand and helps me out the car.

We are traveling in style, we were driven in the royal cars, the ones Nkosi was apparently in on my birthday. This has drawn attention to us. I can see people leaning out of their windows looking, and some pedestrians standing taking videos on their phones. I know some of them, not by name, just by seeing them around.

He lets me lead the way and I go and buzz the intercom so mom can open for us.

“Who is this?” I see hospitality towards guests is still not there.

“Take a guess mama.” She went silent.

“Amile? Is that you?”

“Come open for me.” She didn’t even waste any time, she dropped.

The husband looked nervous, I wonder why.

It’s not cute what MaMchunu is doing, keeping the king waiting like this.

After what felt like forever, she came down, and opened the door.

“My baby!” she engulfed me in a tight squeeze and she started crying.

The all pain and emotions I’ve have holding back just came over me. Especially when she started praying over me, thanking God over and

over, I felt myself going weak.

When she was done, she kissed my forehead and then finally acknowledged the king's presence.

"My apologies Bayede for keeping you waiting outside like this." She doesn't mean it, it's written all over her face.

"No worries MaMchunu. Take all the time you need." He replies in a mocking tone.

I don't know what it is that has happened between them, and quite frankly, I don't want to know. But that, that was clear like the sky that they don't like each other.

Nambitha Makhathini

Nkululeko is here. He called and said he's parked at our usual spot. I've been avoiding him

the whole week. He came back on Tuesday and he's been wanting to meet up so badly because I promised to give him an answer, the answer I don't have.

I was finally going to go out to him today, and let what I feel when I see him decide what I want to say. This could be my first boyfriend. I actually like him more than I am letting on.

But my mother is home and I literally have no excuse for wanting to go out.

My phone is ringing again and I know it's him. I've silenced it now because if my mom hears that I'm on the phone before asking to go out, she'll know that I'm going to do something I'm not supposed to be doing.

"Nkululeko, I can't come out, my mom is home." I whispered into the speaker.

"Tell her you are going to her son-in-law. She will understand." This man thinks he has jokes.

“I’m dead serious.”

“Then lock your bedroom door and go out the window.”

“Are you crazy, I’m not doing that.”

“Then find a way nana. I’m not leaving this time.” I sighed.

I understand that he’s frustrated because I’ve been avoiding him but he’s being unreasonable. Now I have to think of ways to leave and go to him.

“Fine, I’ll be there in five minutes.”

He said thank you before hanging up. Mom is sitting in the lounge watching TV. I walk past her and go to the kitchen. She calls out.

“Ma.” My heart beats faster.

“Are you busy, I want to send you to Mrs Shezi’s house, she has a parcel for me.”

“No I’m not.” Jackpot.

“Okay, hambake mntanami.”

I didn't hesitate to run to the gate. The stars have aligned. His car is the first thing I see as soon as I stand at the top of the driveway. I do a fast walk to him. The street is awfully quiet today, it's surprising.

I get in the front seat and before I can greet, his cologne does.

“Nana.” He smiles. I roll my eyes, trying to suppress the smile that wants to form on my face.

“Nkululeko you are lucky my mom sent me out, otherwise I wasn't going to come.”

“I wasn't going to leave until you come out, trust. I have the whole day.” He's lying. He doesn't. Part of his job description is to look after prince Mandlenkosi.

“Well, I don't have the whole day.” I said.

“Then it’s a good thing that you are the one who has something for me.” Oh shit.

He used his fingers to turn my face to him. He flashed me a smile.

“You look beautiful.” I folded my lips to suppress the smile.

“Thank you.” He leaned in and pecked my lips.

Nicotine! Nicotine! Nicotine!

I could taste it as he sucked on my bottom lip gently. My heart was racing and I wanted to kiss him back, but I’m afraid of failure. I’ve never done this before. He stops and looks at me.

“Follow my lead.” I closed my eyes and nodded.

He gently pulls my bottom lip in between his teeth and then goes on to suck it. I open my mouth and suck on his top lip. Our lips are locking and I feel an intense amount of heat rising from the tip of my toes to the top of my

head.

I want him closer so I put my palm on his face and wrap my arm around his neck. I'm getting comfortable, and this feels amazing.

His hand rests on my bare thigh and he caresses it gently. That is giving me goosebumps all over my body and I suddenly feel cold. I don't stop him. His hand travels all the way to grab my bum, but he does that by sneaking it under my dress. I can feel his hand on my skin. His hand is warm.

He's being a little less gentle with the kiss and his breath is getting heavier as he squeezes my bum. His hand then leaves my bum, and gradually sneaks in between my thighs. I try to keep them closed so he doesn't touch what he wants to touch, but his hand finds its way on the hem of my underwear. I pull out of the kiss.

He removes his hand and when he opens his

eyes, they are red.

“Look what you are doing to me MaXulu.” He pointed to his pants.

I was afraid to look down, but my eyes wanted to see. His front is poking out. Jesus take the wheel.

“I want you to be mine Nambitha. Please just give me a chance to make you happy.” I’ve never heard him call me by my name. It’s strange.

It’s stupid for me to keep trying to fool myself. I know very well that I like him.

“Okay.” He looked at me in the eyes. I looked away.

“Okay what?” he asked.

“I’ll give you a chance. But we have to take things slow Nkululeko.”

“No rush nana. Thank you.” He pulled me in and

kissed me again. It wasn't long though.

I found myself looking at his hard on again. I swallowed hard, causing him to laugh.

"Does it hurt?" he nodded.

Okay now I feel bad. He kissed me again.

"Don't worry about me, I'm a man." He adjusted himself in the seat.

That probably has to be the sexiest effortless movement a man has ever done.

I need to leave this car.

"I need to leave now, mom sent me somewhere." I probably have to run there now.

"Let me take you."

"No, I appreciate it but mom's friend likes to talk so I would rather walk." He nodded.

"Keep your phone on, I'll call you when I get home." I nodded. He leaned in and stole another

kiss.

That's my new favourite thing, kissing his lips. I said my goodbye before climbing out the car.

I almost had a heart attack when I saw my mother standing on the driveway of the house in her pink gown looking at me climbing out the car. She has her arms folded across her chest and she doesn't look very happy. Well fuck!

Amile Gumede

Siviwe also cried when he saw me, he actually bawled his eyes out and that broke my heart. I didn't think it affected him like this. He cried himself to sleep.

Mom had cooked and she insisted that she would dish up for us. I think she just wanted me to stay longer. They are still being very sour

towards each other. They are able to hold a conversation though. The husband is filling her in on what the plan is for school and all of the arrangements behind that.

Because I'm still a minor, he is now solely responsible for me until next year. They even had my surname changed to Zulu, and that's the fucked up part about all of it.

She's not complaining about the fact that they had me changing schools, in fact, she looks like she is happy because this one that I'm going to is a private school, and anything private is associated with good quality education.

I can't tell that he wants to go now, he's bored.

"And is she going to be a boarder?" she's not asking me all these questions. They are for him.

"No, she's going to live with my brother, Mandlenkosi." She looked at me. Yeah, I know mama, I know.

“You don’t have a problem with that?” she’s asking me.

“Yes I don’t mind.” Considering that fact that only she in this room knows about Mandlenkosi and I, she’s concerned about the possibility of something happening.

But they obviously think she’s asking because he’s a man and I’m a woman.

“Mandlenkosi will also tutor her in maths and science. He’s a scientist and he’s very smart.” Yeah, we know all about it.

“Okay then.” She’s still looking at me.

“MaMchunu, sesicela indlela. We still have to go back to Zululand.” He’s lying. They are only leaving tomorrow after they take me to my old school to fetch my transfer card.

“Thank you for bringing her Bayede.” He acknowledged her.

“MaGumede, you’ll find me in the car.” He said.

Him and Mgabadeli walked out the flat. Mom looked at me.

“How are you coping my baby? You look good.”

Her eyes are dressed with sadness.

“I’m okay mama. It gets better with each day.

I’m just glad I get to go back to school.”

“And how is your heart?” I sighed.

“My heart hurts.”

“Because of him?” she’s talking about Nkosi. I nodded.

She held my hand.

“It will get better my princess I promise you. I’m glad you are back. I’ll visit you whenever I get the chance okay?” now I don’t want to leave.

“I miss my life mama.” She stood up and hugged me again and I cried.

I had to hold it in the whole time we sat here, but now it's just the two of us, I have no reason to pretend. It hurts.

"I feel like I failed you my love and I will never forgive myself for it."

"It's not your fault mama. Maybe it was just meant to happen." She pulled back and wiped my tears.

"Did the dreams stop?" I shook my head no.

"Have you told them about it?" I shook my head again.

"You should my baby. Speak to Bayede, he'll help you. Maybe you have a greater purpose at the palace." Maybe I should have gone with them to the royal seer.

"I will." She hugged me again.

"I love you baby, I love you my little girl."

"I love you too mama."

Can time just stand still for a minute.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Amile Gumede

It took everything in me not to cry in front of the husband when we left Glenwood. I officially am part of the women who are called imbokodo.

Give me my flowers while I'm still alive people.

We have arrived in Durban North and I really am not looking forward to seeing Mandlenkosi. In fact, I still can't wrap my head around the fact that I have to live with him. I have to see him 24/7 for the next 3 months. Traumatic if you ask me.

I have to act like I don't know this place so I'm walking right next to the husband. When we get in the elevator, he holds my hand. I look at our

hands intertwined and I actually don't feel anything. It doesn't bother me. I look right ahead and when we get to the floor the first thing I see is his face.

He's holding helium balloons and they have welcome. There are also roses on the table behind him. Oh this is what it is, we are pretending.

They greet each other in a brotherly hug before he came to greet me.

"Sawbona MaGumede."

"Sawbona bhuti." That was the hardest thing I've ever said.

He offered to shake my hand. I couldn't even lock eyes with him.

The last time we saw each other, he made me cry and feel like shit.

"Welcome to your temporary home, I hope you

like it.” I can’t believe I have to be civil with him even when I wish I could rip his head off.

“Thank you.” My voice broke.

“Ndabezitha will you be spending the night?” he asks.

“Yes, tomorrow we are going to fetch the transfer card.” He nodded.

I wonder where Jama is. And where are all these people going to sleep, there are only four bedrooms in this apartment.

He gave me the roses and he offered to show me to my bedroom. He was leading me up upstairs. There is only one room upstairs and it’s only his room. Oh no don’t tell me.

“Thank you Mageba.” The husband thanked.

He must be feeling like shit, leaving us in his room. The fact that his brother is going to sleep with me in his bed, traumatizing. We could’ve

just booked a hotel, he is moneyed.

“I have no doubt that you will settle in quickly.” I looked around the room.

Yeah, it still looks exactly the same. I’m sitting on the same bed that he failed to make me a woman on.

“The house is beautiful my king.”

Maybe I should tell him about the dreams as soon as possible. Today maybe.

He picked up a photo frame that was on the dresser and it is that picture of their mother that I found in the bathroom. He walked to where I was sitting and he sat next to me.

“This is our mother. She died when I was 26, Nkosi was 11.” Shocking.

That means he is 43 years old. We have a 26 year age gap. She actually died on the year I was born.

“She was beautiful.” He nodded.

“She was. I see her when I look at you.” He looked up from the picture and he looked at me.

Jama also told me the same thing once, and I didn’t believe him.

“Is that why you choose me at the Reed dance.” I drew up the courage to ask.

“Yes.”

That is not something I was expecting. Maybe mom was right when she said I might have a bigger purpose to fulfil in the royal family.

“We wanted to have a welcome ceremony for you before you started exams, but the royal seer advised us against it, saying it was too soon after the wedding. But after you finish your exams, we’ll slaughter a goat and thank the ancestors.” That’s sweet.

Why is he being so open and honest?

“I want to see you happy MaGumede, I don’t want to see you cry because then I would have not fulfilled my duty as your husband, and that is to protect you and take care of you.”

“It’s going to take some time to adjust Bayede, it’s not an easy transition.” He nods.

“I know wakwami.”

I definitely don’t see myself falling in love with him. I know I will never love him like I love Nkosi, but I will learn to live with him, and appreciate all that he does for me.

“What plans do you have for next year? Have you applied anywhere?”

“I had applied to the university of Cape Town and Free State, both accepted me provisionally but they are waiting for my matric results.” Do I see myself continuing with my studies? No, there is a low chance I will.

“You are going to move so far?” he’s open to

the idea?

“No my King, I’m rethinking some things.”

“Like what?” he looked at me.

“Furthering my education. I don’t think I want to go anymore.”

“That is a very serious decision to make MaGumede, are you sure?”

“I don’t know my King, I still need to think about it.” So I’m guessing he wants me to continue my studies.

“Let me go get our bags so you can freshen up.” I stood up.

I walked out the room and made my way down the stairs. Mandlenkosi was sitting in the kitchen and it looked like he was lost in thought.

“Bhuti.” He looked at me like he was ready to send me to my grave.

“Is he upstairs?” I ignored him.

“I’m looking for Bab’ Mgabadeli, I need my husband’s bags.”

“Stop pretending Amile, stop what you are doing.” He lowers his voice.

“Have you seen him?” This one thinks I’m joking.

“Are you going to have sex with him in my bed Amile?” my heart literally sank. He’s making it hard for me to ignore him.

“Nkosi...”

“Are you?”

“I can’t guarantee that, if he wants it, I’ll give it to him. Now tell me where I can find Bab’ Mgabadeli. I need my husband’s bags.” He pushed me, he gave me no choice.

He is responsible for the pain written on his face, and I have absolutely nothing I can do about it.

He pointed me to the keys of the kitchen

counter and I'm guessing that means I have to carry all those bags by myself. I went down to the basement and I only took my cosmetic bag, his bags and my pyjamas.

When I went back up, he wasn't in the kitchen anymore, in fact, the house was clear. I went straight up to the room and I found the husband talking on the phone. It's quite evident who he is speaking to. His voice is much more hushed, its softer and gentler when he speaks to her. He loves her, it is no secret. Just like I will never love him like I love Nkosi, he will never love me like he loves her.

He reports that he has to go and that he arrived safely. He bids her a good night and closes it off with an 'I love you'

I feel bad for having to cut his calls short.

"Thank you MaGumede." He said when he turned back to look at me.

Nkosi had all the closets cleared out and they are empty. I won't put the husband clothes and things in there because he is only leaving tomorrow but I need to start unpacking. I came with most of my things here and now I realize that I shouldn't have.

He goes off to shower after I've prepared his things for him. I place the rest of his toiletries on top of the bedside table so he can use them when he comes back. I open the drawers to check if they are cleared out and they are, but there is a picture facing downwards.

When I turn it around, it's a picture of Nkosi and I. I don't remember this picture, but when I look at it, it looks like the day where we went to the movies during the holidays. We were supposed to be studying that day but we were both lazy and we decided to ditch the books and go watch a movie. It was his idea, he felt confident that I was ready for my exam and I needed a

break, and that was the break he gave me. This was probably taken on his phone, that's why it looks so perfect.

I was happy here. It's hard to believe that it was just a few months ago. It seems like it's been years since I've smiled and laughed like that. The husband can't see this, so I shove it at the bottom of my handbag and place it in the wardrobe. I pull myself together and wipe my tears before he comes out the bathroom.

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We didn't have sex in his bed. I think he was just exhausted as I was, that's why I slept through the night, even with him snoring out loud. That's one of the reasons I don't like sleeping with him. He snores, he snores like an asthmatic person.

I woke up earlier than I normally do, and I felt

fresh. I took a long shower and when I came out, he was still sleeping, snoring at that. I left him and went downstairs, I wanted to make breakfast.

The television is on downstairs and there are bottles of beer on the table. I walked closer, and there he was, passed out on the couch, his mouth wide open and drool gracing the side of his face. He's definitely drunk.

I shake him and he gets a fright. He smiles when he sees my face.

"How much did you have to drink last night." He laughs out loudly.

"Why do you care?" I slapped his arm.

"Shh! People are sleeping." He gave a loud belly laugh.

"Usaba indoda yakho hee?" his slanted eyes are looking like slits and they are bloody.

“Go sleep in your room.” He scoffed.

“Which one, the one you had sex in last night, huh. Is that what you did Amile, you had sex in my bed?” okay, he’s still very drunk.

“Come.” I pulled him up.

I’m glad he didn’t fight me, but he’s fucking heavy! I can’t carry him. I don’t even know where he’s sleeping. To make it all worse, he’s crying. Now I’m here trying to drag a drunk grown man because his heart is broken. This is not what I signed up for.

“I apologized, why can’t you just forgive me Amile? Why are you crucifying me for not being in control of my life. I had to do it. I had to let him have you.” They say drunk men have all the facts.

Maybe I’ll find the answers I’m looking for.

“I love you.” It’s very hard for me to hear all the other things he’s saying because he’s crying.

As I drag him to his room, Jama opens his door and he looks like he just woke.

“So much noise.”

He saw that I was carrying him and he came to help me.

“All of you leave me alone.” I fear alcohol and the things they do to people.

He tries to fight with Jama but he’s obviously weak because he’s not in the right state of mind. We take him to the therapy room and put him on the bed. I’m huffing and puffing. What a workout.

“I’m sorry you have to see him like this.” Jama apologized.

“How often is he like this?” I ask taking off his shoes for him.

“Almost every week.” I feel terrible.

And what does he mean he didn’t have a choice?

I left the room before the husband woke up, Mandlenkosi was causing a big ruckus that could've waken up the whole house and it's not even 07:00 in the morning yet.

I found my way to the kitchen and started by preparing porridge, Mandlenkosi is going to need it when he wakes up. I haven't had porridge in a while, they don't serve it at the palace.

Sis' Melo woke up just as I was fixing the husband's bowl of porridge and she actually felt bad.

"It's really fine, we were all tired. And I just woke up early." I reassured.

"It won't happen again my queen." She bowed.

She doesn't want to get rid of this habit. I leave her and take the porridge upstairs.

It seems like he just woke up because he's still stretching.

“Good morning Bayede.” I kneel in front of him and hand him his tray.

“Good morning wakwami.” I stand up.

He takes the swab and wipes his hands and looks at his porridge devouringly.

“Thank you MaGumede, I don’t remember the last time I had porridge.” He’s smiling like a little boy.

“You are welcome Bayede.”

I start opening the windows and curtains, letting the sun shine through and the fresh air grace the room. Today is such a beautiful day.

He seems to be enjoying it. It’s literally just porridge, why is he enjoying it so much?

“Have you eaten yet?” he asks me.

“Not yet my king.”

“I like Bayede better.” I blushed and looked away.

“When you call me like that MaGumede, my heart races.” Is he courting.

I giggled.

“Come here.” He places the tray on the bedside table and pats his lap.

I walked to him and sit on his lap.

“Feel it here.” He places my little hand on his chest and his heart is beating quite fast. I looked at him.

“That is what happens when you call me Bayede.” I giggled again.

“If I continue then you are going to have a heart attack.” He laughed.

“Then I’d die a happy man.” I can’t believe we are flirting.

I can feel his thing growing under me and that means only one thing. He looks at me in the eyes and I look down from embarrassment.

“Ongipha kancane wakwami.” He sneaks his hand under my dress and touches my mound over the lace material.

I swallowed hard. He starts kissing my neck, biting it softly. His other hand is rubbing me down there and I can't help but moan out lowly.

He lays me on the bed and takes off my underwear and stares at my palace like he's ready to tear it apart. His eyes are getting smaller and he's growing harder. He helps me remove my cardigan and dress and marvels at the sight of my breasts.

He doesn't kiss my mouth, he only did it once and it was the most passionate kiss I've ever had. He just kisses the crevice of my neck and plays with my nipples in between his fingers. I hate being kissed on the neck, but I can't tell him that so I let him be.

He takes of his pyjamas and he steadily

positions himself at my entrance. I'm slowly getting used to the fact that this is my life and I have to feed him when he wants. He paid for it anyways!

He slides in and I gasp when I feel his whole length inside of me. Our eyes lock for the first time and he starts to move slowly on top of me. My moans get louder and louder with ever quickening stroke he serves.

Mandlenkosi will have to forgive me, but having sex with my husband is not a sin.

Nambitha Makhathini

I'm afraid to come out my room. Mom woke up early today and she's in the kitchen, the same place I have to be in to prepare my lunch for school. If I don't come out, I'll be late.

I don't know how to face her. She didn't say anything last night after she saw me coming out of Nkululeko's car. She only said I must go inside. I don't even know if she got her parcel or not. I messed up big time.

I open the door and walk to the kitchen. I greet her but she doesn't reply. This is the same woman who was in my room saying she's worried that I'm not living my life enough, why is she shocked?

"I'm sorry mom." I apologized in a hushed tone. I don't want dad to hear.

"Nyori wani Nambitha?" I cleared my throat in embarrassment.

"I'm sorry for disrespecting you mama."

"Is there something in dating your age mates? What's wrong with them?" I kept quiet.

"You also want to fall pregnant and dump your children here after he leaves you? Didn't you

learn your lesson from your sisters?”

“Ma I didn’t do anything with him.” I defend.

“Yes, you didn’t do anything now, but he’s a man, he knows what this thing tastes like, he will want it. After he has gotten it, he will leave you.” She touches my mound over my uniform.

That is an African mother for you, everything on your body is theirs.

“I’m not stupid mom, I know how boys operate.” She almost gave me a backhand slap, but I ducked.

“You are talking back now?” I kept quiet.

“Hlukana nalomfana Nambitha, because if you fall pregnant, I will disown you.” (Break up with this boy.)

I know she means it. Why did it have to be with my first boyfriend?

Chapter Thirty

Amile Gumede

The session was greatly satisfying, and now while he takes his shower, I need to go make breakfast.

It looks like Sis' Melo has been waiting for me to come back, now I feel bad.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting."

"It's okay my queen."

"Has anyone else woken up?"

"Mgabadelo and Jon didn't sleep here my queen. Bhut' Nkululeko is up." I'm assuming Nkululeko is Jama.

I never knew that was his name.

"Please chop these for me."

"Yes my queen."

I want to make porridge for Mandlenkosi. He must be feeling like shit wherever he may be. I dish up for him and I mix it with lemon. I know this is going to kill the hangover. I made it extra runny too so he can vomit all of these toxins out his body.

I took the tray to the therapy room and he was still sleeping in the same position we left him in. I shake him.

“Nkosi.” He groans.

“Wake up and have breakfast.” He groaned again.

“I don’t want breakfast.”

I removed the cover from his body and he wrapped himself up in a ball.

“Vuka bo! The only way you are going to get better is by eating.” I went to open the windows and the curtains, letting in some sunshine.

He cried out.

“It’s too bright!”

“Wake up.” He sat up and held his head.

He looked at me like he was going to murder me. I’m not scared of him.

“Take this.” I handed him the tray and he looked down at the runny porridge.

“Eat so you can go visit the toilet bowl.”

“Why are you doing this for me?” I don’t know, why am I doing this for him?

“Get yourself together Mandlenkosi, this isn’t you.” That’s all I said.

Sadness dressed his eyes.

“I miss you Amile.” I miss him too.

“I’ll be back to check on you. Please eat.”

I walked away. He kept on calling out to me but I ignored him and walked on. If I stay any longer,

I'm going to start crying, and I don't want to cry anymore.

My heart rate increased when I saw the husband sitting in the lounge. He was watching the news on TV. I'm so glad I cleared the lounge earlier.

"Is Mandlenkosi up yet?" he asks me. My heart is beating in my ears.

"Yes, he up." I won't say that he's hungover.

"Please tell him that he needs to come with us to fetch your transfer card at your old school."

"I will Bayede." I went back to the kitchen.

What I've noticed about these two is that they hardly ever talk. The husband always sends word to MaMzobe to pass it on to him. Only when it is critical do they talk. What kind of sibling relationship is that.

I finished making breakfast, so with the help of

Sis' Melo, I set the table.

I didn't want to go in and out of rooms calling these men to come and have breakfast, I'm someone's wife, I can't be barging into bachelor's rooms. The husband is already at the table, I've served him his food and he is eating.

I go knock on Jama's door and ask him to come join us, he said he would come. Now I have to go call Mandlenkosi, and I'm not looking forward to that. I knock on the door.

"Bhuti, breakfast is ready."

There is silence. As I am about to turn and walk away, the door opens and he stares at me. He is holding the tray in his hands, the one that had porridge.

He looks drained, but he's taken a shower and changed clothes. I take the tray from him and walk in front of him. I go leave it in the kitchen and I come back to join them at the table.

“What day is it today?” Nkosi asks. I don’t know what they are talking about.

“Its Friday. The school is open. You will be coming with us.”

“I have work.” He’s lying. He doesn’t work on Fridays. He only works from Tuesday to Thursday.

I looked at him.

“So you are going to go to work smelling like a brewery?” I cleared my throat.

“Mandlenkosi you never do anything for this family. You refused to go see Celemba, you never come home and now you are turning into a drunkard. What is going on with you?” he actually looks pissed.

Mandlenkosi has turned mute.

“Mom didn’t raise you like this. Do you think she would be happy to see you like this?” Nkosi

looked up with rage in his eyes.

“Don’t talk about mom.”

“I’m going to talk about her Mandlenkosi because this is not how she raised you.”

“She didn’t raise me like this. It was you. You made me this person.” He banged the table.

This is getting out of hand.

“Bayede, please.” He was about to stand but I stopped him.

Mandlenkosi is breathing heavily behind me. I don’t even want to look at his face.

“Calm down, both of you.” I’m too young to be caught in between two grown men with unresolved issues.

They both calmed down.

“Thank you.” They are too old to be bickering. There is definitely something underneath this constant bickering.

“Tell him he’s going with us.” The husband says to me.

This man is petty. Nkosi doesn’t even look up from his plate. I feel so sorry for him.

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It’s break. Why did we have to arrive during break when everyone is going to see me. I’m going to be the talk of the school.

We used the office entrance, and the office is directly facing the matric area. The only way out is to walk past the matric area back to the parking lot. As the two cars park behind each other, I see them walking out of their seats to get a closer look.

“These people are your friends?” the husband asked.

“No, but I was in class with most of them.”

Nkosi is in the other car that is being driven by Jama. Mgabadeli comes to open the door for the husband and he helps me out of the car. Teachers have now left the staff room and are congregating in the front office.

I’m sure they can’t wait to see the learner who snagged a king. I’m walking behind the husband and Nkosi is behind me too. They greet the husband with bows and my reg teacher comes to greet me.

“My king. My prince.” She bows in front of them.

“Bayede this is my class teacher and physics teacher Mrs Cullen.” They shook hands.

“Lovely meeting you. The reason behind my wife’s wonderful results.” She blushes.

Did he not just refer to me as his wife, why is she blushing?

“The principal is waiting for you this way.” She led us to the principals office.

She indeed is waiting for us. There is a big table set up with fruits and all of those things. Haibo, this isn't a social event.

She welcomed us and told us to have a seat. The husband is too polite, it shows that he is a peoples person, he lives to make other people happy. He won't decline even though he knows he has to go back to Zululand at 12:00. It's almost 11:00 now.

“It is an honour having you here my king, and thank your for bringing your wife, our star student of matric.” Lies.

She didn't even know I existed before this happened.

“We don't come here with good news though.”

“Are you taking her out?” she looked disappointed.

“Yes, we are here to fetch her transfer card.”

“That is unfortunate, she is one of our best leaders and she produces pleasing results.”

Shame man, she’s only saying this because now her school won’t be as famous as it was if I was still attending.

They gave us the transfer card and all the other necessary documents to get me into the new school. I’m praying I don’t encounter any problems, especially with teachers and learners.

Some of my classmates kept waving at me, I waved back. I was hoping to see Nambitha but she was no where is sight. I’m sad.

Instead of seeing Nambitha, I saw Yonela with her bitter face just sitting there all alone. No one wants to be her friend and she looks really lonely. Our eyes lock for a second and she looks remorseful.

If it was someone else, I would’ve believed it.

But this is Yonela, Yonela Kay 1.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

There was absolutely no need for him to accompany the happy couple to the school. Banzi just wanted to exercise his power and show him who's older around here. That's why he had to go even though he had a death summoning headache.

He should've quit alcohol by now. He knows the consequences of drinking, he feels them every day after a night out, but he prefers the nice time of being in his own world while drunk, to forget about all the pain that he experiences on a daily basis.

The reason why he packed all his things and moved to another room was to make sure she was comfortable and felt at home. It only stung

like hell when he realized that his brother had to sleep with her in the same bed, in his bed.

The same bed where they lay together on several nights and had conversations about life, about the future, their future together. They were supposed to be happy together

His mother visited him in his dreams that night Amile got introduced into the Zulu ancestors. She looked happy, she smiled and thanked him profusely for bringing her home.

The her she spoke about, it wasn't Amile, but her. It was what was meant to happen, bringing her here, only had he done it sooner, she would be his, not his brothers.

He's leaving today. He has to go back to his real wife and he's leaving her behind. Things are going to be different, they are going to be difficult. For all of them in the house.

The fire between them can't be ignored. It burns

hotter than the pits of hell and them having to pretend kills him more and more inside.

They bid him farewell and they see him off. She is not even offered a kiss on the cheek, or even a hug. That is definitely not what married people do. But who is he to complain, seeing that would destroy his ego.

She storms right past him as soon as the car has disappeared down the street. He's shocked so he follows behind her calling out her name.

"Amile wait!" she's very good at ignoring him. She's even better at walking fast. She gets into the elevator before he can reach her so he stands there feeling like an idiot. Its going to be the longest three months of his life.

Nambitha Makhathini

I heard through the grapevine that my best friend was here, and I was the only one who didn't get to see her. I'm so heartbroken. I miss her like crazy and Nkululeko didn't keep his promises that he would call me whenever he is with her.

I understand its not easy though. She's officially a queen and he's just a servant. He's not treated like one but that's who he is. It's in his job description.

I'm glad he's studying, he's doing his last year now, and just like me, he is also preparing for exams. Nkululeko seems rich already, what will happen once he is an accountant like he wants to and is actually making hundreds of thousands of Rands a year. I'll be the testimony and say I was here when he hustled and grinded.

School is out early today, and I didn't tell mom. It actually slipped my mind. It's because she was biting my head of this morning about

Nkululeko. She thinks I'm stupid like my sisters, I'm too smart to repeat a mistake that has been made continuously, I'm not like them. 2/3 of them had already had a child at my age, so they shouldn't judge me. I'm not going to break up with him. What parents don't know won't hurt them.

The first thing I saw when I came out the school gate was his car parked, how did he know we were going to close early. This man definitely has super powers. I walked to the car and he came out to open the front seat for me. He gave me a smile, I was happy to see him too.

"Nana." I sat down. He closed the door and went on to his side.

I don't know why I'm getting into this car, I should be sitting at school waiting for my parents to fetch me like a normal school child. He places his hand on my thigh before he starts the car.

“How is my girl doing today?” butterflies!

“I’m good, how are you?” me and this flirting thing, uh, no.

“I’m better now that you are here.” He actually does look a bit exhausted.

He’s joining the freeway, where us he taking me.

“So how was school?” his hand is still on my bare thigh.

“School was okay, just a normal day. I heard that the royal family came through and Amile was there. Why didn’t you tell me she was in town.”

“She arrived last night and the king was still there so I couldn’t talk to her. But...” he dragged the but and he looked excited.

“She’s going to be staying here until she finishes exams so you’ll be seeing her quite often.” What?

“Are you serious?”

“Like a heartbeat baby.” I’m so happy!

“Let’s go see her now, how about that?” you don’t even need to ask twice.

“Is the King still there?” on second thought.

“No, he left this morning.” I have so many questions.

Nkululeko’s taste in music is terrible, he listens to maskandi and rap. What a weird combination. He also mentioned in passing one of the days that he hates pop, that happens to be my favourite genre, so when we ride together like this, we just listen to the radio.

His phone is ringing and it’s connected to the car audio. Maka Azande pops up on the screen. It’s a hands-free feature for a reason, why is he looking for his phone.

“Why aren’t you just pressing the screen.” I

suggested.

This person always calls him and he ignores it. He's doing the same today and I'm starting to get suspicious. He technically is my boyfriend now so he owes me honesty.

"We will get into a car accident Nkululeko watch the road." I instruct.

He's searching for his phone and he's starting to get on my last nerve. The phone starts ringing again.

"Answer it." I command.

"It's not important." He's sweating.

"Then why are they calling so much. Answer it Nkululeko."

"I can't find my phone." Excuses!

"You have your hands-free on, why are you panicking about a phone, just press this." I press it for him.

A woman's voice speaks. He looks at me like I've just committed the biggest sin on planet earth.

"Nontando. I'm on the road, I'll call you when I get home." He looks nervous...

"Azande wants to talk to you."

"Daddy, my tooth fell out today." Daddy?

Daddy as in father? Oh hell no.

"That's wonderful my princess." I remove the hand that was on my thigh.

"Mommy said I should put it under my pillow and the tooth fairy will come and leave money for me." My heart is beating fast and I'm suddenly feeling hot.

"Yes, the tooth fairy will come ntombazane ka baba. But now Daddy is driving so I'll call you when I get home."

"Okay daddy. Love you."

“I love you too princess.” He dropped the call before any other secret of his were revealed.

He tried to touch me and explain.

“Don’t touch me.”

“I was going to tell you.”

I don’t know why I’m crying, but thus hurts. It hurts a lot.

“Nana please, I was going to tell you, just not now. I didn’t want you to find out like this.” I wiped my tears.

“How many are there?” I can’t believe I’m here crying over a child he had before he met me.

“Nana...”

“How many kids do you have Nkululeko?” I raised my voice unintentionally.

“Two.” Oh hell no.

I can’t! I can’t and I won’t date a baby daddy.

Never!

“Take me back to school.”

“MaXulu, please.”

“School Nkululeko. Take me back to school. I don’t want to ever see you again.” My voice broke.

He’s not listening to me, he’s still driving ahead. I don’t want to see Amile like this but I don’t want to fight with him otherwise we’ll get in an accident and I can’t explain that to my parents.

Even his scent at this point repulses me. I don’t know why I’m angry though, it hasn’t even been 24hrs into this relationship and there’s already problems.

Is it worth it?

Chapter Thirty-One

Amile Gumede

He's watching TV in the lounge and I'm sitting in the kitchen looking through cook books to see what I can make for dinner. I gave Sis' Melo the day off to rest. There was no need for her to come here with me because I'm perfectly capable of doing things myself. She's just going to be taking care of household duties when I can't.

I want to try making dumpling, I've never made it before, but my mom makes the best and I miss her cooking. I remember that I have a phone so I rush upstairs to take it.

I still haven't turned it on, the last I touched it was back in the car when he gave it to me. I sat on the bed and turned it on.

I don't want to have social media, and I only want to have the contacts of the people that are important. I'm fact, I might just stick to using

SMS as my line of communication just like Nkosi.

Jama is home, I can hear his raspy voice and Nkosi is greeting someone else. I walk out the room and stand at the top of the staircase. My heart leaps when my eyes land on my best friend. I run down the stairs to go engulf her in a hug.

I missed her so much.

“You’re actually here!?” she cries.

“You’re also here.” Now we are laughing through tears.

I look at Jama, is he behind this? Is there something going on between them.

“How did you get here?” I wipe her tears and she wipes mine.

“I was basically kidnapped by this man.” I laugh, so does Nkosi, but Jama and Nambitha don’t.

Oh okay.

“Let’s go sit in the terrace.” I hold her hand and we walk upstairs to sit at the terrace.

It has an amazing view of the ocean in the far distance, and watching the white people walking their dogs is pleasing.

“How have you been.” I ask her. She’s awfully quiet.

“I should be asking you! How are you.” You can see the pity in her eyes.

“I’m good. Getting better everyday, slowly getting used to the fact that I’m a wife.” She smiled gently.

“And what about Nkosi, how do you feel about him.” I sighed and banged my palm against the wooden chair.

I can feel my tears pushing their way to my eyes. I don’t want to cry, but I haven’t spoken to

anyone since I got here and a lot has happened. She sees that I'm slowly breaking down and she stands up to hug me in a tight hug.

"Kubhlungu Nambitha. It hurts like hell and what makes everything worse is the fact that he's not taking it well. He's becoming a man I didn't love and the fear of losing the love that I had in my heart for him scares me more than losing him like I have."

"You still love him?"

"With my heart body and soul. I love him and think of him everyday when I wake, even before I go to sleep. I love him." My chest hurts.

"Are you going to cope living here with him?"
this is her way of helping me, I know she can't give me advice.

"I don't know, it's already difficult as is."

"It will get easier like you said babes, and maybe him turning into the man you didn't fall

in love with will be a good thing, you'll get over him much easier." I wish it was easy like that.

"Enough about me and my depressing life, how are you?" she gave an exhausted smile before burying her head in her hands.

So we are both going through the most?

"Chomie is it a boy?" she nods without lifting her head.

This is what happens when you start dating at an older stage of your life. Stress has you by the balls.

"Who is that boy?" she lifts her head and her whole face has turned red.

"Nkululeko Dlamini."

"Do I know him? Does he go to our school?" she shakes her head and laughs.

"You know him very well." She looks at me.

I don't know of any Nkulul...

“Are you fucking dating Jama!?” she slapped my arm.

“Shush, why are you screaming. Do you want the whole world to know!” I cracked up. First of all, it’s Jama!

“Wait, when did this thing start?”

“Hes been asking me out ever since that day we were here.”

“And when did you agree to date him?”

“Yesterday.” Hhayini!

“So why are you guys already having problems?” she genuinely looks frazzled.

“So mans never thought of mentioning that he has not one but two fucking breathing humans from his balls.” Okay, she’s angry. Nambitha doesn’t swear.

“He has children?” I’m shocked.

“Not one Amile, he has two. One calls him

daddy.” Her hand is shaking.

“I looked at my mom like she was crazy when she said I must stay away from grown ups, now I see what she means.”

“Aren’t you glad you found out earlier though chomie?”

“No, because if I hadn’t forced him to answer that call, I wouldn’t have found out.”

“When did this happen?”

“Today, now on the way here. I told him to take me back home but he refused.”

“Do you like him?”

“I do chomie, but this is too much. Children are baggage, one is enough, but two! That is absolutely ridiculous. I’m too young to be dealing with baby mama drama, and older women love causing drama. You could tell from the voice that she was dramatic.” I laugh, I don’t

mean to, but I've never seen her like this.

"Welcome to real life babes."

"It's not funny Amile. This man is toying with my feelings, and how sure am I that he won't also knock me up and leave me for a newer fresher younger girl?"

"Then talk to him, get his side of the story and let him tell you what his plans are with you. If you really like him, I wouldn't advise you to leave him because of children he had before you."

"Easy for you to say, you like kids."

"They love me, and I'm technically a step mother to four boys, and one is a year younger than me." She wanted to laugh, but she held back.

"You can laugh, it's hilarious. He can't even look at me." We both laughed.

Maybe this will be my best coping mechanism, just accepting what has happened and find laughter in the things that bring me sadness.

“Cool down, and think about this with a level headed mind. Make a decision and talk to him about it so you can find a way forward. I just want to see you happy chomie.” I stood up to give her a hug and she met me halfway.

“I missed you so much.” I whispered.

“Me too.”

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She’s not talking to Jama, I don’t know how they are going to drive together in silence. Who am I kidding, I have to stay behind with Mandlenkosi. I’m not looking forward to that.

I see her off and go back to the kitchen to prep

my cooking things. He goes in to fetch a beer in the fridge. I'm standing in front of the drawer chopping and he needs to open the drawer to get the bottle opener. We aren't speaking, I'd like to see him ask.

He looks at his beer bottle before opening the fridge to take out another one. I continue to chop without looking at him. I won't give him the satisfaction. He opens it using the other one and directly drinks from the bottle, gulping it down all in one go.

I'm actually stunned. This is the reason he's always hungover. He goes to dump the empty bottle in the bin and comes back to stand next to me.

"Can I open here please." Liquid courage I see.

I moved out the way and he opened to drawer. He took out the bottle opener and opened the bottle and threw it back in the drawer, not where

he found it.

“Awuyificanga lapho.” I say as he closes the drawer.

“If I bothers you fix it then.” Rotten man this one is.

He walks our and he leaves me chopping violently. He’s not my favourite person at present.

My plans of making dumpling were disturbed by Nambitha so I won’t make it anymore. I just made chicken briyani, I found myself craving it for some reason. I was glad the drunkard had all the spices to make it.

Jama came back just as I was about to dish up. He walked straight into the kitchen.

“Kyasho ukuthi kukhona umama wasekhaya ke manje.” I laughed.

“I’m dishing up now, go do whatever you need

to do and come eat. Call your friend too.” He gives me that look.

“Go Jama.” He shakes his head.

He’s still excited from the food. He’s rubbing his hands together, and that’s a good sign.

Nkosi is the first one at the table, he already looks drunk. I lost count of the beers he had while I was cooking. He kept going in and out of the kitchen. He’s drinking on an empty stomach. He gives me pleading eyes.

“Please dish up for me.”

Sober Nkosi is rude and talks down on me and treats me terribly but drunk Nkosi, he’s a big baby who cries and gets his way.

“Udakiwe Mandlenkosi?” I asked him.

He shook his head and took a plate from the table and handed it to me.

“Please Amile.” I placed his hands on my hips

and looked at him in displeasure.

I'm so disappointed in him.

"Don't look at me like that." He stands up, I'm guessing he's dishing up for himself.

I won't let him. I try to take the plate from him.

"Letha Mandlenkosi."

"Leave it Amile you said no!" now we are fighting over a plate.

He lets go of the plate and takes the dishing spoon out the bowl of briyani and tries to take another plate.

"Mandlenkosi stop it man!"

He slams the plate on the table and storms out the dining room leaving me with a big mess on the floor and the table. Jama comes out of his room in panic.

"Talk to your friend, please, talk to him."

I've lost my appetite.

Nkululeko Dlamini

He's pissed off, in fact he's fuming mad, especially after seeing her expression, how drained she looked. His mission was clear, her wanted to murder him.

"What the hell is your problem!" he barged into his room.

He was passed out on the bed. He couldn't even tell if he was conscious or not, but his position on the bed says otherwise.

"Nkululeko get out of my room." He spoke in a raspy voice.

"Why are you behaving like this, why are you acting like a hooligan!?" oh he's pressed.

Nkosi gets up and faces goes up in his face.

“Watch how you speak to me.” His eyes were bloodshot red.

“Or what Zulu. How do you think she feels watching you behave like this?” He grabbed him by the t-shirt.

“Jama, I’m warning you, let go of me.”

“I’ve been talking to you, I’ve been warning you about your actions, you are getting out of control Zulu, get a grip.” He’s slapping his cheek a few times as to wake him up.

This angers Mandlenkosi and he tries to throw a punch at him, but he’s drunk and he misses easily.

But Jama doesn’t miss. He almost knocks his teeth out in one hit and he finds himself lying on the bed suffering from the pain and the headache.

“Pull yourself together Zulu and when you are done, apologize to MaGumede.” He leaves him

lying there.

It's all just piling up, the frustration from Nambitha ignoring him the whole way here and back, the rocky relationship between him and Nkosi because of his drinking, now this. He deserves a break.

She didn't even get a chance to enjoy the meal she slaved all day in the kitchen making, and the look on her face when she left the dining room is still pasted in his mind.

He cleans up the mess that was made and dishes up for himself and goes to sit in front of the TV, eating thinking about how he's going to handle Nambitha. The reason he didn't want to tell her this soon was because he knew she would react this way. No woman sane enough would agree to dating a man with two kids, especially with two different baby mama's. But he has to explain himself, that at least if she says she can't do it anymore, he would've tried

to make her understand his side.

It's too early to say it's love. He's attracted to her, he's attracted to her body, the way she speaks, the way she carries herself. It's hypocritical of him to feel like this for a young one like Nambitha when he judged Mandlenkosi for dating Amile.

These kids are forward, he saw it with Amile and the other friend they had. He even sees it with his little sister, they love things. The only thing that drew him to her despite her age is her innocence and feistiness all in one. She hadn't even had her first kiss, it goes to show just how fragile she is, how pure she is.

He's calling her. He knows she's not speaking to him but he'll take his chances. He's surprised when she answers, but she doesn't speak.

"Nana I know you won't speak to me but please listen. I've never lied to you, all that I told you

about me is true, I just withheld information, but that was only for the better of our relationship. I wasn't going to spring such on you when you are only starting out in this dating thing, when you have put so much trust in me to make you happy. I was going to tell you, I swear, but when the time is right, and when we were both sure of what we were doing." She cleared her throat.

"Are you done?"

"No. I have two beautiful children, my daughter Azande, she is five years old and my son Banele is turning three in December. They are the reason I went back to school and why I continue to work hard because I want them to be happy and give them whatever their hearts desire. I won't force you to be in their lives as yet, especially if you aren't ready, but I love you and I want to see where this things with you will go." He said the word without flinching.

She picked it up but she kept quiet.

“Nana?” he called out.

“I need to think Nkululeko.”

“Take all the time you need MaXulu.”

“Bye.” She said.

“Have a good night Nana.”

Whatever it is that is going through her head it freaks him out. Women are dangerous creatures and you never know what they are thinking. Nambitha is unpredictable, that’s what he’s picked up about her. You can think and conclude something about her only to do the total opposite, disappointing you.

He’s going to sleep and leave room for disappointment. If it doesn’t work out, at least he would’ve tried, but he’s not going to compromise his children for a woman who doesn’t consider how much his life will change when they come in. His children are his first priority always.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Mandlenkosi Zulu

His life has become waking up in the odd hours of the morning to vomit. Alcohol is not his friend, that was established a long time ago, but now he's gotten into a cycle and he can't stop. He's letting go of himself, he can see it too, but he just can't stop.

There is a thunderstorm outside, and the rain is pouring down like it's the last day of living for all earth species. His head his pounding, but he gets up the bed like that and goes to puke in the toilet. He made it on time, he knows better than to vomit anywhere, the last time he did it, he had to clean it himself and it's not as fun as consuming the alcohol.

He gets in the shower and let's the cold water

run down his back. He's shivering from the cold but this is the only thing that will help with waking him up and taking this headache away. Amile's runny porridge also helped the other day, but he won't admit that. Amile would definitely ask him why he's getting drunk in the first place to need it.

Amile. She fears the storm. She's alone upstairs and she's probably in panic.

All these things run through his head as he tries to get dressed and get warm. He wants to go check up on her, but he's afraid, first of all, his face is aching from the punch he got from Jama and now that he is sober, he realizes that he deserved it. He was completely an asshole, maybe she won't want to see him. But it's worth a try.

He goes to the kitchen to pour milk and get some cookies for her. This is not good enough for an apology, but it's a start, he thinks to

himself.

He doesn't knock on the door, he lets himself in. The bed is empty. It's dark, only the lightning shining through the terrace door every second.

"MaGumede?" he whispers softly.

She's curled up in a corner somewhere. He can hear her crying. He puts the saucers on the table next to the door and turns on the lights. Her cries get louder.

"Amile?" confusion dwells on his face.

She's rocking herself back and forth in the corner facing away from the terrace door, crying. She has a blanket over her head. He tries to pick her up but she's fighting.

"Leave me alone! Leave me!"

"Amile you are going to wake up the whole house." She's bawling her eyes out.

She's still crying, he picks her up and places her

on the bed. Another rumble in the sky forces her under the covers. He knew she was afraid of the storm, but not like this.

“Please calm down, nothing is going to happen to you. I’m here.” She kicked him.

“What do you know about protection? You know nothing about being a man!” so it’s not only the storm.

“I’m sorry Amile.” She’s still crying under the covers.

He places his hand on her back and tries to console her. He had no idea how to handle this. He removes the covers and pulls her to his chest. She’s fighting, she doesn’t want to be in his arms but his hold is strong around her frame.

She gives in and cries on his chest. She’s hiccupping and sobbing all at once. Just when he thinks it’s over, she starts all over again. This is the most gut wrenching thing he has ever

experienced.

She cried until she couldn't and ended up asleep, still hiccuping over her heavy breathing. He placed her on the bed and covered her with a blanket. It was still raining outside, and the storm had calmed down a bit, only a few rumbles at a time.

He got up to leave but she pulled him back by the shirt.

“Don't go Nkosi.” She whispered.

“Hold me.” She has her eyes closed, she's deep in sleep.

He sat back down and leaned on the headboard. She crawled up onto his chest once again and she held him like he was going to run away. It felt like home again.

He sniffed her hair and planted a kiss on her forehead. Thousands of thoughts ran through his mind. This is the perfect moment for him.

“I didn’t fight sthandwa sami. I know I didn’t fight and that is why we are here, that is why I am miserable and in so much pain, because I didn’t fight. But Zwelibanzi always gets his way, and I’ve been living with that my whole life. When I heard what had taken place, I felt powerless, I felt no hope because I knew I would never win against him. It’s always been like that, Zwelibanzi gets his way and Mandlenkosi has to accept it. It’s been like this since my mother died, my life changed. I had to be taken care by him, I had to be taken care of by my father. The same father who never even had enough time for me. I doubt he even remembered my name, he always called me boy. When you lose the mother of your children, the children become solely your responsibility, that didn’t matter to him. He expected us to be fine, just the two of us. I was eleven Amile, I needed my mom, I needed a parent to love me and show me the way. But Mhlabawesizwe cared

more about his people than his own son. Banzi didn't make it any easier for me to get by, he had his own life to live, too busy to take care of me too and from that day I held that grudge against him. As a big brother, he should've known that my behaviour at school was the result of the treatment I got from him and his father. Langaletu was a way better brother and father figure to me. He lived in Durban, he was studying and working there, he would take me for the holidays and take me to therapy, because like a real brother, he saw behind the naughty disrespectful boy and saw the hurt and pain of the healing process I never got to go through. For my mom, and for the love I never received from both of them. He tried. But nothing was bound to work out because Zwelibanzi was here and he took away the one thing I had as comfort, my brothers love. He dragged me back to Zululand and expected me live like normal again. There was no normal in

that place, I hated it. But Bhut' Langa couldn't say anything, Banzi was solely in charge of me. I did exceptionally well at school, but that was only because I was smart. I never studied, never bothered to concentrate on my books. I continued to be a troublemaker and made every single teacher cry. I was rotten, at least that's what Mhlaba called me. He despised me so much that even in my matric year when I came first in my district, he didn't even have the decency to say congratulations. I was still that Rotten boy that he used to beat each and everyday for tearing down his reputation in the community."

She's asleep, her eyes are closed, but tears are dropping from her eyes. She's listening.

"When he died, I didn't even want to go to his funeral, but they forced me to. I hate that place with my whole heart Amile because it brings me nothing but pain and heartache. When I met you

I knew I would never share you with them, I knew I didn't want you next to them. Now this happened and when it did, I wanted to fight, but my childhood, it pressed me down and I realized that I would never win, I would never get you again. I lost hope and I shouldn't have. It kills me each and everyday to think that you were mine but now you are his. Once again he has taken from me, he's taken from me the one thing I knew was mine, and I will never forgive him for that."

She opens her eyes and climbs on her lap and wraps her arms around his neck and holds him. They cried together.

Amile Gumede

I slept in his arms with an aching heart. It was a conversation that was long overdue and it was

about time we had it. It tore my heart apart, thinking about it now my heart aches and tears grace my face. I understand but I wish he had told me sooner. All of this could've been avoided

He's up. His hand is running through my hair gently. It's not a good morning. It definitely wasn't a good night, but nothing matters more than waking up in his arms like this. I look up to meet his face and he looks like he's far away in thought. When he looks at me, tears fill my eyes and all he does is pull me closer and hold me.

"I'm going to go see someone about it." He speaks. His voice is hoarse.

I nodded. He rubbed my back as I continued to stain his shirt with tears.

He lifted my face and looked at me. He wiped my tears with his thumb and leaned in to kiss me. I closed my eyes and kissed him back. I've

never felt so emotional in my whole life. It feels like my heart is being cut into two. This kiss is nothing like we've ever kissed before, it's filled with passion, a flame of some sort and tears are running on each of our faces.

It's the hurting. The hurting is taking over. He has me under him and he's kissing me slowly, no rush. I don't want him to stop, lord knows how I missed this, how I missed being with him, being in his arms.

Nothing that has happened between us matters. Nothing that has sworn to get in between us matters right now, only the rhythm of our bodies. I remove his clothing and that acts like a trigger to him because he stops. It's still my Mandlenkosi.

"Don't stop." I beg.

I'm ready for him. I've always been ready for him, and I've always wanted this, I always

envisioned this day.

With no second thought, he's inside of me. I hold on tight as our bodies ride in a soothing rhythm. Tears stream down to my sides and he leans in to kiss my nose.

"You mean the world to me Amile."

He buries my moans with a kiss and he goes harder and harder on top of me. I don't know what to do with myself.

"Nkosi! Nko...oosi!"

The sound of our bodies together, his smell on mine, I never want this to end.

Nambitha Makhathini

My sister is visiting. She's actually here to see her daughter for the weekend before she goes back to her busy life. I love having her around,

she's a vibe. And I need some advice after yesterday's call with Nkululeko. She's going to be ecstatic that I've finally given it a shot in the dating world. I just don't know how she will feel about Nkululeko himself.

Am I stupid for wanting to give him chance.

"Zimkhitha?" we all have Xhosa first names.

My mother is Xhosa and dad gave her the benefit of the doubt and let her give us the names. He in turn gave us ridiculous English names, names I don't even want to say out loud.

"I need advice." I said walking in to the lounge.

"Usuyajola?" I laughed.

"Something like that." She clapped once and laughed.

"No don't laugh. I need your help."

"Does your mother know?"

"She found out and shes not happy. This is the

same woman who came to my room to tell me that I need to live my life.” She died all over again.

“You can never confirm Mrs Makhathini. Okay, file on the man.” She loves stories.

“His name is Nkululeko and he lives in Durban North...” she interrupts me.

“Like the suburb, is he rich?” I laughed.

“No. Well I don’t know, but he’s studying accountancy so if he isn’t rich now he will be soon.”

“Thatha wena Namnam.” I laughed.

I still hate that name, but my whole family calls me that, I have no choice but to like it.

“So what is the problem with him, is he bad in bed, or he doesn’t have a car.” Gold digger tendencies I see.

“First of all Zimkhitha, I don’t have sex, I’m a

virgin. Two, he does have a car but he's older, way older."

"How old are we talking?"

"Thirty." She widened her eyes.

"Did you bath with the pink powder I left the last time I was here." I cracked up.

"No man, why would I do that."

"So how did you snag a sugar daddy who has a car and a house in Durban North?"

My sister is definitely a gold digger.

"I don't know. He just started following me around. Okay, fine, I don't care about all those things. He's a good person, he has a good heart and I actually like him. But he has kids." Her face is priceless.

"Shiya leyonto. You are too young." I didn't expect that.

"I've dealt with Baby mama's before Namnam,

trust me, those ladies will beat you up.” She knows this because she’s also a baby mama.

“But they aren’t together.”

“It doesn’t matter. That woman will always be in his life, whether you like it or not. They share a human being, and she will do anything to make you miserable in your relationship because you have taken away her ‘man’ whether or not they are together. If you feel like you are strong enough to engage in physical and emotional fights with women, especially that are much older than you that have given him something you haven’t, and in your case, what you can’t, then go ahead.” She just made me rethink everything.

He didn’t specify if they have different mothers or not, but that would be worse. This actually should prove to me that he has a loose zip. But he’s thirty, he’s way older than me, he can have as many children as he desires, especially

because he's financially stable

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My phone is ringing disturbing me from my nap, I don't like being disrupted. I ignored and continued to sleep. It rings again. I know it's no other than Nkululeko, no one ever calls me. I don't feel like talking to him, especially because I just woke up. What Zimkhitha said really had me thinking and it really would be really taxing for me to get into something serious with Nkululeko, his children aren't baggage, but they come with lots of it.

I got up and went to the kitchen to get a glass of water. Zimkhitha is cooking in the kitchen. We are definitely spending the night in the toilet. "You finally woke up." She said looking at me.

“I need to study.” She laughed

“it’s a Saturday, why are you studying?”

“We are a month away from finals, I have so much to do.”

“Shame man, at least you are dedicated. Maybe you’ll pass and break the generational curse that is in your family.” Not maybe, I will pass. I already did well in my trials.

“Yeah.” I got my glass of water and as I was about to exit the kitchen, someone was ringing at the gate.

“Who is that.” I turn back.

“I’ll go check.” She goes out.

I head back to my room to prep my study materials. Zimkhitha comes back just as I settle down.

“It’s a man, a dark skinned man. He said his name is Jama and he is looking for you.” Oh hell

no.

“Are you serious?” I ask.

“Is it your boyfriend?”

“Yes. Did he say what he wants?”

“He said he wants you.”

Nkululeko is overstepping now. What if my parents were home?

“I’ll be back now.”

“Don’t forget what I told you.” I nodded.

I got a jacket because it was drizzling outside and work comfy shoes. I walked out and he was leaning against the wall waiting for me.

“Nana.”

“Nkululeko are you crazy. Why are you coming to my house.”

“You weren’t answering my calls. I was worried.” I shook my head.

“Let’s go buy some ice cream.” He looked at me with that seductive smile and I can’t help but fall for him. He is totally irresistible.

“Fine, let’s go, but you have to bring me back. I need to study.”

“We’ll be back soon, I promise.”

He holds my hand and we walk to his car. He opens the door for me like the gentleman he is and I make myself comfortable. He doesn’t speak, he’s just playing music. Today he’s playing Rnb, I don’t think I know this artist but this is a love song. All he does is just glance at me and continue driving and humming. Is he not going to say anything?

“I miss you.” He said after a long silence.

We are driving to that ice-cream place he took me to the last time.

“You saw me yesterday.” I point out.

“Seeing you is not the same as connecting with you. I haven’t connected with you since that day, and I miss you.” He’s right.

After that call its been awkward.

“Who’s fault is that?” I ask. He shook his head.

“You could’ve just said I miss you back MaXulu.” I sighed.

“Have you thought about it?”

“You said you would give me time.” This means I’m still undecided.

Which means I’m still considering giving him a chance even after all the things my sister said.

He didn’t answer. We continued the drive in silence. When we got to the ice-cream place, we aren’t as jolly as we were when we first came here. He’s still holding my hand though, and that’s all that matters. He got me the same one as last time and he got himself another flavour.

We didn't stay there, he drove us out to the beach.

It's not drizzling this side, the sun is almost about to set and the view looks splendid.

I walk in front of him and kick the sand. I left my shoes in the car, so did he. I feel like I owe him an answer now. It would be unfair of me to keep him waiting.

"MaXulu." I turned to face him.

He smiled and opened his arms for me. I didn't think twice, I went into his arms and he embraced me tightly. I felt so at peace in his arms.

"I said something last night." I know what he said.

"Did you hear me?" I nodded. "Angizwa MaXulu."

"Yes I heard you Jama." I'm still wrapped

around his arms.

“I meant it.” I know he did.

My heart is beating fast.

“I love you Nana.” My heart dropped to the pit of my stomach.

“I...” I stopped.

“Say something.”

“I don’t know how to describe this feeling.” I said.

“Then show it to me.”

I’m scared. I broke the hug and looked at him in the eyes. This is the first time I’m holding eye contact with him. I pecked his lips and looked back at him.

“Are you sure?” I nodded.

Oh so he can hear me now?

He kissed me again and this time I was able to

wrap my arms around him. His hand ran to my bum and he cupped it, picked me up and I wrapped my legs around his waist.

I know exactly what I'm setting myself up for, am I ready to deal with it, I don't think so.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Amile Gumedede

My phone is ringing. I have a phone!?

Who has my number? I haven't called any numbers with this phone. I sit up and take it out of the drawer. The mam next to me also wakes up.

"Who's calling." He asks in a sleepy voice.

It's saved as husband. Oh hell no.

"It's the king." He rolled his eyes and slammed

his head back on the pillow. I answered.

“Bayede.”

“How are you wakwami?” when he left, we were okay, but after last night, I can’t help but feel like I hate him.

“I’m okay, how are you my King?” Nkosi sits up and gets put of bed.

“I’m okay. We got home safely. Sorry for not calling earlier.”

“It’s okay. I’m glad you are safe.” This man is getting dressed and leaving

“Have you started studying?”

“No not yet. Bhuti said he was going to get me notes.” Nkosi is looking at me like he’s ready to murder me.

“Okay, no that’s fine. I’ll try come down and see you next week.”

“Yebo Bayede.”

“Usalekahle MaGumede.”

I said goodbye and waited for him to hang up.

I suddenly feel guilty. I am a married woman and I am waking up next to a man that is not my husband. He looks like him, but he’s not him.

“Nkosi.”

“I’m going to take a shower.” He’s pissed and I don’t know if I should apologize or not.

He must not dare try and ruin the peace we made, although it escalated.

“I’m sorry.” I say for the sake of peace.

“Don’t apologize for talking to your husband.” He’s having a jealous fit.

Is it not enough that I woke up in his arms and not the husband’s. The evidence is in me, I can still feel the warmth between my legs. We didn’t use protection.

“Nkosi...” I call out but the words get stuck I’m

my throat.

“Did you pull out?” he looks displeased with my question.

“Yes, you don’t have to worry about falling pregnant for the wrong person.” A million daggers into my soul

We are back to square one again, all because of a lousy phone call. What was I expecting though, he is a man, he has an ego. I was a hypocrite for screaming his name in pleasure earlier only for me to remind him a few hours later that it was a mistake that should never happen again.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that.” Well it’s too late now.

I got out of bed and put my robe on. I removed the sheets, totally ignoring him. He walked out the room and left me to dwell in my own thoughts. Now it’s going to be awkward between us, the passion and love made in this

bed is not something that can be forgotten easily. If the husband comes down to see me, I won't be able to look him in the eyes.

The sun is already setting, we've been in bed the whole day. I'll throw these in the washing machine because there is no way I'm going to start washing linens at this hour. Before I went to take a shower, I sat down to look at all my contacts saved on the phone. MaMzobe's number is on here, so is Nkosi's, and obviously the husband. Jon's number is also on here. I don't know why because he went back to Zululand. But I'm assuming he's my guard.

I went to take a shower and when I was done, I put on my pyjamas. I wanted to go start on dinner. I don't even know if Jama is home.

When I get downstairs, Sis' Melo has already started cooking. Now it looks like I just woke up now.

“Good evening my queen.”

“Hello Sisi. What are you making, I’m so hungry.” Only now when I smell food I realize that I’m actually starving.

“I’ve made dumpling and insides.” Oh delicious.

“Where did you get the insides?”

“Bhut’ Nkululeko went to buy them for me. Must I dish up for you?”

“Yes please. Where has Bhuti gone?” I have to call him that, it’s hard but I have to.

“He left, he didn’t say where he was going.” I nodded.

I finally put my phone to use and downloaded all my social media apps. The first one I opened was Instagram. First of all, my following had sky rocketed, I was tagged by many people, people that know me asking if everything is true. I don’t have the energy to answer all of these

things. I started by deleting everything on the page and made it private.

All the pictures on there reminded me of all the times I spent with Nkosi, they were taken with his phone and I was with him. I don't want to see them.

Sis' Melo gave me my food and I devoured it. It was so delicious, I had to ask for seconds. I don't know if it's because I'm hungry, but I never eat such heavy foods and ask for seconds. My appetite has opened up.

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I don't have any books on me to use to study so I'm sitting in the lounge watching TV. Sis' Melo went to bed, I'm all alone in the house. I'm worried about Nkosi, and what if he went out to drink again. I know he promised not to drink to

solve problems but he left here in a state and I can't guarantee that he will come back in one piece.

Jama struts in like he owns the world.

"MaGumede, uhleli wedwa?" he asks standing in the dining room.

"Ufuna ngihlale nobani ningishiye ngedwa?" he laughs.

"You must just have a baby so the can keep you busy." I laughed.

"I can do all of it, just not that!"

"Where is Mandlenkosi?"

"I don't know."

"That means he left last night." I know where he was last night.

"Maybe." He went to the kitchen.

"Wena uphumaphi?"

“I went to visit my girlfriend, and I took her to the beach for a young stroll.” He sounds very jolly.

“Which girlfriend Jama, you have so many!”

“Me, no never. I’m a straight man. Only one girl owns my heart.” I’m assuming he’s making himself food because the microwave is on.

“Ujola nobani?”

“Ngijola noMaXulu.” Oh wow.

He came to join me in the lounge. He handed me a beer and I looked at it.

“Oh yes, you are underage. Sorry.” He thinks I’m one of his boys I see.

I laugh and shake my head.

“Please don’t play with my friend’s feelings.”

“Girls tell each other everything.”

“As if boys don’t. I’m being serious Jama, this is

her first relationship.”

“I can’t promise to not hurt her because if it happens, I would have a failure and a promise breaker. I prefer to say I won’t hurt her intentionally.” I love his honesty.

“A young one hey. Uwe lo?” he laughed.

“I know I judged but love is love. Sbongile will have to forgive me.”

“And your babies?” I asked

“What about them?”

“What did she say about them.”

“We didn’t talk about them. But she gave me a chance, which means she’s willing to also be in their lives, but I’m not going to force her to have a relationship with them if she’s not ready.” I applaud him.

“That is very manly of you to admit. I admire you for that.”

“Thank you my queen.” I rolled my eyes.

As long as my people are happy, I’m happy.
Jama has grown on me, he’s the big brother I never had.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She has a special visit she needs to make. She has been delaying this the whole time, it’s time for her to sort it out. Her husband isn’t taking it as seriously as he should. He’s always busy, occupied with the council and now the new wife. His life is busy.

She vowed to be the helping hand that is why she is going to do the things he can’t. She’s driving herself for the first time in a while. Banzi doesn’t want her to drive herself.

They come here regularly so it doesn’t look

suspicious that she's walking across the yard to his hut. She takes off her shoes at the door and bows to fit through the little door. He grunts when she walks in.

"Ndlunkulu." He grunts.

"Makhosi." The smells of the different potions and herbs welcome her.

"Please sit my queen." She finds her seat on the straw mat on the floor.

"I'm sorry for showing up unannounced but I've been asking you to do this for me, it's been three years now and we still don't know what happened to Langaletu."

"But you know what you did." He grunts.

"I never did anything. Don't you dare point fingers at me."

"You can deny it but you can't run away from it."

"Fine. Tell me then, who is Langaletu's wife."

He grunts. And starts throwing his bones. He looks promising, like he's going to give a proper verdict.

"She's not far."

"I want names Celemba, I want names!"

"You are disturbing the process. I'm connecting to the ancestors."

"I pay you a lot of money not to know Celemba, find me that woman, otherwise the whole palace will be in ruins."

"You think I don't know that?"

"Then find her, bring her to me, otherwise Banzi will lose the throne and all my work will be in vain."

"You are upsetting my ancestors. Leave my hut at once!"

She has said what she wanted to say so she doesn't mind leaving. She's mad now.

Everything is on the brink of ruins, even after finding the second wife to try and hold the fort.

Chapter Thirty-Four

Amile Gumede

I can't wait to go home. I'm dozing off, and it doesn't help that everyone is treating me differently, the teachers are treating me differently. If they aren't bowing and babying me, they are making nasty comments under their breaths if I do something as little as breathing a little too loudly. I can't make friends, everyone is afraid of me in a sense, I've just been miserable here and I miss my old life, my old school. Better the devils I know.

But exams are starting soon so I'll only be coming here to write and go home. I choose the wrong class to feel sleepy in. This woman

proved to not like me the first day I walked into her class.

She teaches me IsiZulu. It hurts that I have to be bullied by a person who should be protecting me because we have the same skin colour. If it were up to her, I wouldn't be here.

I'm dozing off on my hand, but I startled when she slammed her book on my desk. I opened my eyes and looked at her.

"This is no Zululand. This is my classroom and it's not a place to sleep. Stand up." I did as told.

I folded my arms across my chest while she continued with her lesson. This has turned from one of my best subjects to the worst in less than two days.

When the bell rang I was ready to get out of the class, in fact the whole school and just go home and rest. I'm feeling really sleepy.

But she stopped me and said we need to talk. I

have nothing to say to her. She made up her mind about me, why should I listen to what she has to say?

“Are you pregnant?” she’s getting on my last nerve.

“Ma’am with all due respect, I don’t think it is your place to be inserting yourself in my private life, in my bedroom with my husband. I don’t think he would be happy to hear that.” Her eyes widened.

“Are you threatening me?”

“I’m not threatening you, but what you are asking me is very personal, it’s not a question you go around asking people. I never did anything to you for you to pick on me like this.” I’m not a disrespectful person, but the way she is talking to me and treating me is very unnecessary.

“I think you should leave my class.” I would love

that.

I turned around and walked towards the door.

“I’m changing your teacher, I don’t want you in my class.” Fine by me!

I walked out. Jama is probably waiting for me. I ran into a girl in the corridor, it looks like she was waiting for me.

“My queen.” I stopped her from bowing.

“No, please don’t. My name is Amile.” I’m tired of this.

“She does this to everyone, she picks on you then makes fun of you in front of everyone. No one likes her.” She’s speaking about the teacher.

“She’s too old to be so involved in children’s lives.” I said.

We started walking together.

“You are very beautiful.” How sweet.

“Thank you. You too.” She has a bald head but she rocks it effortlessly.

“Don’t play like that.” She blushes and rubs her head.

“No, seriously, you are beautiful.”

“Thank you.”

“What’s your name?”

“Francis. My parents really did me wrong.” We both laughed.

“Isn’t it a boy name.”

“It’s gender neutral, but my parents insisted that they name me that because I was conceived in France.” Very interesting.

I forget that I am now amongst rich kids who have rich parents that do anything for them. She has probably been around the world and I haven’t even gone out of South Africa.

I can see the husband’s car. I’m not too sure if

it's really his, it could be anyone's parents. Lord let it not be his car because if it is then he is here, and I'm not ready to see him again. No after what Nkosi told me.

"It was lovely meeting you Francis, hopefully I'll see you tomorrow." I said.

She opened her arms for a hug and I gave her.

"I'll see you tomorrow." She's sweet. It feels good to actually have someone to talk to.

It gave it away, the license plate gave him away. I walked up to the car and opened the back seat door. I was utterly shocked to find him in the driver's seat.

"Come sit in the front with me." He smiled.

Okay, why am I happy to see him? I put my bag in the back and went to sit with him in the front.

"Good afternoon." He leaned in to give me a kiss on the cheek.

“Good afternoon.” He said it back.

Oh he smells amazing today! What a pleasant surprise.

“I thought I should get behind the wheel and come fetch my queen. How was school?” Okay, I’m really happy to see him!

“School is okay Bayede. It’s just taking a lot longer for me to adjust.”

“What, are you being bullied?”

“No, not necessarily, but they are treating me differently. Especially the teachers.”

“Must I go see the principal?”

“No Bayede, there is no need. There’s only two weeks left before we leave school.”

“Are you sure MaGumede?”

“Yes I’m sure Bayede.”

“Okay. So I talked to your tutor and he said that

you are free this weekend so I can steal you.”

“Steal me?” I laughed.

“Yes, just a young holiday before you start exams.” Is he being for real?

“This weekend?”

“Yes wakwami. We leave tomorrow.” Hha!?

I’m excited, but a whole weekend just the two of us. I don’t know how I feel about that.

“Thank you Bayede.”

“So you need to get everything you might need today.”

“Like now?” I asked.

“Yes. Are you hungry?” yes I am.

“Yes.”

“What would you like to eat mama?” I’m allowed to blush right? He is my husband after all.

“Anything is fine.”

“Angiyazi mina iAnything.” I laughed.

“Okay, Nandos.” He shook his head.

“Shuthi vele ubuyifuna.” I laughed.

He’s actually not so bad to be around. I just can’t bring myself to believing that this is the same man the put Nkosi through childhood trauma.

I just keep looking at him to find that mean side, it’s not there. Even when we sat at the table and they almost bit each other’s head off, all I could see on his face was pure love and concern for his brothers health. It’s not because I don’t believe Nkosi, no one ever makes up such, but I just don’t see it.

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I got my Nandos and we went shopping. It was

just the two of us, the eyes were piercing through our skins, but we ignored them all the way. I don't think I'll ever get used to it.

He gave me a hint and said we would be in a place with bodies of water. My first thought was beach wear, so that's what I got. Shame man, he was just tagging along behind me as I hopped from store to store looking for everything I needed. It didn't seem like he hated it though, he even gave an opinion when I couldn't decide, not that I listened to his advice, he has a terrible sense of style.

I think he's also colour blind, every colour to him is either black, white or blue. But anyways, he's my sugar daddy, and I get spoils so I don't mind!

We are going back to Nkosi's place. The fact that we have to sleep in his bed again, the same bed that we did the nasty on just a few days ago, it's traumatizing.

He's helping me with my shopping bags. I think he forgets that he's a king sometimes and that he hired people to do all these things for him. But everyone deserves a sense of normalcy I'm their lives, I guess that is what he seeks.

Imagine not knowing what it's like going to the mall, or anywhere in public without people staring at you all the time. We will be lucky if we don't end up on those shady Instagram and Twitter pages that track influential people.

Both Nkosi and Jama are home, they are watching soccer in the lounge. I only greet them in passing and get the rest of the shopping bags to take them upstairs. I'm avoiding eye contact with Nkosi as much as I can. He's doing the same. We have been staying out of each other's way as much as possible. The good thing is he isn't drinking like a fish anymore.

I'm full, but I have to cook for these men, so I change into some comfortable clothes and

head straight to the kitchen. The husband has already joined the boys in the lounge and they are all making noise. I didn't know the husband likes sport, he looks like he's only focused on business and royal affairs.

I made rice and lamb curry. I wasn't feeling creative, they will have to eat it. At least I made some veggies and salads. I set the table and went to the lounge. They were still glued to the game.

"I'm sorry to disturb, but dinner is ready." None of them answered me.

I walked out the lounge. The can't say I didn't call them. I went to sit alone at the table and dished up for myself. I had their water prepared at everything. Only when I sat down to start eating, did the husband walked in.

"Hawu MaGumede, asikuzwanga, siyaxolisa." I stood up when he sat down. I came to give him

the bowl to wash his hands.

“Thank you wakwami.”

I served his food. The other two came in and joined at the table. They apologized for not coming earlier. I don't care.

I ate my food in silence while they continued to discuss their soccer match. At least they have something in common as brothers, they are actually getting along. It feels good to see them getting along, I always see them fighting or not talking at all.

I finished my food and left the table. I'm tired, I'll ask Sis' Melo to do the dishes for me.

“Wakwami, I'm not staying over for the night, are you going with me to staying behind?” I'm relieved!

“I'll stay behind Bayede so I can prepare for tomorrow.”

“No its fine wakwami. I’ll see you tomorrow morning.”

“Okay Bayede.”

“Will you see me out?” he gave me those pleading eyes. I couldn’t say no.

I followed him out. He bid his farewell to his brother and the look Mandlenkosi gave, it could’ve easily sent me to the grave. I looked away and followed my husband out the door.

“Must I pick you up from school like today?” I’m not going to sugarcoat it, today was fun, I enjoyed being with him.

“Yes please.”

“I’ll do just that MaGumede. Thank you for dinner, you are a really great cook.”

“Thank you Bayede.” I wonder where Mgabadeli is.

“You have a good night ke wakwami.”

“You to Bayede.”

He pulled me in and gave me a hug. It was a friendly warm hug.

He climbs into the car and I watch him drive off. I’m looking forward to this weekend. We had a good day today, although we aren’t good at holding a conversation because it gets awkward sometimes, but I’ll get used to it. I have no choice but to get used to it.

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I bought underwear, night dresses and pyjamas today. I also bought a bikini. There is a low chance that I wear it though, I can’t be showing off my body in public like I used to. Nkosi opened the door and walked in. What happened to basic manners like knocking?

“Where are you going?” I raised my eyebrow at him.

“You didn’t knock Mandlenkosi.”

“This is my room.” He said cockily, closing the door behind him.

“Then I’ll gladly move out of it you will not respect me.” He frowned.

“What’s wrong with you?” he asked moving my clothes off the bed to sit.

“You didn’t knock. What if I was indecent.”

“There is nothing on that body under the clothes and under the skin I don’t know.”

“I am your brothers wife, you have to respect me as one.” He laughed.

“It’s too late for you to say that, not after you let me in.”

“And so you are going to use that against me?”

“You confessed your love to me Amile, through those moans, the way you held me. I know you love me.”

“That was a moment of weakness and you know it.”

“And I enjoyed every minute of it.” He got off the bed and walked towards me.

“I know you did too.” I moved back.

“Get out Mandlenkosi.”

“You may give it to him every night, but your heart it belongs to me, and you know that with your heart and soul.”

I’m pressed against the wall and he’s leaning up against my body. He stares at me deeply in the eyes. I won’t fold, not today. I pushed him back. He gave me a questioning look.

“Leave Mandlenkosi or I’ll leave.” I don’t know what he was expecting.

“Are you serious?” I laughed.

“You think I’m joking? What happened the other day wasn’t supposed to happen, it was a mistake, something that will never ever happen again Mandlenkosi. I’m telling you once and not again, get out.”

I'm just as shocked as he is at the ability to raise my voice like that, but he knows better than to protest when I've put my foot down.

With his tail in between his legs, he left the room, leaving me with my heart racing. The Lord must forgive me.

Chapter Thirty-Five

Nambitha Makhathini

I haven't seen Nkululeko since Monday, he's been busy with school work and I miss him. He

said he'll fetch me from school today so I told my mom that I have extra lessons so we can spend some time together.

He's a bit late, he did say that he was going to be, I'm glad he did because if he didn't I would be sitting here like an idiot. Only after twenty minutes did he arrive. It's Friday, I don't know where he's planning to take me for the day, but I'm excited to see him. We drive to Durban North and on the way I felt quite anxious because Nkosi will be there, so will Amile. I will be torn between them. But I'm here to spend time with my man, I've missed him.

"Is Amile home?"

"You mean the queen?" I rolled my eyes.

"She's my friend before she is the queen." He chuckled.

"I'm just teasing nana. She's not home, her husband has taken her on holiday." What?

“And she agreed?”

“Shouldn’t she?” good question, but...

“Prince Mandlenkosi?”

“Mandlenkosi is a grown man that failed to fight for his relationship. All of this could’ve been avoided had he told his brother that Amile was his girlfriend. Therefore it should not hurt him when Amile is happy with the one that did right by her, no matter how much it hurts all of us.” He makes make very valid point.

“Is she happy?”

“She looks happy. They went shopping yesterday and they were getting along.” I can’t imagine what it must be like for her to be dating such an older man.

The king is the same age as my mother. He’s really old, and my friend is forced to sleep with him, and maybe bear him children. Amile is not ready for kids, just like I am not ready to be a

step mother. Yet here I am.

He parks the car and he helps me out.

“Thank you sir.” He wraps his arms around my waist and pulls me closer to his body and plants a kiss on my lips. Oh yes, I didn’t give him his greeting.

“I missed you MaXulu.” I missed him too.

We won’t be seeing much of each other for the next three to four weeks, exams will be hectic and time to socialize will lessen.

“Are you going to invite me inside?” I asked wrapping my arms around his neck. He laughed.

“Of course.” He pecked my lips once, twice, thrice, four times.

I giggled.

“Okay, let’s go.” He pulled my hand.

I just can’t wait to change out of my school uniform. He led me to his bed room and I was

surprised, it was massive. What the hell!?

“Make yourself comfortable please, must I get you anything to eat?” his bed looks really comfortable! I could have a first class nap on that bed.

“Yes please.” His colour coordinating skills are amazing.

It looks nothing like the rest of the apartment, it's decorated in different shades of dark blue and it's aesthetic. I'm very impressed.

“Who chose the colour scheme in here?” I turned to look at him.

“I did.” He sneaked up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist.

“Do you like it?”

“It is quite impressive.” I'm only drawn to this because I love interior decorating.

“Thank you.” He kissed my cheek, then my neck.

“Mmh Nkululeko.” His hand massaged my thigh. I held it but not firmly. He controlled mine and lifted it up my thigh beneath my skirt. I stopped me.

“Can I change first.” He stopped kissing my neck and removed his hand from my thigh.

“Okay. Let me go get you something to eat.”

When he exits the room, I exhale deeply.

Nkululeko is very sexual, he is very touchy Feely and he can never not go without putting his hands all over my body. I’m not used to this. I still get very uncomfortable, especially when he wants to touch in between my thighs. I’m getting used to him touching my bum, they say that is normal, but his hand going in between my thighs, its awkward for me.

I changed like the speed on lighting into leggings and a white button up shirt. Its quite big on me, but I love it so much. It suits me,

especially with my petite body.

He came back as I was folding my uniform and stuffing it in my bag. He was carrying a tray and it had a glass and a bowl. He told me to sit on the bed and I did as instructed. He put the tray on my lap and he sat next to me.

“What are you planning on studying in university?” he asked. I could see he wanted to lay his head on my chest, but I’m eating, he unfortunately can’t.

“Interior design, I want to work at Mthiyane Construction.”

“Work? Isn’t that a Construction company?”

“It’s a multi-billion company that provides construction services, interior and renovations. Do you know the Mfusi’s?”

“Never heard of them.” He’s not joking.

“You are definitely living under a rock. It was

started by Kennedy Mfusi and now it..." he shut me up by grabbing my boob in his hand and kissing my neck.

"I don't want to talk about the history of dead people who don't bring me any essence in life." I let out a soft sound and I could feel him smiling.

He kissed me even more.

"Do you like that." I nodded and tilted my head to give him more room.

He leaves my neck and comes up to my lips. I lock mine with his and as soon as the heat radiates from his body to mine, he climbs on top of me. My subconscious is telling me to push him off otherwise things will escalate, but I'm so curious, I want to see where this will lead. Not that I would let it get too far.

His hand was already cupped on my breast, but that wasn't enough for him because his hand

moved from their and travelled under my shirt to cup them, skin to palm. He kept squeezing them and little sounds of pleasure escaped my mouth. Something is happening to me.

I'm slowly losing my senses. I have my legs now wrapped around his waist and I'm pulling him down to press against me. I can feel the little guy poking me by my stomach and he keeps moving his waist. This right here is passion!

His hand goes on another journey, a journey down my stomach, to the band of my tights. He's trying to sneak his hand in. I tighten my hold around his waist and his hand loosens against my waist. He doesn't stop kissing me. When he thinks I've forgotten he slips his hand down to my palace over the material of the leggings and he starts to rub me. I shot my eyes open and stopped kissing him.

He didn't stop, he instead went back to kissing

my neck and he went down to my shirt. He started working the buttons with one hand. I wanted to stop him, this was getting very awkward for me. I didn't know what to do with myself.

"Nkululeko." He didn't look at me. My boobs were now exposed to him, he succeeded in unbuttoning my shirt. He had a better view.

"Nana." He popped one nipple in his mouth and it felt very ticklish. I giggled.

"What are you doing?" that didn't come out as a question like I intended.

"I'm making you feel good." His warm mouth departed from my skin. I wanted to pull him back and have him suck on it more.

"How?" he undid more of my buttons and left soft kisses on my stomach.

"Like this." He held on to the band of my leggings.

I breathed out when he looked at me in a begging look. I know he's not asking me for sex.

"I can't sleep with you Nkululeko." He kissed my belly button.

"I'm not asking you to." I'm scared.

Men are very impatient human beings. But women, women are very curious. That is why I'm conflicted and don't know what to do with myself this very moment.

I didn't protest when he pulled down my leggings and exposed my palace. This is embarrassing, it's unusual and very uncomfortable. He pulled the pants and panties all the way down to my ankles and he threw them across the room. He lifted my legs and stared at my lady part.

"Nkululeko." I'm shaking on the inside.

He ignored me. Instead he ran his finger over my skittles and I felt a finger sliding into me. It

was slippery. My eyes widened.

“Nkululeko!” I shouted.

He laughed. I tried to sit up but he pushed my chest back gently.

“Relax nana.” His face disappeared between my thighs and before I knew it, his lips were on my lips, my other lips.

I found myself wrapping my thighs around his face, locking him in from the pleasure of his tongue and the warmth of his mouth. I found myself crying out, crying out so much that the sound of my voice irritated me I had to stick my finger in between my teeth to stop it. I was caught up in a rapture and he wasn't even giving me space to breath.

He didn't stop pressing that pleasure button and I slowly felt my legs starting to vibrate whenever he did that.

“Let it go nana.”

I felt my blood rushing to my toes before they curled and a wave of pleasure washed over my whole body. My body convulsed. He held me tightly by the hips and he came up to my face. My eyes were tightly shut. He kissed me and I could taste the saltiness of the palace.

The disgusting things people do with their mouths, I would've done it long ago had I known it was thus good. I didn't hold back, I kissed him too.

Amile Gumede

When he said mini vacation I thought maybe he was talking about something like going to a resort here in Durban or something, I didn't think he would literally fly me all the way to Cape Town. I've never been to Cape Town and being here feels like a whole different place, a

whole different side of the world. Only when we were boarding the plane did I hear that we were going to Cape Town, I should've known as soon as he told me about a plane but I didn't think he was serious.

It's sunset and it looks pulchritudinous. The husband looks exhausted. He just took a shower and I'm to follow, but I'm still fixing his toiletries. I want to get the best pictures at dinner. It's not the Dream holiday with the dream husband, but it's a holiday nonetheless, in Cape Town, the city of the riches, I have to enjoy myself.

He thanks me like the gentleman he is for his things and I start to change so I can go shower. I find him staring at my body when I turn around. I had my back to him, so it weird to find him looking at me like that. I won't ask though, I just clear my throat and make my way to the bathroom without saying anything.

This will probably be his moment to call MaMzobe. He never wants to call or talk to her in my presence and I think he does the same in my presence. I appreciate that, that he respects both of us, but I really don't care. MaMzobe is like a mother to me, and although I sleep with her man, she still has his heart, and he doesn't have another one to spare.

I hop out the shower and I'm hit by a dizzy spell. I sit on the toilet seat and try catch my breath before standing up. My legs suddenly go weak and I almost faint. I sit back down, but this time, with a loud thud on the toilet seat.

He knocks on the door.

"Wakwami?"

"I'm okay Bayede." I really am not.

I try to stand again but I find myself on the floor. I hit my elbow on the hard floor and I unintentionally scream from the excruciating

pain. He opens the door with force and he rushes to me. He picks me up without asking questions and he takes me to the bed.

“MaGumede you are burning up.” I shook my head.

“I was showering with hot water.”

He touched my forehead and shook his head.

“Ayikhona. Must I take you to the hospital.” I’m seeing two of him now.

“No Bayede, I’m fine.” They both look very worried.

“Amile, follow my finger.” I blinked twice before I tried to follow his finger.

My eyes are getting heavier. He calls out to me again and again until I hear his voice fading.

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I'm hearing beeping sounds. I fluttered my eyelids open and I saw him sitting next to me, his head buried in his hands. My arm is in pain. What am I doing in a hospital bed?

"Bayede." He lifted his head and he looked at me.

"Are you okay? How are you feeling? Must I call the doctor." He's on his feet.

"What happened, where are we?"

"You passed out, you are at the hospital." I tried to sit up.

"No, relax." I'm feeling perfectly fine, it's just my arm.

"I'm okay Bayede."

"No MaGumede, let me go call a doctor first." He walked out the room.

I want to call out to him, but I don't want to

disrespect him like that, you just don't shout out at the king. Husband or not.

When he comes back, he comes back with a young doctor, looks like an intern.

"My queen, how are you feeling?" he took out his stethoscope and checked my chest. I did the stupid breathing exercises.

"I'm perfectly fine doctor." He held up two fingers.

"How many fingers am I holding up?" This is stupid.

"Two fingers."

"It looks like you are okay. We have taken your blood for testing, you fainted and we don't know what the cause may be." The husband looks very worried behind me. He steps in.

"When will the blood results be back?"

"As soon as tomorrow my king. But we will

discharge her if she doesn't faint again in the next two hours." Two hours!? I'm here on holiday, not to spend time in a hospital.

"But I'm fine doctor." I protested.

"Yes I am aware my queen, but I'm keeping you just for observation. When the blood results come back, then you will be in the clear." Oh hell no, this is not what I signed up for.

The doctor walked out the room after excusing himself. The husband came to hold my hand.

"I was so worried MaGumede." He does look worried.

"I think I'm just jet lagged. There really isn't much to worry about, I'm fine I promise Bayede." He shook his head.

"We will wait for the blood results to confirm that. But we are definitely going back home."

"No!" I unintentionally raised my voice. His eyes

widened.

“But you aren’t okay.”

“I promise I’m okay Bayede, let’s wait for the results.” What’s the worst that could come out?

Pregnancy?

Pregnancy?

Oh my goodness!?

“What’s wrong?” He can see the panic on my face.

“I...” the words aren’t coming out.

Maybe I’m pregnant. My period hasn’t visited me in a long time.

I haven’t even finished a month in this marriage, I can’t possibly be pregnant. That would be the devil working overtime. I’m not ready to be a mom.

“MaGumede?”

“I...”

I’m speechless.

Chapter Thirty-Six

Amile Gumede

This has been the longest two hours of my life. I didn’t ditch my study timetable to come to Cape Town to sit in an uncomfortable hospital bed. I want to home. I’m sitting here biting my nails in frustration. The husband stepped out claiming to make a call and the pregnancy thought keeps roaming around my head. It can’t happen. No way.

Okay. Let’s count: I arrived to the palace at the end of September, we are now in the fourth week of October, which means I have officially been married for five weeks, that is technically

a month and a week. Okay.

I had sex with Bayede on the second week of my arrival, the third week of me staying there. I'm definitely ruling out being pregnant by Nkosi, a week hasn't even passed. I'm having the kings baby. I want to break down and cry.

When the husband came back, he came back with the doctor. It looks like he's still on the phone.

"MaMzobe, the doctor is here, let me call you back." He drops the phone and walks well into the room.

The doctor stands next to my bed with a file.

"I have good news for you my queen. You can go home, I got your blood results back, they were able to speed the results up for you. You are clean, there is nothing wrong with you."

Relief!

“What do you mean there is nothing wrong with her?” he has questions, I’m just glad I get to go home! Well, back to my holiday.

“She lost consciousness, what was the cause of that?” the doctor looked through his file and shook his head.

“The results came back clear. She’s perfectly healthy. I suspected dehydration or low sugar levels because those are the most common causes of fainting, but none of that is evident in the results. She’s perfectly healthy.” He shook his head.

“Okay then, thank you.” He’s no relieved. Not yet.

The doctor lets him sign the forms before he excuses himself. He helps me out of the bed and I was quite capable of standing on my own two feet. I didn’t feel light headed anymore.

“We have to get to the bottom of this.” He says.

“I’m fine my king.” I laughed a little.

“You scared me.” I shook my head.

“I’m sorry. I don’t know what happened, but I’m fine.” He wrapped his arms around my waist to support me, he thought I was falling.

I’m pressed against his body. He kisses my forehead. His heart is beating very fast. He really was scared wasn’t he. At least its not pregnancy.

He helps me with my shoes. I wonder how he dressed me up because I was just out the shower, the thought of him seeing me naked actually freaks me out, but he’s seen me multiple times. I should probably get used to it now.

He’s holding my hand tightly in his. I don’t know if he fears that I’ll run away or faint again, but it shows just how caring he is.

He opens the front seat door for me and I climb in. He makes sure that I’m comfortable and I

have my seat belt on before he goes on to his side of the car. I'm not used to seeing him drive himself. It's very unusual, but he's a human being.

Before he starts the car, he taps the screen of the monitor, he's going to contacts. Oh flip, he's calling MaMzobe.

"Mageba." She answers with anticipation.

"MaMzobe, nangu uMaGumede." He looks at me.

"Sawbona Ma."

"MaGumede, are you okay? What happened?"

"I fainted. I suddenly felt weak and dizzy when I came out the shower. But the doctor didn't find anything."

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm feeling like myself." She sighs out.

"That's good then. I'm glad you are okay."

“Thank you Ma.”

“Try and enjoy the rest of your little holiday okay. Don’t scare us like that again.”

“Yes ma.”

She’s not going to talk to Bayede. Okay? She said her goodbye and dropped the call.

Now that I actually think about this, it is quite strange though that I faint out of nowhere. That doesn’t just happen to anyone. I’ve never fainted before, and for it to happen like this, and for me to wake up perfectly fine with no side effects is questioning. It’s even worse now that the doctors can’t find anything. What is becoming of the last years of my teenage life?

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He’s done this before. The only difference

between now and then is that now, he's doing it from the willingness of his heart. The pain and hurt is what is pushing him to do this. It takes a lot for a man, especially a Zulu man to put his pride aside like this and do white people things as his father referred to it.

The last time he saw a therapist, he was in high school and he was booked in by his brother Langaletu. He was in for his behavioural problems in school, and unlike Mhlabawesizwe, Langaletu saw that there was more to his mischievous behaviour than just being a difficult child.

The report given by the therapist back to Langaletu was depression. At only 15 years old, Mandlenkosi was already depressed and his only way of dealing with it was making other people suffer. That's why he bullied and beat up other kids whenever they angered him. The therapist also said he had anger, lots of it, he

was able to control it, but he was only fifteen, there was only so much he could control about himself.

Langaletu told Mhlabawesizwe all of this, he even went as far as showing him the reports when he threatened to pull him out of the sessions. He was adamant on the belief a Zulu man doesn't have depression, that depression was something for women and if he's angry he should do stick fighting.

Mandlenkosi was always his mother's egg. She treated him like the last born he was. No matter how depressed she was, she gave her all into loving him, because she didn't want him to see that side of her like Zwelibanzi did. No child deserves to experience that side of their mother.

That is why Mandlenkosi's memories of mommy are much fonder than the memories Zwelibanzi has.

He's sitting in the chair uncomfortably staring around the room, his heart is beating in his ears, the silence is bringing him anxiety. His eyes are avoiding hers. She's much younger than he expected, therapists are always old and wrinkly.

"Mr Nkosi Zulu." She reads from her file.

He breaths out. He rubs his sweaty hands on his thighs.

"Please get comfortable on the chair so we can start."

Not very welcoming, he thinks to himself. He lifts his legs up to the chair and lies back. He looks up at the ceiling and focuses on the stain. It's quite large.

"Tell me more about yourself."

"My name is Mandlenkosi Zulu, I'm 28 and I work as a chemical engineer."

"I didn't ask you who you are, I said tell me

about yourself.” His heart is racing.

“Your question is hard.” He confessed.

“No one know you better than you. Tell me about yourself, what do you like, what don’t you like?” he took in a deep breath.

“I like soccer. I also like science. I don’t like going back home and I hate my father.” She’s shocked, but she can’t show that, it’s not part of her job description.

“Okay. Your father.”

“What about him?” he asks, not tearing his eyes from the stain on the ceiling.

“You used the words ‘don’t like’ to describe when you listed things you don’t like, but when you talk about him, you used to word ‘hate’. Why is that?” He rubbed his eyes. The stain started moving.

“Because I hate him.” He said blandly.

“Why do you hate him?”

“Because he was never a father to me, being king mattered more than the well being of his son.” She cleared her throat.

“What makes you say this?”

“He never had time for me. It was always Banzi and Langa. Always them, it was never Dumisani or Khethukuthula or Mandlenkosi, it was always Banzi and Langa. Even when my mother was alive, he only served his purpose as a husband, but as a father, nothing. He died without ever giving me a hug. Maybe he did give me one, I just don't remember, but his love, I never felt it.”

“Did you want to tell him that he loves you?” he shook his head.

“Not in words, not Mhlabawesizwe a Zulu man. But actions speak louder than words, a ‘I'm proud of you son' when I got the highest marks in the district, or a ‘I'm here for you' when my

mother died. I was only 11, I didn't know anything, all I needed was a father's love, not a man telling me I need to grow up when all I needed was to be a child, to be myself."

"How do you feel about your brothers?" he exhaled.

"Langaletu was the only real brother I ever had. Waymore of a man than Mhlabawesizwe and Zwelibanzi combined. A man that was never afraid of feeling. I am here today, committing this 'taboo' because of him." He laughs mockingly.

"That's what my father called therapy, he called it 'Taboo'." He drew in a sharp breath before closing his eyes.

"So you've been in therapy before?" She asks after some silence.

"Yes, almost 13 years ago. Mhlabawesizwe pulled me out of it though. He forced Zwelibanzi

to come and fetch me from Durban saying I must go back to school. I'm assuming he was also too busy to come fetch me himself."

"Okay, all I'm hearing from this is you hate Mhlabawesizwe, you don't like him because he didn't show you love, but why do you hate your brother?"

"Because he was always on his side. Never on mine. Zwelibanzi got the love I always wanted from Mhlabawesizwe. Why wasn't I enough?"

"Have you ever sat down and talked to him about this?"

"I have nothing to say to him." His chest is rising and falling. Tears are burning his eyes.

"Zwelibanzi took away the one person I thought no one could take away from me, and I let him. I hate him and I will never forgive him for doing that to me." He wipes his tears.

He sits up and looks at her. Her face is

scrunched up, as soon as their eyes met, she relaxes her face and looks down at her note pad.

“I think I’ve said enough for today.” He fixes his shirt.

“But your session doesn’t end for another thirty minutes.” She says looking at her wrist watch.

“I’ll pay your for wasting your time.” He stands up.

She also stands up and pulls down her skirt.

That seems to draw his attention to her thick thighs and her hips. She also has thick legs and her dark skin us glistening in the sunlight.

“Thank your for coming Mr Zulu.” He rubs his nose and nods.

“Your next session is in two weeks.” She spoke again.

He nods. He doesn’t think he will wait that long to come back. He looks at her little feet again.

She startles when she clears her throat.

“Sorry.” He turns and walks out.

Her heels are clicking behind him, he urges to turn around but he keeps his hands deep inside his pockets and walks straight to the door. He opens it and walks away. She stands at the door and stares at him as he walks all the way down the stairs, out their offices.

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He needs a stiff drink after that session, talking about his father brings him nothing but affliction, and it needs to be numbed out. Now that he knows alcohol works, it's his go to.

He doesn't keep alcohol in his house because he doesn't drink, only the beers in his fridge that Jama drinks occasionally. But they have turned

into his daily bread, that's where he found solace and they would wear him out whenever he had more than five bottles. But he's not cheap enough to continue drinking beer day in day out. He's sophisticated, he'd rather get drunk off of whiskey or scotch.

So he bought a few bottles of whiskey and took them home. He's probably going to start a collection. Its still going to be a long two months of living with Amile. She's only been here for two weeks.

He didn't feel guilty when they had sex. In fact, it was the best thing he had ever done. He did what he had always longed to do, and that was feel what it was like to be inside of her, make love to her. It was perfect. Not even the thought of his brother being inside of her tainted that night. It didn't matter. He finally got to be in her arms.

There are laughing voices in the other room.

Jama is probably home with one of his many whores he thinks to himself. He starts drinking.

“Zulu?” Jama’s voice echoes behind him.

“Bafo! Ukahle?”

“You are drinking again?”

“Am I not allowed to?” he asked. He’s not turning his head. Instead, he’s tilting his glass to get the last of the droplets of whiskey from his glass.

“Yazi bafo I waited 18 years before I could be allowed to do this, and I foolishly spent another what, 10 not doing it. I’m definitely not going to miss out now. I only live once, right?” he’s already drunk.

“Uxakile Zulu.”

“Ngixake bani, wena?” he shakes his head.

“I’m not your problem Nkululeko. I’m no one’s problem. You just focus on fucking your whores

uphume kumina.”

In that moment, Jama wanted to close Nambitha’s ears, or maybe unhear what she just heard, but she’s old enough to associate things. When the silence hits, only then does Nkosi turn around.

“Hawu, Nambitha, right?” he stands.

“Yes my prince.” She bows a little.

“Don’t do that.” She straightened up.

“Don’t let this one trick you into sleeping with him.” He slapped Jama’s shoulder.

“Come on Bafo.”

“Uyazazi mshayi.” Nambitha gave Jama the side eye.

“Nisale kahle ke.” He’s holding his glass and bottle.

He walked to his room, leaving the couple with havoc.

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Amile Gumede

I have hated every single study session held with Mandlenkosi because he has been unbearable to work with. It has been the longest three weeks of my life and tomorrow, I am writing my final maths paper. I'm not one to rejoice just as yet, I still have three more exams to write after that, but this is the last Maths exam.

The drunkard is not here and we haven't even started the last section I have to study. It's already midday and he's probably drunk wherever he is. I've been postponing calling Bayede to tell him what is going on in this house but now, I'm up to here with Nkosi's unruly behaviour. He's not only messing up his

life, but he's also fucking with my education.

I stand up and go to the kitchen to make myself something to eat. Jama left to go write his exam. I didn't know he was also in school, I was quite shocked to find out that he was doing his final year in accountancy. He's probably smarter than I gave him credit for.

Him and Nambitha seem happy. It's all I want to see for both of them, just joy and happiness. I also haven't seen her in a while, she stopped coming to visit when exams started. Most of the time she spent here was with Jama though, not me.

I've slowly grown accustomed to the fact that I have a husband that requires attention so I got used to calling him and all those other things. MaMzobe also calls to check up on me too, and she tells me everyday that she misses me. Honestly if I had the choice, I'd rather be staying in the palace than to be here. I'm starting to

hate it here, Mandlenkosi has turned it into a joint.

He walks through the door and he looks sober. He's all dressed up, a white shirt and black pants with formal shoes. He doesn't greet, he just throws his car keys on the counter and walks straight to his room, the therapy room.

"Angilalanga nawe." I say. Why isn't he greeting?

"I know that very well." Idiot.

I continue eating. My phone rings on the table and I know it's the husband. He's the only one that calls me.

"Bayede, sawbona."

"Hello MaGumede, how are you doing today?"

"I'm okay, how are you?" See, normal conversations.

"No, I'm okay. What were you writing today?"

"Nothing, I had the day off. I'm writing

mathematics tomorrow.”

“Have you started studying?” I looked at Nkosi’s bedroom door. It’s closed.

“Bhuti wasn’t here so I did some revision, but He’s back, maybe we will start the next section.” His voice changes.

“Maybe? Where was he all this time?”

“I think he was at work.” Why am I lying for him.

“No its okay MaGumede. I’ll give him a call now.” I wanted to protest, but I know he’s going to put him in line.

“Thank you Bayede.”

“I’ll call you before you go to bed okay.”

I said my goodbye before hanging up. I stood up to go dump my bowl in the sink and went to knock on his door. I’m not trying to provoke him, but I really need to start studying otherwise I will fail tomorrows exam.

I could hear him talking on the phone, he wasn't exactly talking, he was shouting. He sounded angry. I knocked again. After what felt like an eternity, he opened the door for me and he looked like he was fuming. Smoke was just about ready to come out of his ears.

"What do you want, you've already ran to your daddy to tell him that I don't teach you!"

"You aren't teaching me vele! I'm writing maths tomorrow, you know this. We haven't covered a whole section. How do you expect me to pass."

"Zifundele wena. I have a life of my own. I don't owe you or your husband anything."

"Nkosi?"

"No, don't say my name." he goes back inside his room.

I follow him in.

"Come on, I've put up with your shitty behaviour

for the past month, I've tolerated your drinking and you making stupid mistakes when teaching me, now you want to do this. It's the last time I'm asking you for help. Ngizophuma kuwena." I don't like begging, but I don't have a choice right now.

"Amile get out of my room." He's stripping his shirt off.

"Mandlenkosi, please."

"Ask your husband to teach you." He's being petty.

"Come on. Must I beg you down on my knees. It's the last time."

"Don't embarrass yourself Amile."

He's literally stripped off all his clothes and he's only left in his underwear. For a drunkard he looks good.

"Are you going to get out or must I help you

out?”

“Nkosi, please.” He came to push me out.

I stiffened my body and held on to the frames of the door when he tried to push me out.

“Nkosi!”

“Get out Amile, get out of my sight, get out of my life.”

I held onto his arms and dug my nails into his skin. He winced in pain and he grabbed me by the neck and pressed me against the wall. It wasn't rough, but he was hovering above me and his breathing was irregular.

“I said get out.” He says in between gritted teeth.

“Make me.” He looks at me in the eyes and mine are as wide as saucers.

My chest is bouncing up and down. His hand is still wrapped around my neck and veins are popping out. My clit starts throbbing as his

breath continues to fan my face.

He lowers his head and kisses me. It's not slow. It's a passionate hungry kiss and I return it with the same urgency he gives off. My hands caress his skin and I remove the last piece of clothing on his body. He doesn't stop. His mister starts growing in my hands and I stroke him gently.

He leaves my mouth and goes down to my neck. I moan out and tilt my head. He uses his hands to lift my dress and my eyes shot open at the burning sensation of material sliding against my skin. He ripped my panties.

He used his other hand to grab my neck and lower the lining of my dress to expose my breast. He plops a nipple in his mouth and starts sucking on it.

"Nkosi!" I'm dripping wet, he's also hard.

Our eyes lock for a second before his hands

grip both my thighs and he lifts me up. He presses me against the wall and I feel him rubbing his tip at my entrance.

I can't believe I'm letting him in again!

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“You taste so good!”

He's pounding me from behind, he's going to hard I can't not scream, but Jama just came back and he's somewhere in the house. I told him to stop, but he hasn't stopped.

His body tenses up behind me and my body falls flat on the bed. He also lies on top of me groaning like an animal. That was a lot.

“Get off.” I pushed him off.

He pulled out and my coochie was dripping.

“Jama is home, I need to get out of here.” I rolled out of bed.

I took the towel on the chair next to the bed and used it to wipe myself. I’m panicking now, how the hell am I going to get out of this room.

I put on my dress, he tore my underwear, he wasn’t exactly being gentle. I fixed my hair looking at the mirror. I’ll take a shower upstairs.

“Go check the coast.” He’s still lying naked on the bed.

“How long are we going to play this game Amile?”

“Nkosi, please.” I pushed him off.

“I can’t keep sleeping with you. You are my husband’s brother. What we are doing is a sin.” The first time was a mistake, this time, I don’t even know what to call it.

“The sin is the goodness in between those

thighs that I can't live without." This is really not the time.

He got up and went to the wardrobe to find something to wear. He put on shorts and a t-shirt and dragged his body to the door. He walked out and I could hear him conversing with Jama. He spoke to him for almost ten minutes before coming back in to tell me I could get out. This is not the life I want to live. I need to go back to the palace.

I ran upstairs before Jama came out of his room and I took a well deserved shower, scrubbing off his smell on my skin. A lot of things have changed between us. I still love him, but I have more resentment than love for him. He hurt me so much that even the awkward moments we share now don't excite me. I'm much happier if he is away from me. Maybe this is how it should be.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She's not feeling well. Her stomach is upset and she also has a headache. Banzi didn't go to council today so he can stay at home and take care of her. He was on the phone with Amile earlier asking her how studying is going, from there on, he's been shouting on the phone.

She got out of bed and walked to where he was, as hard as it was. She touched his shoulder.

"Go back to bed MaMzobe."

"Calm down Banzi I can hear you all the way from my room."

"Mandlenkosi you will do as I tell you, do you hear me. Ngimdala mengingaka ukuthi ngingaphikisana nawe." He ends the call and turns to her.

"Why did you get out of bed." She really is

feeling light headed right now.

“You are too rough with Nkosi. He’s still young, he’s allowed to make mistakes. Do you want to push him away like Baba did?” He shook his head.

“Then be considerate, please.”

It was entirely Nkosi’s fault that his relationship with their father was that way, he expected him to be someone he wasn’t instead of accepting that he was just Mhlabawesizwe Zulu, a king that put his kingdom first.

“I need to vomit.” She said holding her stomach. She ran to the bathroom and emptied out her stomach.

“Are you okay?” he asked worriedly brushing her back as she coughed into the toilet bowl.

“No, I’m no where close to being okay.” That broke his heart.

When she finished, he helped her rinse her mouth and walked her back to the bed where he tucked her in.

“You are coming down with the flu.” He said touch her forehead.

“I don’t think so.”

“It’s the flu. Because you don’t listen to me, you continued to go out in the cold.” She shook her head.

“I’m trying to find Langaletu’s wife. You are too busy to do it so I will.” He frowned.

“The elders will be on our case, its been three years Banzi, we were supposed to find her as soon as she died.” She said again.

“And what if she’s already dead. There are so many women out there how will we pin point the one?”

“Wherever she is, she’s having dreams about

him. That's what Bhulubhulu said before he died." This stressful.

"What did Celemba say?" she breaths in.

"He said she's close by."

"And how will we know which person is dreaming of Langaletu?"

"That's the part I want to find out about."

"Don't you think we need a different opinion?" he suggested.

"What do you mean a different opinion?"

"I mean see someone else about it. Celemba has proven that he can't." she protested.

"That can't happen, Celemba is the royal seer."

"Bur he's failing at his job." She would rather die than to let that happen.

"This is not an easy job, give him a chance. In fact, we both should go see him."

“Ngiyala MaMzobe. Ngeke phela. Rather we not find her.”

“If we don’t find that girl you will lose the throne.” She said.

“I don’t care about the throne, I never wanted it from the beginning. I completely understand why Langaletu ran away from it, losing it won’t hurt.” She shook her head.

“No Mageba, we are going to see Celemba tomorrow, he will give us the answers we want.” This is a disaster waiting to occur, he thinks to himself.

“You aren’t feeling well. You will stay here until you are better.”

“But Mageba.”

“No MaMzobe, I have spoken. Get some rest, I’ll bring you food later.”

He walked out the room and closed the door

behind him. She's suddenly breaking into sweat, the last thing she needs right now is for Banzi to get involved in this too much. They can't go to another seer otherwise her dirty laundry will be aired out, and she's doesn't want her reputation to be tainted. What happened was only a mistake, he wasn't meant to die.

She didn't love him like that but she didn't want to harm him too.

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She's vomiting again, she's had enough and can't stand it anymore.

"Are you sure you aren't pregnant?" Banzi asks her as he brushes her back.

It doesn't stop. She starts coughing and it comes out of her mouth and nose. Her chest

and stomach hurts.

“Don’t say that.” She says in between tears.

He keeps quiet and continued brushing her back. Pregnancy is the last thing they should consider. She already three boys, she’s in her forties, she can’t be having a little baby now, that’s why Amile was brought into the kingdom, so she can give him kids.

She goes back to bed and turns the side lamp off and covers herself with the duvet.

“MaMzobe, are you sure there isn’t a little one in your tummy?” he asks leaning in.

“No. I’d know if I was pregnant Banzi. I’ve done this three times.”

“Maybe this time will be different.” She sat up and looked at him.

“No, don’t put ideas in my head. The only person who should be getting pregnant is Amile,

not me.”

“How about you take those home tests then.”

She shook her head.

“I’m not doing that.”

“Nontuthuzelo!”

“Banzi I don’t want to! I don’t want to be pregnant.” He stood up and went to ravage through the drawers to find the pregnancy test.

These have been here for a while, but they should still work. He goes to give her one.

“Go take it.” She’s refusing.

“Ngiyakucela wakwami.”

She snatched it out of his hand and went to the bathroom. She locked the door behind her and sat on the toilet seat. Her heart was beating in her ears from the panic.

It can be all things, just not pregnancy. Lord knows how she’s not ready to have a child.

She peed on the stick nonetheless, just to prove to him that his assumptions were wrong. When she was done, she washed her hands and went back to the room to give him the stick. They sat in silence a whole two minutes waiting to see what was going on.

“It says positive.”

What a sudden twist and turn of events this has become.

“You are lying.” She says blatantly.

“I’m not. You are pregnant my love.” He stands and engulfs her in a hug.

She’s not happy. She really is not happy. This is not part of her plan.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

Mandlenkosi Zulu

“She’s leaving today. We’ve fucked twice now, and that makes it harder for me to just switch off my feelings for her like I’m supposed to.”

Looking at the stain is still his favorite sport when he comes into this office. He’s getting more accustomed to talking freely with her, and he actually stays the whole hour now, unlike the first time.

“Why do you use the word fucked?” he chuckled.

“Because that’s what we did. We fucked around. It wasn’t supposed to happen, she’s told me multiple times that it doesn’t hurt anymore.”

“Tell me more about your relationship with her.”

“Is this one of your trick questions?” she laughed.

“No, I just want to know.”

“I met her back in April. It was her birthday and her and her friends were at a club. I honestly

thought she was older than her age because she was covered in make-up and all dolled up. I was attracted to her and I wanted to see her again, in daylight this time. She looked prettier without the make-up, she was perfect, the way she walked, the way she talked, even the way she laughed. Her laugh particularly reminded me of my moms laugh.” She’s quiet.

“When I found out about her age, and when she found out about my title, we were ready to stop whatever it was that was about to form between us, but our attraction was instant. By the end of the first day I spent with her, I was already in love with her. So we continued and three days later we were madly in love with each other. I told my mother about her in less than a week of my knowing her.”

“So you do go home?” she asked.

“Only to visit her grave. Nothing else. I know out love was meant to be, I know she will come

back to me because she had a dream about my mom. I've never had a dream about my mother, only after she came into my life."

"So you think she's the one for you?"

"Yes. That's why I'm going to fight for her."

"Look I don't know much about traditional things, but you and your brother share a mother, it could be that the dream was directed to your brother, and not you." He exhaled.

"Banzi doesn't even love her. Yes he sleeps with her, and buys her gifts and takes her out, but he doesn't love her. More than anything, he brought her to the palace to make her an incubator."

"Did you tell him about your relationship with her?"

"No."

"Why didn't you?"

“He wouldn’t have believed me. I think I’ve given you enough stories to back that up.” She nodded.

“Like any other time, I felt powerless against Zwelibanzi’s word and I just saw myself as a weak man. It doesn’t hurt when other people call me that because I labelled myself as one before people could.”

“It is no use me saying you should’ve fought for her and failed knowing you tried, but your heart would be in a better place than it is now knowing you had did that. Knowing that you had tried. She would also have closure knowing you did you utmost best to fight for her, but it just didn’t happen. The healing journey for both of you would be way easier.” He holds his face and wipes his tears.

“You know she is the most perfect human being I have ever met. Everything she does, the way she loves me. She loves me like MaNdlela loved

me, and that is a love that is rare to find.”

“Don’t you think that is the problem?” she asked.

“What?”

“You don’t love her, you see your mother in her eyes and that is why it is so hard for you to detach from her. Maybe that is the reason why your brother also gravitated closer to her.”

“No, I love Amile.”

“What was the first thing you love about her?”
He keeps quiet.

“Her eyes.”

“What about her eyes?” he cleared his throat.

“They reminded me of my mother’s eyes.” she wrote on her notepad.

“What else did you love about her?”

“The way she took care of me, the way she checked up on me and how she made sure I

was always okay. She looked out for my wellbeing, my health.”

“All the things your mother did for you?” he nodded realizing the absurdity of her ability to point out something he didn’t.

“It’s a common pattern, and this happens often to people who have not grieved a loved one. They fall for the first person that often reminds them of that loved one. It is common in friendships and romantic relationships. You didn’t get to grieve for your mother, your father forced things down your throat, things you weren’t ready to experience, he wasn’t patient with you, and your grieving process was delayed. That is why you look for your mother in every woman you meet.”

What she has said is not far from the truth.

“You and your brother are emotionally using her for your own selfish benefits.” She added.

“Don’t compare me to him. I love Amile. Yes she may remind me of my mother, but I love her nonetheless. He doesn’t, and he has made that clear.” She sighed.

“Okay so how do you feel about her leaving?”

“I’m partially relieved that I don’t have to face her after treating her that way and putting her through so much emotional pain in the time we stayed together. But my heart splits when I think about my brother having her by his side. That she now has to go back to her new life as his wife, and not mine. It hurts.”

“You need to have a serious conversation with your brother. You need to understand the reasoning behind him being the way he is. Bring him to therapy.” He chuckled.

“If you want more money Mathapelo, just tell me, I’ll give you more.” She doesn’t catch on.

“Why do you say that?” he sits up to see her

confused expression.

“I’m not bringing Banzi here.” She shook her head and closed her notepad. She placed her leg on top of the other.

She’s wearing pants today, they are kind of tight on her.

“Stop doing that to yourself Mr Zulu. You are hindering your healing process by holding this grudge against your brother and father. Your father is dead, he’s not coming back, he’s at peace wherever he is and you are here dealing with the pain he left you with. If you talk to your brother, you’ll get all the answers you want, and maybe get the healing you seek for that little boy who lost his mom and never recovered.”

She has a valid point, but his pride won’t let him admit that.

“Look you don’t need to bring him here, if you feel you are strong enough to deal with it on

your own, you can, but maybe he also needs therapy, just as much as you needed it. He just doesn't know it."

"Let's go out for lunch." He stands up.

"Mr Zulu." She protests.

"It's on me." She doesn't care about that. She really is not looking very eager on going with him.

"I love keeping a professional relationship with my patients Mr Zulu."

"Outside of this office, I am no one's patient Dr Moeketsi. Let's go."

She really doesn't want to go, but he's very persistent. Even in the way he's looking at her. She stands and takes her purse from her desk.

"This is very unprofessional of me Mr Zulu."

"You sound very stuck up right now." She stopped in her tracks.

“I’m not forced to do this you know.” He chuckled and took her handbag.

“Ngyadlala Thandazo.” She frowned.

“I don’t even want to know.”

He walked behind her as to marvel at the view of her curvaceous behind. She surely makes pants look like the first wonder of the world.

Amile Gumede

I feel like shit, and the only good part about today is that I’m in my mother’s arms.

“Baby you can’t ignore him forever, at least answer his calls because the next thing he will be here in panic.”

“I don’t want to leave mama.”

The waterworks start all over again. I’ve had a

shitty week; first it was that slip up with Nkosi, that I regret with my whole heart, then I had a black out in my last exam. I barely wrote two pages in that exam and I know that I'm going to fail.

I have mixed emotions about going back to Zululand. I don't want to continue staying with Nkosi and being in his presence, but the anxiety of being with that man is kicking in once again. It's a lot. I'm overwhelmed. He's been calling the whole day, and I haven't gotten back to him. He promised to come fetch me last night and I panicked.

"I know you don't want to go my love but you can't stay here forever, you can't hide here. He will come and fetch you either way."

"I just want to stay one more night with you mama, that's all I ask."

I hate crying like this, I should be using this time

to bond with my mom but I was just overcome with so many emotions.

My phone is ringing again, and I wish it would just stop. The sound is starting to annoy me. Mom brings it to me and stands over me.

“It’s him. Please answer my baby.” She hands it to me.

I wipe my tears and stare at the screen. I hesitantly swipe the green button and put it against my ear.

“MaGumede, what’s going on, why aren’t you answering the phone?” I exhaled.

“I’m sorry my king. I was taking a nap.”

“Why do you sound like you are crying? Are you okay there, where is Mandlenkosi?” His questions are slowly getting on my nerves.

“I’m not with him, I’m with my mother. I missed her.” He breathed out.

“I’m glad you are safe. Mgabadeli and I are on the way to Durban as we speak.” My heart fell to the pit of my stomach.

“Yebo Bayede.”

He said goodbye and I didn’t even have the energy to so I just dropped the phone and buried my head on my pillow.

“What’s wrong with you Amile? You seemed okay the last time you were here, you and this man even went on holiday, what’s going on now?”

“Mama I allowed to break down. I’m not strong.” She shook her head and came to sit next to me. Worry lines were etched on her forehead.

“That’s not what I meant to say my love, I’m sorry.” She engulfed me in a hug. I’ve been crying ever since I arrived.

“I slept with Nkosi.” I said through the tears. This thing was burning me up inside.

She pushed me away as to get a better view of my face. She looked baffled.

“Hayi Amile.”

“It was a mistake mama, it should never have happened, and I feel like an idiot for letting it happen more than once. I feel so guilty, how am I going to look Bayede in the eyes?”

“Every action has a consequence Amile. I told you a long time ago to come clean about Mandlenkosi. I told both of you to sit down with Banzi and tell him what was going on between the two of you. All of this would have been avoided.”

“Nkosi was supposed to do that mama, not me. He’s his brother, not mine.”

“No, it was both of you guys’ job. Now what you guys have done is called fornication, adultery. The ancestors will turn your backs on you.”
She’s not making it any better.

“You can cry until these walls and ceiling come crashing down my child but you were wrong. Both of you.”

This is what they call the bitter truth, and it’s very hard to swallow.

“Did you tell him about the dreams like I told you to?”

“No.” she shook her head.

“I haven’t had the dreams ever since I left the palace to come live here.”

“Ilokungcola enikwenzayo noMandlenkosi.” I wiped my tears and stood up.

“Mama, please.”

“What was the last dream about?”

“The first one, I went to this big house and there was this lady, a traditional healer and I went to fetch the man’s body. He wasn’t dead, but he was fatally sick and the healer told me that if I

don't take him home, he will die. I carried him out the house down the gate and when the journey started, he woke up and told me he loves me, and that's when I woke up. The second one it was like we were still on that journey, but he looked healthy. I was tired and I wanted to give up but he told me a queen doesn't give up. He then said that I must come find him but I must wait. That had to be the most confusing out of all of them."

"It would be pointless for me to take you to a seer, this clearly has to do with the royal family and they have to sort it out. You are not part of our ancestors anymore, we will get severely punished if I do so talk to your husband, he will sort it out."

"How do I know that I can trust them mama."

"What have you witnessed that makes you say that?"

“Nkosi told me that his older brother who was meant to be king died before he was to coronated, they still don’t have enough proof that the husband wasn’t responsible.”

“Manje uzokwenzenjani?”

“Now that I’m done with exams, I’ll do some digging about the late prince.” Maybe he is the one in the dreams. Till this day I don’t have confirmation of that.

“Be careful Amile. I don’t want to lose you.”

“Yes mama.”

“Stay away from Mandlenkosi.” I nodded.

“Get some rest ke. I’ll wake you when it’s time to go.”

That alone broke my heart.

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I'm so tired, the last thing I need is to share a bed with a person. But it seems like he isn't going anywhere, he's here to stay.

We are back in Zululand, we are back in the palace and I can say with a mouthful that I kind of missed this place. It isn't my ideal definition of home, but it's better than where I was.

It's late now, we left Durban late in the afternoon and it was the longest drive ever. MaMzobe is already asleep so I'll see her tomorrow.

I'm going to abuse my power and leave my unpacking to Sis' Melo tomorrow morning. She got a well deserved holiday in Durban, I think she even got herself a boyfriend, she hardly spent time at the apartment.

He wraps his arms around my waist and I startle. Since when is he affectionate.

“MaGumede.” He whispered against my ear.

I closes my eyes. I felt his fingers tracing my neck.

“What is this?” he asked. I opened my eyes.

“What is it Bayede?” I turned and looked at him.

He pulled me to the mirror. He showed me a red spot on my neck. My heart stopped beating for a millisecond.

“I don’t know, maybe something stung me.” I touched it.

It’s not that dark, thank God my skin is not too light. Nkosi left marks on my skin.

“Is it sore?” I shook my head.

“Olayithi ke.” He turned me around to face him and he picked me up in one swift move.

I wasn’t expecting that so I giggled out unintentionally. He carried me to the bathroom and I was surprised to see it looking brand new,

I have a bathtub.

“This looks perfect Bayede, thank you.”

“I don’t want you in showers now, the last time you fainted.” I laughed, as if I wasn’t showering all these days in Durban.

“Maybe it was Cape Town water.” He laughed.

“I’ll sue them all.” Who was I kidding, this man could never hurt a fly.

“Thank you Bayede.”

I gave him a side hug and he squeezed me back. He’s doing a good job at keeping me happy, that I can’t lie about. Now I wish all the other factors could disappear.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Nambitha Makhathini

I miss my man. Like I seriously miss him.

Yes I was angry the last time I saw him, but now I've cooled down and I realize that there was no reason for me to be angry at him. What the prince said about him is not true, and what hurts the most is that I believed a drunk man over him.

I'm finally out of high school, it feels like a dream that I never thought would end. I have mixed emotions. My friends as school have planned a pens down party and surprisingly, my parents agreed for me to go.

Nkululeko is in Zululand. He still called me every morning and every night to tell me about his whereabouts and that he loves me, even when I didn't speak. I still haven't said the words back, I need proper courage.

I'm all dolled up, I'm taking an Uber. I want to let loose tonight and if I had the liberty, I would get

wasted, but I can't because I need to get back home.

I left the house in jeans, but I have my party dress stashed in my bag. There is no way I'm going partying in jeans. The Uber dropped me off at one of the girls I go to school with.

They asked me to do their make up and no way was I going to turn down money so I agreed, plus, I didn't want to arrive alone.

She's a rich spoilt brat, we've never been close, but tonight, I will enjoy the benefits. Her mom has already given us two bottles of expensive champagne to pop and by the time we left the house, some were tipsy.

We arrived at the venue and before I went inside, I called my boyfriend. I'm sure he's going to be surprised. It feels good to call him that, my boyfriend. Zimkhitha still hates his guts.

"Nana."

“Babe, hi.” He chuckled.

“You aren’t angry anymore sthandwa?”

“I’ve realized that there is absolutely no reason for me to be angry at you when you didn’t do anything to me.”

“Nazoke mama. Umuntu wami ke lo engimaziyo. Ukuphi emsindweni?” and just like that, we are back to normal.

“School mates have organized a pens down party.”

“Your parents allowed you to attend that thing?” he sounds appalled.

“Yeah, why not?”

“Ay eyami intombi bakwethu.” I laughed.

“It’s a once off thing babe. I won’t get too drunk, I promise.” He protested.

“Never. I’m coming there to fetch you.” I laughed thinking he was joking.

“Aren’t you in Zululand.”

“No, I’m home. Give me 20 minutes and I’ll be there.” Oh hell no.

“Nkululeko don’t make me regret forgiving you and calling you.”

“Ngiyeza lapho. Send me the location.”

I dropped the call. I’d like to see how he’ll get the location, I won’t send it to him. Nkululeko is crazier than I thought.

I went inside and it was already lit. People were dancing, the music was banging. I cant even marvel at the beauty of the interior, it’s so full in here. I need a drink.

“Hey, Nami!” yes, I have variations to my name.

“How’s the party?” he asked standing next to me.

I can’t say I know him well. He’s a very quiet person. What’s his name again, Olwethu I think.

“I just got here, but it seems like a vibe.”

“Come join us that side.” I’m here to have fun, so I won’t be stuck up.

I follow him out to the terrace where they are chilling on the outdoor furniture. There are five guys and three girls and a hookah in the middle. I don’t know two of the guys, doesn’t look like they went to our school.

“This is my older brother, the owner of the house.” He introduced me.

The brother is very handsome.

“Thank you for hosting us.”

“You are welcome beautiful.” They opened up space for me to sit.

They were playing games, spin the bottle and they were rotating lips like nobody’s business. I wasn’t part of the game, I just minded my business, laughed when they did and smoked

whatever they were smoking. I don't want Jama to kill me just as yet.

"Okay, Nami has to join now." The older brother said.

They kept calling him Nkunzi, I'm not really sure if that's his real name, but it's very commanding.

"No, I'll pass."

"Come on, it's a fun game." One of the girls sitting next to me convinced.

She looks like a good kisser, not that I crave her lips

"Fine. Just one round." Jama will kill me. Today I will meet Jama, not Nkululeko.

I downed a shot before the game started and they all cheered. We live once right?

They spun the bottle and it landed on Olwethu and the other girl. She didn't waste time, she climbed on his lap and kissed him passionately,

she even started grinding her genitals against his.

“Okay, it’s not porn hub. Next.” I was holding my breath that it doesn’t land on me.

And it didn’t, it kept skipping me until the demon next to me spun the bottle and it landed on me and Nkunzi.

“You only live once Nami.” He’s right.

He lifted a shot glass and downed one. I stood up and he met me halfway.

His hands directly went to my ass and he cupped it before his lips met with mine in a steamy, rushed kiss. His hands snuck up under my short dress and he squeezed my bum. He’s going hard on my lips, seems like he’s been dreaming about this the whole night.

Everyone shouts stop when it starts to get too heated. It’s the alcohol, I would never do that. We spun a few more times before Nkunzi stood

up and went to my side. He leaned down and whispered in my ear.

“Follow me, I want to show you something.”
Who does he think he is?

He walks inside the house. I’m curious to know what he wants to show me. I stood up and followed him, no one here can judge me, they don’t know me like that.

He pulled my hand when he found me in the crowd and he led me up the stairs to a certain room. It was locked and he took out a key in his pocket and opened it. No words were exchanged, he just pinned me against the door as soon as I entered the room and shut me up with a kiss.

Now I know a fuck boy when I see one, and this one right here thinks he’s scored the jackpot with me. His hands are running all over my body and he’s trying to undo my dress. I push him off.

“I have a boyfriend.”

“He’s not here now, is he baby girl.” He kissed me again.

I pushed him off. He undid his belt and put my hands on his bulge.

“Stop it.” I removed my hands.

I turned and tried to open the door but he grabbed my arm.

“We are just going to have fun, nothing more.” I snatched my arm away and I opened the door.

I dashed out the room and ran to the staircase.

“Nami baby.” It’s the idiot calling me.

I almost have a heart attack when my eyes land on Nkululeko. He’s fuming mad, his eyes have turned blood shot red. I felt all the alcohol evaporate from my system.

He charged up the stairs and roughly dragged me down. I couldn’t even protest, I knew exactly

what I was putting myself into when I followed that man into that room.

I'm glad Nkululeko is here, but we aren't off to a good start, he looks enraged. I could tell in the way he threw me in the front seat like I weighed nothing.

"Seat belt." He roared.

I scrambled to fix my seat belt and he was standing over me to see what I was doing. Shit, I left my bag inside. This man doesn't look like someone you can talk to right now, I'm shaking.

"Babe...I left my bag." The look he shot me was enough to make me drop my eyes instantly.

Never again.

He slammed the door in my face and stormed back into the mansion.

How the hell did he find me? The scene he just caused will cause me havoc on social media,

I'm just glad we aren't going back to school ever again and I'm not forced to see all these people again.

He came back and he had my bag and my makeup set. He threw it in the back violently and I looked at him.

"Nkululeko!?"

"Thula wena."

I was still frowning at him when my eye landed on the black metal peeping out of his pants. I shrivelled up in my seat.

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I don't know why he didn't take me home. First of all, we aren't talking to each other, he is silent because he's angry and if he's angry he won't listen, so I'm also not speaking.

We are at the apartment. He's still the gentleman, he came to open the door for me. When he offered his hand, I didn't take it. No way am I holding the same hand that holds a gun. I can still see it and it's giving me anxiety.

He sees that my eyes are staring at it so he tucks it in properly and covers in with his shirt before saying: "Let's go."

His voice is still raspy, his eyes are still red and his face is still hardened. Being in his presence right now is very uncomfortable. When we got to the apartment, and passed the lounge, cartoons were on and there were two heads sitting on the couch, quietly concentrating. Oh hell no.

"Hambo geza." He instructed.

One head turned and shouted.

"Daddy! You're back."

I gave him one look and he didn't even look

guilty.

“Hamba uyogeza.”

I can't believe him. He left me standing there and went to carry the head. The head looked just like him, just prettier, cuter. This is another level of disrespect from him and I don't think I can get over this.

I went to his room to strip my clothes and got a towel to wrap around my body. As I walk to the bathroom on the other side of the room, he walks in. He closes and locks the door before going to his bedside drawer and taking out his gun. He doesn't put it inside, he leaves it on the top of the dresser. I turn head and attempt to continue walking but he speaks.

“Usuyafeba wena?” I swear if I was close to where he was, I would've turned to him with a slap.

“What the hell Nkululeko!?”

“Then what do you call what I saw? Men following behind you, calling your name with belts undone. Masimba mani lawo?”

“I didn’t do anything with him.”

His jaw is so tight, I’m afraid of what he wants to do. The way his hands are clenching, I should be running away.

“Buya uze la.” He’s not playing games.

I take a few steps towards him, then stop again. His facial expression is terrifying. I walk closer to him and he grabs my wrist, pulls me closer so violently that I almost crash against his body. My eyes widen from the shock. He points a finger on my face and his grip on my wrist tightens.

“Angizwani nobufebe mina. Uyangizwa ukuthi ngithini. Mangigcine ukubona lamanyala ongibonise wona.”

I tried to free my wrist but his hold was too tight.

I nodded a couple of times before he let go.

“Hambo geza.” This is the third time now he’s said that. Maybe I stink.

Remind me to never cross Nkululeko Dlamini ever again.

Amile Gumede

I haven’t slept with the husband since Cape Town, I instead slept with his brother and I can’t get that image out of my head.

He let me have my moment in the bath tub, I assuming he went to check on MaMzobe. I was still soaking in the bubbles when he came into the bathroom with a big white towel in his hands.

“Akusaphumeke yini MaGumede?” OH yes, I’m thoroughly enjoying this.

“Woza manje wakwami.” I laughed and stood up.

I was covered in soap bubbles but he wrapped the towel around my body and carried me bridal style to the bedroom.

“You’ll catch the flu, that water has turned cold.”

“It was still very warm Bayede.” I’m loving the princess treatment though.

“Let’s get ready for bed manje wakwami. I’m exhausted.” I like it when he’s tired, I means no humping.

I got out of the bed and went to take my toiletries to get dressed. He already took a shower so he’s ready for bed. He takes the liberty of preparing the bed for us and I’m grateful, this is what a marriage should be like, not just the woman doing everything. I thank him, climb into bed and we slept. Him on his side, and me on mine.

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He was in the passenger seat, and he was sober. Okay, he wasn't completely sober, maybe he had a glass or two of gin before the decide to leave the club, but that was it. He was completely sober though compared to the others, so why did he get into the passenger seat and not the drivers seat.

He looked uncomfortable, his friends were playing music loudly and the driver was speeding. He told him a couple of times to slow down, but the adrenaline was pumping inside of him, the driver, he wanted the rush.

They were driving to his place to drop him off first, he was supposed to go home to Zululand the following day.

The road was clear, but it started raining heavily and they lost control of the vehicle. It was slippery and the car swerved off the road and

tumbled into a river on the other side.

He ended up inside the water, fighting for his life, his long legs could not help him from drowning, he was a Zulu man, he was never taught how to swim. Something pulled him further under water and his breath slowly ran out, as the water filled his lungs.

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It felt like something was pressing down on my chest and my nose was blocked. I tried to scream and fight this thing that was pressing me down but I couldn't.

“Amile!”

He lifted my whole body up and I had water come up from the pit of my stomach.

What the hell is going on. This man looks extremely concerned.

“What’s going on?” he lifted me up from the bed

and removed the wet covers. Where did all this water come from.

“Were you dreaming?” I nodded.

Tears are now flooding my face and I can’t breathe, my heart is beating in my ears.

“I was drowning in the river. It wasn’t me, but it...it was...it was him.” My breathing is indefinite.

“Him who?” he’s rubbing my back.

I climb onto his lap and just cry. He doesn’t protest, he just holds me firmly, but I can hear his heart beating violently against his chest.

“It’s okay, we will talk in the morning.”

Out of all the dreams I’ve had, that was the closest one to reality and I can’t help but feel like there is something going on here. It can’t be.

Chapter Forty

Amile Gumede

I slept on his lap, with my head on his chest. His heart is still beating like a drum against my chest, but that seemed to comfort me, that's why I has a peaceful rest after that horrid dream.

I lifted my head to look at him and he was wide awake, but his eyes were bloodshot red.

"Good morning." He said to me.

It's not a good morning, especially for him.

"Good morning Bayede." He surprised me by kissing my forehead.

"How are you feeling?" he asked brushing my back.

"I'm okay. Did you sleep?" I'm looking into his eyes and I'm seeing a different side of him.

"I couldn't sleep until I was sure that you were okay. You scared me." He's still scared, I can

tell from the way his heart is beating.

“I’m sorry I scared you.” I lay my head back on his chest.

“Do you have the dreams often?” I don’t know if I should answer him or not.

“No, I don’t.” I’m lying through my teeth.

I’m still holding on to my grandmother’s words, I won’t go around telling everyone about my dreams because they are sacred. And if this is a depiction of how the prince died, then I’m in the wrong man’s arms.

“How did Prince Langaletu die?” his heart started racing. He kept quiet for a while.

“He died in a car accident.”

“And did you bury his body?” I lifted my head to see his face.

He looks very perplexed. His eyes sunken and grief dressing his face.

“He drowned in the river, we couldn’t find his body, the police said he was eaten by crocodiles.” His eyes are tearing up. This must hurt.

I buried my head in the crevice of his shoulder and he kissed my shoulder.

“I’m sorry.” He apologized.

I don’t know if he’s apologizing for what happened to his brother, the one I happen to confess my feelings to almost every night?

“Was the dream about him?” he asked after a long shot of silence. I swallowed hard as to count my response.

“Yes, I think so. I don’t know what he looks like, but someone kept calling him Prince.”

His whole body tensed up.

“Are you sure you’ve never had any other dreams about him.” I shook my head no.

I've already said enough.

"I will bring this up with the elders. Don't say a word about this to MaMzobe." He commanded the last part.

"Ngiyezwa Bayede."

I wonder what this is about. I am deep within the palace grounds and I'm part of them, they at least owe me an explanation of everything that is going on. And why are we keeping this a secret from MaMzobe? I'm not going to defy his orders though, I'll do as told.

I got out of bed and he asked to take a nap. I wasn't going to say no, this man stayed up the whole night for me. I went to peacefully take a bath and got dressed.

I'm officially back to doing nothing the whole day, that's why I don't like being here. The least I can do is go join MaMzobe for breakfast.

She looks so different, her skin is clear and

radiant. She even has plump cheeks.

“Good morning ma.” I greeted.

She was happy to see me. She stood up and gave me a tight squeeze.

“I didn’t see you last night. You guys came back late.”

“We left Durban late.” We broke the hug and sat back down.

Breakfast looked delicious. Everything you can imagine, from fruit salads to eggs and bacon. I missed this.

“Where is Banzi?” It’s weird to hear someone calling him by his real name.

Personally, I could never shame, I don’t have the guts to do that.

“He’s asleep. He said he didn’t have a good night so he just wants to nap for a little before starting the day.”

“I always tell him that he overworks himself and he never rests.” I could beg to differ.

I don't know much about him and what he does, all I know is he wakes up every morning and goes to council. Whether he actually works when he gets there, I don't know.

“How were exams?” she asks. I sighed.

“They were difficult. I surely understudied, and I blacked out for my last paper.” She looked shocked.

“Hhayi, what do you mean?”

“I don't know ma, it just wasn't what I was expecting. I won't be surprised if I don't get distinctions.”

“Let's be hopeful, and that one paper won't be your downfall.” I hope so.

We continued to chat throughout breakfast and I avoided talking about the husband at all cost

because I didn't want the dream to come up.

Nambitha Makhathini

I called my mom last night and lied to her. I told her that I would be sleeping over at a friend's house because I didn't have transport. She didn't fuss over it, but she instructed me to be back by tomorrow. Tomorrow is today.

I had to do that because Nkululeko refused to take me home last night claiming that he can't see at night. I know that is a fib, but he was angry, I didn't want to make it worse.

We didn't sleep in the same bed. I slept in his room, and he slept somewhere else in the house. I was only shocked to find him walking into the room in the middle of the night carrying a child and placing them in the bed.

He left the room after that, and I was subjected to being kicked and slapped by little hands and feet all night. I feel really disrespected by his action.

It's early in the morning. I woke up before the sun rose and I sat on the bed and watched it rise. I'm feeling cold, I'm only wearing his shirt because I didn't have clothes, but I can't be under the covers with the child.

I leave the bedroom and go to the built-in bathroom to take a shower. I smell like him from last night, I used his manly products, and now I have to use them again.

I stood in front of the mirror and brushed my teeth, thinking about what happened last night. Now that I look back at it, I was so chill because of the weed they put in the hookah.

I also shouldn't have gone into that room because the Nkunzi guy could've raped me, and

no one would've known. The stupid things we do when we are drunk.

I can hear little footsteps coming here. I freeze on the spot until she appears at the door and looks at me with a confused look. She rubbing her eyes and she looks just about ready to cry.

“Where is my daddy?” little devil.

I froze. Her face changed and she sulked before she started raising her voice.

“I want my daddy.” Oh hell no.

I walked out the bathroom and she followed behind me. She kept screaming for her daddy. I opened the door to the bedroom and stood at the frame.

“Nkululeko!” I don't care who's asleep, this man must come fetch his brat.

“Nkululeko!” I don't know why he put her in the same bed as me. He's not keeping his arm of

the deal.

He came out of the kitchen and looked at me like I'm a mad woman. He's shirtless and barefoot, he looks amazing by the way.

"Awumthulisi ngani?" he asks making his way towards me.

He walks past me and he meets his brat. He picks her up and she lays her head on his chest. I dragged him through my teeth and walked past him to the bathroom. I don't like children, that has been established now. Now he's here forcing his kids down my throat.

I finished brushing my teeth and hopped into the shower. I always take my time in the shower, I love the feel of burning hot water on my skin, and this is the perfect water.

He walked in the steam filled bathroom, I could see his figure through the glass doors. What is he doing in here! He's not respecting my privacy.

Before I could complain about him being inside the bathroom, he opens the shower door and slides in and closes it behind him. I dread turning around to look at him. He's naked, so am I.

"Awumthulisanga ngani uAzande ekhala?" I didn't turn around.

"I don't know how to." He chuckled.

"Manje ubone kungcono ungimemeze."

"She wanted her daddy." That came out in a very jealous tone. I hated it.

He grabbed my arm and made me turn around. I didn't want to look down because this man is butt naked, so am I, the only thing in between us is the water running down his body.

"Are you jealous?" he asked with a smirk. I wanted to slap his smug face.

"You aren't keeping your end of the deal

Nkululeko, you promised to keep your children away until I would be ready to meet them.”

“Angithi wena wenze amasimba izolo.” Remind me why I dated a Zulu man again?

“I wasn’t going to send them back to Zululand because you needed to come here.”

“That’s why I asked you to take me home.”

He shook his head and grabbed my butt. He pulled me closer to his body and I felt his thing poking my front.

“It’s no use crying over spilt milk. You’ll get used to them, you have to because you are here to stay mama.”

He’s breathing against my face. He closes the water and pins me against the cold wall. I almost scream from the shock but I laugh instead. He lifts my leg and I feel something rubbing against my clit.

“Nkululeko.” I protest.

He kisses my neck. He keeps rubbing himself on my opening and I want to push him away but the pleasure is escalating. My moans get louder and louder when he uses his hand to massage my nipple.

He uses his hand to separate my wet folds and he positions himself at my entrance. He looks at me for permission and I just look at him with my chest bouncing up and down. I’m terrified.

He kisses my mouth in a quickened pace and I feel him try to push himself in. I cry out. He tries again but it doesn’t happen.

“Daddy.” I push him off me!

My coochie is feels different. I look at him and his eyes have turned red. What the hell did I almost do!?

“Daddy open for me!” maybe I should thank the brat for coming to my rescue.

“Get out Nkululeko. Go!” he gets out the shower and wraps a towel around his body.

When he leaves the bathroom, I sink down on the tiles and bury my head in my hands. At least I’m still intact, but I need to make sure something like this never happens ever again. That was very close.

Zwelibanzi Zulu

He’s trying to crack his brain with regards to the dream Amile woke up to. He’s been avoiding MaMzobe the whole day because if she sees him, she will be able to point out that he’s worried about something, and she will get the truth out of him.

He’s at council. He’s hungry, he left the palace without eating and its hard for him to concentrate. He’s also feeling sleepy, the last

time he put his head on the desk, he dosed off and only woke up when Mgabadeli called out to him.

“Sir, are you okay.” Mgabadeli asks walking into the office carrying a packet of apples.

“I’m hungry and tired.” He says with sunken eyes.

“Must I take you home?” He shakes his head.

“I need something to eat.”

“I’ll go to the palace and...” he interrupted him.

“Don’t go to the palace. Come sit here, I need advice.” He was shocked, him and the king aren’t friends.

He took the seat I’m front of him and he straightened up.

“Yes sir.”

“Do you know of any good healers or seers outside the kingdom?”

“Yes sir, I know of a few. But Celemba is the best right, he is the royal seer.” He shakes his head.

“I don’t trust that man anymore.” Mgabadeli looks away.

Finally, he sees it, he thinks to himself.

“And what would you need my king?”

“I need to get in contact with a another seer, I need a different opinion on something.” He nodded.

“There is one I know, gog’ Malandela. She’s originally from Swaziland, she’s good with everything sir.”

“You must take me to her as soon as tomorrow.” He nodded.

“Yes sir.”

“This must stay between us do you understand me?”

“Yes my king.” He stood up.

“Can you please get me something to eat in town. Ngafa indlala bo.” He bowed and walked out.

He sat with his head in his hands. His head is starting to throb.

He definitely won't tell MaMzobe because she will start stressing and he doesn't want that for her, he wants her to enjoy her last pregnancy before menopause.

He can't wait to be a father again. It's been years, in fact, he thought he would be a grandfather at this age, but life has its own plans.

A weight will only be lifted off his shoulders once he brings home Langaletu's wife, and she can take the throne like she is supposed to, and give him back his normal life.

Normal life sounds so farfetched to him.

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He's back home. He forced down the terrible food Mgabadeli brought him, only because he was hungry, but now that he is home, he only wants a shower, a proper meal and his bed.

He goes upstairs, he's spending the night with MaMzobe tonight. He technically should be with MaGumede because she was away for so long, but MaMzobe is pregnant, he wants to spend as much time with her and the baby as possible.

"My love. Oh I was so worried about you." She came to engulf him in a hug.

He looks morose, even more reason for her to worry.

"I had to rush to council in the morning."

"MaGumede told me you were tired. Do you

need a massage?” She kissed his lips.

“Yes please wakwami. I just need food, and my bed.” He rubbed her growing bump.

“The little baby is growing.” He’s excited about the baby. It’s a whole different story for her though.

She pushes his hands off her stomach.

“Let me fix your bath things so you can rest and tell me all about your day.” She walks out the room and he lies on his back.

He listens to the knots in his back pop and he groans I’m satisfaction. Tired is an understatement.

His phone rings in his bag and he takes it out.

It’s the one he shared a womb with.

“Ngane kaMaNdlela.” He greets.

“Bhuti, how are you doing?” from that he knows it’s not a social call.

“I’m good.”

“I’m good too. I’ve been attending therapy for the past few weeks and my doctor has requested that you join me.” He frowns.

“Mandlenkosi, what are you saying to me?” he sits up.

“I’m asking you as a brother to please attend therapy with me.”

“There is nothing wrong with me Mandlenkosi.”

“You aren’t doing it for yourself, you are doing it for me.” He sighed I’m depression.

“I have a lot on my plate...”

“So you can’t?” The attitude in his voice can’t be missed.

“I didn’t say that. I can’t be dropping everything for your Mandlenkosi, you are a man now, I can’t be there all the time to hold your hand throughout life.”

“It’s fine if you can’t.” He was about to protest, but the line went dead.

This is not what he needs right now.

Mandlenkosi’s tantrums are the last thing he needs to deal with amongst so many stresses in his life.

Chapter Forty-One

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She found him asleep on his arm. Shame he was really tired, she thinks to herself.

He hasn’t even taken a shower yet, she went out a little while to go fix his food.

“Banzi.” She sat by his feet and moved him gently. He opened his eyes and looked at her.

His eyes had turned red.

“Wake up my love and eat something.” He massaged her arm.

“Woza la mama.” He pulled her face down to his and kissed her gently.

He just woke up from a deep sleep, what is this now? He deepens the kiss by pull her closer to his body. She climbs on top of him and her thighs lock him in.

“Ongipha kancane.” He touches the heaven between her thighs and she laughs.

“Uvuka nje?”

“Yes please mama.”

She won't deprive him of what he paid for.

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He ate the velvet cake, had his shower and got

some proper food. He is now a happy man and he is lying on his stomach and she is giving him a back massage. He's half asleep and the goodness of her magical hands on his back aren't making it easier for him to stay awake.

"What tired you out so much my love?"

"I didn't get a wink of sleep last night." At least he's still talking.

It's hard to articulate what he is saying because he's half asleep, but she hears him.

"Why?"

"Insomnia."

"Since when do you have insomnia?"

"I don't know mama, but I stayed up with my eyes open the whole night."

"Mmmh." She doesn't believe anything he just said.

"I've been thinking yazi Zulu."

“Mmmh, usufunani wakwami.” She chuckles nervously and continues to massage his back.

He moans out in pleasure and only then does she speak.

“We never had a white wedding, and you promised me years ago that we would have one.”

His silence spoke a thousand words.

“Zulu?”

“MaMzobe I have a lot going on. Angithi uwe lo okade engibelesele ngokuthola umka Langaletu, on the other hand I have to deal with Mandlenkosi and his tantrums, you are also pregnant, and I also have council, I don't have time for weddings. You know that if I do something for you, I also have to do it for MaGumede.” She sighed and got off his back. He sat up and his joints popped and cracked.

“Is it money problems?” she looks sad, and he

doesn't like that?

"No, money is never a problem sthandwa sami, it's time for planning a wedding, I don't have that time." She sulked.

"I'll plan it myself Zulu, please my love. I've always wanted a white wedding."

"The timing sthandwa sami, it's off."

Her eyes immediately filled with tears. This is not the part he missed about pregnancy. Oh goodness.

"Ungakhali mama. Look, we'll talk to MaGumede, if she agrees, then you can plan your wedding. But if she doesn't want it, then it's not happening."

She can't thank him just as yet. That's unfair of him to ask. She turns on her side and switches off her lamp.

"My massage?" she ignored him.

He sighed out in frustration and turned to face the other side.

Cold bed it is then.

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She's standing in front of her full length mirror in the bathroom staring g at the baby bump gradually forming itself on her body. She went to the doctor and they confirmed the pregnancy, she's still hoping that it's a dream, and that she will wake up and the baby would have disappeared.

This is now taking her ten steps backwards, Amile was supposed to be pregnant for Banzi, not her. The deal was she was done giving children, that was why they mutually agreed to get a second wife.

Her being pregnant also prevents her from further finding Langaletu's wife. She can't do that while she's pregnant. Now Banzi will find her first, and that's what she doesn't need. The man is dead set on letting some girl rule as queen so he can live a normal life.

She doesn't understand what kind of normal life it is that he wants. She's lived a normal life, she doesn't want to go back to that.

He appears behind her and smiles when he sees her caressing her bump. He attempts to place his hands on hers but she pushes him off. She's still angry about last night.

"Sthandwa sami?"

"Go kiss your precious MaGumede." Okay?

"Is this about the wedding?" she kept quiet and continued to fix her bath in silence.

"But I promised to talk to MaGumede about it."

“Hamba phela uyokhuluma naye. Igugu lakho.”
He’s so lost.

“Fine MaMzobe, we’ll talk at breakfast.”

He walks out the bathroom. She drags him through her teeth thinking he’s going to bed. She is actually startled to find that he is nowhere to be seen, and he left the bed unmade as well.

This is why she hates pregnancy, she’s turning into an ogre.

Amile Gumede

I woke up earlier than I usually do because my sleep decided to just evaporate. I sat in bed for almost two hours trying to evaluate my life but nothing made sense so I finally got up and decide to start my day.

I started by praying, I actually went on my knees and spoke to God, I asked him to help me through this difficult patch I'm in, and to give me the answers that I needed because I've been led astray, I'm confused and generally just not okay overall.

I felt lighter after that, and I felt like I was ready to start the day.

While I was making the bed, my door opened and the husband walked in. He was still wearing pyjamas and was walking barefoot.

"Good morning Bayede."

He advanced towards me and when he was close enough, he held my waist and started kissing my neck.

"Good morning MaGumede." This is unbelievable.

Did this man just waltz into my bedroom after spending the whole night with his wife to come

ask me for sex?

“Ongivulela kancane.” He tried to force his hand in between my tightly clenched thighs.

I shook my head and gently pushed him off me.

“Are you also kicking me out?” He asked in a raspy voice.

Oh so he did fight with MaMzobe?

“With all due respect Bayede but you just came back from MaMzobe’s room, you didn’t sleep here, I can’t just sleep with you.” My heart is bulldozing my chest.

“She kicked me out and told me to come here.” He’s frustrated.

I touch his shoulder and beg him to calm down. He sits down on the bed and looks defeated.

“I’m tired. Why can’t I just have a normal life?” He looks so put together, why is he folding now?

“Bayede sex is not going to solve your

problems.” I’m making it worse am I?

“If it’s not Mandlenkosi asking me for stupid therapy sessions, it’s dead people that just don’t want to rest! Nangu noMaMzobe ngapha ufunana nemshado. At this point you are the only person that is making sense to me.” Okay, he’s not okay.

“I just want to disappear for a while, why can’t I do that?”

I bring his head closer to my stomach and I just comfort him. He wraps his arms around my waist and holds me tightly.

“It’s going to get better Bayede.” I don’t know what else to say, I’m not good at giving comforting words.

“Thank you wakwami.” It’s a very unconventional relationship that we share.

“I think you should shower so we can have breakfast before you rest.” I suggest.

He's still holding on to me tightly.

"Okay. MaMzobe wants to talk to us at breakfast." He said lowly.

That's completely fine with me. Him and Mandlenkosi are one and the same person, they are both cry babies. They act manly on the outside but they are just softies on the inside.

I fixed his bathing things and he went to take a shower. I just can't wait to find out what MaMzobe wants to say. I heard him mentioning something about weddings.

He's still in the shower so that means I can get in my bath tub and soak for a bit. I love my bathroom now that it has the bathtub. It looks like it was taken out of a movie. A pearly white with gold handles, big enough for me to bury myself under.

He comes out butt naked and I pretend to not see him. These are the kind of things that I can't

get used to, seeing him naked like this because when we do the dirty, I'm always too out of it to look at his body. He grabs a towel from the rack and wraps it around his waist.

Now I'm afraid to drop mine and get into the bath, he's standing against the vanity brushing his teeth. He looks at me through the mirror and our eyes meet. I looked away.

"Geza lapho." I blushed and looked down.

I dropped the towel and climbed into the bathtub. He turned around and leaned against the vanity, staring at me. As if I wasn't already naked, he undressed me further. I sat down and poured water over my skin, to try and hide my embarrassment.

When he finished brushing his teeth, he came to stand behind me in the bath, kneeled and placed his hands on my shoulder. My body froze, I couldn't even turn to look at him. I felt

his warm minty breath down my neck before I felt his soft lips on my skin. My lips quivered and I felt the water going cold against my skin.

His hands went down from my shoulders and they cupped both of them. I bit my lower lip to suppress my moan. Anyone that touches my nipples has touched my soft spot. He kissed my cheek before removing his hands and standing up. I was too scared to look at him.

“Qeda lapho wakwami.” I don’t think what he just did is legal. It’s quite unfair if you ask me.

As I finished my bath, I could still feel his breath on my neck and his hands on my skin. Never will it happen, he’s not allowed to turn me on like this.

When I went back to the room, he was nowhere in sight, I guess I took too long to finish up. I got dressed and left the room to go join them at the table. I couldn’t wait to hear what ma had to say

to me. To us as he had said.

They aren't talking to each other, in fact, it looks very tense at the table. I find my seat and greet, she mumbles a low greeting back before she continues stabbing her food. I don't know what their fight was about, but it looks like I'm involved. I dish up for myself and we eat in a very uncomfortable silence. If someone were to walk in here and find the situation like this, we would be the talk of the whole town. I can see it already, 'Tension at the Royal house as wives give each other the cold shoulder.'

I don't consider myself MaMzobe sister wife. That's the last thing I've ever thought of whenever I look at her. She's more of my mother than anything, but that doesn't change the fact that I sleep with her husband. I shouldn't expect her to be happy that I open my legs for her husband when he isn't with her. I surely would also feel some type of way

towards that woman.

She's safe though, I don't have his heart, he also doesn't have mine, she has absolutely nothing to worry about, I'm the least of her worries.

"MaMzobe you asked us here, please state your case." He raised his eyes to her.

She looked away and continued stabbing her food. She doesn't look like she's willing to talk.

"Okay, fine. I heard your request and I know that I made a promise to you, and as a man, as your man, it is my duty to keep all the promises I make to you. But now the dynamics of our relationship have changed, it's not just you, there is two of you, and I made the same promise to both of you, therefore I have to treat you equally. What you get, she should also get, vice versa." I wonder what it is that she wants.

She glances at me and I'm unable to control my eyes, I look away.

“MaGumede, uMaMzobe wants a white wedding. If it is that you also want one, I will do it, for both of you. But if you don’t want it, none of you are getting it.” Now I see it, it is the men in a polygamous relationship that ruin it.

The eyes MaMzobe keeps giving me are a clear indication that if it were up to her, she would jump over this table and cut me up in half.

“Bayede, I don’t want a white wedding, the one I had was enough for me. But if Ma wants it, I shouldn’t get in the way of that.”

“I have spoken MaGumede. It’s both weddings or not. Senizobona ke nobabili ukuthi nimisa kanjani. I’m late for a meeting, please excuse me.”

He wipes his lips and stands up. He kisses her cheek and he comes to kiss mine too. He bids us goodbye and leaves us in the tension. Ma has been quiet the whole time. I’m concerned.

This was bound to happen, but I didn't think it would be over something as petty as this. I shouldn't even be involved, it should be their business.

"Ma I'm sorry..." she interrupts me.

"You will not get in the way of me getting this wedding." She spoke.

"Understood." I nodded.

I think I just agreed to having a white wedding. I was fine with the wedding I had. It was already massive and out of my control, I don't need another one.

But I'm not ready to die yet, and she looks like she's ready to kill me at any moment. I guess I took this polygamy lightly and assumed that she likes me. A scorned woman is very bitter, and capable of the unknown. It's every woman for herself I guess.

Should I start planning?

Zwelibanzi Zulu

There is silence in the car as always. Man thought are running through his mind. He is terrified of the things he might discover upon his arrival at this Gog' Mandela. You never know what to expect. If his suspicions are right, then there a lot of things that need to change.

Mandlenkosi pops into his head and he feels guilty for dismissing him like that. He has an excuse, he was tired and snappy, and he didn't exactly give him a chance to explain himself. He picks up his phone and dials his number. It rings for a long time before he picks up.

"Mageba." He responds.

"Ngane KaMaNdlela, how are you?"

"I'm good. How are you?" their calls are

awkward as always.

“I’m okay. I was calling to find out about the request you made last night.”

“You said no.” He responds with little interest in his voice.

“No, I didn’t say no, you cut me off before I could finish.”

“You started off by giving excuses bhuti, and that was the clearest no I’ve ever gotten.” He exhaled loudly.

“What is this for?”

“For my healing. I’ve been going through a lot and I finally decided to go see a therapist. She suggested that you come in.”

“I’m not dealing with anything, why do I have to be there?”

“For me.” He sighed.

He already knows that Mandlenkosi doesn’t feel

loved by him, MaMzobe has pointed that out several times before, but only he feels like that. The things he has done for him say otherwise. It's a pity he doesn't see.

"When do I need to come in?" it's the least he can do.

He's emotionally drained, everything is suddenly taking a huge toll on him now and he doesn't know how to handle it, the least he can do is just deal with Mandlenkosi.

"My next session is in two weeks, I will alert my doctor." There was silence for a while. And then he breathed.

"Thank you Bhuti."

"Don't thank me, come home." He always says that when he misses him.

He didn't get a chance to see him when they were fetching Amile, this has to be the longest he hasn't seen him in a while.

“Okay.” He was surprised that he agreed.

This has to be the most civil conversation they have held in a while. They always bicker and fight over small things, Mandlenkosi doesn't want to listen.

“Mgabadeli, how far are we?” he asked dropping the phone, looking outside the window.

“Almost there sir.”

This journey he is taking holds a lot of answers for him. He has to go there with an open mind and heart.

Chapter Forty-Two

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He was recovering from a hangover. He still hasn't moved back into his room now that Amile is gone, it still smells like her and he can

still find traces of her all around, it's quite triggering.

He was doing well before making that call to his brother and asking him to join therapy with him, it angered him so much that the only comfort he found was in a bottle of whiskey.

It didn't help that Jama was also going through a thing of his own. His children put him in a debacle with his girlfriend and he also needed the alcoholic therapy after he put them to bed.

He's good with his kids, he doesn't need help, he manages just by himself. He knows Mandlenkosi would never chip in and offer to help, he doesn't like kids. He only greets them, hugs them if they want to and that's that. You will never see him interacting or playing with them.

So they drank together all night, and Mandlenkosi forgot that he fails to handle his

alcohol, now he's sitting here with a painting headache and little to no appetite because of the bile stuck in his throat.

"I need to stop drinking alcohol." He mutters to himself as he walks out the room to the kitchen.

Jama and his children are in the kitchen. He's making them food, he actually looks better, like they weren't drinking like fishes yesterday.

"Ayy Zulu." Jama greeted.

"Bafo!"

"Hello uncle Nkosi." The little voice shouts for his attention.

He goes to her and give her a little high five.

"Hello girly. How are you?"

"I'm good."

Banele is just running around the kitchen doing whatever it is that he is doing.

“I wish I had this type of energy at this time.”

“You look messed up.” Jama pointed out.

He plugged the kettle and leaned against the counter.

“I am.”

“Alcohol is not your friend. You must respect it.”

He laughed.

“Has your girl called you or she’s still mad.”

“Still mad. But I made it very clear in the beginning that I won’t compromise my time with my children. If she can’t be around them then that’s her problem.” Nkosi raised his hands in surrender.

“That’s why I don’t want them.” Jama shook his head in displeasure.

“Hambo gonyuluka, hlampe umqondo uzohluzeka.” (Go vomit, maybe your mind will be clearer.)

“Fokof.” Azanda quickly covered her mouth in shock.

He laughed and looked at her.

“Sorry girly. That’s a bad word, okay.” She nodded.

He went to lock himself up in the bathroom and vomited into the toilet bowl after finishing the whole jug of hot water. He needs that runny porridge that Amile made him the other time, it really helped him, but he can’t make it the same way she does.

When he felt like it was enough, he left the bathroom and went to throw himself on the bed and reflected on the life he was now living. He was very disappointed that his brother turned down the offer, although he was expecting it, it still hurt.

His phone rang and he scrambled around look for it, when he took a glimpse at the screen, and

saw it was his brother calling him, it took a lot for him to answer it. He was still pissed off from his response last night, but he answered anyway.

He was shocked you find out that he was actually willing on attending the therapy with him. His response was the last thing he was expecting from him and he was ecstatic that he was keen.

It's not going to be the smoothest journey with him, a lot of things will be revealed and said, but Dr Moeketsi reassured him that it's a step towards the right direction and that is where he wants to go.

He actually wanted to call her and share with her the news.

"Thandazo." That's what he calls her, to this day, she doesn't get it.

"Mr Zulu." Professional as always.

“How are you?” she yawned.

“I’m okay. How are you?”

“I’m sorry, did I wake you?” he’s looking at the great clock on the wall, it’s reads 11 o’ clock.

“Yes, you did. But it’s okay.”

“Okay. I have some good news for you and I think they might require you to join me for another lunch.”

“You are pushing it Mr Zulu.”

“Come on Thandazo, you haven’t even heard what I have to say.”

“Okay, I’m listening.”

“My brother agreed to join us next week. I think that is worth a celebratory lunch, don’t you think?”

“Yeah, I guess so. See, I told you that he wouldn’t say no.” he brushed that off.

“Okay, so when must I fetch you?”

“I’m very much capable of driving myself ntate.”

“Fine, whatever you like. Find a restaurant you like and send me the location, I’ll be there.”

The only reason why she isn’t protesting is because the last time they went out together, they were civil.

She won’t admit that she had fun. She’s still on that trip of maintaining that professional relationship.

Mandlenkosi often targets those that bring substance into his life. He falls quickly for those who bring him quick fixes and healing. This is exactly where this relationship is headed, and it calls for nothing but disaster.

Zwelibanzi Zulu

The car couldn't go down the steep hills of the fucked up driveway that leads to the house he is going to, so Mgabadeli had to park the car and he had to walk the rest of the way.

It's not too far. It's a short distance, and he appreciated the moment to take in the fresh air to clear his mind before he go inside. He asked Mgabadeli to stay in the car, he didn't need another pair of ears listening, the fact that he is here is already suspicious enough to anyone who might see him.

He passes the main house because the door is closed shut. That is probably from the cold, he can also feel his fingers and toes turning blue. He's walking towards the only hut in the yard, and as he draws closer, he can smell the incense getting stronger.

He stands at the door and knocks twice before he gets a response.

“Ah, mntanenkosi, I’ve been expecting you.” She speaks.

It’s not overdone with the grunting and chanting that Celemba always does. But that’s not his only concern, why is she referring to him as that, no one calls him that anymore.

“Please, come in.” she signals for him using her hands and points him to the mat on the floor.

He unstraps his sandals and leaves them at the door before going to settle on the mat. He’s done this multiple times to know how to handle it so he pulls out a bundle of notes and he places them on the mat in front of her.

“Makhosi.” She claps twice.

“Mntanenkosi.” She says again.

This is still baffling him.

“Ikona kuphi ke okukulethile la?” (which problem brings you today?) she asks giving him

a wide smile.

This is very unusual for him. He knows sangomas to be very dramatic, and they chant and grunt every second, why is she smiling.

“You said you were expecting me?” He asks in a low voice.

She moves her bones around that lay on the mat. The bundle of notes still lying where he left them, untouched.

“Yes, my ancestors told me to expect a visitor. And here you are, so what brings you?” He clears his throat.

“My brothers wife.” She shook her head and chuckled under her breath.

“Buza futhi.” (Ask again.) He frowned.

“I need answers about my brothers wife.” She burped, and here it starts.

“It is not your job to seek your brothers wife.

They will make their way to each other. Buza futhi.” (Ask again.) She moves her bones around.

“But my brother passed away.” She grunts.

“Nikhuluma ngalelibhokisi elikhala umoya enalifaka emangcwabeni akwaZulu, aniwuhloniphi umthetho Zwelibanzi.” (You are talking about that empty casket you buried in the Zulu burial site. You don’t respect rules and laws Zwelibanzi.) Her voice changed, and he was spooked out to say the least, it sounded like his father’s voice, scratch that, it was his father’s voice.

“What are you trying to say? Are you saying that Langaletu is alive?”

“Qhaqha wonke lamafindo aboshiwe lapha emagcekeni oZulu.” (Undo all the knots tied on the Zulu grounds.) His father’s voice again.

She grunts again and starts clapping her hands.

Her shoulders shake and she tilts her head back.

“Makhosi.” She chants.

“Makhosi!” He responds.

He sits there and dwells in confusion as he watches her grunt and chant.

“Mntanenkosi.” She says.

“Makhosi.” She breathes out heavily and it seems like she’s going back to her normal state.

He’s still confused as to why she keeps referring to him as that when he is the king.

“Ungavumi ukulahlekiswa umuntu wesifazane. That is the downfall of all the Zulu men.” (Don’t allow a woman to lead you astray.)

“What does that mean.” She claps twice.

“Makhosi.” She says. He repeats.

“All that is in the dark will come to the light. Ugade lenyoka ekulandela emsileni.” (Beware of

the snake trying go to step on your tail.) She smiles again.

“Is my brother alive?” He sounds hopeful.

“Go ask your wife.”

She stands up, still leaving the money on the mat. He frowns.

“What does MaMzobe have to do with this?”

“I have to go Mntanenkosi.” He stands up.

He is still very much confused about everything that is going on. He came here with only one question but he’s leaving with several.

He takes out another bundle of notes and he hands them to her. She opened both her palms to accept it. She bowed.

“Mntanenkosi.” She thanked.

It’s bothering him, her referring to him as a prince when in actual fact he is the king.

She walked him out. She's a young woman, she's probably in her early 30s. When he came here he was expecting an older woman. He has just been confused by a young girl. He didn't expect any of the things that were said in there, and he doesn't know what to do with the information.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

For the first time in a long time, she sat and did nothing the whole day. She locked herself up in her room and watched TV. Being at the same table as Banzi and Amile pissed her off so much that she didn't even want to be around her.

It was all pretty when he was making promises to her, saying that she was the only one who owned his heart and he would never love

another woman like he loves her. Now it's a different story because even a blind man can see that she is taking control of him, little by little. She is slowly worming herself into his heart and today proved that.

She didn't mean to be so visibly angry, but the hormone change is also adding on. She should be glad that she is pregnant, because she has the upper hand, she can control him like she always does. She knows that when her mood is foul, so will his.

He waltzed into the room without acknowledging her presence and went straight to the closet.

Because she is pregnant, her senses are heightened, especially her sense of smell, she is able to pick up the slightest smell that no one else can. She knows what incense smells like, she's been in and out of Celemba's hut to know it. He smells of incense.

She stands up, sharpening her tongue, ready to start a verbal war.

“Where were you?” he nodded.

“Good afternoon to you too sthandwa sami. Yes, I am hungry, I would love something to eat.” She rolled her eyes.

He walked inside the closet to look for a change of clothes, something warm, he’s feeling cold.

“Honestly MaMzobe if this is how you will treat me and hide behind your pregnancy then I’m going to spend less time in your presence. You are making it hard to be around you.”

“Zulu?” she’s in a state of shock, her sharpened tongue has gone blunt.

“Is there anything you want to tell me?” He asks.

“Yes, MaGumede agreed to a wedding.” He sighed.

“Where are you going to get the time to plan a

wedding wakwami?” she turns around and walks back into the room. He follows behind her.

“I have all the time in the world.” She can still smell the incense, but the way he shut her up earlier has her scared to ask again.

But she’s MaMzobe.

“Why do you smell like incense. Did you go see Celemba without me?”

“No. Bengiphahlela uNdabezitha.” She’s standing with her hands on her hips.

“How sure am I that you didn’t impose this wedding on MaGumede.”

“Go ask her.” He shook his head and grabbed her arms.

He wrapped his arms around her frame and kissed her forehead. She lay her head on his chest and she can feel his heart is racing.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m okay. But I’m hungry, my wife didn’t make me food.” She chuckled.

“I’m sorry for the way I behaved yesterday. It was uncalled for and rude. Can I blame it on the hormones?” the baby she doesn’t want is now being used as a scapegoat.

“I’ll accept your apology only because it’s you.” She laughed.

“Thank you my love.” She stood on her toes and kissed his lips.

“Hambake uyongenzela ukudla.” She nodded and left him sitting on the ottoman channel hopping.

She doesn’t buy the story of him burning incense just for his father, there is no way. I need to have a talk with Mgabadeli, she thinks to herself as she makes her way down the stairs.

Chapter Forty-Three

Zwelibanzi Zulu

He's going to spend the night with MaGumede, it's her night anyways. He wanted to sleep in MaMzobe's room but she kicked him out because it wasn't her night. The jealousy had definitely gone down.

He still wasn't at ease with any of the things he heard earlier, but he's going to keep everything to himself, observe everything and once any of the things that he heard from Gog' Mandela make sense, he will act on the instructions he was given by his father.

The biggest fear for him though is that Langaletu may be alive, and he has no idea where he will start to look for him. It's all too much.

She's already tucked in under the covers and she's typing away on her phone. Today was very cold, especially for a day in December. She looks shocked to see him here. She shuts her phone off, places it on the side table and sits up.

"Bayede."

"Sorry I'm late wakwami."

She got out of bed and went to fix his side. He chuckled.

"I'm capable of doing that myself." She looked down. She didn't even have anything to say.

She never has anything to say though. She's definitely warmed up to him, and they are able to hold conversations with substance, but she's still shy around him. He loved making her squirm this morning in the bathtub. That reminded him that he was still a man and he had the power to make women weak, just with a little touch.

“It’s my duty Bayede.” She bowed a little.

He thought they were passed this stage in the relationship. He scooped her up in one swift move and her eyes widened. She laughed out loud that she had to cover her mouth.

He’s very strong. In his days he used to stick fight with other boys in the mountains, that’s what his father forced down their throats, him, Langaletu and Khethukuthula. She has her hand on his strong arm, and it looks very tiny.

He sits on the bed and she straddles him. He uses his hand to hold her small one tightly. He plays around with her perfectly manicured fingers. That’s where she never misses, her hands are always on point, as small as they are.

“You are very beautiful.” He looks up at her face briefly and her cheeks have turned into a hue of red.

“Thank you.”

“Please be honest with me.” He said softly.

She nodded and focused her eyes on his face.

“Are you happy here?” she looks down.

She’s not hesitating to answer, it looks like she’s trying to conjure up the perfect answer for him, just so he can be satisfied.

“I am. It’s not the ideal happiness that I imagined to have in my life, especially in this time in my life, but I have absolutely nothing to complain about. Yes it’s not what I’m used to, but everything is slowly getting familiar to me.”

“I’m sorry for imposing such on you at such a young age.”

More than anything, he feels guilty because of the storm he can sense looming in the royal family.

“Everything happens for a reason Bayede, and I believe I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t have a

purpose to serve.” Certainly.

He caresses her cheek and kisses her cheek, then down her neck.

It’s never her lips. He fears kissing her lips. He did it once when they made love and he never forget about that kiss. He craves her lips, how plump and pink they always look. But it’s a trap.

She runs her fingers on his face as he lowers his lips towards her bosom. He takes in the scent of he sweet perfume and runs his hands all over her curves.

He lifts his head and their eyes lock for a moment. Her innocent face draws him in and he gently runs his finger on her parted lips.

He resists the temptation of kissing her lips by lying her on the bed. The way she is crossing her legs together shows that she is still recovering from this mornings Kickstart. Her eyes are drawing him in and he’s failing to resist

the temptation.

“Your eyes MaGumede.” He caresses her thigh.

He looks mesmerized to say the least, he’s leaning in to get a better look and now his breath is fanning her face.

She does the unthinkable and pulls his neck down and locks her lips with his. She finally did what he didn’t have the courage to do and he’s loving it.

It’s not hurried, it’s a slow passionate kiss and his hands are running all over her body.

“Uzongipha manje?” he asked and cupped her boob in his hand.

He gently rubbed her nipple over the material of her silk night dress and she drew in a sharp breath and arched her back.

“Yes Bayede.”

“Ongivulela ke sthandwa sami.” She slowly

parted her thighs and exposed her magical place.

He moaned out in pleasure at the sight of it, and used his hand and brushed over it. One finger went in first and he swerved it around her core and she bit her lower lip to suppress the moan. He plunged it in and out a few times to kick start her and when he pulled it out, it was dripping wet with her juices.

“Ohh mama.”

He got on top of her and she used her toes to grip onto the band of his shorts, and pull them down. He gently gripped on her neck and devoured her lips. With their kiss becoming breathier, she held it in her little hand and stroked it. He was amazed at the fact that she was taking things into her hands.

She was ready for it, and that is why she positioned it on her palace.

He groaned like an animal when her walls clenched around his member. That seemed to fuel him because he started pounding her hard, fast, giving her no room to breath.

She's screaming at the top of her lungs and tears form in her eyes. She's scratching his back and the deeper her nails dig, the harder he pounds. He's never this rough, but he's feeling frustrated. This isn't for her, it's for him.

When he fills her up with his cum, and falls onto his side of the bed, huffing and puffing. She's definitely not satisfied with that, so no one is resting before they are even.

She climbs on top of him and places her hands on his chest to push him down. His eyes widen in shock but his member is growing stiff.

“Uzongibulala MaGumede.”

She lowered herself onto him and she let out a satisfactory moan.

Her confidence was on another level and when she started grinding on him, he moaned out. He was shocked by her ability and impressed all at once. He spanked her bum and she went faster.

“Mama, kumnandi mama ungayeki.”

Ecstasy took over both of them. Peaceful is the name of the sleep they will have tonight.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

They said curiosity killed the cat. She’s playing in a very dangerous territory and if Banzi dare find out, she is good as dead.

But she’s curios. It’s curiosity that is leading her out her cosy warm bedroom to the servant quarters. She tightens her robe around her body and stands in front of the wooden door and knocks several times.

She can hear footsteps from the inside coming towards the door. He opened and he was only in his boxers shorts. He was shocked.

“My queen.”

She pushed her way in and instructed him to close the door and to put on some clothes. He did as told and when he was done, he found her standing with her arms folded across her chest.

“My husband left this morning, where did he go?”

“To council my queen.”

“Why do I feel like you are lying to me?”

“I’m not my queen. As per usual, I drove his majesty to council for a meeting. Thereafter I drove him back here.” She knows how to get him.

He is Banzi’s personal body guard, he is always wherever he is.

“And what did he do at council after the meeting?”

“I don’t know my queen. He asked to be left alone.” Her face visibly fell. She’s not as smart as she thinks she is.

“If I find out that you are lying to me, you are done for. You tend to forget that I am in charge of your paycheck.”

“I swear my queen, all I have said is the truth.” She turned and opened the door to walk out.

She needs to pay Celemba a visit, maybe he can get rid of this child that is restricting her movement. Maybe make it look like an accident. There are more important things that need her attention, like finding Langaletu’s wife.

Banzi will start doing it on his own and end up finding out things he shouldn’t find out about. She has to be a step ahead of him.

She’s walking down the passage, past Amile’s

room and she hears them having sex. She is screaming at the top of her lungs and her screams are accompanied by deep throat groans. She's disgusted to say the least, and she feels her stomach getting upset.

She rushes to the nearest bathroom and emptied her stomach into the toilet bowl. It's too late in the night to have morning sickness. She knows she won't be able to look at her the same after this.

She realized after this morning when he left the room to go to her that she's not just a young girl that she can mother, but her sister wife, a girl that they share a man with. It's just the harsh reality, and now that he heard his enjoying that thing between her legs, everything has changed. She's not that innocent little girl she laid her eyes on at that Reed dance.

Zwelibanzi Zulu

He was worn out from the previous nights exercise. He had the most peaceful sleep and he woke up to her beautiful radiant face. He traced her cheek and the feel of her soft skin on his fingertips sent him into a frenzy.

She battered her eyelashes before she revealed her hazel brown eyes. They bore into his and she smiled before looking away.

“Good morning MaGumede.” He whispered, kissing her cheek.

He pulled her closer to his body and placed his lips on hers. Her hands found their way to his head and she caressed him and their lips locked.

She could open up and let him in, but her whole body is in knots from last night.

“Are you going to get some rest today?” He asked.

“Yes my king.” She definitely needs it.

He got out of bed and turned his back on her. Her eyes landed on his back looking like he was ravaged by scavengers the whole night.

“Oh my goodness.” She exhales loudly.

He turns around and looks at her face. She looks flushed.

“What’s wrong MaGumede?”

“Your back Bayede.” She kneels on the bed and touches the scratches.

He sauntered to the mirror and turned to look at the before letting out a deep throat chuckle.

“Somebody left a mark.” She giggled.

That is more than a mark, it’s branding.

“Don’t worry about it. It will fade in the next

couple of days.” He said and kissed her forehead.

He loves showing affection through touching and kissing, because words have never been his strong suit. It takes a lot for you to understand him.

He’s heading to the shower, he instructed her to stay in bed and relax, he can do everything himself. So that’s what she did. When he climbs into the shower thoughts consume him.

He’s realizing that slowly but surely he is letting her into his heart and letting her settle inside of it. Its hard for him not to love her, she’s beautiful, she’s fragile and the most caring and considerate person after MaMzobe he has ever met.

Something about the way she takes care of him, although they haven’t spent that much time together, reminds him of the way his mom

loved him when he was little. The love he missed, even when she was alive. Not even MaMzobe, after so many years has reached that level, getting him to feel the nostalgia of the times he shared with his mother.

And he realized this that day she made him porridge. The one thing he said he hated and swore to never eat again because it reminded him of his childhood, the childhood he dreads remembering. But she made it perfectly, just the way his mom used to make it, with freshly squeezed lemon juice and just the right amount of sugar.

In that moment he realized just how much he missed his mom, that no matter how angry he was at her when she died, he still loved her and will always be the queen of his heart.

That is why he chose her back at the Reed dance. Her eyes; they drew him in, but more than anything, they reminded him of his mom.

The happy woman who raised him, not the woman she died as, miserable, depressed and sickly.

Does he want to succumb to this feeling, he's not sure. It's very hard for him. He's afraid of losing her like that, and loving a person is not easy. That is why he asked her those questions last night. He was glad that she was okay, that she's 'happy'

He hops out the shower and goes back to the room. She's asleep, her eyes are closed and her mouth is slightly ajar. She looks so beautiful he thinks to himself.

He takes his phone and sends his brother a message to meet up with him at council, and states that it is urgent. Before he switches it off, he absurdly thinks about taking a picture of her. So he does, snaps a few pictures before putting his phone away and getting ready for the day.

It doesn't even feel like it's festive season to him. Heck it doesn't even feel like his birthday month. There is just so much going on, he doesn't even have time to start organizing his annual charity even for the people of the community he hosts every Christmas Eve, his birthday.

MaMzobe is really out if it. She normally starts preparing these things around October and they are already in the first week of December, nothing has been said. He runs into her in the passage, it looks like she's coming from the office.

"Wakwami." She stops in her tracks and turns to face him.

"Good morning Banzi." He pulls her hand and locks her in his embrace.

"How did you sleep?" He's asking her, but he's rubbing her belly.

“Ukhuluma nami noma nesisu?” He chuckled, but she wasn’t laughing.

“I’m asking my lovely wife. How is he treating you?” he can’t hide his excitement about the baby. Unfortunately she doesn’t share the same sentiments.

“He’s showing me hell and I don’t want him in my stomach anymore.”

“We still have 8 months to go. I’ll be right here to take care of both of you.” She fakes a smile. He lifts her chin and kisses her lips.

“Can I have some breakfast before I leave.”

“Everything is on the table Mageba.” Her mood is off, but he won’t say anything.

“Thank you wakwami. Are you not joining me?”

“I’ve already eaten. I have work to do.” She says trying to pull out of his embrace.

“Wait sthandwa sami. You know that we are

now in December and we have to start planning for the Christmas Eve Community Project.”

“Everything has been finalized, we just need to find people that will help us.”

“Oh, that’s great than. Maybe you should ask MaGumede for help.” She faked a smile.

“I will.”

He let her go, he could see that she was not present. He doesn’t want to end up at the conclusion that Gog’ Mandela gave him, he’ll blame her outbursts on the pregnancy.

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Khethukuthula is already waiting for him, he was sitting in the office typing away on laptop. He’s always busy, he prides himself and putting his business first, that is why he is successful.

Out of all of them, he is living the most peaceful life.

“Ngane kaMaJili.” He stood up to give his brother a hug.

“Mntaka baba.”

“You got here early.”

“You said it was urgent.” He went to take his seat in the chair opposite him.

“It is, and I couldn’t think of anyone else to tell but you.”

“Hlala odabeni Bayede.”

“ULanga lethu ngathi uyaphila.” Confusion dwells on his face.

“Come again.” He lowers his voice.

“Our brother might be alive.”

This is big news. And now that it has come out of his mouth, it sounds absurd. Khethuluthula

stands up to go close the door and he locks it. He come back to sit down and closes the laptop in front of him.

“I don’t understand you mntaka baba.”

“You remember on the day of his funeral, Bhulubhulu said we should find his wife and bring her home so she could take control of the kingdom.”

“Yes, I was there. He died that same night didn’t he.”

“Yes, he did. But MaMzobe and I have been trying to find her all these years because she needs to take charge of the kingdom or at least get introduced to the ancestors before they turn their backs on us, and we still can’t find her.”

“Kanti what is Celemba’s job as the royal seer, he should have found that out a long time ago.”

“Ingakho-ke ngihambe ngaya komunye umuntu. She told me that I must stop looking for her,

they will find their way to each other. Then she spoke in Mhlabawesizwe's voice and we buried an empty casket and there are knots on the palace ground."

"What does that even mean?"

"I have no clue. What I do know is that we need to go to that river."

"Have you told MaMzobe." He sighed out in dismay.

"I don't think I should let her or MaGumede know. The healer said I must be aware of women, as they are the main cause of the Zulu men's downfall."

"Ngeke bafo fanele siyiphuthume lendaba." He's aghast.

"We are going back to Gog' Malandela, maybe you will hear her out better."

"We will go mntaka baba, because if any of the

things she has said are true, than lots of things are about to change.”

And one of them might be him losing one of his wives. He’s not willing to let go of any of them.

Chapter Forty-Four

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He decided to leave with Jama when he went back to Zululand for the rest of December. He hasn’t gone to the palace in a long time, and although he hates it there, it’s still his only home and sometimes he feels empty, the only thing that can cure him is going home.

He accompanied him to drop off his children. It was still very early, and he was hoping he’s miss dinner so he could avoid seeing Amile, but you can’t avoid someone that you are going to

live with. Amile is practically his family now, and he has to learn to be around her no matter how uncomfortable he is. Another problem is having to see her with his brother, that thought just paralyzes him.

But he's a man. He has to accept that this is the life he has to live from now on, so that is what he will do. He will soldier on.

He arrived at the exact time his brother arrived. It looked like he was coming back from council.

"Isikhindi emagcekeni oZulu?" Banzi asked mocking looking at his skinny hairy legs.

"I thought it was hot like Durban this side." He defended. He wasn't expecting it to be this cold.

"I wasn't expecting you today, I'm glad you came." He's looking at his brother and he looks worn out.

There is a lot going on, and more than anything, he resents him for taking Amile away from him.

But he's still his only brother, and although they hardly get along, losing him would break him, he just won't admit it out loud.

They make their way inside the house and the first person they run into is Amile. He needs to take a deep breath, so he can keep his cool. She greets her husband first, he even goes as far as giving her a kiss on the cheek.

"Bhuti." She greets before putting out her hand to shake.

He smiles and pulls her for a side hug.

"How are you MaGumede." Her whole body is stiff.

"I'm good bhuti." She detaches herself from his body and goes to stand next to her husband.

That crushes him on the inside.

"Where is MaMzobe?" he asked looking around.

"She's sleeping."

That's so unlike her, he thinks to himself.

"Let me go check on her. Please see me in the office." Banzi said looking at him.

He nodded and looked directly at Amile. Banzi excused himself and walked up the stairs. He continued to bore into her eyes while Banzi made his way up the stairs, only the sound of his shoes clicking on the wooden steps audible. When she's sure he's not around, she turns around to go back to her chamber, but he pulls her arms and looks at her.

"What, what, what!?" she shout whispers.

"I'm attending therapy."

"Good for you. So now you won't be an alcoholic?"

"Disappointing right?" he asked sarcastically.

She rolled her eyes and attempted to walk away, but he pulled her back again.

“I love you.” She’s tired of this game.

“Mandlenkosi, please.”

“It’s fine. Go.” He gave her a small smile.

He’s definitely different. It’s like he’s that Mandlenkosi that she’s known all this time. She’s smitten.

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He’s sitting in Banzi’s office, waiting for him to arrive. He wonders what he wants to speak to him about. The last time they spoke before he asked for therapy, he took out his frustrations caused by him by sleeping with Amile.

He felt a pang of guilt when he saw him today, but seeing Amile’s face also reminded him he may have her, but he has her heart.

“Hawu, usula?” the door opened and he walked

in.

He was wearing a tracksuit and sneakers. He looked like he was just about ready to leave.

“You said you wanted to see me.” He closed and locked to door.

He looked at him suspiciously and followed him as he made his way to his chair. He sat down and sighed out loud. Now that he’s up close and looking at him in the eyes, he looks exhausted. Not only exhausted, but stressed too.

“I did. When did you say this therapy thing of your is?” he frowned.

“Next week. You look like you need it more than me.” Banzi lifts his hand to his head and he sighs out again.

“Konakele kaZulu.”

“What happened bhuti?”

“Langaletu might be alive.” He frowned at

looked at him.

“Alive, where did you get that crazy notion?” he blurts out.

He gives him a disapproving look.

“I don’t understand bhuti..”

“Angishongo ukuthi uyaphila, kodwa kungenzeka.”

“That can’t happen. We found his clothes in shreds by the river. Its obvious that he didn’t survive.”

“Your father is angry. He spitting fire from the grave because we buried an empty casket. He’s just as angry as Bhulubhulu was before he also died.”

Bhulubhulu was the royal seer before Celemba. He worked for Mhlabawesizwe and was to be Langaletu’s seer too, but he died right after he died, on the day of the empty casket funeral. He

died right after causing a scene at the palace on the day of the funeral telling MaMzobe and Banzi that if they don't find Langaletu's wife, the whole palace will be in ruins. It had to be the most dramatic thing to ever happen in their family.

"And who told you all of this, Celemba?" he asks in a mocking tone.

"Maybe you weren't exaggerating when you said he was fake." He chuckled and shook his head.

"It's not time for you to say I told you so. We have a serious problem on our hands. If it is true that he is alive then we need to find him."

"Bhuti, if bhut' Langa was alive, and wanted to come back, he would've come back a long time ago. It's been 3 years."

"Don't forget that he was in a car accident, maybe he sustained an injury, maybe he lost his memory."

“Everyone knows who Langaletu is, he’s not like me who stays under the radar. His pictures were all over the internet. Anyone who would’ve ran into him would’ve got in touch. Maybe we should just accept that he’s gone. He might have not wanted to be king, but he loved his home. He would’ve come back, no matter what.”

“I’ll only get peace of mind knowing I looked and failed. I’ve failed him already, three years after his death, only now am I waking up. At least let me give up having tried.” He stood up and grabbed his keys off the table.

“Where are you going?” He stood up too.

“Khethukuthula and I are going to the river.”

“I’m coming with you.” He shook his head.

“No. You will run your mouth to MaMzobe and I don’t want that.”

“Are you keeping this a secret from her?” he

asked looking suspicious.

“No, I’m protecting her. She’s pregnant and I don’t want to stress her out. She’s already very moody and acting strange.” He blurted out.

“Pregnant?” his heart started beating loudly.

“Yes. I shouldn’t have told you that. Keep it to yourself.” He nodded fast.

“Go change if you are going with me.”

In his heart, Langaletu died, he’s not coming back. He just wants to prove to Banzi that whatever he heard was not true. It makes no sense for him to be alive.

Amile Gumede

Nkosi coming home threw me off completely. I wasn’t expecting him to come, and it looks like him and the husband are okay again. They fight

all the time, it's great to see them getting along.

It's surprising how it has never crossed my mind that one day the secret of Nkosi and I sleeping together, not once but twice has a possibility of coming out. I'm terrified of that day when the whole truth comes out,

What scares me the most is that it looks like the husband is catching feeling. Not that it's a bad thing, but him and MaMzobe are fighting. He didn't tell me this, but I'm not stupid, we live in the same house, I can't sense that their energies are off. MaMzobe is also very moody, she's not as sweet as she was when I got here. She's talking to me less and giving me more nasty look.

I don't even know if it's about the wedding issue, but she has no reason to be angry at me, I gave her what she wanted, sacrificing my sanity. Now I have to plan a wedding I don't want, a wedding I don't need.

I walked to the kitchen to get myself a bottle of water and I saw the husband's car drive out the driveway through the window. I wonder where he's going.

"Who is that?" Ma disturbs me from my thoughts.

"Bayede." I turn and look at her.

I'm jealous of her skin. It looks so smooth, so radiant.

"Where is he going?"

"I don't know ma, he didn't tell me."

"Is Mgabadeli driving him?" why is she asking me so many questions I don't understand.

She's the first wife, she knows all of this, not me.

"I didn't see ma." I gulped down half the glass of my water.

"Uphi uMandlenkosi? I heard him talking

earlier.”

“Maybe he’s in his room ma.” She took the glass I just placed in the sink and poured herself water.

“Your husband said I must ask you if you want to help me with his birthday charity event.” So is she asking or what?

“When is his birthday ma?” how disgusting, I don’t know my own husband’s birthday.

In my defence, he probably doesn’t know mine and I’ve only been married to him for plus minus 2 months.

“On the 24th.”

“Of this month?” that’s a stupid question Amile.

He’s born on Christmas eve!?! I wouldn’t have guessed.

“Yes. He hosts a charity event for the village ever year and he gives out food parcels to the

needy and cooks for those who don't have food or shelter." Shouldn't he do that everyday, I mean take care of the homeless?

"That's a lovely gesture."

She walks out the kitchen and I follow her.

"Yes, it is."

"I would love to help ma. Just tell me whatever you need."

"Normally the staff help us, but they will be off this year so the first thing you can do is find people that will help us."

I don't know a lot of people.

"I'll do my best ma."

"We also have to sit down and come up with a menu for this year. This is the only time we splurge so we go all out."

"I see. I can definitely do that." Okay now I'm excited.

“Thank you.” She doesn’t look thankful, but she fakes a smile and walks away.

She looks tired. I also saw the same look in the husband’s eyes, but he looks more stressed out than tired.

I went back to my room and took my phone. I want to take a stroll in the garden. I have a few missed calls and all of them are from Nambitha. What a surprise. I call her back.

“Finally. Is Jama there at the palace?”

“Hello to you too chomie, how are you?” I chuckled at the way she was breathing. She whined.

“Hey, I’m sorry chomie. I’ve been trying to get a hold of him and his phone is not going through. I’m worried.”

“He came here and dropped Nkosi off before he left. I didn’t even see him. Must I call him for you?” she sighed.

“If you don’t mind chomie. I’m really worried. He said he would call when he gets home and he was driving with the kids.”

“I’m sure he’s okay wherever he is, but I’ll call him to make sure.”

“I appreciate it chomie.”

“Okay, let me try him and then I’ll get back to you.”

I lowered myself on the bench and dialled the black man’s number.

“Ndlunkulu.” I rolled my eyes.

“Mr Dlamini, how are you?”

“I’m okay, what a surprise, what have I done to receive a call from royalty.” I laughed. I know he’s mocking me.

“You have ignored your girlfriend.” He dragged me through his teeth.

“Did she tell you the shit she did before she

whined and said she can't reach me on the phone?" oh heeh.

"No, and I don't want to be involved, please." He laughed.

"Very good."

"Just call her and talk to her otherwise she's going to burst, please."

"Your friend thinks I don't have feelings. Fine, I'll call her." I laughed and shook my head.

"Goodbye Jama."

"Goodbye Mamndlunkulu."

It's too early for them to already be having problems, but Jama is impatient, he probably wants the one thing that Nambitha won't give up and that is the thing in between her legs.

Quite frankly, Nambitha and I are different. She valued her virginity, I didn't care about it, I wanted to give it to the right person because no

matter how long you save it, nothing changes, it's bound to break at the end of the day, that's why I don't cry too much about mine. It just sucks that I had to give it to someone else when I had the one I love had the opportunity to take it and didn't use it.

Only if Nkosi had fucked me the way he did last time on that day I asked him to, we wouldn't be where we are right now.

Nkululeko Dlamini

"Azande might walk in at any time Ntando." He's failing to control his breathing as she strokes his hard shaft in her hand.

"She's glued to her cartoons, relax daddy." She gave him a sexy smile before swerving her tongue on his tip.

“Oh mama.” He closed his eyes and tilted it back.

“You like this” she said massaging his balls.

He groaned when she took in his whole length in her mouth, down to the back of her throat.

It’s hard to resist her, she’s got great head game, and even better sex game. It’s quite surprising that they only have one child, the way they hump each other.

More than anything, he’s frustrated. He’s a man, he has needs, and that’s what his girlfriend doesn’t understand.

He loves her. He genuinely does, but he’s too old to still be doing self service when he has a girlfriend. And it’s not exactly him wanting to sleep with her, no, he claims to understand that she’s saving herself for marriage. But what he goes through is pure torture. Evil in his books.

He grips on her afro and pushes her down. She

gags and that seems to satisfy him. She forces herself to go faster as tears cascade down her face.

“I’m cuming.” He said in a high pitched voice.

She massaged his balls and that sped up the process because he spilled his semen in her mouth. She knows he loves it messy so lets it drip down the side of her mouth, down inside her cleavage, all over his thighs, before licking her lips and giving him a sexy stare.

“Kodwa Ntando.” She chuckled.

“Bet your takalani can’t do that.”

He give a lazy chuckle, throws his head back and fixes his underwear.

“You’ll never find another woman like me Nkululeko.” He ignores her and takes the towel on the bed and wipes his thigh.

“Don’t do that to yourself Nontando.” She said

before he stood up and pulled up his pants, buckling his belt.

She also stands up.

“If you love her like you say you do you wouldn’t be coming here and fucking me and crumble under me like a weak little boy. You would fuck her.” He’s not going to give her the satisfaction.

She already heard that they aren’t okay. He doesn’t like that. He grabs his phone while she continues to speak. He dials her number. She answers like she was sitting, waiting for it to ring.

“Baby, finally. I was so worried.”

He looks at Ntando who has suddenly gone mute.

“I’m sorry I didn’t call nana. I got caught up.”

“I thought you were angry at me.”

“Never, I could never be angry at my nana. My

beautiful yellow bone.” She giggled.

Ntando stormed out to the bathroom leaving him silently laughing

“When are you coming back?”

“I don’t know nana, but if I don’t come back this week, it will definitely be the next.”

“I miss you already.” The frustration has slowly melted away. Hearing that she misses him, it’s a sign that maybe he isn’t in this relationship alone, because that’s what he feels most of the time.

“I’ll send you something so you can go spoil yourself, okay nana?”

“You don’t need to baby.”

“I want to.” She sighed.

“Thank you. How are Azande and Banele?” his heart leapt.

“They are okay. Azande didn’t want to leave, but

she slept throughout the trip and now she is watching cartoons. Banele was just happy to see his mother.” She laughed lowly.

“I’m glad then.” He doesn’t know what this means, but it’s a strong in the right direction.

Maybe now she will accept his kids. That’s all he wants, that she give them a little bit of affection and love.

“I love you nana. Don’t ever doubt that.” He looked at the bathroom door where Ntando disappeared to.

“I love you too Nkululeko.” His heart melted.

It’s going to take a lot for him to learn how to detach from Ntando she give it to him good, but she loves Nambitha, and hurting her is the last thing he wants to do.

(Unedited)

Chapter Forty-five

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She's worried. Both of them are. They are sitting in the lounge in complete silence, waiting for something, anything to happen. They've tried both of them, neither Banzi or Nkosi are answering their phones

She's furiously tapping her foot on the tiled floor and she is shrieking from the inside. First of all, he didn't say where he was going, to either of them, now he's not answering his calls.

This is the same thing that happened with Langa, he went out in the day time and he never came back. She's definitely not ready to lose her husband. Especially like this.

"Try him again." She instructs Amile.

Amile is feeling sleepy. She's even laid her head on the armrest of the couch. She picks up her phone and lazily dials a number.

She eyes her as she listens attentively to what is being said I'm her ear.

"Nkosi we have been trying to get a hold of you."

She gives her a look. What happened to calling him bhuti?

"Give me the phone." She said.

Amile passed her the phone and she snatched it out.

"Mandlenkosi ibizwa ngani lento eniyenzayo." She shouted.

"Ma, please don't worry. We are okay, and we are on our way home."

"Don't test me. Give Zwelibanzi the phone."

Now Amile is the one sitting listening attentively,

trying to hear what is being said.

“Wakwami.”

“Wakwami my foot Banzi where are you?”

“I’m on my way home. You can go to bed my love. I’ll be home soon.”

“There is no bed I’m going to without you.”

She’s feeling emotional all of a sudden.

“Okay, you can stay up and wait, I’m coming back. I promise.”

She didn’t even wait to hear the rest of the things he said, she handed the phone back to its owner.

“Bayede.” She assessed the screen before placing it on her ear.

She rolled her eyes discretely and turned to face the other way.

“I’m feeling sleepy.” This definitely means she’s waiting up alone.

“Yes Bayede, good night.”

She removed the phone from her ear and stood up.

“Ma, I’m going to bed, goodnight.”

“You aren’t waiting up for your husband?”

“He’s assured me that he is safe and that they are on their way home.”

She’s not going to project her negativity onto her little mind, she clearly hasn’t experienced what it’s like to lose a loved one.

“Okay, good night MaGumede.”

She dragged her slippers on the wooden floor all the way to her bedroom.

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“Nontuthu.” Why is he calling her by her name?

That is very strange.

“Wake up and let’s go to bed.”

She’s sleeping on the couch. Now that she lifts her head, her neck is strained. That means they got home later than he had promised on that call.

“Banzi where were you?” she asks forcing her body off the couch

She feels heavier than normal. He offers his hand and helps her up he would carry her, but he’s also tired, you can see it on his face.

“We will talk in the morning. Let’s go to bed mama.”

“I don’t want to talk in the morning, I want to talk now.” He exhaled on distress.

She’s wide awake, she has her hands resting on her hips, looking at him waiting for an answer.

“Tell me where you were?” he placed his hand

of the small of her back and thrust her forward.

“Nontuthuzelo, please. It’s late, I need to rest. I told you, we will talk in the morning, if you don’t want to listen to me than you can sit here and wait once more.”

She sulked but hardened her body on the same spot when he tried to push her towards the direction of their bedroom. She was refusing, so he let her go and walked away.

“Banzi don’t you dare walk out on me.” Her voice broke.

“Come to bed.” That’s all he said as he climbed the staircase.

When he disappeared up upon stairs, she wiped the tears that were on her face and stormed up their. She was ready to make crazy demands.

She found him stripping off his clothes, getting ready for bed. He has scars on his back, not just any scars, but it looks like claws were

scratching into his skin. Her heartbeat quickens when her mind goes back to that moment she stood outside that door and heard them groaning and moaning, their skins against each other. Her stomach drops.

“Did she do that to you?” he didn’t even realize that she was here.

He turned and looked at her. Her face had turned pale and tears were gushing down her face.

“MaMzobe...”

“She gives it to you good huh, that’s why you don’t touch me anymore?” He frowned.

“Where is that coming from sthandwa sami?” he walks closer to embrace her.

“Where were you Banzi?” she’s sobbing.

All her emotions have been roped up into a bundle of sorrow.

“We went to the river where Langaletu died.”
She stopped crying and looked up at him.

“What for? What were you looking for?” he used his thumb to wipe her tears.

“Nothing for you to worry about sthandwa sami, I will sort it out. You worry about baking our son and keeping him healthy, okay?” she shook her head.

“Don’t do that to me Banzi. You know that I don’t want this child, you know this wasn’t part of the plan.” He shook his head.

“We can’t change time sthandwa sami, he’s already baking, and we are both going to love him, whether he was part of the plan or not. I don’t want you to keep thinking about this whole Langaletu thing, do you understand me.”

“But Banzi...”

“No. This child’s health comes first and the last

thing you need is stress. Not a word of it, I will handle everything.”

“Is she the one that’s making you hate me like this?” She untangled herself from his embrace.

“Amile has nothing to do with any of this!”

“Is it because hers is tighter? I’ve given you three kids Banzi and you do me like this?”

He is distraught, you can see it all over his face.

“Nontuthuzelo, ngiyakucela, yeka lento oyenzayo njengamanje.” His voice was firmer.

She walked passed him and went to tuck herself under the covers. She started sobbing softly. He doesn’t even understand how this was turned and make about Amile when all he wanted was to protect his child.

“I’ll do anything you ask me to do MaMzobe, just don’t go to bed angry with me.”

She knows that what she is doing is pushing

him away into her arms further, but she's terrified of the secrets she is keeping.

"Okay, let's take a break, a break from everything, let's just leave. Let's take the boys and go on holiday, just us." He bargained.

"With her?" she's happy that he was the one who suggested it.

This gives her leverage against him. Now he's going to be distracted from the search. It's not even about Amile.

"No, just our family. Like old times." She sat up and looked at him with tears in her eyes.

"Do you want that?" she nodded.

"I'll book the flights." He walked closer to her and wrapped his arms around her body.

"I love you, and I meant it when I promised that no woman would ever take your place in my heart. Come hell or high waters, I will love you

and be with you sthandwa sami. Don't ever doubt my love for you because that hurts me Nontuthu. I love you." She smiles through the tears.

The reassurance is good enough to soothe her aching heart.

"Asilale sthandwa sami."

He kissed her forehead and tucked her in.

Amile Gumede

He's wrapped up in a snake. It's green and slithery, exactly like the one that almost squished me to death. He looks at peace and it keeps moving around him.

There are loud drums beating loudly, I've heard this song before. I know this tune very well. This is the song that they played for me at my

'wedding'

"Ngizobuya sthandwa sami

Ngizobuya ngikuthande ngendlela ongakaze
uthandwe ngayo

Ngizokuthanda sthandwa sami

Ngizobuya"

The snake submerged him under the water and
I screamed following them.

I wade through the water shouting for him to
wait for me. I felt something holding me back.

"Let me go! I want to go to him! Let me!"

It keeps pulling me back but I'm fighting. There
is no way that I'm going to let go, not this time.

I put my right foot forward and try grab on to
something but I can't seem to find anything. My
hand lands touch the snakes tail and I grip on it.
I seem to gain more strength because the
hands trying to pull me back let go and I hear a

distant scream before I also get roped into the snakes coil under the water.

He's inside, he looks happy and when his eyes meet with mine, he smiles and engulfs me in a tight hug.

“It’s over my queen. The worst is over.” My chest hurts from the crying.

The snake tightens its hold against out skin and I have never felt this safe.

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I’m woken up by a thud on the floor and my whole side hurts instantly. My heart is beating out of my chest. I pick up the covers and stand up. I meet with my reflection in the mirror next to the bed and my hair looks messed up.

This has to be the most clearest dream of all of them. Langaletu is alive. He’s alive and he’s coming back.

I'm panicking. Why is he calling me isithandwa sakhe? I can't be his love, the only love that I want to love is Nkosi. Now that I've been roped into sleeping with both Nkosi, and Banzi, brothers, I can't also be Langaletu's love. It can't happen.

I go on my knees and clasp my hands together.

"Dear God, peace is the last thing I have had in my life, and things seem to just go worse day by day. I know I made a mistake, I committed an atrocious sin and adulated with my husband's brother, but this punishment, it's too much. I know this would be selfish of me to ask, but please, let it not happen that we find out that Langaletu is alive and that he is coming back for me. Let it be that I am just the messenger lord, that I am a vessel to pass on this message. If you give me just this one chance God I will give myself to you fully, dedicate my life to praising you. Amen."

I got up and dusted my knees before making the bed.

I suddenly feel so dirty, and now I see the consequences of what happened that day with Nkosi. I shouldn't have. They are brothers, blood brothers. They share the same mother and father and if this dare come out, I would be deemed as a jezebel. This wasn't part of the plan. The plan wasn't to sleep with all the brothers in the palace, the plan was to be happy.

My heart is not at peace, and I need to tell Bayede the truth, the whole truth, from my encounter with Mandlenkosi, to how I feel about him and all the dreams. Maybe this ease my guilty conscious, because now that is all that I feel, guilt and disgust in what I have done.

I went to take a shower and flashes of Mandlenkosi pressing me to the headboard, pounding me, going in and out, his hands, his fingers digging into my skin, giving me so much

pleasure I couldn't handle it. That had to be the most violent sex and that's why I had marks on my neck, he kissed me too hard.

I'm definitely not deprived, yesterday with Bayede was nothing like I have ever imagined. The scars on his back are proof of that. Look at me sounding like a whore, a homewrecker, coming in between two brothers.

I run my hands on my skittles with the warm water of the shower and pressed my lips together. I don't want to do this, I just prayed to God for him to forgive all my sins, I can't be doing this now.

But I'm stressed, and I need that orgasm, maybe the heavy load will lessen from my shoulders.

The last time I tried this, it was the most unbearable thing. But if I want to get to that place quicker, I need it. I grabbed the shower

head and carefully adjusted the pressure before leaning against the wall...

The lord will have to forgive me again.

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I've been sitting on the shower floor for over ten minutes, I'm too scared to stand up, my legs are still vibrating from that mind blowing orgasm that I had.

I can't feel my toes and I feel my skittles throbbing for more. I don't think I have anymore to give, but that was the best orgasm I've ever had.

I crawled out of the shower and went to grab the towel. My feet felt a bit better and I felt like they would be able to carry me. I stood up and went to the bedroom.

I almost fainted when I saw Mandlenkosi standing by the door. He was actually leaning on it, typing away on his phone.

“Mandlenkosi!?” He looked up and saw that I was only wrapped up in a towel.

A ghost of a smile graced his face. This is definitely a test.

“On time?”

“Are you delusional or what? Do you forget that I am your husband’s wife?” I whisper while walking towards him.

“Yes you have reminded me over and over again, but fact remains that you have given it to me, not once, but twice. Namanje nje ngisakanguthinta uncibilike ungivulele.” He lowered his voice trying to be sexy.

I won’t give him the satisfaction, but he’s making it hard because I just masturbated to his image back there. This is definitely the lord

trying to test me.

“I’ve done it before, and I will do it again. Get out of my bedroom Nkosi. This isn’t just a place, this is the royal palace, and unlike your joint, we respect this place.”

“Joint?” he’s closing me in.

I probably shouldn’t have stood in a position like this.

“Yes. La uletha khona izifebe zakho. Ijoyinti lelo.” He chuckled and grabbed my thigh.

I tried to move back but my back met with the wall. I cursed under my breath.

He pressed up against me.

“Manje unomona?”

“I have no reason to be jealous.” I rolled my eyes, trying to escape from his trap.

He put his leg in between my thighs and tried to use his hands to touch my coochie.

“Get out! Anyone could walk in here.”

I’ve already asked for forgiveness for my sins, I can’t commit the same sin twice.

“One last time baby. That’s all I want, to feel you just one last time.” He lowered his head and captured my lips.

I hate myself for melting at his delicate touch. His hand succeed in traveling up to my palace and he massaged my swollen clit.

“Already waiting for me.” He whispered against my lips.

He has no idea.

His fingers dug into my core and I moaned against his lips. Even a fool can see that I’m being used.

“Mandlenkosi.” I tried to push him off but his fingers were doing me so good.

He quickened his pace and I melted under his

touch.

“Fuck it’s so warm.” I was so close to having another orgasm but he pulled out his fingers and he licked them. They were literally dripping wet.

I hate that I can’t resist him. That no matter what I do, I can’t say no to him. I feel loose.

“Please get out.” I sighed defeated.

“What we are doing is so wrong but it feels so right Amile. I love you so much and I just can’t let you go.”

“You let me go the day you didn’t fight for me.” He sighed.

“I thought we were passed this stage.”

“It still hurts, and now that we have committed such adultery, there is no going back. I’m going to tell Bayede everything.”

The door opened while he was still pressed up

against me work his knee between my thighs. My heart literally stopped beating and I saw his whole face going pale.

“I’ve been waiting for you to...” she stopped mid-sentence and marvelled at the sight.

I’m only in a towel. This man literally just fingered me right here, all the evidence is clear.

“Mandlenkosi what are you doing in here?”

He slid his hands into his pockets and looked down. Cat got his tongue now?

“Both of you explain what the hell is going on in this bedroom before I lose my mind.”

I’m not breathing. I can feel my heart in my throat.

“Ma, please calm down, I will explain everything.” He says looking down in embarrassment.

“I’m waiting, explain.”

“I was harassing her, its my fault, I’m sorry.” Her eyes darted between the both of us, then they stopped at him.

“This is not just anyone Mandlenkosi, this is your brothers wife, do you understand that.”

“I do ma.”

“Then what is the meaning of this?” he looked down.

“Get dressed and meet me in the study.” I’m literally shaking.

This can’t be happening, not to me.

Chapter Forty-Six

Amile Gumede

They followed each other out the room and I sank to the ground, feeling like my chest would

tear open. Ma is going to hate me, and now she's going to tell Bayede. It definitely won't come out the same way I would've planned to tell him. He's also going to hate me, I'm going to be fined, banished, and divorced.

My lower abdomen cramps and a sharp pain shoots through my lungs as I force a scream. It doesn't come out and I stifle a sob as I crawl to my wardrobe to try and find something to put on.

I need to call my mom, I need to tell her what is going on. I am not strong enough to deal with this on my own. she will know what to do, she will know how to handle this. I grabbed my phone off the pedestal and laid my head against the edge of the bed, drew in a breath And dialed her number. I know she's going to shout at me in fact she's going to kill me because she told me to stay away from Mandlenkosi. Did I do that? No, my stubborn

heart just couldn't let him go, I just couldn't stay away from him. The love of my life.

She answered and when her voice registered in my ear, I just broke down.

"Baby, what's wrong?"

"MaMzobe found out."

"Found out what Amile?" I hiccupped.

"About Nkosi and I's mishap." I heard her sighing heavily.

"What did you do?"

"He was in my room..."

"Amile Gumede did I not specifically tell you to stay away from Mandlenkosi?" I sobbed louder, unable to answer her.

"Ayikho into oyikhalelayo, ngakukhuza ngalamanyala akho." (There is nothing you are crying for, I warned you about the abominations you are committing.)

“I told him to get out ma, he didn’t want to.”

“Manje what are you going to do? She knows, she’s obviously going to tell your husband the truth. Do you understand the seriousness of this? Izizumbulu zezimali lezi enginganazo esifanele sizikhokhe sigeza umuzi?” (The insane amount of money I don’t have to pay to cleanse the palace?)

“I don’t know mama. She said she wants to talk to the both of us.” She clicked her tongue.

She’s disappointed in me more than anything. I’m disappointed in myself too.

“Don’t you dare lie to her. Tell her the truth. Yazi Amile, uzehlisa isithunzi nje lento oyenzayo, ubukisa ngami.”

“I’m sorry mama.”

“Don’t keep her waiting. Go hear what she wants to say and call me when you are done.”
At least she still has my back.

I bid her goodbye before hanging up and standing up and getting dressed. One thing I'm going to do is beg her not to tell Bayede, because I want to tell him myself. If I don't tell him myself, it's not going to come across like it should. I want him to understand what is going on, how we got where we are.

My hair is wet so I put on a head wrap and a long dress. I made sure that my whole body is covered, I even put a cardigan on top, despite the sun being out. I'm sure she already deems me as loose.

I knock twice in the door and let myself in. They were sitting in silence, and the atmosphere was thick. I found my seat next to Mandlenkosi and looked down.

“One of you start explaining.”

Mandlenkosi leans forward to try speak but I cut him off.

“I met him first. I knew him first and we were in a serious relationship.” I blurted out.

He gave me a look that I knew could send me straight to the grave. What did he want to do? Come here and lie?

“Mandlenkosi?” oh so she doesn’t believe me.

He kept quiet.

“Is what she is saying true?” this is all in his hands. She definitely won’t believe me over him, he is her precious son.

“No. It’s not true ma.” My heart is beating in my ears and I can feel my hands burning up.

“Nkosi!?” I shout unintentionally with tears threatening my eyes.

First he didn’t fight for our relationship, now he’s denying me in front of his family. What did I ever do to him.

“I didn’t know her before the palace.” He turned

his whole body to look at me and he gave me that look that said I must go with the story.

“MaGumede, I’m sorry for harassing you, I know you’ve told me to stop, and I will. I’m stopping today, I should have never crossed the boundary.” Tears dropped down my face and I wiped them.

“Amile tell the truth.” She never calls me by my name. I’m fucked.

“But ma I did.”

She held her head in frustration and banged her fist on the table four times.

“You two are going to drive me crazy!”

“Listen Ma, I’m a fucked up human being. I was trying to spite bhuti, but nothing happened between us. That is why I’m attending therapy. I need help ma.” Oh wow. Actor of the year.

In fact, he deserves an award.

“Amile?” I hate this back and forth.

“Hes not lying.” I said in a breathy tone.

“So where did you get that story from?”

“She was protecting me. I’m sorry for this ma. Truly.”

“I’m telling Banzi.” She sighed out.

“No, ma please don’t tell him. I’ll do it myself. He’s attending therapy with me next week and I will tell him, I swear.” Is he being for real.

Now it’s a competition of who tells Bayede the truth first.

“Mandlenkosi you are slowly going to get on my last nerve.”

“I’m sorry ma, I know this is the last thing that you need right now. That’s why you shouldn’t stress yourself. I will tell him.”

“Leave.” He said looking at Nkosi.

He stood up and walked out the office. When she was sure that he was gone, she looked at me concerned.

“Why were you quiet? Why didn’t you say something?”

Is it because I’m crying that it seems like I am the victim in all of this? Oh if only she knew the web of lies I have tangled myself in. I can’t untangle myself.

“No one was going to believe me.” She shook her head and reached over the table to touch my hand.

“Are you sure that I shouldn’t tell Banzi?” I shook my head no.

“They are brothers ma, I don’t want them to fight because of me.” And that is the only honest truth that I have said since I have walked in here.

“Nonsense. I’m sorry that you had to endure

staying with him, I thought he was better than that, I thought he was more of a man.” She looks disappointed in him.

I haven’t seen this side of her in a long time, I missed her.

“Its okay. He didn’t harass me too much.” I wiped my tears.

She looks pitiful. I’m definitely still going to sit down with Bayede and tell him everything. I don’t know when, but I will. I don’t want this burden anymore, I can’t take it anymore.

I feel like shit, and I hate feeling like this.

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I can hear shuffling around the room and that could either be Sis’ Melo or Bayede. But why would Bayede shuffle so much. He just woke

me up from my beauty sleep.

I pop one eye open and see him pacing up and down next to the bed. It's already dark outside, that means I slept throughout the whole afternoon. He looks very frustrated, he doesn't even realize that I'm up.

"Bayede." That came out as a whisper, but he heard me because he stopped pacing and came to me.

He caressed my cheek.

"MaGumede, how are you?" why does he look so flushed? Does he know something?

"I'm good." I haven't seen him since yesterday morning.

"Go back to sleep mama, did I wake you?" I shook my head no before sitting up. I'm hungry.

"Bayede I need to talk to you." I puckered up the courage.

“Me too.” What?

My heart dropped.

“MaMzobe, the kids and I are going away for a few days. She’s not okay, and I just need her to relax. There is a lot going on at the palace, and I just want both of you to relax, and not get involved. It’s still going to be very hard that is why I need both of you to be strong.” I don’t know what he’s talking about, but he’s scaring me.

I nodded and he leaned in to kiss my forehead. Maybe I shouldn’t tell him just yet, he looks worried and stressed, I don’t want to add on to it.

“What did you want to talk about?” I cleared my throat trying to get rid of the lump stuck there.

“I wanted to tell you about school, but it’s okay, we can talk about it another time.”

“Thank you MaGumede.” I respect this man and

I'm afraid of disappointing him after he told me that I am his place of peace during the storm.

That thank you came from the depth of his soul. He really isn't okay. It would be unfair of me to put all my burdens on him like this.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She's using the fact that he's at MaGumede's room to her advantage tonight. She called Jon and asked him to drive her to Celemba's hut. Jon wouldn't dare question her, he will only do what he is supposed to do.

"Don't you dare breathe a word about this to anyone otherwise you will find yourself jobless and homeless." She threatened him.

It's funny how she threatens him with a soft voice, without shouting or causing a scene.

That definitely scared him enough and he swore to secrecy.

He parked inside the yard. There is no fencing protecting the yard so it's easy for them to enter. They did that on purpose, not having a fence. They know no one will dare try enter the yard of a royal seer. Those who take chances are met with the vicious dogs and sometimes the traps set up all over the yard.

She tells Jon to get out the car and shoo the dogs away. She's also not used to them, but she comes here all the time.

"Who dares to enter the royal seers homestead!" his voice roars out. His title is never forgotten. He always addresses himself in third person.

"The queen makhosi." Jon whispers next to him.

She opens the door for herself and climbs out. She closes it behind her and shoos Jon away

from Celemba. He does a little bow and goes back to the car.

“Ndlunkulu.”

“We need to talk.” He chuckled and moved out of the door way.

“You are welcome.” She squeezed herself in and found her seat on the Reed mat on the floor.

He came to sit and clapped twice. She rolled her eyes and took out a few notes and laid them on the mat.

“Thokoza.”

“Celemba, I’ve been begging you to do this for me, my husband is now five steps ahead. Who is Langaletu’s wife?”

“Ndlunkulu you know that I don’t have access to that kind of information. I have told you that she is close by.”

“That’s not good enough. Banzi is snooping

around, just the other day he was at the river, if he finds out that accident wasn't a mistake, we are both good as dead."

"That isn't going to happen. He's dead, he isn't going to miraculously rise from the dead."

"Then do something about it. I'm taking him away on holiday to distract him." He chuckled.

"And how is the little one doing?" She rolled her eyes.

"Don't annoy me. I don't want this thing inside of me."

"You need a concoction?" she kept quiet for a while.

"Give it to me." He laughed.

"Just put this in your tea, it will be history."

He was mixing things in a bowl. She's not heartless, but getting rid of this child is for the better. There's too much going on in the palace

for her to be worrying about taking care of babies.

(Excuse the late chapter, I've been occupied)

Chapter Forty-Seven

Amile Gumede

You can see the worry on MaMzobe's face as we watch them depart. Nkosi and I are seeing them off, maybe she looks worried because she's leaving me with Nkosi and she thinks that he's hitting on me. Now this is my chance to give him an earful for what he did. I can't believe he did this to me again, he denied my presence in his life once again.

He grabbed my hand and held it tightly, I tried to pull my hand away but his hold was too tight.

“Mandlenkosi!”

“I’m tired of fighting with you. I want us to just go out and be together for the last time.” I looked up at him.

Mandlenkosi isn’t okay. Maybe he’s the one who got into a car accident and got his brain damaged. The thought behind his reasoning is very questionable and maybe he is wasting his money by attending the therapy because he is delusional.

“Don’t look at me like that, I’m not crazy.”

“You are. You sound very crazy right now.” I finally succeeded in removing my hand from his.

“They are out on a weekend away, we should do the same. I booked us a lodge in Hluluwe, two days. That’s all I ask of you. I want to say goodbye to you, say goodbye to our love.”

He’s not joking.

“I’m not doing that with you Nkosi. You are the adult here, you know what’s wrong and what is right. You can’t be demanding to take a away knowing very well we are on the tip of being caught. First of all, yesterday was fucked up. You denied my position in your life once again and I hate to admit it but it hurt more than it did the first time you did it. What closure are you seeking? To me it seems like you found it a long time ago, that is why it is so easy for you to let me go.”

“I did that for your protection Amile.”

“What protection!? You’ve already broken my heart, the one you promised to protect. And what happens to this already broken heart after this trip, you’ll fuck me, make me fall in love with you all over again and leave me because you have found the closure you need? I’m don’t being your yo-yo Mandlenkosi. I’m done. I’m asking you nicely, please stay away from me.”

He's standing there speechless.

I'm starting to doubt that he actually loved me the way that he claimed he did. I don't know what it is that he saw in me, but now that I've seen this test, I know he never loved me. Maybe I should just leave him.

I walked back into the house and I feel cramps on my lower abdomen. I went to the bathroom and there were light spots of blood on my panty. I'm happy to see my period, the last time it came, it was only two days and I actually started getting worried, but it's here again, that's a good thing.

I went on a frantic search for my tampons around the room but I couldn't find even a single one. I hate pads, everyone that knows me knows that I can't stand those things, but they seem to be the only thing I can find. And it's the extremely big one that goes all the way up my ass. Uncomfortable if you ask me.

I put it on and downed two painkillers for the cramps. I hate having the cramps. They don't attack every month, but when they do come, they are the devils advocate. I need a nap.

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One thing about me, I hate being woken up, and that's exactly what this one is doing. He's waking me up. First of all, why is he in my room.

"Amile?"

"Mandlenkosi I thought I told you to leave me alone."

"Look, I'm sorry for earlier. I didn't look at things from your perspective. You were right, I was selfish and inconsiderate of your feelings. From now on, I'm going to respect your space and treat you like I'm supposed to treat you. As my

brothers wife.” This is not what I want to hear about I just woke up from a peaceful sleep.

“You can exercise that respect by leaving my room.” I said sitting up.

My cramps are getting worse. I won't say it out loud because he's going to panic.

“I'm going to, but since it's just the two of us I gave the staff the night off. Maybe we could go get some dinner.” I shook my head I'm disbelief.

“Did you not promise to stay away from me?”

“It's just supper. Do you want to stay here and starve.” I can't believe him.

“Okay, I'm sorry MaGumede. Must I bring you a takeaway?” He got up from the edge of the bed.

He wants me to beg him I see. The only reason I'm going to fold is because I'm hungry.

“Wait while I freshen up.” He gave a dashing smile.

I don't know what he's expecting to achieve with what he's doing.

He walked out the bedroom and gave me space to change. I thought maybe the pad would be filled with blood because of the cramps, but there was only a few spots. So much for a period.

It's hot, but I'm shivering from the inside, which could mean I'm coming down with a cold so I wear a white woollen dress, a head wrap and sneakers. I throw a coat on top to seal in the warmth because I'm feeling cold.

I came out the room and he was sitting in the lounge busy on his laptop. I'm guessing he heard my footsteps because he looked up he frowned when he looked at me.

"Its not cold outside." He said closing his laptop. He stood up and pulled down his shorts.

I'm going to have to tolerate him the whole

night, looking at him is already hard enough.

“Well I’m feeling cold.” I said clutching onto my purse.

He didn’t say anything. He led me outside the house to Bayede’s car, the red Jaguar. I love this car, he hardly ever drives in it. He’s always using the bakkie, I will never understand men that buy cars only to keep them in the yard.

MaMzobe always travels in the Fortuner, the other black cars are only used when they make their royal appearance. The Jaguar is always parked here. I wonder if this one got the permission to drive it.

“Jama and his baby mama are going to join us, you don’t mind right?” I frowned.

“Baby mama?” first of all, that term is degrading, two, Jama is dating my best friend, why is he rubbing shoulders with his ex?

“Yes, the mother of his daughter.” I kept quiet.

“MaGumede?” oh he wants a response.

“I don’t mind.” Of course I mind.

But it’s not of my business hey?

My cramps are getting worse. They are becoming unbearable. He sees me holding my stomach and he asks what’s wrong.

“It’s that time of the month.” I said under my breath.

“Did you take painkillers?” he asks looking a little worried.

“Yes, I did.”

“Do you want more?” I nodded.

“I’ll give you after dinner.”

It can’t get any more awkward than this between us. To think we used to sit like this, laugh, talk and feel love radiating from every word spoken to each other. It really hurts. But I’m a big girl, big girls cry and get over it. I’ve

cried enough, now it's time I get over it.

There's a fancy restaurant in town that we are going to. It's not something you would expect to find in the middle of the rural areas, but it's quite established. It's also empty, people probably can't afford to eat here, it looks top class, like super expensive. Maybe only those rich men with big bellies with cows and big plots of land bring their side chick's here to spend all their money. I wonder who owns this place.

Jama and the baby mama as Nkosi said are already waiting for us. They look very cosy, they are laughing and talking. I won't jump to conclusions just yet, they are probably friends, they obviously co-parent, they have to get along.

The lady got up and gave me a little curtsy.

"My queen." I'll let it slide.

"Good evening." Nkosi opened a chair for me

and I sat down.

Jama who was sitting down looked at me and smiled. I gave him a weak smile back.

“Ndlunkulu.” He said extending his hand over to me. He squeezed it and it.

“Hello Jama.” Nkosi found his seat next to me.

Great, now it looks like we are on a double date.

A waiter came and took our orders before conversation commenced between the boys.

The lady kept stealing glances at me and she was making me very uncomfortable.

“I’m sorry. It’s just that you are very beautiful.” It sounds forced.

I know she’s looking at me thinking that I’m so young and whatever else that she thinks.

“Thank you.” I may be beautiful, but I’m in a serious amount of pain as I sit here.

“Jama where is my Namnam?” his whole face

lit up.

I'm happy to see that, but the lady next to him, not so much.

"She's my girl Ndlunkulu, let's not fight." I chuckled.

"How is she? I miss her." The lady gave me the eyes again.

"She says she's okay. I'll only see her next week when I go back to Durban."

I nodded. That was my last two cents for the night. I sat there battling pain. After we finished the lovely three course meal, Nkosi gave me one painkiller.

"Can I have another one." He shook his head.

"If I give you another one you are going to die from overdose. These pills are strong."

He's annoying me. He's saying something I don't want to hear. I drank it anyway and asked

to be shown to the bathroom.

“You’ll be okay.” He said as I got up from the chair.

I feel weak, even as I stand up, it feels like I’m going to collapse. I hold on to his shoulder for strength and he looks up.

“MaGumede.” He stood up and held me.

“Take me home.”

Both him and Jama stood up and they both held me up.

“Let’s go.” Nkosi carried me bridal style out the restaurant. I feel weak.

“I need the toilet Nkosi.” I said breathless.

I’m suddenly breaking into a sweat and as he buckles my seat belt, he wipes the droplets of sweat forming on my forehead and nose.

“Can you hold it till we get home?” he’s worried, you can see the creases on his forehead, but

he's keeping calm.

His calmness is starting to make me panic.

"I'll try." My voice is breaking.

I don't want to cry and freak him out, but I'm in pain.

"Let's do this, let's take this off shall we." He unbuckled the seat belt again, and with his hands trembling, he removed my coat.

When I finally took it off, he closed the door and stood outside talking to Jama for a split second before hopping into the car and driving away. He's heading towards the palace and I feel my stomach turning.

"Nkosi I need the toilet." I said in a hurried voice.

"We are almost home." He's picking up the speed.

I feel the urge to push something, but I'm scared of the unknown.

“I think you just need to stop the car.” I said feeling a shortness of breath.

He looked at me like I’m mad.

“I’m not doing that. We are almost home, hold it in.” I think maybe he thinks this is a joke.

“If we don’t stop right now Nkosi I might just lose my life.” I press my hand down on my stomach and felt an intense amount of pain shoot through to the bottom of my legs.

He’s not stopping the car, and it doesn’t look like he’s planning on stopping it. So much so that I start crying when I feel something running down my leg.

“Nkosi...”

“We are almost home Amile.” He’s snapping at me.

I touch the liquid running down my leg and when I lift it up to the light, I see blood. He sees

it too and he panics. I feel tears running down my face as the harsh reality hits me. This can't be happening.

He parks the car in the yard and he comes to my side, opens the door for me and carries me out. My dress is covered in blood and I'm crying. I'm scared, I don't know what to think, I don't know how to interpret this. What's wrong with me.

He takes me to the main bathroom and he attempts to walk out.

"Don't you dare walk out on me." I scream while holding on to the shower door.

"You are bleeding Amile. I don't know what to do."

"Go to my room and get me a pack of pads." I instruct.

I'm ignoring the voice in my head telling me that these are not just periods. I'm ignoring it with all

my might.

He runs out as quickly as his feet can carry him.
Men fear the sight of blood.

I take off my underwear and the whole pad is soaked with blood, so is my underwear, even my dress. It looks like a murder scene in this bathroom, blood smeared all over the pearly white floors giving me anxiety. I sat on the toilet seat and gave in to the urge to push. I felt my vagina dilating so much that I had to look down and see what was going on.

This can't be.

"Nkosi!" I shout as loud as I can, tears dressing my face.

There is so much blood.

"Nkosi!" He ran into the bathroom and when he saw me sitting on the toilet seat, he dropped everything he was in his hands and came to me.

I breathed furiously and continued to push until I feel something heavy drop out of me. I hear a loud thud inside the toilet bowl before I see Nkosi's eyes dilate.

Zwelibanzi Zulu

He was skeptical about leaving, only because he couldn't get what Gog' Mandela said out of his mind. He was being distracted by a woman from doing what he's supposed to be doing, which is finding his brother.

He loves his wife, and he loves his children even more. He will do anything in his power to make sure that they are safe, healthy and happy. That is why he took this trip with MaMzobe, so that his unborn child is healthy because if MaMzobe is stressed out, it puts a strain on the baby, and he wants that. There is nothing he loves more

than being a father and he can't wait to be a father again. He's also praying to father MaGumede's children one day, but after the moments they have shared, He's in no rush to try with her. She's still got a lot ahead of her. He doesn't want to hinder her by giving her a child.

He still wants her to go to school, study to be what she wants to be and live her life like the way she wants, so it doesn't feel like she was forced to be at the palace even when she was.

"Love, why are you so deep in thought."

She looks happy here. She's been cooking up a storm with her boys in the kitchenette and she has a series of things planned out for them later. She insisted on cooking so they could stay indoors tonight, they will only go on adventures tomorrow.

"Nothing to worry yourself about." He put his hands out and rubbed her belly.

“I can’t wait to be a father again.” She looks at him blankly before he forces a smile.

“When do you think is the right time to tell the children and MaGumede?”

“Not now. It’s still early days, maybe wait until I start showing.” He continued to rub her belly.

“But you already are sthandwa sami. I can see the little Zulu growing bigger and bigger.” He plants a kiss on her bump.

She moves away and holds his hands.

“Dinner is almost ready. Do you want to freshen up before you eat.” He is yet to address the fact that she doesn’t want him to bond with his child, but he won’t do it now, he doesn’t want to ruin the good mood.

“Yes please wakwami. But don’t worry, I’ll do it myself.”

He stood up to be at her level and kissed her

lips softly.

“Ngiyakuthanda.” He said in a whisper.

“Uthandwa imina Mageba.”

It’s going to take a lot to convince him that she is going to be the distraction and his downfall. He loves her.

Chapter Forty-Eight

Amile Gumede

The doctors walked in with long faces and I knew what to expect. Nkosi just sat there with his head buried in his hands throughout their whole speech of how its not the end of the world and that it possible to try again. I even counted the amount of times they said I’m sorry for your loss, that’s how uninterested I was in what they had to say.

“We have scheduled an appointment for you to get your uterus cleaned of any clots tomorrow so we will keep you over night.” He can see that I’m not listening, why is he still talking?

I wipe my tears and turn my body to the other side. I don’t know how I feel. I don’t know whether to be glad that it died before I knew about it, or hurt because I just lost a whole human being.

Trust me, having a baby was the last thing on my mind, but it still is the most heart wrenching, souls breaking thing to experience. Whether a I wanted it or not, losing a life hurts.

I stifle a sob as the image of the blue creature lying in that toilet bowl creeps up in my mind. I say it’s a creature because no human looks like that. The deformed shape of what looks like legs, the arms. That is the one image I will never be able to get out of my mind.

I feel incomplete, like a part of me has painfully ripped from me and I can't get it back. This is the worst feeling ever. I hate it, I wish I didn't have to feel it on my own. I wish I could give half of it to someone else, so maybe they can also understand.

Nkosi can't even face me. He can't even look at me. Is he doing this because he knows that there is a possibility that the child could've been his? The doctor said I was 8 weeks in. I was just about to finish my second month. I'm such a bitch. I'm a married woman, I just lost my first child and instead of grieving fully, I'm here thinking about who could be the father. I'm even afraid to call Bayede. The last thing I want is for him to ruin his holiday with MaMzobe. He needs it.

And Nkosi. Why is he sitting there like he doesn't hear me crying? Like I'm being ridiculous for feeling pain.

“Nkosi are you just going to sit there and listen to me cry?” I asked through tears and snot.

He lifted his head and his eyes were inflamed, veins popping on his forehead and his jaw was tightened as if he was holding back tears.

“What do you want me to say?” His voice is hoarse, like he was involved in a screaming match.

I don’t know why I’m taking out my frustrations on him, its not his fault the baby died, but I’m mad, I’m broken, and he’s the only person close enough that I can’t take this out on.

“I lost a baby. Not a bag or cellphone, a fucking human being and all you can do is just sit there?”

He stood up and walked to me.

“It could’ve been yours Nkosi, it could’ve been your baby and I lost it. I killed my child.” By then I was pressed up against his chest and he was

rubbing my back as I poured my heart out in tears.

“The baby wasn’t mine Amile.” This is the last thing I want to hear right now.

“Nkosi, you can’t run away from that fact that we had sex, twice not once. That’s how babies are made, you can’t tell me that you are standing here denying the possibility when all you should be doing is comforting me, being there for me.”

“There is no possibility. It’s not mine.” I looked at him in utter shock. I can’t believe him. I actually can’t.

“I had a vasectomy. I can’t have children. I don’t ever want to have children. So there was no possibility of it being mine. It was your husband’s.” Saying that pained him, you could see it in his eyes, especially when he couldn’t hold eye contact with me.

Couldn't he have just not told me all of that. Or maybe just put it away and say it later when I'm not hurting like this. If it were in another situation, I would be glad. But there is nothing to be glad about, the baby died, I saw the lifeless body in the toilet bowl and I know that I will never recover from this ever again.

"I'm calling your husband to come back." He said attempting to walk further away from me. I pulled him back using his t-shirt.

"Don't you dare do that Mandlenkosi, don't you." I warned.

He didn't listen to me. He took out his phone and started pressing it. I got up and tried to pull it out of his hands.

"Don't call him." The waterworks are starting all over again.

Now we are fighting over the phone, but he's obviously stronger than me. He succeeded in

pulling it out of my hands and I plopped my body back on the bed and just cried in defeat.

I don't want him here. I don't even want him to know. He doesn't deserve this, not when he has so many burdens.

I sob even louder when I hear Nkosi talking to him.

“Bhuti you need to come home. MaGumede is in hospital.” He was looking at me. I could feel his eyes piercing my back. I sobbed even louder.

He walked out and I heard another pair of footsteps walking into the ward a second later. It was a nurse. They told me to calm down but nothing in this world was going to make me calm down. Before I knew it, she injected something in my IV line and I felt drowsy. Fuck them all!

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She is livid. Now they are being packed up and shifted. It hasn't even been 5 hours here and they are already leaving. The kids are devastated, but he's definitely not leaving them behind. Not when he doesn't know what happened to his precious wife.

He told her almost twenty minutes ago that they are leaving, but she's still under the covers, sleeping. He's doing all the packing. He wants to leave as soon as possible.

"MaMzobe we need to leave." He said shaking her once again.

"I'm not going anywhere Banzi. You promised me a holiday with my children now you want us to leave? I'm not doing that. Hamba wedwa." He sighed defeated.

"MaGumede is in hospital. Mandlenkosi didn't tell me what happened, I don't want to leave you

behind because I don't know the seriousness of her being in hospital."

"Phela if it's serious, we will call and check up on her. You go, I'm not going anywhere." She's not budging.

He gave up. He doesn't need to waste time, he needs to go and see what the problem is.

Hearing her crying in the background and Nkosi refusing to state the problem, clearly shows that its really serious.

She got out of bed and put on her silk gown.

She has been trying to pucker up the courage to do this but fear overcame her. Now is the perfect time. Her anger is the confirmation. He didn't take this trip for her well-being, he took it for the benefit of his child, because she seemed like a risk to herself. This is exactly what she is going to prove, that she is a risk.

The boiled the water for tea and just when the

water was almost ready, he walked into the kitchen carrying his small bag. It's a he came with, she's surprised he was actually fit in clothes enough to last them a whole three days. He walked passed her and stood at the door.

"I'm off MaMzobe, I will call you with an update."

"Did you sat goodbye to your children?" he looked down.

"I don't want to wake them up." She shook her head.

"No, you know what you are doing is disappointing them. Your conscious can't let you look at the disappointment in their eyes."

"Nontuthu..."

"Hamba Banzi. I'll tell them you had to attend to something important."

He dropped his head and for a second, he

hesitated to walk out for a second but when he saw that she wasn't even looking at him, he placed his hand on the handle and opened it. This is the hardest decision he has ever made, but it's a life or death situation.

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She drank the tea last night, now she is just waiting for something to happen. Vukani is up. He is playing his awful music loudly for the whole lodge to hear. She doesn't know how she's going to face them and tell them that their father left. Now Vukani will have an even better reason to hate Amile, she is driving a wedge between their family. Slowly but surely.

Her door opens and the youngest, Mgcini runs in. He's almost 9 years old. He's at that age where he is very hyperactive.

“Mama.”

“Morning son. Where are your brothers?” she sits up.

Why does she feel so normal?

“Vukani is eating and Halle is sleeping.”

“Go tell him to make me breakfast.”

“Okay, where is Bayede?” she laughs.

She always laughs whenever he calls him Bayede.

“He had to go back to Zululand mfanawami.” His face fell.

“But we never see him and spend time with him.” She sighed.

“I know my boy and I’m sorry about that. He’s going to make it up to you guys okay, when everything has settled he will spend time with you. You still have a lot of days left before you go back to school.” He shook his head.

“It’s unfair mom that other boys at school get visits from their dads at school at he doesn’t.”

“My boy angithi you know that you dad isn’t just anyone. Even you call him Bayede, he is a king. He runs the whole of Zululand by himself, he’s busy.” The reasoning isn’t valid, no parent shouldn’t be able to make time for their children. No matter what the excuse is.

“Okay mama. I’ll go tell Vukani to make you breakfast.” He was back to his happy mood.

Being a child is nice. But she wishes that she had known earlier that her boys are unhappy about not seeing their father. Maybe it’s time they come back from boarding school and live with them permanently. The last thing she needs are her boys to be unhappy.

Amile Gumede

I can hear voices speaking in the ward. They drugged me and put me to sleep because I was hysterical. What makes them think that I won't continue now that I'm awake? I'm saying this again, I didn't lose a person, I lost a human being.

I opened my eyes and they met with Nkosi's. I felt the bile rising from the pit of my stomach all over again. I hate him for what he did last night. It was fucked up.

"Sthandwa sami." My eyes followed the voice and my heart leapt.

The only person I needed to see, my mama.

"I'm so sorry my baby, I'm sorry I wasn't there." She held me tightly and I melted into her arms.

"How are you feeling now?"

"They drugged me last night. I can still feel it in my system." She shook her head.

“I’m not talking about that my baby.”

“Not now mama.” My heart feels cold. She pulled out of the embrace and looked at me with pity.

“It’s okay baby, I won’t force you to talk about it.”

I removed the covers from my legs.

“I need the bathroom.”

“Your stitches haven’t healed my love.”

Oh yes, they gave me stitches. How can I forget that the most painful moment in my life also left me scarred physically.

“I said I need the bathroom. If you don’t take me I’ll mess this bed.” Her eyes widened.

She can see that I’m not joking so she and Mandlenkosi came to help me up. As I was limping to the bathroom, the door opened and the husband walked in. Fuck Mandlenkosi!

“MaGumede.” Nkosi moved away from me and made way for the husband to walk towards me.

“Are you alright? What happened?” so Nkosi didn’t tell him?

Does it look like I’m okay?

“Bayede she needs the toilet. The doctor will see you shortly.” She cast her eyes on Nkosi, I’m guessing signalling him to call a doctor.

The only reason why she spoke is because she can see that I’m looking at him like he’s just murdered someone. I wasn’t going to answer him. I don’t want him here and earn myself an enemy out of MaMzobe for cutting her holiday short.

Call me difficult or what, but now that I realise that I have to sit on a toilet seat, all the trauma from last night is resurfacing. The toilet seat is closed, just like it was when the paramedics came to fetch us from the palace. Nkosi was

the one who closed it, I couldn't stand to see the sight of that creature covered in blood.

"I can't mama." I turned back.

I'm glad she caught on because she rubbed my back.

"Okay, you can just hop in the shower my love, is that fine?" I nodded.

She helped me get in the shower and I did what I needed to do. It stung like hell, but I had no choice but to. But my mom helped me, and I'm do grateful that she is here because I wouldn't be able to do all of this without her.

When we went back to the ward, the first person we walked into was Bayede, with red rings around his pupils, looking like his world has just come crashing down.

"MaMchunu, can you please excuse us." His voice is low, not as autocratic is it usually is.

Mom was hesitant, but I touched her arm and she let me go before she excused herself.

Bayede was the one who came to help me back in bed, but his hands were cold, so was his body.

“I feel like a failure, I feel like I have failed you wakwami.” I don’t want to do this again.

“Its not your fault Bayede. I was the one carrying the child, I should’ve known, I should’ve felt something, I should’ve went with my gut, and not what doctors told me. It’s my fault.”

He comes and embraces me in a tight hug. I’m crying all over again, I don’t want to cry but now that he’s here, it all feels so real again. Maybe he’s what I needed.

“Don’t do that, it’s no one’s fault. There is no way we could’ve known, all we have to do now is just give him the best send off and make sure you are okay sthandwa sami.” He embraces me once more.

“I love you okay, and we will get through this together, I promise you, it will get better.”

This man doesn't realize that he just told me that he loves me. But if he says it now when he's feeling so emotional, it confirms that it's been something he's been wanting to say. It feels good to be held and told that I'm loved.

Chapter Forty-Eight

Amile Gumede

They are taking me home. Mom is in the car as well because she is the one that is going to be taking care of me. Apparently there is a funeral tomorrow at dawn, I don't see a reason for that, but I guess it's their culture and their culture is mine.

No one else has come to see me, I think Bayede

restricted that because even Nkosi, my saviour didn't come back. I'm kinda glad he did that though, I'm afraid of seeing people. I don't want people to look at me like I have failed the royal family. Now they will look at me and think that my womb is weak, that I can't even carry royal blood. Maybe it's my punishment for letting brothers hit.

From what I heard, MaMzobe and the boys aren't home yet. I heard her and the husband fighting over the phone multiple times when he thought I was asleep. She doesn't want to come back.

When we arrived at the palace, I could see the whole staff standing outside waiting. Is this a good or bad homecoming? They weren't around when everything happened. I don't know if I should be glad they didn't see, but them being here means they already know. I'm sure they had to clean up all the blood.

Mom helped me out of the car. I'm perfectly capable of walking on my own now. The stitches have healed a bit and I'm not limping anymore. But they are afraid I might collapse at any time from heartache.

Mgabadeli is carrying my bags and Bayede is following behind me with his head lowered, its like a walk of shame. They made way for me and bowed as we made our way past. It's very sorrowful. I hate this, I hate that people are pitying me. It makes me believe for real that I have failed at my duties as a wife.

Mom took me to my room and tucked me in while the husband stood there, leaning against the wall, hands tucked inside his pockets, staring at my moms back. He seemed distant, like his mind was floating far away. He hasn't had proper sleep in days. He's been camping at the hospital with me, sleeping on the couch, refusing to leave my side.

We didn't talk much. I think we were both too disturbed to, plus him fighting with MaMzobe just drained the life and soul out of him. I've never seen him like this. Ever.

"I'm going to go get you some water so you can drink your meds." Mom said before she kissed my forehead.

The husband shifted his eyes when she turned to walk out. He moved out of the way as she walked out the room and he slowly descended the steps and came to sit at the foot of the bed. He needs at least an 8 hour nap. That's what he needs because the dark circles under his eyes are not sexy.

"How are you feeling?" He rubbed my leg?

I shrugged my shoulders. One thing about me, I haven't spoken much since everything happened. My responses are very limited.

"Are the stitches healing?" I nodded.

I love that he asks yes or no questions, that way, I can just not speak. I can see that this is frustrating for him, but the last thing he wants to do is pressure me into speaking when I don't want to. So he'll accept the nods and the listening ear. He can see that I'm listening, that's all that matters.

I might leave for a few hours, and try to get MaMzobe to come home with the boys before the send-off. The whole family needs to be here and get cleansed before anything." I look away.

I'm sure he can tell from my past reactions how I feel like about this stupid funeral he keeps going on about. I don't want it. There is no need for it. So what, there is going to be a coffin and flowers for a child that died without meeting them? It's not fair.

"Gog' Malandela is going to be leading the ceremony or cleansing and will let us know how long your mourning period will be." Who is that?

I thought the royal seer was Celemba, now who is this gog' Mandela?

“I know this is still fresh and it hurts, but we also need to name him. We have to introduce him to the ancestors and let his spirit cross over.” Now that is what I'm not going to do.

I shifted my whole body and faced the other side before pulling the blanket up to cover my face.

“MaGumede.” I felt tears running down my face as the stabbing pain consistently throbbed in my heart.

“Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami kodwa usiko. Kubhlungu ngiyazi, nakumina kuyazwela, kodwa Ikona ekufanele sikwenze njengabazali.” (I'm sorry my love, but its tradition. It hurts I know, it hurts me too, but it what we have to do as parents.) Easy for him to say, he's still a parent to three healthy boys.

What about me? Trust me, being a parent was the last thing on my list, but I wouldn't have hated my baby when they were here, I would've loved them with my whole heart.

"I'm leaving now, I'll be back soon and I'll be there with you. I love you and you aren't alone in this." He squeezed my arm before he stood up from the bed.

The door opened, I'm guessing that is mom because it can't be that he's already at the door. I heard mom salute him before he walked out.

Nambitha Makhathini

Nkululeko told me he was coming to see me, but stated he wasn't going to stay because he has to go back to Zululand. I don't know what is keeping him there any longer, but he insists on staying there longer

I'm not at ease because I don't know if he's staying with his baby mama or not wherever he is.

Also, Zimkhitha is home, the parents aren't. They have gone out for the whole week. I hope she gives me a pass to let me go see him. I won't make the mistake of spending the night with him though because he is dangerous. The last time he almost took my virginity and I felt so guilty for almost a week. I felt guilty for not giving it to him, but I also feel guilty for almost breaking the promise I made to myself to keep it until marriage at least.

Zimkhitha still hates him. She called me stupid for still pursuing a relationship with even after I was made aware of his offspring, she would die if I told her that I already met them. She lying on her bed, we had Nandos for supper last night, her blesser decided to spoil us because we didn't feel like cooking. Perks hey. She's typing

on her phone and smiling like an idiot. I'm guessing she's talking to him.

"Nkululeko said he's coming down today." She paid me no mind.

"And what do you want to do?"

"Can I go see him?" she laughed at me mockingly.

"I didn't say anything when your sugar daddy brought you food last night." I said.

"Yini, useyakudla lomfana, wadelela nje manje?" I looked away.

"Zimkhitha you are being irrational."

"You started it. I told you, this man is no good news. And I know it's your life, but you know that I would never lead you astray little sister I know what these men do. Don't forget that I'm a baby mama. Sabelo is married, he claims to be happy but he's always more than happy to

spread my thighs when given the opportunity.”

“ithini ke leyonto ngesidima sakho? Udlana nendoda yomunye umfazi?” She laughed mockingly again.

I will never understand the thought process of women sometimes. It’s sickening to think that my sister also has this mentality.

“This is not about isidima sami, but shows you ukuthi men are never satisfied. It’s worse in your case. Even when you lock them down, they will never be satisfied, because sex for men is not a spiritual thing. That’s why it’s easy for them to cheat. Usemncane, there is a lot you still need to learn, so phuma emuntwini omdala.” She didn’t answer my question so I’ll ask again.

“So can I go see him.”

“Do what you want babes, you are of legal age.”

“Thank you.”

I walked out the room and went to mine to get ready. I don't know when he's going to arrive, when we spoke in the morning, he said he was about to leave. I really miss him and talking to him on the phone isn't enough, I want to smell him again. Even the t-shirt that I went home with has lost his smell because I'm always wearing it. I want to feel his hand in mine again and feel his warm breath against my neck. I just miss him.

I took a long bath and listened to some music to take my mind off of things. I'm stressed about my matric results, I'm also stressed about the fact that I still need to decide between universities and hear from Mthiyane Construction about my learnership application. It's a lot going on.

When I got out of the bath, I found missed calls on my phone and they were from Nkululeko. Don't tell me he's already here.

I can hear commotion outside at the gate, and Zimkhitha is talking at the top of her voice. I'm only draped in a towel, but I'll go out anyway. I don't want trouble with the neighbours because the next thing they will call the police and mom and dad will give us a problem.

She's fighting with a man. She even opened the gate and is standing in front of him.

"Zimi!" I shouted from the bottom of the driveway.

She turned around and I saw his head. I know that head.

I stormed up the driveway in my towel and when I saw Nkululeko, he had veins on his forehead.

"Babe." I said going to throw myself into his arms.

Zimkhitha quickly pulled me back.

"Are you coming with me?" He asked.

Zimkhitha is fuming.

“Are you going to let him disrespect me in front of you, in my home Nambitha?”

“There is no need for you to be causing drama like this Zimi, told you he was coming to get me. You are causing a scene with the neighbours.”

“I’m causing drama?” She asked pretending to be shocked.

“Yes you are!” she pointed a finger at my man.

“I hate men like you, stay away from my sister otherwise me and you are going to have a problem. Pray you don’t ever run into me.” She threatened before storming back inside the house.

I’ve always known that my sister is wild, but I didn’t think she was a straatmate.

“I’m so sorry about that.” He wiped the sweat on his nose before he looked at me.

“I’ll be waiting in the car.” He said and walked up the driveway into his car.

Now the mood is foul. One thing about Nkululeko, he gets angry quickly, and right now, he’s angry.

I went back to the house and got dressed. The big sister was sulking in the lounge, she’ll be okay. If it’s meant to happen that I date Nkululeko, then who is she to stand in the way of that. Rather she let me decided what I want to do. But for now, I love him. All I feel for him is love and there is no way I’m going to break up with him. Not me, especially not now. My thing is, I’m going to prove to him that my love is true, because that’s all he wants, to be loved.

I said goodbye to her even though she ignored me before making my way outside to his car. When I opened the door, he was on the phone. He still looks morose, like the whole world is on his shoulders.

“Since when do I report my every moves to you?” his voice was a few octaves deep. Kinda scary if you ask me.

“I told you, I’ll be back later. A four hour drive is nothing.” He’s still going back to Zululand?

My heart just sank to the pit of my stomach.

He ended the call after saluting Zulu. I guess he was talking to the Prince. He leaned against the steering wheel and looked at me under his arm.

“Utshele udadewenu ayeke lento yakhe yokungujwayela kabi. Akadliwa nje imina.” The only thing missing was for him to point a finger at me while he said that.

But his voice was monotone, quite scary if you ask me. I nodded before I apologized on her behalf. I can see that he’s not okay, but I’m afraid to ask, I’ll just sit here and wait for him to start the car and take us wherever he has planned to.

“Have you seen anything on social media?” I shook my head.

“No.” I remember that he doesn’t like non-verbal responses so I fix my error very quickly.

“Okay. Good. I think it’s best you come with me to Zululand.” I frowned.

“Why?” great, I’m giving one word answers.

“Your friend needs you. She needs support.”
Amile!

“What happened to her?” now I’m panicking.

“Her baby died. The funeral is tomorrow and she’s going to need a friend.” Wait a damn minute.

“What baby, Amile never said anything about pregnancy. What baby are you talking about Nkululeko?” I can feel tears threatening my eyes. I’m sensitive like that.

“I don’t know. In Zululand sthandwa sami,

pregnancy is a delicate thing, and it is kept private and sacred, especially in the first few months, to prevent something like this happening. Maybe that was the case with MaGumede and that is why she didn't tell you. But it has happened now."

"So what are they burying if it was a miscarriage?"

"The body of the child. She gave birth to a stillborn. Because it hadn't fully developed, it meant it wasn't time for them to live so that's why it died."

My heart broke. I can't even begin to imagine the pain she must be going through. Having seen such, being exposed to such at her age, it's traumatic

"I'll call my mom." I have to support my friend, no matter what.

One thing about Amile, she always had my back,

the least I can do is have hers.

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“Mama, a royal escort has been sent to come fetch me, Amile is not okay.”

“And what do you have to do with it?” she’s late. I’ve already packed my bags and Nkululeko is already waiting for me outside.

“There is a funeral tomorrow at dawn. She lost her first child.” I heard her gasp over the phone.

If it was any other parent, they would say I must stop associating myself with Amile because her and I aren’t on the same level, she’s married, already doing things I’m not doing and I am I virgin, a child.

“Haibo, oh umntana ka Makhosi.” She’s definitely going to let me go.

“She needs my support mama. She needs me to be by her side now more than ever.”

“I don’t know Namnam, is it safe for you to go. How sure are you about this man here to fetch you? Did you speak to Amile’s mother?” time to lie.

“Yes mama, I did.” She sighed again.

“Its okay, go mntanami. I will tell your father.”

She sounds very hesitant, but she needs to understand that I’m grown and I can make my own decisions now.

“Thank you ma.”

I said as I dragged my suitcase out my bedroom. Zimi stood by the door looking at me.

“Ngithini kumawakho?” I shrugged my shoulders.

“Nothing.” I walked out.

I’m not happy with what she did earlier, it wasn’t

cool and so she deserves the cold shoulder for now. I'll deal with her when I come back. For now my main focus is making sure my friend is okay.

Chapter Forty-Nine

Amile Gumedede

It's two in the morning. Chickens have been screaming since midnight. That is quite unusual if you ask me, I know its summer, but they don't usually start this early, they make that noise at three in the morning. Maybe even the chickens can sense the sombre mood of the palace. I've been asleep since last night, I couldn't keep anything down, I kept vomiting and the picture of the creature was plastered in my mind. That's why mom gave me sleeping pills on top of my already drugging medication and I was

knocked out.

I haven't seen what preps are being made for the so-called funeral. I still stand on the fact that I don't want it, there is absolutely no need for a funeral, its just going to be a trigger of unwanted emotions. Its easy for the husband to want it, he wasn't there when everything happened. He wasn't the one pushing out a deformed dead body and got stiches after that. He's only suffering by association.

I'm soaking in the tub, I even had the liberty of adding the bubbles, I missed this. I know if mom walks in here, she's going to start shouting at me because this isn't the best time to be soaking. But I'm hurt, I'm allowed to do whatever I want to do.

"Wakwami." I startled and turned around.

He looked like he was ready, he was all dressed up looking dapper. He just didn't look very

impressed with me in the tub.

“Bayede.”

“You don’t have time for all of these things, the sun is going to rise soon.”

“I didn’t ask for a funeral.” He looked stunned that I said that. His face said it all.

I submerged my head under the water.

No, I wasn’t trying to kill myself, that is the last thing I wanted to do, but that’s what he assumed I was trying to do because he came and held me up. Is he mad, now the sleeves of his shirt are wet, who is going to find another shirt for him?

“Amile!?” I’m trying to fight him off. He must leave me alone.

“Ufuna ukusibonisanani wena!” his grip tightens around my arms and he pulls me out of the tub.

I’m kicking and screaming for him to let me go,

but he's carrying me to the bedroom. I'm naked and wet, how the hell is he going to place me on the bed.

"Listen to me, I know that you are hurting, we all are, but your life will continue, it's not over for you. I'm here, your mom is here, there is no need for you to try end your life, how do you expect me to live." I sit up and wipe the water on my face.

My chest is moving up and down, I'm fully naked. The tone of his voice has completely changed the atmosphere.

"I wasn't trying to kill myself." he looked fuming mad. I've never seen this side of him.

"What were you trying to do? Must I remove this bathtub?" okay, he's worried.

"No Bayede." I said looking down.

"Get dressed, the sun is rising soon."

He untied his cuffs and unbuttoned his shirt as he walked out the room. I got a fright when he slammed the door behind him. I didn't mean to make him angry, that wasn't my intention and now I feel bad.

I buried my head on the pillow and suppressed a cry. Is it not enough that I'm hurting?

I got off the bed after a good two-minute cry session and went to find an outfit in the wardrobe. I'm assuming I need to wear black for such an occasion, I'm a widow. I got a black bodycon dress, it's the only presentable one I own. It has long sleeves but it's just above my knees. I'll pair it with a white trench coat and my black sneakers. That's all I have in my wardrobe that looks presentable.

After I finished getting dressed, I sat on the bed and waited for something to happen. I'm too scared to leave the room, just like I was when I first got here.

When the door opened, mom walked in and behind her stood Nambitha. I was happy to see her, deep down, I really was, but I'm drained. I don't have the strength to be jumping up and down. I highly appreciate the moral support though.

"What are you wearing?" I don't know if she's asking or mocking.

She made me stand up and her face looked horrified. And why is Nambitha still standing at the door?

"You can't wear this, you aren't a girl anymore, you are someone's wife, the king's wife." She says it as if I wanted it. She's being unfair.

"I didn't ask for it."

"Don't speak to me like that. Take off that coat." I pulled it off and threw it on the floor. I'm not in the mood for this.

"Amile don't make me smack you, not here, not

today.” She handed me a pair of stockings and black heels.

“Wear this and wrap your head.”

Why is she being so difficult with me. I didn't ask for all of this, its unfair. I put the things on anyway, I don't want drama, not after what has happened with Bayede, I disrespected him.

I won't lie I looked much better with the heels and stockings. I looked presentable, like a lady with class. When I looked in the mirror, my curves were defined by the dress, and I didn't look as broken as I felt on the inside. I let down my braids, they had also run its course, they need to be taken out. I then put the black cloth on top of them and I was finally draped in all black like the widow I am. Mom gave me a scarf and said I must throw it over my shoulders. Now I feel like a farm julia.

I walked out first and met my chomie at the

door. She gave me a tight side hug before she grabbed my hand and walked with me. I'm glad she didn't speak or say those crappy I'm sorries that I'm tired of hearing. That is the last thing that I need right now. It's almost three in the morning and we are already going to sing hymns for a child that didn't even open their eyes.

She let go of my hand when we got to the lounge and I felt the warmth leaving my body. MaMzobe came back, she sitting on one of the chairs leaning on her hand, looking very uninterested in everything going on. She's also wearing black, but she's rocking it better than me.

This is definitely not a normal funeral because there is incense being burnt around the lounge. The other lady sangoma Bayede was talking about is the one burning it. She starts walking around the room talking. I can barely hear what

she's saying because of the grunts and deep throat chants she gives out.

We then were escorted outside and the royal SUV's were parked outside, waiting for us. This is really a big deal then. I was in the same car as Bayede, I don't know why, I wanted to be with my mother, but I don't think that's how life works, I don't get what I want.

When the car started moving, he grabbed my hand and tightened the hold around it. I didn't even turn my head, I looked straight ahead and tried to regulate my breathing. I want to apologize, I just won't do it now, it's not the right time. But I feel terrible for what I did.

We are at a burial site. Looks like it's where all the Zulu ancestors are buried. The biggest tombstone is the king's tombstone, its not hard to miss, it even has his picture. Dramatic of you ask me, I hate these types of tombstones. I'm guessing there is already a plot fixed for the

creatures body because we are walking across all the crooked and destroyed hedgestones. My eyes are drawn to the cleanest tombstone, with the freshest flowers and the prettiest most elegant design.

Bayede is walking fast, and he's tightly holding my hand. He's tense, I can see it in his eyes, they aren't staying still. I tried to read who it belonged to, and all I caught was Asanda MaNdlela Zulu. Only because it was written in bold. It's their mother's tombstone, it's beautiful, just like her. I bet Mandlenkosi is the one who constantly cleans and takes care of it.

We get to the burial plot. A small hole has been dug and I feel emotional all over again. I wish they gave me shades to cover up my eyes. I'm tired of crying in front of people. I'm really not interested in participating in all of this, so I'll stand here and hold back my tears and watch what they are doing.

When Bayede left my side, I felt cold. But that feeling was nothing compared to that moment where he appeared carrying that tiny body, wrapped in a skin. I don't know which skin it was, but I guess because it's a royal child, that's what happens. He walked passed me and it took everything in me not to faint right there on the spot.

The last thing I wanted, or needed was to see that body again and have a new image of it imprinted in my mind. He has the guts to carry it. I couldn't even look when he placed it inside the dug up grave. A fresh batch of tears covered my eyes and clouded my vision. All of this in pure silence. I should've known that this isn't a normal funeral.

It broke my heart watching him speak to the ancestors and the child, how he confessed his love for him through subtle tears. He was doing his all to try and push them back but it's not

easy. This is our moment, we went through this together, although we didn't endure the same pain physically, we still feel the same pain emotionally.

I gulped down the lump in my throat before I went to kneel by his side and comforted him. I needed that comforting too, but he's been strong for everyone ever since it happened, he's been strong for me, he needs this more than anyone.

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The car couldn't drive down to the waterfall so we had to walk. I never knew that cleansing happens on the same day of the burial, but I guess things are done differently here.

I'm with Bayede and Gog' Malandela. The sun is almost fully risen. It's only four in the morning.

By the time we leave here, it's going to be hot like hell. That's why I hate December.

She's a beautiful lady, Gog' Malandela I mean. She looks young, maybe early thirties or mid thirties. I wonder where Bayede found her. She's walking in front singing and the husband and I are following behind her, both lost in thought.

The waterfall looks exquisite. This has to be the cleanest most clearest water I have ever seen. The rays of the sun are bouncing off the water and it looks like a scene from a movie. If my body wasn't feeling so cold from the inside, I would throw myself in. It's places like these that I love seeing, serene places.

She smiled at us, both of us before she bowed her head and clapped her hands.

"Mntanenkosi, Ndlunkulu we sizwe." We responded by clapping back.

The frown on my face can't be missed. I know

I'm the 'queen' but I'm the second one.

MaMzobe is the Ndlunkulu, the real queen mother. Not me. Why is she addressing me like that? And why is she addressing the king as a prince? The husband isn't shocked by this. I wonder why.

"We are going to go into the water now my queen." She said removing the sling bag around her shoulder.

I don't know if I should strip or not. She's already making her way to the waterfall. I look at the husband for reassurance.

"Take off your clothes and go." His voice is very low. I don't like that.

I nodded though and stripped off my black clothes. Gog' Mandela was no where in sight, where did she go?

"She's under the water." He said from the distance. He can see me looking around trying

to find her.

I'm only left in my underwear. I covered my boobs and dipped my toes in the pool. The water was freezing cold, oh hell no. She emerged from the water and told me to come in. I hope I don't catch a cold.

I got in and let the cold shoot through my body. I don't even remember the last time I was in a body of water like this. I wade through the water and follow her to where she is leading me. I won't lie, this is peaceful, the sound of the water, it's so soothing.

"Ndlunkulu." She bowed.

She had a bucket with her and she scooped up a pint of water.

"Wena oyohola omama. Mama wezibulo lenkosi." I held my breath as she splashed the water on my face.

Why is she praising me?

“Okwenzekile kufana nokudaliwe. Konke okwenzekile kwenziwe abaphansi, ungadinwa Ndlunkulu.” She splashed me with water again.

I felt something gripping my leg under the water and I tried to scream but it pulled me deep under the water. It’s the snake I always see in my dreams, it’s trying to coil me in but I fight until I hear it hiss and let go of my leg. Now I feel weak.

When I came up to the surface again, she looked at me and she smiled. She’s always smiling, it’s like the smile is glued to her face.

“Go and don’t look back.”

I was expecting a cleansing with eggs, milk, candles, like how they normally do it, but she just used water and praises. And it wasn’t just any praises. Didn’t she just help us bury the child, why is she calling me umama wezibulo. A zibulo is a first born, the child that died was no

where close to being the first son. I'm more confused than I was when I got here.

Chapter Fifty

Nambitha Makhathini

I'm so sleepy. The burial was at three in the morning before sunrise, I'm exhausted already. When we arrived at the palace yesterday, I didn't get a chance to see Amile. She looked broken, and she even lost weight. The bags under her eyes and the darkened pigment of her skin, it's hard to look at her. I'm traveling with my boyfriend and Amile's mom. She doesn't know that he's my boyfriend, though, because I know she's going to kill me if she finds out.

The king and Amile went to do a cleansing, and now we are going back to the palace. I want to sleep, even if it's for two hours. We arrived, and

the queen was sitting in the lounge. MaMchunu went to greet, and I followed behind her. She looks very grumpy, she's been like this since morning.

"Ndlunkulu." I bowed before her.

I'm scared of her. I've always fantasized of seeing them, now that it's happening, I don't know how to handle myself. All she did was greet back. Now I want to disappear.

I walked out of the room and went back to the garden, where there was tranquillity. It's still early, the grass is wet and the sun is shining. That's summer in December for you. It's already sun rise at four o' clock. Deep down, I wish I stayed in a place like this. This palace is grand, the rooms, the décor, everything about it is top tier. The view is even better. The smell of the morning dew on the grass, no air pollution, just fresh air. The sound of the birds, the chickens marking the rising of the sun. I'd kill to live and

wake up here every day.

The air around me suddenly smells polluted, did I admire it too much. I know that smell all too well though. Who other than Nkululeko and his God forsaken cigarettes. He snaked his arms around my waist.

“MaMchunu is going to see us and I’ll get into trouble.” He puffed out a cloud of smoke and it took everything in my power for me not to cough.

My lungs aren’t that strong.

“I thought you left your mother at home.”

“I did baby, but she’s also a mother to me, and unlike Amile, I’m not married. I’m still a child.”

He puffed another cloud before he threw it on the floor and stomped on it.

“I understand mama. But I missed you.” I turned around and gave him a peck on the lips.

“I missed you too.” He hugged me tightly. So

much so that he lifted me off the ground a little.

I giggled and buried my head on his shoulder.

My heart is thudding against my chest.

“You want to come home with me?” He asked grabbing my bum.

He always ruins the moment with his sexual tendencies.

“Yes, but I’m not doing anything with you.” He chuckled.

I’m not joking.

“We won’t do anything MaXulu.”

“Yeah right.” He’s already hard behind me.

“Asambeni nana.” I need a nap.

I agreed to go with him. I can’t say no to his pleading face, it’s too ugly.

He went inside to get my bag while I chilled in his car like the madam I am. I can’t stop

thinking about what Zimi said about Nkululeko potentially sleeping with his baby mama's. He has two of them, Azande and Banele don't share a mom. I don't know both of them, but if they are anything close to what Zimkhitha is in terms of being a baby mama then I should be worried.

Nkululeko is a grown man. In the midst of all the love I feel for him, I still stand back and question what it is that he wants from me. I'm way younger than him, I have absolutely nothing to offer him either than love and a few kisses. Why is he being so patient with me? It makes me wonder if he's getting what I can't give him somewhere else. Maybe I'm just being paranoid, but I shouldn't let Zimkhitha get into my mind.

He came back and he had my handbag. I'm glad he didn't take my whole suitcase. He didn't say much, he just kissed me on the cheek and started the car. I feel very appreciated by this

man. Today I'm playing my music, I'm tired of being bullied by him.

He surprisingly didn't say anything, his hand just rested on my thigh the whole way. He's too quiet for my liking today. But we arrive faster than I was expecting at the home he said he was taking me to. It's one of the biggest modern houses on the street. The yard is big, with freshly cut green grass. If this is where he lives, then he's done much for himself, and that means he's as rich as I think of him to be.

He comes to open the door for me and hold the small of my back while leading me to the front door. He unlocks it and when he opens, I'm met with a bare lounge. There is only a table in the middle of the room, there is one run down couch and a TV stand with a small TV. The inside is quite disappointing compared to the outside. At least it's clean and spacious. I wonder why it's not furnished.

“Must I make you something to eat?” he asked nibbling on my earlobe.

“No, I’m fine. I’m feeling sleepy.” I told him as I scanned the room.

“Must I rock you to sleep?” I frowned before I giggled catching on to what he’s saying.

“No, I’ll be fine Mr Dlamini.” I pushed him off me.

He went to the kitchen and opened the door. I could see the view from where I was standing. The fresh breeze of the morning filled the whole house. The hills look luscious and the mist floating just above the hilltop looks beautiful next to the sun rays. I’m in love with this place.

“Come let’s go take a nap.” He led me to the passage.

“Are you going to leave the door open?” Is he not afraid of strangers and thieves coming in?

“Uyahlonishwa umuzi wendoda sthandwa sami.

Akekho ozongena.” I forget that I’m dating a bodyguard.

He opened the door to a big room that was fully furnished. Finally. It has built in wardrobes and a beautiful bedroom suite. This bed looks big enough to be a queen bed. It looks very comfy.

“Who lives here?” I asked sitting on the bed.

I melted on the inside when he went on his knees to untie my shoes. My baby is a little romantic

“It was my parents house.”

“Where are they now?”

“They died.” Now I feel bad for asking.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize nana, they are better off in their graves.”

I look down at him and I see the scar under his eye. I remember that he said his father put it on

him. Now I'm suddenly curious about his family. When he was done undoing my shoes, I put my feet on the bed and laid back on the pillow. He went to the wardrobe to get a blanket and came back. He got in behind me and held me before he covered us with the blanket. This is the cosiest we have ever been.

"How old were you when they died?"

"I was 25 when Dlamini died and mom died when I was 19." Not too bad. But I'm guessing his father's death is much fresher than his mom's.

"I'm sorry about that." He kissed my cheek.

"It doesn't hurt sthandwa sami don't apologize." He's been saying that and it kinda bothers me.

"Did you build this house or did you parents leave it like this?"

"I rebuilt it after Dlamini almost burnt my mother to death in this house. The bastard died

in a house my mother didn't get to enjoy." Okay, he's annoyed now, I don't want to annoy him.

"Was he the one who scarred you?" his breathing pattern slightly changed.

"Yes he did." I kept quiet.

I felt like I had to let this moment of silence happen otherwise he was going to burst. His heart was thudding against my back. He tapped my arm.

"You said you are sleepy, sleep." I obeyed very quickly. I didn't even think twice.

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The rain is pouring outside. I don't understand how that is possible, it was sunny not so long ago. I'm feeling so sticky, and Nkululeko is holding me tightly in his embrace. The blanket

is no where in sight.

“Baby.” I tapped his cheek lightly.

He opened his eyes and they were red. He looks ugly when he wakes up, but I wouldn't mind waking up next to him my whole life.

“Did you close the kitchen door? It's raining.” He caressed my cheek and kissed my lips.

“I did nana.” I didn't stop him from kissing me this time.

He's an amazing kisser, his lips are very soft and they do things to me, to my body.

I guess he really did get up because he's topless, he's only left in his black pants. I don't know why he left them on when he could've taken all of the clothes off. I on the other hand am still fully clothed. I'm running my hands on his chocolate skin and I'm loving the gentleness of it.

He lifts my dress and uses his hand to try arouse me down there by my pleasure spot. I opened up and let him.

“I love you nana, don’t ever leave me.” This is really not the best time to confess his love. Not when I’m so vulnerable under his touch.

“I’ll never leave you baby.” That’s what I said.

It’s not like I’m planning on leaving him anytime soon. I meant what I said when I said I loved Nkululeko.

I don’t know when he pulled his pants down, but I could feel him rubbing himself against the lace material of my underwear. I tensed up. I’m still fully clothed but he started soft bellows and they were arousing. With my eyes closed shut, I directed my hand and grabbed him and stroked him gently. I’ve never done this before, it’s so weird but the way he's tilting his head back means that he’s enjoying it.

He sneaks his finger into my underwear and he finds my pleasure button. I'm trying to squeeze my thighs together but the pleasure is not letting me do that. My hand pace slowed down and he removed his hand from my core. He instead pulled my panties down. I don't know what he's trying to do.

"Baby?" he kissed my neck gently leaving bite marks on it. I closed my eyes and ran my hands on his head.

His hand massaged my boob as he kissed my lips gently, in no rush. Then he separated my thighs. I tried to stop him but he's stronger than me.

"Baby." I warned again. I'm still calling him Baby even in such a tense situation.

He ignore me once more before his hand brushed my opening. Nothing out of the ordinary, my body became less tense. His

member was resting on my thigh, I take a glance at it and I almost faint at the sight. It's big, very big. I've never seen it, heck it was my first time holding it. It has the slight curve and that scares the shit out of me.

He notices that I'm staring and he chuckles before taking my hand and making me stroke it again. My breathing hitched as he got on top. He positioned his tip on my entrance and I jerked up.

I shook my head no but he grabbed my thigh and I felt him pushing himself in.

"Nkululeko stop." My breathing pattern is changing.

Is he not hearing anything that I am saying? His grip on my thigh tightened before I felt a stabbing pain in my abdomen. Oh no, oh no what did this man do?

"Nkululeko get off me." Instead of getting off

me, he grunts and I feel him fill me up.

I can't push him off, he's way stronger than I could ever be. I'm in pain, all I'm doing now is crying. I can't believe him, I can't believe he is breaking his promise that he made to me to wait.

He starts wiping my tears and kisses my lips as droplets of his sweat fall on my boobs. I bit his lips and that only seemed to fuel him because he went faster and faster. I have never felt such an excruciating pain. This is no where close to the special that I wanted. It's with the right person, just at the wrong time.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

They came back from the cleansing, and they have been locked up in their room sleeping like logs. It's definitely not an easy journey, it wasn't

an easy day and water can tire one very much. That is why she is grabbing this opportunity with both hands. She needs to tie up a few loose knots, starting with Celemba who gave her false muthi. She doesn't understand why she still has a baby in her stomach while Amile's is buried six feet underground. It doesn't make sense. She's driving herself. She needs answers from Celemba.

When she gets to his hut, she doesn't even bother to leave her shoes at the door.

"Hey, hey! You are not respecting my ancestors."

"Ancestors my foot with your dormant herbs. Are you sure you are a real nyanga?"

"Have I not proven that to you Nontuthuzelo?" she shakes her head.

"Why did you give me fake herbs? Why do I still have a child growing in my stomach and

Amile's child is dead? Why? Tell me I want answers. Throw those bones and prove to me that you aren't fake."

He laughs, like gives a loud cackle and frustration spreads through her body.

"I don't control ancestors, I talk to them."

"Okay, then talk to them, ask them why I have a child that I don't want? Go ahead, ask them."
She's waiting on him to throw the bones.

"What you are doing is disrespecting me, and my ancestors. I will not sit here and do whatever you say I must do if you are still failing to respect me."

"Fine by me. But the king doesn't trust you. That is why while you sat here on your ass, he got up and got someone to do a cleansing that should've been done by you. As the royal seer. Your authenticity I'd question Celemba. Fix it otherwise uzofahlaka wedwa."

She said getting up.

“Who is that?” he gets up too. Good she got his attention.

“Ask your ancestors.” She picks up her bag and goes to the door.

“Ngitshele igama, ngizoqeda ngaye.” She stopped on her tracks and smiled to herself.

“Malandela.”

Silence prevailed. She chuckled loudly before she walked out of the hut and back to her car. She knows exactly how to push the right buttons, and now she has succeeded.

Chapter Fifty-One

Zwelibanzi Zulu

He feels hopeless. He had all the answers at his

fingertips, and the last time they say each other, they had scheduled to meet so he could complete the final process of untying all knots at the Zulu kingdom. Things were going to reveal themselves and then just the next day, she was pronounced dead.

Other than his plans being totally messed up in the process, she was young, she had a bright future ahead of her. She was doing her doctorate in traditional medicine and was going to graduate soon. He can't help but think that it's his fault that everything happened the way it did. Like her blood is on his hands.

She was shot dead in her hut. Three bullets to the chest, killing her instantly. That couldn't be a coincidence, it's definitely a personal vendetta. Today is the funeral, and he is going. He even compensated the family to try and ease his guilty conscious. He has no reason to be guilty, but her last day was spent with him, he feels

like he's involved. He's just lucky that no one is going to point fingers at him because he is the king.

MaMzobe is still not talking to him so he's spending all his nights with MaGumede, who is also not doing okay. She's having constant dreams that she won't disclose and they are slowly starting to stress him out. She's stubborn. He proved that himself on the day of the funeral.

She's in the shower while he makes the bed. He's giving her all the princess treatment because she hasn't fully healed properly. He has forbidden the bath too, what she tried that day was way to risky. He's going to shower after her. He doesn't want to be late for the funeral. She comes out naked and goes to take a towel in the wardrobe.

"Bayede are you going with MaMzobe to the funeral?" Her voice is as sweet ad honey.

She's always soft spoken like this. He missed this side of her.

"No sthandwa sami. Ngihamba ngedwa." She shook her head.

"You can't go alone Bayede. You have to have someone next to you."

"Mgabadeli will be there." She walked up to him and placed her little hands on his chest.

"Mgabadeli isn't your wife." He sighed and looked at her eyes.

She still looks drained. The dark circles around her eyes are refusing to fade. But they glistened anyways.

"Ngiyabonga mama, but I can manage by myself." She made him sit down on the bed and stood in front of him

"That's the problem Bayede, that you can't always do it by yourself. Yes you can manage

by yourself, but you don't have to. I'm here, we can go together."

"You haven't healed MaGumede."

"So have you." He looked at her in admiration.

"Go take a shower, I'll continue here." She tapped his shoulder.

He got up and before he walked to the bathroom, he stopped to kiss her forehead. One thing he's lucky about having is women who are strong willed and know how to take charge and pick themselves up when times are tough. All the qualities a queen should possess. He definitely knows how to pick them.

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This is their first appearance together as husband and wife. They were almost late, and

that wasn't going to look good for him, Mandela did die working for him. As per normal, they were placed at the front with the family. They sat through the whole ceremony with their hands intertwined. They were both lost in their thoughts, especially him. He was angry at himself for not knowing that maybe she could've been in the firing line.

All of this actually makes him suspect that there may be some people or someone who doesn't want him to find out about his brother's tragic accident. It's not so tragic anymore, he knows that the car was tampered with, and knows of the possibility of him being alive.

Now he's going back to square one with Mandela dying. Now he has to find another seer that he trusts because being with Mandela has proven to him that Celemba is as useless as they come. In just a few days, she has solved half the mystery he failed to solve in

three full years. He is last on the list, and when all the dust dies down, he definitely has to be fired.

“Bayede.” Her soft voice brought him back to life.

“Its time to go to the grave site.” She looks pale. He touched her face, and she only swallowed hard.

“No. You need to go home and rest.”

“I’m fine.” Both of them are whispering because there is a ceremony going on, but he’s getting worried.

“You aren’t fine, your skin is losing colour, I’m taking you home.”

When he tried to stand up, she held him down.

“Wait for the prayer to end.” He sat down.

She’s stubborn like that, now he regrets coming with her, she’s definitely not okay, especially to

attend funerals.

Amile Gumede

I'm breaking into a sweat. It's hot in here, I'm suddenly not feeling well all over again. That's why Bayede took me home, he said my skin was loosing colour.

He's dabbing my forehead with a cold towel and looking at me with concern on his face.

"I don't like this." He said shaking his head multiple times.

"I think it's the side effects of the medication I'm on, I'll get better I promise." I reassured.

"I shouldn't have gone out with you." I held his hand.

I have never met a man as fragile as him. That's what he is, he is very fragile. He hurts very

easily, and when he loves something or someone, he loves hard. I've learnt a lot about him through his actions, things I didn't see all the other times when I was with him. He loves being loved and he appreciates the little things. His love language is physical touch and words of affirmation. He's a gentle person; even being king can't alter his natural personality. That's why he's so hard on Nkosi, that's why he's so hard on himself because he tries to mask his gentleness. And it works well for him; it works until he shows you the love he has for you, and then you see it.

Am I in love with him? No, I don't think I am. But I've gotten used to having him around, and I don't think I don't want to not have him here and have him as my husband. That's love. I love him, I'm just not in love with him.

"You should go to MaMzobe tonight." I said with a small smile on my face.

His cold towel is working.

“No, I can’t leave you here like this.” I chuckled and looked up at him.

“I’m fine. Don’t forget that you left your holiday with her for me.”

His eyes softened. He’s so in love with me; he can’t even hide it anymore.

“I did that because you needed me.”

I need to get over Mandlenkosi and realize that all I need is right here in front of me.

I put my hand on his cheek and leaned up to give him a peck on the lips. He smiled.

“Please get better, MaGumede.” I don’t even know what’s wrong with me.

“I will Bayede.” He kissed me again.

It feels good to feel his lips like this, it’s hard to imagine that there was ever a time where he couldn’t even lock eyes with me when we had

sex. Now we make love and I've grown comfortable with him, just like he now knows how to open up and love me openly. This is the first step towards a healthy marriage. The dead baby bought Mfihlakalo brought us together.

A knock sounds at the door just as the heat becomes a heat that is needed within my body. He sits up and shouts for the person in the other side to come in. It's sis' Melo.

"I'm sorry to disrupt my King, my queen. My queen has a visitor." She moved out of the way and Nambitha was standing there.

Bayede looked at me and I sat up.

"I'm going to give you some space." He stood up.

There is no way I'm going to stand, I already feel dizzy. I hold both his hands and he leans down.

"Go to MaMzobe's room please Bayede." I whispered in his ear in a begging tone.

He didn't fight me, he just nodded and laid a peck on my cheek.

"Take it easy please." I nodded and let go of his hands. His scent is all over my body.

When he walks to the door, both sis' Melo and Nambitha bow for him and he leaves. Nambitha continues to stand at the door after I've excused sis' Melo.

"Come in chomie." She looked around looking a little scared before she slowly made her way in.

"Close the door." I would do this all myself but I did mention that I'm feeling very dizzy at the moment.

She came to stand at the foot of the bed and looked at me. She looks so off.

"Sit down chomie, are you okay?"

"This is your marital bedroom chomie, I can't just fraternize with you like we used to."

“Nonsense. Sit down.” She sits on the corner of the bed.

“I didn’t know you were still here, where were you staying?”

“I was with Nkululeko.” It’s literally Saturday today. She arrived here on Sunday.

“Jama?” she rolled her eyes.

“My boyfriend, yes.” She’s definitely not acting normally.

Her voice is low and her eyes are wandering around a lot.

“When are you going home?”

“I just got here and now you’re asking me when I’m leaving?” why is she so defensive. Normally I’d laugh off this response, but judging by the energy she is giving off, I can’t just laugh it off.

“No, I’m not kicking you out chomie, I’m just curious because you got here on Sunday, what

did your parents say?"

"They don't mind, I'm a woman now, I'm out of school, I can do whatever I like." She flicks her braids. Now this I can laugh at, but I'm still not at ease.

"Enough about me, how are you doing, how have you been. We didn't get to talk that day." She holds my forearm.

"I'm okay. I mean I will be okay. Mentally, I'm coping, I have the husband and we are going through it together. Physically, I don't know, I'm still on the medication they gave me, I'm hoping the side effects wear off soon. I'm tired of being bed ridden." She looks at me in pity.

"I'm so sorry my friend." I shook my head.

"Its okay, I'm okay. Okwenzekile kufana nokudaliwe, it wasn't going to happen if it wasn't meant to happen. I wasn't ready to have a child anyway." She used her thumb to wipe

my tears and she came and engulfed me in a tight hug.

I haven't cried since that day of the funeral, maybe I am over it, maybe I have accepted the fate. Mandela's words are still ringing in my ears.

"Don't deprive yourself the time to heal your body and your mind properly." She said rubbing my back.

"I definitely won't, I know the importance of spiritual and physical health." We both laughed through the tears.

A good friend cries with you, just saying.

"Okay, no more tears, I'm done crying. How are you and Jama, how's the relationship going? Are you enjoying the love." She chuckled and wiped her tears before she looked at me.

"I am chomie. I gave him my beads." My eyes widened.

It can't be. Not Nambitha, it never can happen.

"What!?" She looked away and covered her mouth.

She's giggling!?

"I did. I gave it to him and that was the best decision I have ever made."

I'm still in a state of shock. This is the same Nambitha that swore to keep it until she marries. What happened? It hasn't even been five months into their relationship.

"So you really did it chomie?" she nodded. The excitement on her face doesn't match the sadness in her eyes.

"I did and it was amazing. He treated me like a princess and he made it so special. He only flopped by not having the roses like I had imagined, but it was perfect. I wouldn't have asked for a better person to give it to." I'm concerned.

Okay not concerned but confused. Why the sudden change of heart, Nambitha, losing her virginity? It really doesn't add up. But she looks happy. She's giggling and blushing like a little girl.

"And how many orgasms did he give you?" if you can't beat them, join them.

She giggled.

"Quite a few, my legs kept shaking, I couldn't keep still. I even went on top." She covered her face.

"Chomie!? Sabaweli your confidence. I've only gone on top once." She closed her ears.

"No chomie, the sex you have and the one I have is different, don't tell me about it, I still want to have respect for the king." I cracked up.

"Oh but he can lay the pipe down. Don't be fooled by the potbelly that man can move his waist." She covered her ears.

“I’m not listening!” I’m dead with laughter.

“I’m just kidding. How long are you staying?” she uncovered her ears.

“I’m going back to Durban tomorrow.”

“Christmas Eve is the husband’s birthday and there is a charity event that he is hosting. I was going to ask you to come and help MaMzobe and I with the cooking, but with everything going on, I didn’t have the chance.”

“Oh yes, the Christmas Eve Community Project. He hosts and cooks for all poor families every year. Personally, that is why he is the best king Zululand has ever had.” That’s my husband ya’ll!

“Will you be able to come and assist me, chomie?”

“I’ll have to talk to Nkululeko.” I frowned.

“Nkululeko? not your mother or father?” she laughed.

“I’ll obviously talk to them too, but he’s going to be the one who brings me here, so I have to speak to him.” I shook my head.

“Weeh, ‘I’m a woman now.’” I mocked.

She laughed and rolled her eyes.

“So you can spend the rest of the night with me because you are only leaving tomorrow?” I made my eyebrows dance and she laughed.

“Yeah, I guess I can.” I clapped.

I’m feeling a little bit better now. It’s true what they say about laughter, it’s the best medicine.

“Okay, I have the best night time routine we can do, I also found a bunch of old movies in a box, we can watch that and some ice-cream and popcorn!” I’m suddenly excited, when was the last time I had a sleepover.

“Not in here right?” she asked in a serious tone.

“Why not in here, this is my room.”

“Correction, marital bedroom. You have sex with your husband in this bed. I can’t sleep with you in it.” I shrugged.

“He doesn’t mind. There is nothing wrong.”
She’s just being dramatic

“Amile!”

“Nambitha, please.” I dragged her name and she rolled her eyes.

“I’ll sleep on the floor, it’s fine.”

I know she’s not going to do that. But I don’t care, I’m just excited to spend the night with my best friend. We’ll watch some Waiting to Exhale and maybe I’ll also exhale. I’ve been holding in a lot of things. It’s time to let it all go.

Chapter Fifty-Three

Amile Gumede

I'm trying to wake up, it's not happening. Something is pressing me down. I open my eyes and I see Nambitha hovering over me. I'm still on the ground. Was I unconscious?

"What's wrong with you? What happened."
She's trying to help me up but I don't want to get up.

I heard the husband's voice coming closer. Nambitha moved out of the way and he came to me.

"MaGumede, what's going on?" the woman isn't next to me anymore. Where is she?

He picked me up, but I tried to fight my way out of his embrace.

"What is the problem?" I'm trying to turn my head to see where he was standing but I can't see him.

"He was there, he's back!" I scream.

He covers my mouth and carries me to the house. He passes the lounge full of council men and took me upstairs to MaMzobe's room. Oh hell no.

"Amile, keep quiet, calm down and tell me what is wrong." His eyes are bulging out.

I didn't even realize that I was crying now. Am I delusional too, is it because I haven't eaten in four hours, I don't know, I feel borderline crazy. It's the man in my fucking dreams.

It's him. I know that face all too well.

"Langaletu. The prince Langaletu. He's here, I saw him." He rubbed his head in frustration and paced around the room.

"Khuluma into ezwakalayo, angikuzwa mina uthini." Is it because I'm crying?

No, he's crazy, I didn't stutter, not even once.

"He was there, standing by the tent looking at

me.” He walked to the window, opened the curtain and looked down at the yard.

“There is no one by the look of him. Are you not going crazy MaGumede, is it not the medication?” he’s jumpy, why is he acting like this?

I remember that woman. Before I passed out she was screaming ghost.

“That woman that was crying down there, she saw him too, I wasn’t the only one Bayede, she saw him.” He’s looking at me like I’m crazy.

Before he can answer me, there is a loud knock on the door.

“Zwelibanzi vula lomnyango.” Who other than my sister wife, the owner of the room.

Bayede signaled for me to keep quiet using his finger. I frowned.

“I know you and Amile are in there, open and tell

me what the hell is going on outside.”

“Nontuthuzelo I’m talking to my wife.” He shouted back.

“In our bedroom? Is that a sign of respect to you?” she sounds angry.

As she should, it’s her right to be angry. He’s not respecting her space.

“Bayede, I’m telling you I saw what I saw. If you don’t believe me, we can go look, I’m not crazy. But Ma is right, we aren’t respecting her room.” I got on my feet.

“Not a word of this to the woman outside do you hear me?” I nodded.

My heart is thudding. There are a lot of things going on. But I’m going to respect him and listen to what he says. So much so for a worthwhile birthday together.

I follow behind him as he opens the door. I can’t

see her face, but I can tell from the way she is breathing that we are good as dead.

“Do you want me to lose this baby? Do you want another burial in this place?” she better not!

If I did not respect her like I did, I would step aside and slap the shit out of her. She’s being insensitive, trying to blackmail him into giving in. That is very toxic of her to do, I’ve never met this side of her. I’m actually repulsed.

“Nontuthu, don’t you dare use my baby like that. God forbid something like that happens to our child. Please.” He walked out past her, and I followed like a lost puppy.

She tried to grab me using my apron, but I screamed. She quickly let go of me.

“Nontuthuzelo!” Bayede shouted at the top of his lungs.

She pointed a finger at me.

“You girl, you seem to forget your place. Respect me.” tears are burning my eyes.

“Come, lets go.” He pulls me by the hand and drags me down the stairs.

I don't know if he's angry or frustrated or both. There are a lot of things going on right now and I don't know what to do with myself.

“Where did you see him?” we are standing outside where he took me.

The yard is still full, people are still colleting food parcels and plates. I can't see the woman or any of the women she was with when I saw the prince.

“Over there.” I pointed by the tent.

Mgabadeli was behind us. I startled when his voice erupted behind us.

“Go look that side.” He rushed towards the direction I pointed.

“Are you sure of what you saw?” he asked again.

“I’m not crazy Bayede, stop assuming I am.”

“Okay, I’m sorry.”

He followed the direction Mgabadeli headed, and I looked around. No one was paying attention to us, so I followed them. They both looked stupid looking around for a human being like they are looking for a missing phone or handbag.

“Bayede there is no use doing this.”

“You said you saw him, are you changing your mind now?”

I hesitated to answer. I don’t want to anger him further.

“Mgabadeli, ngilandele uCelemba azokhuluma into ezwakalayo.” He roared.

“Yes sir.” This day has officially ruined.

He stormed back in the direction of the house. I

stood there dumbstruck without a clear indication of what to do next. He was standing here wearing a brown t-shirt. His head was bald as in the dreams and he had his hands tucked deep into the pockets of his black pants. I saw him, I even saw that tooth necklace around his neck, I saw it. It was him, I'm not crazy.

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My feet are aching, we have been standing the whole day, finally people are starting to lessen in the yard. The tent will only be taken out after Christmas, apparently the whole family is coming tomorrow for Christmas lunch.

I'm so grateful to the ladies that were helping us out, MaMzobe left us a long time ago, understandably so, she's pregnant. They helped us pack everything away. There was no food

left, people were coming back for seconds and takeaways for their families at home who couldn't come, or to just have something for later. This is a great initiative, Bayede takes care of his people, he's a good king, so much better than what Mandlenkosi gave him credit for.

I'm in the house wiping the dishes. I'm alone, I think Jama and his little family left already because Nambitha is nowhere in sight. I made a mental note to call her before I sleep because I'm worried.

The sun is already starting to set but it just hit six o'clock. That is very abnormal.

"Why are you doing that yourself?" he asked behind me.

I didn't want to turn around.

"You need to rest; remember you are still on medication. Did you eat today?" I sighed.

“I did eat Bayede and I’m still okay, thank you.”

“I’m sorry about earlier...” I turned around and stopped him.

“You didn’t find anything, that means I was being delusional.” He shook his head and walked closer to me.

“You aren’t delusional, he may be alive. I know this, Mandela told me.” his voice is hushed.

My heart starts beating abnormally.

“His “death” wasn’t an accident, someone deliberately tried to end his life and now that person killed Mandela because she knew the truth.” He’s whispering.

I wonder how long this has been bothering him. this is such a big secret to keep.

“Are you sure Bayede?” I’m looking at him dead in the eyes. I’m not so sure.

“I suspect Celemba.” I gasped.

“Why would he do such?”

“He wanted this position, yet he isn’t doing shit for this kingdom.” I’ve never seen this side of him.

Oh and this is what married gossip feels like? I love it!

“It makes sense Bayede, but what are you going to do? Where are we going to find Prince Langaletu?”

“He’s coming here, Celemba. Leave finding Langaletu to me.” I placed my hands on his shoulders and kissed his lips.

He heaved a sigh.

“Happy birthday Bayede.” He smiled.

“Thank you wakwami.”

I fixed his collar. Today definitely didn’t go as planned, but the night is still young. While we were still staring at each other in the eyes with

my hands on his chest, someone cleared their throat. What a moment.

“Celemba has arrived.” She announced before she turned on her heels and walked out.

“Come with me.” he said.

I’m scared. I’m not ready for what might be revealed in that meeting, but I have to stand by my husband’s side always. That’s what I’m here, to be his support system. I drew in a deep breath and followed behind him.

Nambitha Makhathini

I’m angry at him. scratch angry, I’m fucking fuming, that’s why I’m quiet. She’s riding back with us to KwaDlamini, I’m guessing we are playing happy family and he’s happy he gets to eat both his cakes buttered on each side. I’m

starting to feel like I'm not enough for Nkululeko, even after I have given him sex, he's still chasing after his baby mama. Nothing makes sense to me.

He said he's going to put Azande to bed, so I decided to take a shower and I finished before he came back. This was my chance. I set up a fort of pillows on the side of the bed he sleeps in, and I slipped under the covers to sleep. It's hot, but I want to be dramatic and cover myself up with the duvet, so I have the air conditioning on high. Maybe I'll let him freeze to death, that's if he chooses to sleep here.

I felt the space where the pillows were going cold just as I was drifting off to a peaceful sleep. The devil's advocate is here.

"Nana, are you sleeping?" I kept quiet.

He was shuffling around the room mumbling to himself. I don't know what he's saying though.

“Aren’t you feeling cold, it’s freezing in here?” I rolled my eyes.

I won’t dare move, especially because he hasn’t seen that I’m up. He got in next to me and his whole body was cold. He placed his filthy hands on me and I felt chills running down my spine.

“Cela ungifudumeza sthandwa sami?” I don’t know if he’s ignorant or just dumb in general, can’t he see that I’m sleeping.

“Nana?” his hand is lifting up my night dress.

I’m not letting him do this to me again. I used my hand to slap his and he removed it.

“MaXulu.”

“Leave me alone Nkululeko. Hlukanana nami phansi.” I said through gritted teeth.

“Are you still mad at me? I apologized nje sthandwa sami.”

“I didn’t forgive you.”

He's touching me again, and now he's trying to get on top of me.

"Let me apologize again."

"Get off me." I warned.

"Hawu mama?" he tried kissing me.

I slapped the shit out of him so hard that he got of me, sat on his ass and held his cheek.

"You want to rape me again?"

"Usithathapi isibindi sokungibeka isandla."

"I got it exactly where you got the audacity to take my virginity without my permission. Is it not enough that I let it slide like nothing happened? Now you are embarrassing me bringing your baby mama to come sleep in the same house as me, ungibukanisa nabantu Nkululeko noma sengikunike uqobo lwami?"

His eyes are still bulging out like he's just seen a ghost.

“MaXulu?”

“You said you loved me Nkululeko.”

“I did. I do sthandwa sami.” He breathed out and held his head.

“Why didn’t you say you didn’t want to?” is he testing me.

“Is no not enough, is shouting and crying for you to get off me not enough for you to see that I don’t want to? You violated my innocence and now you are treating me like shit.” He buried his head in his thighs.

Is he crying? He better not be crying because I will smack him upside the head.

“I’m sorry nana. I didn’t mean to hurt you.”
Maybe he isn’t okay.

“Well, you did.” He lifted his head.

His eyes were red, but he wasn’t crying. He held me tightly and kissed my neck. My frame in his

body felt like a complete puzzle piece.

“I’ll do everything to make it better, I’m so sorry. Tell me what you want me to do, just don’t leave me.” Funny how that didn’t cross my mind.

“Kick her out. Tell her to go back to her place.” He breathed out loud in agony.

“I can’t.” I pushed his away from my body.

“Nkululeko?”

“She’s the mother of my daughter. She needs to take care of Azande.”

“Am I not here? Am I invisible?” I don’t understand Nkululeko.

“You and I both know that you can’t even speak to my children, the last time I left Azande in your care she cried till kingdom come.” I held my chest in pain.

“So you don’t trust me with your children?”

“Don’t put words in my mouth.”

“But I told you that I’m not ready to meet them. I told you to keep them away until I was ready to meet them, but you kept rubbing them in my face. It’s not my fault that I wasn’t ready. You failed to keep your end of the deal.”

“And I’m sorry about that, but I can’t risk the wellbeing of my children, I told you they always come first.” Tears streamed down my face.

“Give me a chance.” I begged in a low voice.

He looked like he was hesitating.

“You aren’t willing to give me a chance to show you that I can take care of your children then you don’t love me enough. You don’t love, nor do you care for me that’s why you violated me and mistreat me. This isn’t going to work Nkululeko.” he shook his head and held my hands.

“Ungakwenza konke sthandwa sami kodwa unangishiyi.”

“Then tell her to leave.”

I am changing. I'm not this person, I'm becoming this bitter person that I myself can't recognize. He is changing me for the worst. But my love for him is overpowering any other thought that I may have in my mind.

I am changing.

Amile Gumede

We are in the throne room. This is my first time in here and it feels so good to see the husband sitting on his chair. He looks so high and mighty looking down on us.

Both MaMzobe and I are sitting on either side of him and there is silence in the whole room, only our breathing is audible. Celemba walks in and stops at the door to bow. He continues to walk

in and stops at the alter and bows again. He then kneels in front of him and praises him.

“My king has summoned me.”

“Tell me what your job description entails.” He cleared his throat.

“Being the passage and messenger for the ancestors to the Zulu’s.”

“And what have you been doing for the past three years?” he’s talking through gritted teeth.

I have the urge to go and tell him to calm down, but I can’t. I know that if I don’t, he might just blow a fuse and not be able to get the message across.

“I have been the messenger to the Zulu’s.” I looked at MaMzobe, she looks pale.

“Tell me what happened to my brother?”

“He got into a car accident...” he shook his head.

“Something I don’t know Celemba! Tell me

something I don't know!" he roared.

"He wasn't meant to die." He folded.

That's not enough, we all know that he wasn't supposed to die.

"Then what happened? Why isn't he here sitting in his throne?" MaMzobe cleared her throat.

"Because you are supposed to be the king sthandwa sami."

"Thula wena, ngiyeza kwena." I'm so confused.

"Tell me why he isn't sitting here in his chair?" the seer was quiet.

He has confirmed to me that maybe he was behind Langaletu's attempted murder.

MaMzobe stood up and climbed down the stairs.

"That's enough Mageba, you know that everyone in that car was drunk, they were bound to have an accident."

“Ngithe mfazi hlala phansi ungafuni ukuzixabanisa nami.”

“Mageba?”

“Are you defending him? Did you work with him to kill my brother? Is that why you always vouch for him and defend him.”

“Mageba you are being irrational.” She spoke softly.

“Ngithe hlalaphansi, ngiyeza kwena.” She lowered herself on the chair feeling embarrassed.

“And what are the ancestors saying about the empty casket we buried?”

“They said nothing?” his light skinned face is turning red.

“Kanti yini umsebenzi wakho!?” I startled, so did everyone else in the room when he shouted like that.

He got up and got his spear from the holder next to the throne. MaMzobe stood up, so did I.

“Mageba calm down!” MaMzobe shouted.

Celemba was on his feet moving away backwards.

“Nontuthuzelo suka endleleni yami.” He almost pushed her down the stairs, but she held on to the chair next to her. Now I was afraid to intervene. MaMzobe is still screaming for him to stop, using every threat in the book.

Now I’m just standing here with my heart in my throat. He is enraged.

When Celemba is pressed against the door, they open, and he almost falls flat on his bum, but he hits someone else’s body. It’s the brown shirt. My eyes widened like saucers when my eyes met his face. He was staring at the husband.

“Ehlisa umoya Ndabezitha.” He sounds exactly

like it did in my dreams. Authoritative and attention drawing.

“Sthuli sika Ndaba.” He raised his hands and bowed to the husband.

I saw Bayede moving back in shock and lowering the spear slowly. Celemba picked himself up from the ground and ran as fast as his feet could carry him.

A loud scream erupted behind me before I heard a loud thud. Oh no.

Chapter Fifty-Four

Amile Gumede

The brothers are just standing there staring at each other, I know this is a reunion, but a pregnant woman just fell down the stairs.

“Someone help, please, anyone!?” now I’m in

tears.

My heart is racing and there is a lump stuck in my throat. They just stand in a staring match. Bayede drops the spear and it rolls down the carpet and stops by Langaletu's feet.

Maybe my vision is playing tricks on me because I'm crying. A spear can't roll on a flat surface. What kind of sorcery is this? Higher powers? Witchcraft?

"Bayede!" I screamed at the top of my lungs.

I see blood slowly staining the carpet and I panic. He finally decided to turn around and he ran towards me. I was slapping her cheek gently trying to wake her up, but it seemed like she wasn't even breathing. She better not do this.

And why is the ghost just standing there staring at the whole debacle like it's a film!? The husband picked MaMzobe up and walked

hurriedly past him shouting for Mgabadeli to get the car ready. I'm shaking, my breathing is unsteady. I'm standing next to the pool of blood, and it is blocking my nostrils up. He's standing in my way; I want to get through and go to the hospital with Bayede and MaMzobe.

He bends down and picks up the spear and holds it in his hand, firmly placing it on the ground. He possesses so much power, my heart is racing. He looks exactly like he did in my dreams. I try to walk past him without peeping a word, but he grabbed my wrist and pulled me back. My whole body heated up.

"Who are you?" he asked in his naturally deep voice.

Tears rolled down my face as I felt my head feeling light.

"Amile." I whispered.

I didn't mean to, but my voice couldn't come out.

I've been holding these tears back since this man walked in here.

"What are you doing here?" I should be asking him that.

I have so many questions, but I'm having an out of body experience. It's not everyday that you see your dreams coming to life. All I need to do now is to kneel in front of him and apologize to make it come to life.

"I'm Bayede's wife." His brown eyes are capturing. They are almost the same colour as his t-shirt.

His hand is still wrapped around my wrist.

"Zwelibanzi or me?" my eyes widened, and I felt the air leave my lungs.

"What do you mean?" my vision is getting blurred by tears.

"Tell me what you are doing here?" I shook my

head.

“I don’t understand what you mean.” I tried to free my wrist.

He let me go and I wiped my tears.

“You’ve been haunting my dreams; you have been driving me crazy. What did you do to me?”

“Nothing, I don’t know you?” his chest is bouncing up and down.

I feel like I’m going to throw up. He smells like incense and herbs, it’s a very natural scent. Even knowing that he has dreams about me is not enough to relieve me, in fact, it scares me.

“You don’t know me?” he moved closer.

I moved back and shook my head vigorously.

“I didn’t want to come back here to this hell hole, but you, you kept begging me to come back. Who are you?”

I almost tripped over the step from moving

back, and when I almost fell flat faced on the floor, he held me up.

“I’m sorry.” I said holding on to his hands.

These are the warmest hands I’ve ever held. Am I really not dreaming?

“Tell me who you are.” He’s not raising his voice, but he sounds very frustrated.

“Leave her shlobo.” He lets go of my hand and turns around.

“Shlobo...”

“Muyeke.” It’s a woman’s voice. I want to see her, but his tall figure is blocking my view.

He turns back around and gives me the spear. With my trembling hands, I take it and stand there dumbstruck not knowing what to do.

“Hey!” he’s walking away.

I don’t even know what to call him. I know he’s older than me, but my head is all over the place.

He turned around and looked at me.

“You can’t leave.” He frowned.

“What’s stopping me?” okay, he’s mean, I don’t like him.

“Your brother needs you; your kingdom needs you.” I don’t like the way I sound.

“How were they surviving when I wasn’t here.” I kept quiet.

“I was never here.” I’m not going to start chasing after him, I’ve done enough of that in my dreams.

I saw the woman. She had dreadlocks and was wearing red cloths. It’s that woman that I went to when I fetched him. What the heck is going on!? Are they dating, what’s going on?

Mandlenkosi Zulu

It was him who came and drove Banzi instead. It doesn't take away the fact that he's also panicking behind the steering wheel. They will make it to the hospital by god's grace.

"What happened bhuti?" Nkosi asks in a voice close to breaking.

"Please just concentrate on the road. She's losing blood." He slams the steering wheel a couple of times out of frustration.

He's not getting an answer, that's why he's frustrated. A part of him is ready to blame his brother for this and if she loses this child, it will be his fault. The same thing happened to Amile and Banzi wasn't there, he had to experience it on his own as if he had put that child in her stomach.

It felt like his own heart was being cut open that night, the amount of pain she endured, before, during and after the incident was enough to

send her to the grave. Women are strong people, they endure so much but they keep going.

He's still going to pretend like he didn't hear all the commotion that happened, the screaming and shouting before she was rushed into the car like this.

They got to the hospital in no time and they rushed her to the emergency. Stretchers were brought out immediately after he ran to the reception screaming for help. They wheeled her inside the emergency room and Banzi was directed to the reception to give out all the details they needed.

“What happened to her?”

“She fell down the stairs.” He said without thinking.

Nkosi stared at him a little longer than necessary, thoughts running through his mind.

Which stairs is he talking about, there is only one flight of stairs at the palace and those stairs are very close to his bedroom, he didn't hear a single thing.

When Banzi finished signing whatever it is that was required, they went to sit on the cold chairs in the waiting room. Banzi is covered in blood, his hands, pants, shirt, all of it. He leans forward in frustration and heaves a heavy sigh. He can't afford to lose another child, especially in such a short space of time.

"Bhuti what happened? Which stairs did she fall from?"

"Nkosi, please. Not now." He raised a hand to try and dismiss him.

"I want to know, you can't keep me in the dark forever. This is the second child you will be losing and this is not just anyone, this is MaMzobe, a woman who has been like a

mother to me. I deserve to know what the hell is going on.”

“Can’t you be a little sensitive, or maybe put yourself in my shoes just for a day? You are always whining and complaining about yourself, when is it never about you?”

“You always treat me like a child...”

“I treat you like one because you act like one Mandlenkosi. Why can’t we just be civil with each other, you are always ready to pick a fight with me, forgetting that I am older than you. Kwimanje ngiyazi uyangisola ngalento eyenzeke kunina.”

He’s not trying to draw attention to himself, he already has the attention drawn, but today has been emotionally taxing and he has finally gotten to that breaking point where he feels like enough is enough.

“Because that’s how I was raised, raised to

always have my defences high and protect myself from people ready to take advantage of my vulnerability.”

“And that is the difference between me and you. You weren’t raised to always have your defences high, you were raised to be vulnerable while I couldn’t wear my heart on my sleeve like you do. I was raised to be strong, to take control and never show the weak side of me. And what about what I feel?”

“You had a father.”

“And you had a mom.” He replied in displeasure. Silence passed between the two of them. Therapy was necessary. There’s definitely more to their characters than what meets the eye and maybe they would understand each other better had they attended.

“I hate fighting with you Mandlenkosi, you are my brother and I love you. You are the only

good memory my mother left behind for me. The last thing I want to do is to lose you.” Tears broke in his eyes.

“Tell me the truth bhuti.” Banzi sighed.

“I think MaMzobe was behind Langaletu’s attempted murder. He is alive and back at the palace. The spear rolled to him from my feet, I was never the chosen one for the throne and now that he’s back the trouble is starting.” This was the absolute last thing he was expecting to hear.

It’s overwhelming, he said a couple of things, he doesn’t know which is scarier.

“My king, my prince.” The doctor came and stood in front of them and bowed her head lowly.

“The queen is awake; you may now see her.”

“How is the baby?” Nkosi chimed in.

“The baby is safe my prince.” She bowed again.

“Thank you. Please show us the way.” Banzi said in a low voice.

She led them down the passage. That took quicker than they both expected, in instances like this, they stay and wait in hospitals for hours un-end.

When they walked into the ward, she was sitting on the bed staring into space. Nkosi was the one who ran up to her bedside and gave her a hug.

“I was so worried ma, I’m so glad you are okay.” Banzi stood at the door feeling a flood of mixed emotions.

“I’m fine Nkosi, I promise.” She rubbed his shoulder.

When he moved away from her side, she looked at her husband, but couldn’t stare for too long and looked away. He didn’t tear away from the

door frame, he just looked at her lying on the bed, avoiding eye contact.

“I think I should excuse you.” Nkosi said after seeing the tension between them.

He kissed her forehead before walking out the room. They exchanged with Banzi and he went inside. He stood outside and leaned against the wall replaying all the words his brother had said to him.

He doesn't understand what he means when he says he didn't have a mother, he gets even more confused at the fact that he wants to blame MaMzobe, the sweetest, most kindest woman under the sun, for killing their brother, and that the alleged dead brother is alive. He won't believe it until he sees it with his own eyes.

Amile Gumede

I can feel that the bed is empty, but I someone's breath fanning my face. I'm too scared to open my eyes and meet the face that is staring at me. I can't even pick up the scent, but I know it's a man because it's a heavy presence towering over me. I don't even remember which side I'm facing.

If it's Bayede then why isn't he inside the bed, holding me, comforting me? He went through a lot today, and it was supposed to be his day, a day where he was doing good for people from the bottom of his heart, where he was supposed to be happy. He doesn't deserve everything that is going on, everything that is happening to him. He's a good man and all he does is put other people first, I just wish I could take the time to put him first, just once. That's if he would let me put him first. He makes it hard for me not to love him.

I couldn't keep my eyes closed for a second longer so I opened them only to meet with the dark brown eyes boring into my skin. I get such a fright that I move back and cover myself with the duvet completely. Didn't he say he was leaving?

"I asked you who you are?" I don't know what creeps me out more, that this man is supposedly dead, or that I'm not just seeing him in my dreams but here, in real life. And how long has he been staring at me?

Maybe I'm still asleep and I'm dreaming. This is all a dream that is why we are conversing as normal, we always converse like this in the dreams.

"Why are you here? How did you get here?" I don't know if he's blind or what. Can't he see my facial expression?

"I'm married to Bayede." He stood up, held his

head in frustration before he heaved a sigh.

He seems like a person with anger issues. He sat back down and he looked at me.

“Don’t call him that, call him by his name.” I respect him way too much to call him by name.

But this one’s face is intimidating. He’s worse than Bayede, and I thought he was scary.

“I’m sorry, I can’t do that.” I said with a trembling voice.

“Zwelibanzi took another wife?” that sounded like a question to himself so I kept quiet.

“How old are you?” he raised his eyebrow at me.

I’m not really intrigued by the bushy black hair on his head and that beard with white hairs peaking out.

“Seventeen.” He couldn’t disguise the shock on his face.

“Did you finish school?” I cleared my throat.

I'm uncomfortable and I don't think he can see that.

"I did, I wrote my matric at the end of November."

"So you are waiting for your results?" I kept quiet.

He stood up and stared at me for a long time. I shifted uncomfortably on the spot.

"I'm sorry for bombarding you, I just can't believe I'm actually seeing you." I could tell from the way he was hesitating that he had more to say, but he held back.

He slammed his fists against his thighs as he turned his back and walked out the room.

Langaletu kaMhlabawesizwe Zulu is his name. The man of my dreams is standing right in front of me.

Chapter Fifty-Five

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

It hadn't gotten to that point where she hated the child. She was still tolerating it for the sake of Banzi. She didn't want to try kill it again when he was still healing from Amile's pregnancy loss. She was going to wait until things had settled down and then only decided on killing it. She doesn't have time though, this is her sixth week pregnant, once she reaches twelve weeks, it will be very difficult.

Now everything is going south. Even after such a traumatic experience and falling hard, landing on her stomach, this child is still pretending to be a die hard. She's given up on trying and she felt really hopeless when the doctor looked at her and confirmed that the baby was okay.

Now Mandlenkosi has left, her whole body is

shivering from the inside, afraid of what Zwelibanzi might say to her. He's still covered in blood, enough blood to create a murder scene but there is still a human being inside her body.

She knows he doesn't know the truth, but the last thing she expected to find out was that Langa is alive, breathing and kicking like he didn't just disappear three years ago. She's not even sure if he himself knows the truth of what happened. She's just crossing her fingers everything works well in her favour and she can easily blame it on Celemba.

"Myeni wami..." he spoke over her.

"The doctor told me that the baby is fine."

"So you don't care about me?" she still couldn't look him in the eyes.

"Why did you fake that collapse?" he asked in a very low voice, that's angry Banzi for you.

"Is that how low you think of me to be Mageba?"

You think I could just fake collapsing like that? tell me how could I have faked that blood all over you hands and clothes?" she's hurt that he could insinuate such, it clearly means that the level of trust between them has slowly decreased.

"I don't know Nontuthuzelo, you tell me. it's not like you wanted my child from the onset." She shook her head.

"Who is this man and what has he done to my loving husband?" her voice is breaking.

"Am I lying if I say you didn't want it? When I say that you moved my hand away every time I tried to bond with him, something you never did."

"This pregnancy is different Banzi, it was unplanned. I wasn't expecting to have a child and now it feels like my life is being put on hold when this is the time to enjoy my life."

"Is that why you forced me to take a second

wife?" this is all news to him. he looks stunned. But she's trying to distract him from asking the real questions he should be asking, and it's working like a charm.

"That's what we agreed upon. More kids, just not from my womb." She defended.

"That doesn't mean the child should go back, it's here! Its not going to disappear." He raised his voice, much to her startlement.

"Yes, my feelings towards this pregnancy haven't been positive but I could never wish to experience such and wish death on my own blood." She wiped her crocodile tears and covered her face.

She was hoping for an apology but he's just staring at her with a blank expression. Her heart starts racing, she's slowly losing him, that's all that she sees on his face.

"Tomorrow morning we are leaving." She sits up

in a haste. His voice is authoritative, it's not up for discussion, but she won't give up without trying.

"But I'm not feeling well Mageba." She holds her stomach and fakes a cry.

"The doctor said both of you are fine. What are you running away from?" words get mumbled up in her mouth.

"Mageba I don't understand why you are talking to me and treating me like this? I almost lost our child, and you are here, you can't even look me in the eyes and ask how I feel?"

He avoids looking at her and bows his head.

"I'll be outside. We are going home in the morning and that is final." He cleared his throat and walked out.

She knows that he might be on to something. He wouldn't act like this if he didn't know something was going on. One thing about

Zwelibanzi, he loves Nontuthu, and anything pertaining to her drives him crazy. Her wellbeing comes first. He would never treat her like this, this coldly, he knows something. It's now or never, she needs to act fast otherwise she will lose everything she has worked for; she will lose him and suffer the consequences of her actions.

Nambitha Makhathini

There is a persistent knocking at the door. My brain is half asleep but there is another body next to me. Then it dawns to me that I'm not home. ngikwaDlamini la engikhona and Nkululeko's hairy legs are on top of mine. Even in the hottest weather he finds a way to intertwine his body with mine. One thing about my man, when he sleeps, he sleeps like a log.

Now I'm the only one subjected to this persistent knocking. Who in the world would think of knocking on someone's door this early?

I move his legs aside and get up to go open. There are only two other people in this house, his brat and the baby mama. When I open the door she is standing there holding a tray of breakfast wearing pyjamas short enough to deem her naked.

"Can I help you?" I asked scanning her from top to bottom.

"Ngizolethela ubabazi ukudla. Phela umfazi wenza njalo, akalali lize liyihlabe endunu." She's trying to start something.

"Thank you for your gesture 'Mfazi' but my man is still sleeping." I tried not to put too much emphasis on my in my man, but we have to set boundaries.

I tried closing the door but she blocked it with

her perfectly pedicured foot and pushed back using her hand.

“Yeyi wena nondindwa! You think you are going to last? Nkululeko doesn’t love you. He’s mine, it’s always been me and it will always be me. He’s mine, all of him, that’s why he continues to make love to me even when he has you.” Shes triggering the bitch fit in me, and I don’t want to let her win.

“it’s so sad to hear that a beautiful woman like yourself can just spread her legs for someone else’s man and see that as something to brag about. You may claim to own his dick but I have his heart, and that’s all that I’m here for.”

I know that in order to match up to them just bow out, kill them with kindness. I have no reason to let her get to me, I know what Nkululeko and I have, I don’t have a reason to doubt that anymore. That’s why I used my calmest voice, only to get her throwing arms.

It all happened so fast but I felt her hands pulling my ponytail so hard I felt my roots separating from my sculp. I let out a shrill scream before digging my claws into her arms and pushing her back to press her against the wall in the passage way. There is food and glass scattered all over the floor and she is trying to free from my grip but I have my claws sunk into his skin. The harder she pulls my hair, the harder I scratch.

“Nkululeko!” I fucking told him to tell her to get out of this house, now we are here, and he’s sleeping peacefully.

“Don’t involve him in this, fight me like a woman!” she moves his hand to my neck and chokes me.

I use my teeth to bite her and she swears loudly and loosens the hand around my neck.

“Ntando! What the fuck are you doing?” I ran

back to stand behind him and clutched on to his body and cried my eyes out.

“She started it!” now she’s the one crying as if she didn’t throw hands first.

“She’s lying baby, look at this.” I tried to turn him around to see the marks on my neck but he pushed me back.

“Both of you, shut up!” he shouted and I jumped up frightened.

“What is the meaning of this ratchet behaviour? What kind of example are you setting for Azande, both of you!? Ekseni kangaka!?” I thought I had seen him livid.

He wasn’t livid enough. I can almost see the smoke coming out of his ears and nose.

“Baby, you have to believe me, I would never do such.” I said placing my hands on his arms. His body is cold, or maybe my body temperature is too high.

“I know you wouldn’t sthandwa sami. Go back inside.” He pushed me back.

There is glass on the floor and I don’t know where and where not to step. I don’t want to leave him alone with him, now after what she said about spreading her legs for him whenever she wants.

“NO, I’m not going inside until she leaves. Now, she must leave, if I’m the one you love!”

Everything that has happened is pushing me to be this bitter woman that I myself can’t even recognize. But she fucking beat me up, even when I tried to be civil, she needs to leave.

“Nkululeko you will not kick me out I am the mother of your child!” she shouts.

“Nontando, you are here causing nothing but problems for us. What happened to being an adult!? What example are you setting for Azande?”

He's pushing her towards the kitchen, he's not paying attention to me. They are having a verbal altercation. I see Azande peeping at the door of her room and she has tears running down her face.

My heart breaks. I may not like her mother and most of the time, her father's actions, but truth be told, she is innocent in all of this. She's just a child and didn't choose to be brought into this world.

My gut tells me to go and take her and shield her from the altercation happening in the kitchen, but my guilty conscious won't let me. Instead I bend and clean up the mess in front of me. I hear car doors slamming very hard before I hear trampling foot steps charging from the kitchen to where I am.

"I'm taking her back to her place..." I don't let him finish.

“I’m coming with you.”

“Akukho ndawo la oyakhona. You are going to stay here and look after Azande. I’ll be back now.” Its like he’s saying I must prove to him that I’m willing to compromise my feelings towards him having children like I said I would.

But it’s not even about that. I don’t trust them together. It’s not that j don’t trust Nkululeko, it’s the witch that I don’t trust.

He didn’t wait for my response, he found his way out the house, rattling the keys in his hand, making an annoying sound. He’s not even dressed appropriately.

I left the mess and went to Azande’s room. I’m hoping that it was an illusion seeing her cry, peeping at me.

She’s sitting on the edge of the bed hugging her stuffed animal. Her chocolate skin is stained with tears. She’s beautiful, looks a lot like

Nkululeko, she took his skin colour and some of his features. She's just prettier than him. Not that a man should be pretty.

"Come to Nana Azande." I opened my arms for her to come to me.

I'm shivering from fear. I'm not good with children in general, now I have to be a comforter to a child that I'm having a hard time accepting.

She jumps off the bed and comes to hug my legs. My heart melted

"Was my mommy hitting you?" words got trapped in my throat.

"No, why do you ask that?" it was difficult to speak, my throat was also strained. She strangled me quite hard.

"She spansks me too when I'm naughty, but she always says I must not tell daddy. Did daddy hit mommy?" so she's naturally violent?

Why the hell would you tell the child to not tell their father that you are hitting them. There is something suspicious going on. I may not be a parent but I know you spank a child to discipline them, so why is she hiding it from Nkululeko if she's just disciplining her? Or is it something beyond that?

"No she didn't. Daddy doesn't hit women, he respects them."

He told me last night that he's sorry. He apologized for what he did, for violating me. I forgave him, it's a very complex situation. But he's not his father. You'll understand one day.

"Why?" this is why I don't like children.

"Because women and girls like you should be treated with respect." She nodded.

"Okay." She looked at me and I bent down.

I used my thumbs to wipe her tears.

“Don’t cry. Daddy is going to come back now.”
She nodded again and gave me a hug against
my will.

I froze.

“I like you, Nana, you are pretty.” I chuckled.

“I like you too Azande.” I tapped her back before
she went back to her bed.

It’s going to take a lot for me to get used to this.
I’m not a terrible person, so I won’t let the
circumstances change me, I’m giving it a shot
and I’ll try to let her in. For the sake of
Nkululeko’s happiness and peace in our
relationship.

The bitch must just stay away from me!

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He’s at her mercy. He hates that he can’t stop

thinking about her and she didn't even have to do much but to be there for him.

That's what's running through his mind as he stands at her apartment door knocking like a love sick puppy, hoping and praying that she answers and doesn't get rejected for crossing the line like this.

"Mr Zulu."

"Two dates later I'm here unable to stop myself from thinking about you."

"Wait, it's 5 in the morning." She looks sleepy.

Here eyes are half closed and her hair is all over the place. She looks sexy to him though, he never thought he'd be attracted to a thick Mami, but he is mesmerized. That short night dress revealing her chocolate thighs, amazing.

"Are you going to let me in?" he rubs his hands together as if he is cold.

It's nothing but nerves, that's all that's taking over him.

"Mr Zulu I'm confused." She rubbed her eyes again as to make sure that she wasn't dreaming.

"Let me in Thandazo." She moved out of the way and let him walk in.

He waited for her to close the door before he turned around and pinned her against the wall and locking his lips with hers. He's been dying to do it.

"Wait." She pushed him away and held her plump lips.

Her hand started quivering as she pushed him away.

"Am I crazy for saying that I can't stop thinking about you, that I want to be with you and around you all the time?" his eyes glistened.

"Yes sir, you are crazy. Nothing can happen

between us, you ate my patient.”

“You know me better than any woman has ever known me Mathapelo. I also want to know you too.”

She’s not grasping any of the things that he’s saying. He grabs her waist and pulls her closer, massaging her folds. She giggles, she’s very ticklish.

“Please don’t touch me.” She tried to move back but he lowered his head and captured her lips.

“I don’t want to be this person Mr Zulu, I don’t want to use our sessions against you but you haven’t healed, and you haven’t gotten over your ex, you can’t be pursuing me.” She said pushing him away again.

“Ngifuna ithuba lokuziveza kwena nje kuphela, nginike lelothuba.” She didn’t understand that, all of it.

“How will I know you aren’t just using me as

your rebound?" He caressed her cheek.

"Games is the last thing I want to play Mathapelo. I'm serious." None of this is making sense to her. You can see it on her face.

"Ngiyacela stufuza." She frowned.

"Mr Zulu please get out of my apartment." She pushes him off again.

His heart drops. He left Zululand in chaos for rejection, it hurts like hell.

"I mean everything I say Mathapelo. I want you and I wouldn't have drove four hours from home to tell you that." She avoided eye contact.

"I can't just give you my heart. I may know your life problems but I don't know you like that."

"Then give me a chance to prove to you that I want you. Go on a date with me." He bargained.

"Fine." She gave in.

Success! He thinks to himself. He learnt in his

last session with her that holding on to Amile is as good as holding on to a thread of cotton. Their love surely wasn't meant to be. They want different things and although he still loves her with his whole heart, accepting that they can't be is the first step to moving on. Now he has Mathapelo, and he wants to do things the right way.

Chapter Fifty-Six

Langaletu Zulu

"This is the exact reason why I didn't want to come back Shlobo. Now I'm forced to do things that are out of my belief system." He's pacing up and down the tiny space.

"You are making me dizzy. Sit down and tell me what you said to her. Don't tell me you scared her off with your intimidating look." He stopped

and looked at her before laughing.

“If I did scare her, it wasn’t my intention. But I just can’t wrap my head around it.” He lowered himself on the stool next to the bed.

He pulling the strands of white hair on his chin. He only does that when he’s frustrated. He keeps quiet and stares into space.

“She’s young shlobo.” He says with worry in his voice.

She shrugs her shoulders.

“I don’t understand how Zwelibanzi can agree to marry such a young girl. She’s still a minor, not even 18 years old yet.”

“I know it sounds taboo shlobo because of the values and respect you have for women but that’s your culture, it’s been that way for decades in your bloodline. One of your fathers wives was 15 when she got married.” He slams his hand on this thigh.

“But not Zweli. I’m repulsed.” She shakes her head.

“Talking doesn’t help, now you need to take over otherwise things will crumble.”

The sad part is that she has been telling him that he needs to go home and fix things, repair things in the palace, but he’s been postponing it to the last minute. Now that it is a life and death situation, he’s forced to go.

“She denied having any dreams.”

“That’s what she’s been told to do. She can’t trust you enough yet to tell you. But she’s definitely having them.”

“Why won’t she trust me with her dreams?”

“Your ancestors are over her, they walk with her and protect her. She’s a part of the Zulu’s, her place was set in stone on the day she was born. It was bound for her to get to the palace, whether you were there or not. And if you bow

out, she is the only one that can take the throne, unless if she bears a son.” His heart is racing.

He holds onto his chest and draws in a sharp breath.

“UNkulunkulu akavele angithathe.” The stabbing pain in his chest starts to get unbearable.

He hates this, the pain and suffering he has to endure for people who couldn't fulfil their duties while they were still alive. He's dealt with it many times before, so he knows how to handle it, that doesn't make the pain any better.

Thuli passes him a glass of water and he downs it before exercising breaths and regulating his heart beat. He's okay again.

“Don't say that shlobo. You have a lot to live for.”

“Yeah right. Nontuthuzelo is not breathing because I'm alive.” She laughs.

“The higher power will deal with her accordingly. You should focus on dealing with what you came back here, and that is rebuilding the palace.” He sighs and finishes the contents of his glass.

“And what about Zweli. I can’t just take his wife, I can’t hit the in the same kraal as my brother.” Thuli chuckled.

“Technically, he hit in your kraal.” He shook his head.

“Its not funny shlobo.” She laughed even harder.

“I know it’s not. He will have to cleanse you and the palace. Unfortunately.” She ceased her laughter.

“So how much damage has been done?”

“There was a soul involved.” He shrivelled up in his seat.

“She got cleansed though, she’s pure.”

It still freaks him out how she just knows these things, even after so many years of them being friends, he can't get used to it. He appreciates her though, he wouldn't have made it out of that horrid accident and survived for the past three years if it wasn't for her.

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They are back at the palace. Thuli is standing at the gate waiting for him to climb out of the car but he's hesitant. Coming back to this place still gives him anxiety. Why couldn't the ancestors just be satisfied with Zwelibanzi being the king, he's doing an amazing job, they are only a few months apart, and Mhlabawesizwe did raise them both to be kings, its only fair that he continues.

He climbs out and stretches his long limbs. He

forgets that he is technically a ghost where he is, everyone walking past is stopping and staring in horror. He strides towards the gate and leads Thuli towards the house.

Zwelibanzi's car is parked in the yard, he's home, but it's awfully quiet, like there is no life at all. Today is a day for family, it shouldn't be this dead in the Zulu yard. The ancestors are probably turning in their Graves, he thinks to himself.

"Why are we here shlobo?" he asked as they walked through the foyer.

"You are here to talk to your brother and tell him everything that happened."

"What? That his wife that I wanted to marry tried to kill me so he could get the throne? Or that now I have to marry his wife, take away the throne and everything else he has worked hard for?"

“Yeah, basically all of that.”

The first person they ran into as soon as they walked in was the man in question. He still hasn't come to terms with his brother being alive, they didn't even talk last night when he walked into him almost stabbing a man to death. He's still curious what that was about. They stood there staring at each other once again not knowing what to say to each other. Three years is a long time, they are no different from strangers.

“Mntakababa.” He spoke first. Banzi stared at him with a blank expression.

“I was hoping we could sit down and talk.” His eyes shift from him to Thuli who is standing idle behind him.

There is a lot of confusion dwelling on his face.

“This is Thulisile.” He's not going to bother explaining who she is, they have a complicated

relation.

He nods and leads them to the lounge. A lot of things have changed around here, he thinks to himself as he scans the surroundings. It's much more homely than it was when they were growing up, the only difference is that it's empty, so there is no warmth, it lacks warmth, but it's very homely.

They both sat down, and Thulisile asked for a mat. She doesn't sit on a couch or chairs in other people's houses where her ancestors don't dwell. Banzi gave that look before he called out to MaGumede to the lounge.

That's when she emerged. She was wearing a green and white maxi dress that was just below her knee and had a white head wrap on her head. Her braids were floating on her shoulders but she looked pale. He couldn't tear his eyes away from her, she's exactly how she was in his dreams, nothing missing.

“Bayede.” She crouched down next to him.

She was so poised and elegant. Thulisile looked at him and saw that he was staring at her.

She got up and went to fetch the mat, came back and laid it before Thuli to sit. She excused herself and left the room in complete silence.

“Bafo I feel it is my duty to explain myself to you, I owe you and the whole family an explanation.” He began.

Banzi stared at him. He hasn’t spoken a word since he walked in. He only shouted for MaGumede, whispered whatever it was that he whispered in her ear and kept quiet again.

“When I got into that accident, I was glad that it happened, I thought I had found the easy way out to escape the throne, that being death, but the ancestors had a different plan and got me out of it alive. It just wasn’t my time yet, but that accident wasn’t just an accident, it was

planned.” He drew in a deep breath.

“Do you know who it was?” Banzi asked.

“Will you believe me if I told you.”

“The last thing I need right now is for you to be beating around the bush, you clearly know more than I do.” You can cut the tension with a knife in this room.

“Nontuthuzelo. She paid someone to mess with the car brakes. It was unfortunate that the driver was also intoxicated, but none of us were drunk enough to crash a car.” There was no shock on Banzi’s face.

That worried him. Is this something he knew all along, or is he hiding something.

“Why would my wife do something like that?”
there it is.

“When she told me she was in love with you, and rejected my marriage proposal, she knew

she wouldn't be queen." He saw his brothers
adam's apple up and down.

"Proposal?" his face is losing colour.

This is the truth that was bound to come out at
any time, it's been postponed for too long. He
hates that he had to come back and ruin the
peace.

Mathapelo Moeketsi

I'm running late. The only reason why I agreed
to this lunch is because I have no Christmas
plans. All my friends are married, I have no
family, orphan things chile!

This is why I never understand why children
who had siblings always complained and said
that being an only child is fun, I hate it.

I was shocked by Mr Zulu arriving at my place

at 5 in the morning confessing his apparent feeling to me, the psychologist in me flew out the window. He looked a little drunk too, his eyes were red and maybe that is why he was spewing all the nonsense he was spewing.

I would never date him. I made a deal with myself never to make a mistake of dating my patients. I can't be knowing all your dirt and having a relationship with you. Plus my mental state doesn't allow me to be in a relationship. I'm carrying the burden of so many people, plus my own.

He has shit of his own that he hasn't healed from. His situation is fucked up, he's sleeping with his brother's wife, the same one that happens to be his ex girlfriend. It's a whole lot of things going on that I don't think I would want to associate myself with. He's also not my type.

I'm almost two hours late, I had to do my make

up. I always have to have some sort of face beat because I'm not the prettiest of girls. I've been told quite a few times that I'm not pretty, that I look like a man and that my dark skin doesn't look appealing.

I think I'm going to his place, the location is sending me to a gated community. Scratch that, it's an apartment.

I called him when I got to the gate and the security wouldn't let me in.

"Thandazo." I still wonder why he calls me that. It makes no sense to me

"I'm at the gate, your security won't let me in." I looked at the man. He was wearing a very unfriendly face.

"Give him the phone."

I handed the man my phone. Now his filthy hands were touching it. They were having a conversation in isiZulu, I didn't understand a

single word, but I'm guessing that worked because he open the gate for me and brought back my phone.

There almost two blocks in each building, I can see him standing outside the building with keys in his hand. I park next to his Mercedes. It's no secret that he's rich, he lives in a gated community, has the latest expensive phone, wear brands and wears expensive wrist watches. Oh, he's a scientist.

"Stufuza." He stretched his hands out for me and I just looked at him.

Another reason why I wouldn't date him is the language barrier. I don't understand IsiZulu to save my life. I've only been in KZN for 7 months plus.

"No hug?" he gave me those eyes. I'm not falling for it.

"No Mr Zulu."

“Can you start addressing me by my name please.” He held my waist, my folds and pulled me closer.

I want to tell him to let go of me, I’m uncomfortable.

“You look absolutely gorgeous.” He looked into my eyes.

“Thank you. Can we go inside?”

He lets go of me and leads me inside his not so humble abode. This is a fucking loft. How did he get a loft in South Africa? This man really is rich then!

“Its not much, my chef was off I had to pull everything together.” There’s a table set up and everything.

He said chef. Oh wow, nice life problems.

“Its okay.” I only said that because the aroma is inviting.

One thing about me, I love food, and I love eating. He opened the chair for me and I sat down. He went to his kitchen and came back with some dish. It smells amazing.

“It smells amazing.” I said looking at him.

He has found the way to my heart, my stomach.

“I tried. Hopefully the smell and the taste align.” I chuckled.

I’m still uncomfortable around him. He sat down and told me I could dish up. He kept looking at me.

“What?” he’s probably judging me for the amount of food I’m dishing up for myself.

One thing about me, I’m unapologetic about the amount of food I eat, as well as my weight. I don’t care what people think about me.

“You look beautiful.”

“Thank you.”

I started stuffing my face. The food was exceptional. He outdid.

“Thandazo.” I looked up.

I’ve finally acknowledged that name.

“Uzongiqoma nini?” I gave him a blank expression.

“I don’t understand isiZulu.” He chuckled.

“I want you, and I’m not playing games.”

“I’m not looking for a relationship, especially with you.”

“What’s wrong with me?” he asked holding his chest.

“You are my patient, it’s in my code of conduct not to engage with my patients. It’s called decency.”

“Outside of those office walls you don’t abide by those code of conduct rules.”

“I take my profession very seriously so I will abide by the rules by all means.”

“Ngiyakufuna nje mina. Ngenzenjani?” I looked at him confused again.

“I want you, and I’m going to get you, one way or another.”

“I’m not a prize.” He seduced me with his eyes.

“And if you think I’m going to be a quick fuck then you are mistaken.”

“Okay, what do you want me to do to prove to you that I actually am serious about pursuing a relationship with you?” he’s not giving up.

I’m dealing with a typical Zulu man, I’ve been told they are stubborn and persistent.

“Nothing. I don’t want you.”

He stood up and strutted towards me and took my hands. He helped me stand up, held my waist and pulled me close. He always puts his

hands there, it's weird.

He captured my lips and I could taste the sweet and sour sauce of the wings we are eating. His lips are soft, he's making me feeling a foreign feeling. I haven't been touched by a man in a long time. He's a good kisser.

But I'm pushing him away. I don't want to give in.

"Please MaMoeketsi." I rolled my eyes.

"How will I know you won't just hut and run?" I asked looking up at him. "I'm not that kind of man baby." I pushed him off me.

"Then you will practice the 90 day rule. If you want to date me, let it purely be about getting to know each other."

He frowned.

"These white people things?"

"Yes, that is the only way you will date me. If you can't, say so now. I'm not obligated to

dating you. You aren't even my type." He laughed.

"Fine. I'll prove to you that it's not just about sex." He's adamant.

I don't know where that came from. This 90 day rule thingy. I've never done it with any man, but there is a first time for everything. I've had a terrible experience with men who just get with me to get in between my thighs.

Chapter Fifty-Seven

Amile Gumede

There are swarms of cars parking in the yard, some are screeching their tyre's and exhausting their engines. I'm guessing the prince's arrival has been announced. This isn't as rosy as I am putting it, this is someone that has risen from

the dead.

I know as a wife I should've been out there in the kitchen slaving off making drinks and snacks for everyone coming in because MaMzobe just came back from the hospital, but I'm locked up in my room. I've only met the in-laws once, and that was on my wedding day. I'm scared of them.

I'm even more afraid of the ghost man and his side kick. She's very creepy with those beads all over her body, and the goat skins on her arms. I'm afraid to even breathe in front of them.

I still need to pucker up the courage to tell someone about the dreams. Someone here in the palace that I can trust. I don't even know who that is. I need to call my mother.

I roll out of bed and go take my phone. I dial her number.

"My baby." She sounds so down.

“Hello mama. Merry Christmas.” It’s not so merry for me.

“Merry Christmas baby. It’s not the same without you.” I sighed.

“I know mama, it’s a mess here, nothing is going well.” I wouldn’t be feeling like this if I was at home with my family. The energy here is so tense. It’s been tense since last night in that throne room.

“What’s going on?”

“The man that I kept having dreams about, he’s back.” The line went dead.

“Who is he? Do you know who he is now.”

“Prince Langaletu.” She drew in a sharp breath. I feel exactly the same.

“So, what does this mean?” I wish I had an answer.

“I haven’t told anyone.” One, two, three...

“Amile how do you expect them to help you get to the bottom of the problem if you don’t tell them. Maybe if you had told Zwelibanzi sooner all of this would be clearer to you, manje awuzwa nawe.” I sighed.

I was expecting that lashing out. My mother is always irrational, but I understand where she is coming from. I’ve been bothering her about this and she’s been pushing me to get help, because only I can help myself by talking to someone, I know can help me, so me keeping quiet frustrates her. It’s just not as easy as she makes it sound, I’ve been told that dreams are very delicate, and I haven’t exactly figured out who and who not to trust here, even Bayede himself. He could’ve been behind his brother murder too.

“It’s not as easy as you make it sound mama.”
Malandela didn’t say anything about it.

"Yini enzima la?"

“He’s here. He told me he has the same dreams of me.”

“So did you tell him about yours?” I drew in a breath.

“I’m scared mama.” She exhaled.

“I don’t know what to say anymore. You are complicating this for yourself. Awufunde ukukhuluma, this thing of yours of keeping quiet is not going to take you. Your life is just going to be stagnant.”

She’s right, my life does feel stagnant. In fact, it feels like I’m moving backwards.

I hear a loud gut-wrenching cry from outside and I jerk up from my chair. It’s a woman’s voice, there is commotion.

“Mama there is something happening outside, let me go see what it is.”

“Tell your husband about the dreams.”

“I will.” I said that to get her off my back.

Bayede is dealing with too much for me to burden him with more. I’m supposed to be his calm within the storm, not adding my own hail and stones.

I threw my phone on the bed without dropping the call. My mind is no longer on the call, but on what is happening outside. I stumble out the door only to meet with MaMzobe dragging her body down the passage too. She’s looking at me.

“What’s going on?” she asked in a hoarse voice. Seems like she just woke up from a deep sleep.

“I don’t know ma. Let me go find out.” My feet carried me through the passage up the stairs to the lounge where almost 8 pairs of eyes turned to look at me.

They seemed to look behind me and I’m guessing MaMzobe is appearing behind me

because prince Langaletu's facial expression changed.

"She's the witch here!?" Balungile charged towards both of us.

One of the princes held her back and she kicked and screamed to be let go. Is she talking about me or MaMzobe?

"This woman needs to leave the Zulu premises bhuti, she tried to kill our brother. Our ancestors turned their backs on us because of her." The husband's eyes are bloodied.

I can't stand to look at the pain on his face. He stood up.

"Mgabadel, take her away." Wait, I missed a whole lot of things, I'm confused.

Bayede walks out the room and leaves a thick atmosphere. Who is being taken away and why?

"Sisi please follow me." He's talking to

MaMzobe who is standing behind me.

What did she do? I am certain that she was not behind Langaletu's death.

"I don't want to manhandle you in your state."
She's moving back with tears running down her face, now I'm crying too.

I don't know why I'm so emotional because I don't know what she did, and where she's being taken away. All I know is she is a good woman, a mother and a wonderful wife.

I look in Langaletu's direction and he's wearing cold expression. His eyes soften when they meet with mine and I fail to maintain eye contact. I look away and follow behind Bayede as MaMzobe is being dragged out by Mgabadeli.

"Bayede!?" I shout running up the stairs, tears are clouding my vision.

There is commotion happening behind me, I don't even want to look back. My mind is

currently focused on making sure the husband is in the right state of mind. He clearly isn't, he would never let his wife be treated like an animal at his command. And what about Mgabadeli?

I banged on the door for him to open for me, but I only heard something smashing against the wall. I hope he doesn't hurt himself in there.

"Leave him alone." It's one of the other Zulu wives, I'm not sure who she's married to though.

"I can't leave him alone, what if he hurts himself." It feels like my eyes are bleeding, they hurt so bad.

I touch my cheeks to check if its still just tears running down my face before I lean against the door of his bedroom and just try to listen to what could be happening on the other side. She's trying to get me to stand up and leave my husband alone but I'm not going to do that.

“I’ll take over from her MaSithole.” His voice spoke.

We both got a startle; I saw her body jerking up before she hastily turned around and left. She’s a city makoti, she’s wearing a 6-inch ombre weave under her doek.

What startled me was hearing his voice and recognizing it so quickly when I’m only used to hearing it in my dreams. What is he taking over?

“Sukuma phansi, uzongenwa amakhaza.” What am I? Three?

He held out his hand for me to hold. I grabbed it and stood up. I straightened my dress and attempted to walk away. I don’t want to be too close to him.

“I’m sorry you had to witness that.”

I don’t know which it is he is apologizing for, but he doesn’t know the agony he has put us through, me alone, and the rest of this family;

before I came, and even more now that he's back.

I just nodded and removed my braids from my face. I need to take these out, they've run its course. He knocked on his brother's door.

"Bafo, let me in, we need to talk." I think he's done enough talking for today.

I'm intrigued in what he has to say, but I also want to make sure my husband is okay. That's me coming to terms with the relationship I have with him, I can finally acknowledge him as mine.

The hinges of the door creaked as he carefully pulled it open. He didn't appear, he just left it open. The one that has risen from the dead signals me to go in first and I fold my arms across my chest before taking gentle footsteps into the bedroom.

It's a mess in here, the bed is unmade, I'm guessing this is where MaMzobe was sleeping,

there is a porcelain vase smashed on the floor, the pieces look very sharp. He's sitting on the ottoman; his eyes are red-rimmed and he's looking at himself in the mirror.

"Bayede." I went to kneel in front of him and lowered my eyes to stare at his feet.

He touched my shoulder and tightened it before his hand started trembling. I lifted my eyes to look at him and he shook his head.

"Don't say that." I held onto his trembling hands and tried to calm him down.

"I'm sorry." I whisper.

I'm sorry for all the things he's going through, I'm sorry that he has to suffer when he has been nothing but a good man to everyone.

He covers my hand with his and I feel a warmth spreading across my body. The bond we've created these past few months is beautiful, and he has grown on me more than any other

human has ever grown on me. I certainly am not in love with him, but I love him, and that won't change.

"Don't leave me too." He whispered.

Words got stuck in my throat when I tried to reply. I knew what I had to say, in fact, I knew what I wanted to say, my voice just couldn't come out.

He placed a gentle kiss on my hand and closed his eyes.

"Don't leave me." He said it again.

I don't know what is making it so hard for me to reassure him that I won't leave when I know deep down in my heart that I don't want to, I don't dream to ever leave him.

Langaletu Zulu

He wanted to talk to Zwelibanzi about MaGumede too, he didn't want to tell him in front of the rest of the family, but she was adamant on staying, that is why he let her in first and just stood at the door to give them space.

This makes it harder to break the news to him, they clearly have a strong bond and having to be the one to want to break it up because he has selfish ancestors is wrong. There has to be another way.

He paces around one spot for a few seconds contemplating what to do before he takes off and storms down the stairs. He finds Thulisile still seated in the same spot, drawing patterns on the mat, humming lowly. She does that a lot, especially when she's alone. It's how she communicates with the spirits.

“MaMfusi.”

“Wena weNdlovu.” She praises.

She gets on her knees and claps twice for him. He does the same and bows a little for her.

“What do you see, is anything going to work out?” he asked with pain in his voice?

“Khuluma noBanzi.” He sinks his fingers into his hair and roughly pulls it.

“I’m here just ruining his life, he was crying in there, now I have to take his wife too?”

“That’s the thing, he took your wife, not the other way around. It’s not your fault that the one for him was a witch.” His heart sinks

“I need to perform the ceremony and officiate your wedding before I go home shlobo. You need to act fast before the palace crumbles.”
Wedding?

“A wedding?”

“Yes. For MaNdlela and Ndabezitha, before you

can marry her.”

He knew that the first duty he had when he came back was to marry MaNdlela and his father, but he didn't know that they needed an actual wedding.

“UMaNdlela uphila kuMaGumede, yingakho uZwelibanzi mengabe emubona, amuthande.” He buried his head in his hands and drew in a deep breath.

He's thinking about all the pain and heartache he's going to cause for his brother, it pains him too. How can ancestors just favour him only when both of them were raised to be kings?

“Where did they go?” he asked.

He's referring to the rest of his family.

“Outside.” She replied.

He excused himself and walked out. He stood on the porch and overlooked the land as he as

his brother's cars driving out. They didn't breathe a single word, they just sat there gawking at him like he was a ghost, now they are leaving.

Ntombizodwa collapsed at the door before she even spoke, and she was rushed home by her other sisters, leaving just loudmouth Balungile. She's still the same girl he knew her as, lazy and talkative. That's why she's unmarried, no one wants a loud woman.

His mothers didn't come, he's glad they didn't, otherwise they all would've died on the spot. He sticks his hands in his pockets and admires the fresh afternoon breeze. The land looks healthy, the infrastructure is not as bad as it was when they were growing up, but it could be better. Zweli has done a good job-he thinks to himself. "It all belongs to you." He turns around and see nothing.

He looks up and sees the clouds gathering up in the sky and it quickly turns pitch black.

“Sithuli sika Ndaba.” The voice again.

He descends the stairs, and the rain starts pouring down on him. He’s soaked in seconds, that’s how heavy it is. He’s back home, this is his official welcome. Maybe now he can begin thinking about talking to his brother. At least he’s gotten rid of one of the many thorns, Nontuthuzelo deserves to rot in jail, for breaking his heart and failing to kill him. He wouldn’t be here if she wasn’t incompetent.

He lifts his hands in the air and lets out a deep throat howl that almost threatens to shake the whole of Zulu land.

Chapter Fifty-Eight

Langaletu Zulu

He's standing in front of his room, standing face to face with the door, skeptical about knocking and disturbing the peace. But he heard Thulisile loud and clear, he needs to do this now.

He was drenched in rainwater, he had to dry off first, and she was the one who helped him, now he's standing here contemplating on a way to break the news to him.

He knocks; twice before he feels shuffling in the room. It goes quiet again before he knocks again and opens the door slightly. He knows never to do this. You don't let yourself into another man's bedroom, never! That is the biggest form of disrespect, especially a married man.

They are cuddling on the bed. She is safely tucked in his arms sleeping peacefully with her

mouth slightly open. He on the other hand is wide awake, staring at him.

“Mageba, bengisacela uk'luma indlebe ngala ehhovisi.” He rubbed his hands together as he felt a cold chill run down his spine.

He is more nervous than he thought he would be. That and the cold of his skin from standing in the rain for too long.

He removed her head from his chest and carefully placed her on the fluffy pillow next to him. He stood up and put on his slippers before dragging himself out the bedroom.

Langa led the way, and when they passed the passage, he looked at Thulisile and pleaded with her to come using his eyes. She got up from the mat, rolled it up and followed behind him. Banzi opened the door to the study and led them in. Thuli laid her mat while both of them settled on the couch. The look on Banzi's face

screamed uninterested, and that was hint enough to Langa that he must start talking.

“I’m sorry about Nontuthu.” Banzi’s face remained expressionless.

He’s not saying anything. He has his chin resting on his palm staring at him.

“When Mhlaba died, we both knew that we had responsibilities, I had to get married and you had to marry him with MaNdlela. None of those things happened because I was a coward I ran away and let the problems accumulate only for you to solve, and that was selfish of me, my sincerest apologies Mageba.” He rubbed his sweaty palms together.

“I came back because I’m sick. The years have gone by and death is knocking at my door, I have to fix things before I succumb to it and leave the palace is shambles.” An expression on Banzi’s face.

It looks like worry, but he's not peeping a word, he's just staring at him. It's a sign for him to continue.

"I have a wife, she was given to me by the ancestors and in my death she will be the only one who can take the throne."

"Have you found her?" he asks staring at him.

He clears his throat.

"Yes, I have." Relief spread across Banzi's face. Too soon brother.

"And you will reclaim your throne?" he asked looking at him dead in the eyes.

He cleared his throat and broke the eye contact. It's as clear as day that Banzi doesn't want the throne. Both of them never wanted it, that's why Langa thought hiding was the best option. Now it's all back firing on him and it's causing a ripple effect.

“I should, but not without MaGumede.” He chocked.

It didn't occur to Banzi quick enough because he gave a response.

“And when will this be?” Langa clears his throat.

There are a lot of Gumede's out there, it can't possibly be the same one he shares a bed with, the one he loves.

“Not my MaGumede right?” he lifted his head when it dawned to him.

Langa looked away and scratched his neck.

“Mageba ngiphendule, awuzile la ukuzobhidliza umuzi wami.”

He hesitated a bit before conjuring up the right words to answer his brother who now had his bottom lip trembling.

“I wish it wasn't the case Ndabezitha. I'm sorry...” Banzi got up from his seat.

All this time Thuli was drawing patterns on her mat using her finger, humming lowly.

“Does she know this?” his eyes are runny.

“No, she doesn’t.” he felt a stabbing pain in his heart.

He held onto his chest and bent down. Thuli broke out of her trance and got up. Banzi stood there frozen, not knowing what was happening.

“Calm down shlobo.” He grunts in pain and balls his hand in a fist and bangs his thigh.

His heart rate is increasing by the second and if he doesn’t breathe, he might end up having a heart attack.

“And what about the love I have for her? What am I supposed to do with it?”

He winces in pain as the question goes straight to his heart. Banzi doesn’t wait for his response, he storms out the office, banging the door

behind him. Langa lies back on the couch and cries out in agony. He tries to exercise his breathing but it's equivalent to throwing water on a duck's back.

Thuli goes on her knees and starts appeasing the ancestors, calls out to them since she doesn't have incense on her that she can light. That was the only thing that used to help.

"Siyabonga boNdaba, Sthuli sika Nkombane."
She cupped her hands and clapped.

He joined her when he felt himself regaining his strength. When he had recovered, he sat up and Thuli knelt in front of him.

"You need to go to a hospital." She said placing her hand on his knee cap.

"I'll go." He said in a breathy voice.

"You've been saying that." She argues.

"Once I've sorted everything out Shlobo,

okwamanje, ngisabhekene nezinkinga zomuzi wami.” He didn’t waste any time, he stood up and found his way out the office.

It’s late now, he wants to rest, but he’s far from being done. Banzi’s reaction is just how he imagined it would be, yet he still doesn’t know what to do.

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He knew he would find him in his bedroom. He let himself in once again and found his brother sitting on the chair staring at MaGumede peacefully sleeping. His back was turned to him so he couldn’t see his facial expression, but judging from the way he was slouching, he was unhappy.

He heard him break into a sob and saw his shoulders bouncing up and down. He felt a

gaping hole in his chest when he heard that sound. Nothing hurts more than hearing a sound like this, a man crying, giving up and giving in to circumstances that can't change.

He moved in and touched his shoulder and squeezed it.

"There has to be another option bafo." for the first time since he came back, he acknowledges him as his brother.

He buries his head on his thighs and stifles a sob.

"I'm so sorry that it had to be her, I wish there was another way." he's never been good with words of comfort, he feels like kicking himself in the hind.

He gives Banzi his moment and just casts his eyes on the sleeping beauty. She looks perfect, he's mesmerized by the fact that she can just sleep through bold voices having conversations

and sobs. She's really knocked out.

"So how is it going to work?" Banzi asks after a long shot of awkward silence.

"Thulisile will take us through the process, and you have to slaughter a cow to cleanse me." he let out a shaky breath.

"And will you tell her?" he rubbed his nose bridge.

"Would it be too much of me to ask you to do it?" Banzi turned.

"It would." he nodded and looked away.

He's handling this as manly as he should, but it's taking a toll on him.

"I'll talk to her." he said and placed his hands inside his pockets.

Banzi stood up from the chair.

"Thank you for ruining my life." he said tapping him on the should and looking at him in the

eyes.

He could maintain the eye contact so he looked down and listened to his footsteps as they slowly faded away.

He slowly settled on the seat he was just in and sat staring at her the same way his brother just did. Only this time, she fluttered open her eyelids. Her brown eyes bore into his and he looked away in embarrassment. She sat up in a haste and scanned the room.

“Where is my husband?” she asked holding in a yawn.

“I need to talk to you about something important.”

“Okay, but where is my husband?” she asked again.

“Banzi is out getting some air.” she removed the cover and attempted to stand up.

“MaGumede, please sit, I have to talk to you.”
she sulked and folded her arms across her chest impatiently.

“I know you’ve seen me in your dreams and over and over again you dreamt about a snake. I need you to be honest with me.”

“If you know then why are you asking me?” she answered with attitude.

He raised an eyebrow at her and she suddenly dropped her attitude, along with the folded arms.

“Do you know what all of those dreams mean?” she shook her head no.

She’s gone mute, he thinks to himself.

“Zwelibanzi’s mother was the first wife, Mhlabawesizwe’s first wife, but he never married her fully. MaNdlela lives inside of you and as the rightful king, it is my duty to marry MaNdlela and Mhlabawesizwe.” her face

changed.

“The reason you are here is because this is home. The ancestors brought you here and now I have to fulfil my duty, that is why I am back.”

“None of what you have said to me makes sense.” she holds her mouth and stares at him.

“You are my wife, in order for the palace to be restored to it’s former peace, I have to be ordained as king but before that, I have to marry my queen, and that is you.”

“No, you are making a mistake. Bayede is the king.” he sighed

“He was wrongfully put on the throne. If I had really passed away, it would’ve been his job to find you and you take over. This kingdom is yours.” he lowered his head as if he wasn’t proud of that statement.

He definitely understands that this is too much of a burden for a 17 year old to bear all by

herself.

“Why me, why not MaMzobe? Why would the ancestors choose me, knowing very well that I’m married to your brother? This so called MaNdlela, why would she choose someone else’s son and not hers.” tears cascade down her face.

“I’m sorry MaGumede, I know all of this is unfair on you...”

“You didn’t answer my question, why me?” he scratched his head.

“I don’t know.” he’s been looking for the answer himself.

“How do I know you didn’t bewitch me?” she stands and moves away from him.

He stands too and tries to follow her.

“Stay away from me.” she pointed a hand at him.

Her body started shaking before she held onto

her knees and let out a shrill cry.

“Ngikhathele! Why is it me!?” she starts hyperventilating.

Now he regrets doing this, he regrets coming back. Had he not, he would’ve spared her this heartache.

He goes to her and tries to hold her but she pushes him away and starts slamming her fists on his chest.

“I hate you; all of you and your bloody family and selfish ancestors! I hate all of you!” she screams until her voice runs dry.

He doesn’t stop her, he lets her have her moment. It’s painful to watch, but there is not much he can do himself.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She's lying on the cold floor sobbing. Mgabadeli was given strict instruction to not leave her side not matter what, but the main aim here is to teach her a lesson. She's holding her stomach feeling a sharp pain in her lower abdomen, she doesn't even have the strength to fake it.

"Paul help me!" she shouts trying to get on her knees.

"If you don't help me now, I promise I'm going to make sure you and your family suffer for the rest of your lives..." she cried clutching on to her bump.

"Do you forget that you are on my payroll?" she still has the nerve to threaten him.

He shakes his head looking at her.

"I'm here doing my job and following orders ma'am." he folds his arms across his chest.

She lies back on the mattress feeling defeated. The pain slowly subsides and she turns to lie on

her side. She continues to sob.

“I’m hungry.” she cries.

He ignores her once again.

“Tell Zwelibanzi that his baby is going to die if he doesn’t come here.” she’s run out of threats at this point, but she see’s the expression on Mgabadeli’s face and knows that she’s won.

He got up and disappeared down the passage. She regrets everything that happened, that is quite definite, but she has to defend her honour.

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Someone was breathing down her neck. She startled and sat up, inhaling his strong scent. When her eyes opened, she quickly jumped on him, held onto him tightly and started crying.

“I knew you would come back for me Mageba,

thank you.” she was too excited to realize that he wasn’t reciprocating.

He just continued to breathe out loudly, giving her the cold shoulder.

“Can we go home so you can tell me it was all a terrible nightmare sthandwa sami, that it’s just the two of us, no MaGumede, no new baby, no Langaletu, just me and you.”

He slowly pushed her off and stood up, dusted his pants and folded his arms across his chest and looked down at her.

“You never loved me...” she stumbled to her feet.

“I did Mageba, I loved you, I still love you...” he silenced her with his hand.

“A woman who claims to love a man would never even dream of doing half the things you have done to me.” she got on her knees and held onto his legs.

“Banzi, please you have to believe me. Whatever poison they fed to you about me, it’s not true. Langa was being spiteful because I chose you over him, you are the one I love.” he moved his legs.

“Zwelibanzi don’t do this to me, please.” she cried, staining his pants with tears.

He tried to free his legs but she held on tighter.

“Whatever it is that we have, or used to have, is over. You can keep your kingdom, it’s all you ever wanted. Stay away from my children, and you can keep that bastard in that rotten body of yours.” he turned to walk away but she grabbed onto him.

“Zwelibanzi please! Just listen!” she lay on her stomach and let him drag her on the floor and he walked away.

She continued to scream and cry from the pain in her heart and in her stomach. Eventually, she

decided to let go because her screams could not get through to him.

“I’m sorry my love.” she said in a hushed voice.

He was long gone by then, she slowly fell into a state of unconsciousness.

Chapter Fifty-Nine

Amile Gumedede

My only crime was choosing to wake up so I could wake up to nonsense like this. Is it not enough that I had a terrible dream that I thought I could escape by waking up? I don’t want to live this life anymore.

He tried chasing me down the stairs but I was too fast for him because I could hear him panting at the bottom of the staircase as I bolted out the palace door.

I'm also running out of breath as my feet carry me out the hell hole. It feels like I'm having deja vu. This has happened and the last time it happened, things didn't end up in my favour.

I stop just outside the gate to catch my breath, suddenly feeling like I'm unfit. The tears that had dried up on my face get wet all over again as I stand listening to my heart pounding against my ribcage and in my ears.

Is there really a reason for me to be trying to do this when I know that it is futile. They will find me, everyone in the place knows me, there is no where I can run to and find safety.

I sink down in the middle of the road feeling defeated and just let out the lump stuck in my throat.

It would make much more sense to wake up and find out that this is still the nightmare, that at least Langaletu is dead and he's not coming

back. Just when I had gotten over the fact Nkosi will never be mine and I was starting to embrace Bayede as my husband, this happens. What do they want from me, whatever did I do to deserve such pain and heartache. I'm barely an adult, but I have suffered at a level most adults have never suffered.

I sink my head onto my palms and stifle a sob. I feel hands on my sides picking me up and I look up to see Bayede. My heart almost bulldozes my chest from the excitement.

I get up and throw myself in his arms and I let it all out. He holds me and I feel a gaping whole in my heart. I should be feeling safe in his arms, not this.

"I don't want to Bayede, I don't want to let you go, not like this." I sobbed.

He didn't speak, he just held me up and dragged me towards the car that was parked on the

pavement.

“I’m sorry MaGumede, I’m sorry.” I gripped onto his shirt and clung onto him as tightly as I could, taking in his scent, everything about him.

Amongst other problems that will come with me having to separate from Bayede to Langaletu, now I will officially be the Zulu bicycle, jumping from one brother to another. It’s my reputation, self-respect and dignity flushed down the drain. I’m climbing up the ladder, from the last born, to the second, to the patriarch. What about isidima sami?

He helped me settle inside the car and buckled me up before he went to his side and started the car. He’s not driving back to the palace, he’s driving away. I feel like I’m in a getaway car in a movie where a couple elopes to get married. The only difference in this instance is this actually my husband, and there is nothing wrong with us running away.

Did I ever imagine to have these feelings for him three months ago? No, I never anticipated it. I've grown accustomed to being around him, I don't think I will be able to adjust to yet another man. It all darts back to isidima.

I'm not thinking straight at this point, all I can think about is getting away and maybe he will come up with a better solution, the further we are away from the palace, and anything that has to do with the Zulu's, the better.

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I can feel someone shaking me. I open my eyes and realize that I'm still in the car. I sit up only to meet with his slanted brown eyes. I feel emotional all over again.

"Where are we?" I ask stretching my tired limbs.

“Ulundi.” that’s almost an hour away from the palace.

“What’s the plan now?” he grabs both my hands and holds them tightly

“I don’t know.” I look into his eyes and all I see is hurting.

I place my hands on his face and bring him closer to mine. I closed my eyes and rested my forehead on his. I felt his thumb sweeping over my cheek and I realized that I was shedding tears.

“I don’t want to do this.” he held me in his embrace and I buried my head in the crevice of his shoulder.

It all feels too heavy for me to carry. Not now when I’ve dedicated my whole life and soul to this man, now I have to give myself to another one, it’s too much.

“You don’t have to sthandwa sami. Let’s go, it

can just be the two of us.”

Not only am I losing a peaceful life, but he’s also lost so much, the throne, and both his wives. Basically all the things he has worked tirelessly for.

He got out of the car and he came to my side to open for me. I climbed out and followed him to the front door. Its a beautiful house, quite massive if you ask me. I don’t want to ask too many questions, I just want to be with him in harmony, it might be the last time.

He carried me bridal style through the door and he led me up the stairs, I’m guessing to the main bedroom. I can’t shake off the feeling that something bad is going to happen. I can feel it in the pit of my stomach.

He placed me on the bed and he got in next to me. I snuggled on his chest and held onto him as tightly as I could. I took in his scent and

closed my eyes.

“Why didn’t you tell me about the dreams?” he asked in a low voice.

“I was afraid of something like this happening.” that and not having trusted anyone with them.

“Do you love me Amile?” I shifted my head to look up at him.

I’m hesitant. It’s easier to say it in my head. I do love him, but how do I explain the exact feeling I feel.

“I do Baye...” I stopped midway. I guess that’s not the correct term to use.

“Banzi.” he corrected.

I sighed. It feels weird calling him by name. This man technically is almost thrice my age. It’s too late for me to be saying all of this, but I want to maintain that respect for him.

“I love you, and appreciate the things you’ve

done for me.” my heart almost leapt out of my mouth.

“I’ve lost everything. I have nothing to live for.” a cold chill ran down my back when he said that.

I snuggled even closer and wrapped my arms around his body.

“Don’t say that, please, take back those words. You have me, you’ll always have me. You have me, your children and your brother, we need you. You have us to live for.” he sighed.

“Are you hungry?” I hate that he’s talking like this.

“No, I’m not.” he rubbed my back.

“Sleep.”

It’s already morning. The sun has risen and life is beginning for people yet he’s telling me to sleep.

“Don’t go.” I said placing my hand on his chest.

I felt his heart beating.

“I won’t.” I drew in a deep breath before I closed my eyes to get some rest.

Langaletu Zulu

“Wabuka nawe shlobo ebaleka?” Thulisile asks scanning the area.

“What was I supposed to do, run after her. You know very well that my heart can’t take that.” he buried his head in his hands.

“We have to find her and Banzi has to come back.”

He got a lightbulb moment and looked up.

“Maybe they are together wherever they are.” he said staring at her.

“Is this a movie?”

“Come on shlobo, be realistic. These people love each other, they won’t just separate because we told them to.”

He stood up and grabbed the keys off the table.

“You haven't had a wink of sleep shlobo.”

“Sleep is the last thing on my mind.” he said as he jogged to the door.

He was about to climb in the driver’s seat when one of Banzi’s cars sped into the yard and parked him in. He got out in a haste and went to attend to his brother.

He was disappointed to see his driver and bodyguard, Mgabadeli. But panic was written all over his face.

“My Prince, the queen has been admitted to hospital, I’ve been trying to get a hold of uMageba to no avail.”

“Was he not with you?”

“No sir, he gave me strict instructions not to leave her side. But now I was forced to come here and look for him.” he’s huffing and puffing.

He really doesn’t care what happens to Nontuthuzelo, but Banzi loves her, so he has to do something.

“Go back to the hospital, I’m going to go look for Banzi.”

He bowed before getting in the car and driving off. When he turned, he saw Thulisile standing on the porch staring at him with arms folded across her chest.

“Where is Banzi?” he asks her.

“You know I don’t have superpowers right.” only when it suits her she doesn’t.

“Nontuthu is in hospital.” he announces.

He speed walks to the car, Thuli meets him halfway.

“And why are you worried?” she asks with no hint of interest on her face.

“She’s pregnant, she can’t be in and out of hospital.” she raised an eyebrow.

“Don’t tell me you still love her.” he sighed.

“No, I don’t. She’s my brother’s wife and he loves her, I have to make sure she’s okay, for him.” she shook her head in disbelief.

“Manje what are you planning on doing?”

“I’m going to look for Banzi.” he said getting in the driver’s seat.

“You can’t drive remember.” it’s not because he can’t, it’s just that he hasn’t done it in a long time, and his heart condition doesn’t let him drive alone.

He won’t fight her about it. He gets out the drivers seat and goes to the passenger.

“So where are we looking first?” she said as she

started the car.

“MaNdlela’s house up the road.”

She didn’t dispute.

Amile Gumede

I’m still lying on his chest. I can feel the warmth of his skin against my face. I exhale before fluttering open my eyelids and holding him tighter. I felt his soft lips on my forehead.

“I’m still here.” I did have fear that I would wake up to him gone.

That was a very peaceful nap, I didn’t realize I was that tired.

The sun is shining into the room through the curtains, bouncing off my skin, giving me a golden glow. It’s nice and warm, along with his skin. I love it here.

“Why isn’t it you?” I asked feeling tears running down my cheek. I wipe it off and sniff away the snot.

“I wish I had an answer for you sthandwa sami.”

“She’s your mom, why would she choose another woman’s son and not hers?” he exhaled, his breath fanning my face.

“Because we had a rocky relationship. My mother died on anti-depressants, fighting depression that was put upon her by Mhlabawesizwe...”

He never refers to the late king as his father, the same way Mandlenkosi didn’t. I understand why Mandlenkosi would, not him. And I didn’t know that their mother was depressed, Mandlenkosi never mentioned it.

“My mother was his first wife, but he went on to impregnate another woman before her, hence Langaletu is the first born. He didn’t stop there,

he married two other women after that without my mother's knowledge and consent. He didn't notice, not even once that she was depressed, and I had to suffer the consequences of his actions, I had to be on the receiving end of her depression while he received a smile and open arms, making it seem like I'm the terrible child." that's a lot to take in.

It's crazy because this is exactly how Mandlenkosi felt about his father, at least he had his mom. Banzi had no one but himself.

"She would apologize on her good days, and say it's because I looked like him and reminded her so much of him. I didn't hate her, she was my mother, I forced myself to understand even when I couldn't."

"Did you ever heal from that?" I ask.

"I thought I did. I thought I did right by treating Nontuthuzelo right and giving her my undying

love, the love my father never gave my mother. Now I realize I was a fool.” I shook my head.

“She loves you, no matter what happened, she loves you. You are an amazing man, and a wonderful husband. I appreciate you.”

“But I’ve failed Amile, just like everyone was expecting me to. I’ve even failed my brother, our relationship is on the rocks because of me.”

I exhaled. I have a mouthful to say about Mandlenkosi, but where would I begin to explain how I know. I don’t want to break his heart like that.

“Maybe if you open up to him like you just did to me, you might find out that both of you are very similar.” he kept quiet.

Before he could reply, I heard a door, voices and footsteps.

“Do you hear that?” he asked sitting up.

“I did.” he got off the bed.

I started panicking. Who could it be, how did they find us so soon?

“Stay here, I’ll go look.” I haven’t spent enough time with him.

I sat on the bed and folded myself up into a ball on the bed, rocking myself back and forth.

I heard two bold voices, one belongs to Bayede, Banzi I mean. The door creaks open and I look up to see who it is. It’s the creepy sangoma woman. She walked well into the room and came to kneel on the side Banzi was sleeping on.

“MaGumede.” I kept quiet.

Does she not understand that her and her ghost friend have come here to ruin my life.

“Likhulu ijoko othweswe lona, liyasinda ngiyazi, kodwa akekho umuntu oyimbokodo njengawe.

Your father named you Amile for a reason, he knew that you would do great things, that you would lead, wayazi ukuthi uzowumisa umuzi wakwaZulu, ume unganyakaziseki, njengwe. I believe in you, your father believes in you, your ancestors as well; you just need to believe in yourself too.”

I close my eyes and pictures of that dream where I stood in that white dress and white head gear holding that spear in my hand flashed like a movie right in front of my eyes. I felt tears trickling down my cheeks like a waterfall. I never said I wanted any of this. I never asked for it.

“Ndlunkulu.” she clapped twice before she stood up and walked out the room.

Chapter Sixty

Narrated

“How did you find me?” Banzi asked as he charged down the stairs.

Thulisile stood beside his tall figure looking at Banzi as he walked down the stairs in outrage.

“I figured. Bhuti, you need to come back home so we can deal with this accordingly.”

“Easy for you to say, you are here to claim my life and you are leaving me with nothing.”

“That’s why we need to talk things through, find common ground.” Banzi sighs.

Being angry is not in his nature, that’s why he feels like he’s fighting a losing battle.

Langa signaled Thuli to go look for Amile while he asks Banzi to calm down so they can speak.

“MaMzobe has been admitted to hospital, Mgabadeli has been trying to get a hold of you.” he said in a soft voice.

“I don’t care about Nontuthuzelo.” Langa could see that he was faking it, you could see it in his eyes.

“You might not care about her bhuti but she’s carrying Zulu blood, your blood and that should be your priority right now. I urge you, please go see her, make sure that she’s okay. I’ll give you time, both you and MaGumede, just make sure the child is okay.”

Banzi put his hand on his face and wiped it gradually, creasing his nose.

“Ngiyacela bhuti.” Banzi pleaded.

He turned and walked back upstairs to the bedroom where he was. He ran into Thuli just about to open the door. He walked past her without acknowledging her presence. Their hands touched when he made his way past her, and that seemed to evoke an emotion inside of her. She started chanting and burping.

He stopped in his tracks and looked at her.

“Qaphela.” she said to him, looking at him in the pupils.

His dilated.

“Qaphela.” she said again.

He moved away feeling frightened before he disappeared into the room.

He found Amile balled up and foetal position, rocking herself back and forth, sobbing lowly. His heart broke and he felt useless for not knowing what to do.

“He’s here.” he chocked.

Her sobs got a little louder.

“MaMzobe is in hospital and he asked me to go see her.” she sat up and wiped her tears.

“Go see her. Go make sure the baby is okay.” he looked at her for reassurance.

She nodded and got off the bed to go give him a tight squeeze. She wrapped her arms around his neck and held him tightly.

“I love you so much MaGumede.” he said in a firm voice. He’s holding himself together.

“I love you too Zulu.” she sniffed.

They broke the hug and stared at each other for a while before he planted a soft kiss on her forehead.

He went to grab his jacket off the chair and walked out the room without looking back...

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It took a lot to convince Amile to go back with them to Zululand without Banzi there with them.

She’s curled up in a ball in the back sobbing.

She feels an extreme feeling of hatred towards

Langa for putting her through so much, especially now that she grown so used to being with Banzi, and learning how to love him.

Langa on the other hand is feeling an intense amount of pain in his jaw and has a gaping hole in his stomach. He can't seem to shake it, he's been feeling like this since they left Ulundi.

They are a 20 minutes away from Zululand. It has been the most silent drive ever, no sound of the radio, just Amile's sobs and sniffs every other interval.

There is an accident on the road, there are a few cars parked on the side of the road inspecting the scene, causing unnecessary traffic. Thuli maneuvers through it successfully but when Langa inspects it through the window, he see's a familiar vehicle.

His heart leaps.

"Thuli stop the car." she's also looking around

trying to find a spot to stop so she doesn't block oncoming cars, but Langa isn't hearing any of that.

"I said stop the car!" he shouts unintentionally.

He knows that she doesn't appreciate noise, but he's not thinking straight, his eyes are deceiving him.

Amile sits up to see what the commotion is about. She looks out the window and watches as Langa sprints to the accident scene. With a hoarse voice, she asks: "What's going on?"

Thuli doesn't reply, she just grips onto the steering wheel and takes a deep breath in.

Now her interest has peaked. She's trying to peek from the back seat but she isn't seeing anything. She gets a peek of the car in question, it's the flaming red Jaguar, she knows it all too well. Even in an unrecognizable state.

"Banzi." that's the only thing she says before

she tries to open the door but it's not opening.

"Open this door, that's my husband's car!" she shouts at Thuli who just sits still without moving.

She's getting hysterical and starts banging the window. In a panic she dives to the front to try and open the door and after succeeding, she leaps out the car in a panic, not even minding the glass on the road. She's barefoot and they are cutting through her sensitive feet as she jolts to the accident scene.

"I need you to let me through, that's my brother there!" Langa is being restrained by police.

When Amile appears behind him, the police immediately recognized her and bowed. That seemed to fuel her anger.

"Is that my husband lying there?" she asks in a breaking voice.

The paramedics are attending to a body.

“We are not sure my queen.”

“Then let me through so I can identify him.” she shouts.

It gets through to them because they let both her and Langa through. As they get closer they see the body being covered in the foil, the person has been pronounced dead.

The first thing Amile sees lying on the side of the road is his tooth necklace. She feels a stabbing pain in her heart before she lets out a shrill, heart piercing cry.

“No, no, no, take that thing off!” she runs to the corpse.

Langa stands the frozen on the spot feeling a cold shiver run through his body.

They give her space and she goes to uncover the foil.

He’s not breathing, there’s blood all over his

face and his clothes. If it wasn't for the blood, you'd swear he was sleeping.

"Bayede no, you have to wake up, wake up!" she shakes him as she grips onto his body and screams.

"Do something! Bring him back! Do something, he's not breathing!"

Everyone who was on the scene took off whatever hat they were wearing and got on their knees in sign of respect.

Mandlenkosi Zulu

He knows he should be home at this time, this is a time to be spent with family. Even Jama is in Zululand and he's here in his bachelor pad enjoying the serenity. He also doesn't want to be too far from Mathapelo.

Deep down in his heart of hearts though, he knows the reason he's avoiding going home, the amount of drama he left behind has surely spread like wildfire, and because no one has called him yet, he's safe.

He's made plans for him and Mathapelo, this is the wooing stage where he has to prove himself worthy of her love, so he's doing all he can.

Another thing that he loves about her is that she may think she's smart, but she's actually very clueless. She doesn't even know his title, or better yet, the importance of the title itself. He likes that.

She's also playing hard to get, he likes a challenge. It's a good distraction for him, he's keeping his mind occupied and hopefully, he'll fall in love with her soon enough. For now, he's just attracted to her.

He just came back from the gym, he hasn't

been in a while because he hasn't been taking care of himself.

It's been tragic for the past three months and as the new year approaches, he hopes to start it on a clean slate, no problems, no heartache, just focusing on himself, his body and his career. And potentially building a better relationship with his brother. Now that he has a slight idea of how he feels about their childhood, and how they were raised, he's open to the idea of getting to know him on a deeper level, not judging that is on the outside.

He hits the shower and when he finishes, he goes to the kitchen to make himself something to eat. Mathapelo is coming over in a few, he thinks to himself, so he needs to make haste.

He can't stop thinking about his brothers, more especially Banzi and the allegations he made towards MaMzobe. He can't wrap his head around it. It doesn't make sense to him;

MaMzobe would never do such a thing. She's as kind as could be, she could never plot to kill anyone, especially a family member. What did she gain from attempting to kill Langaletu? The throne? What's so special about it?

His phone disturbs his thoughts and he picks it up without checking the caller ID.

"Zulu hello." he answers.

"Mr Zulu, I'm outside." it's her.

"I'm coming." he drops everything he's doing and sprints to the door.

He hates that she's still calling Mr Zulu, but he understands that she struggles with the language. He finds her standing next to her car with her arms folded across her chest. She's looks gorgeous, he thinks to himself. She's dressed accordingly for the day ahead, comfortable and sexy.

He opens his arms for a hug and she hesitantly

agrees. He hears her inhaling his scent and he knows that he's done something right.

"You look sexy." he says.

She moves away from him, feeling a tad bit uncomfortable. Even he can see it on her face.

He leads the way to the apartment and she follows him, only the sound of her heels causing an echo in the lobby. When they get to the apartment, he asks her to make herself comfortable in the lounge.

He goes back to the kitchen and he checks his phone. He has several missed calls from Jama and when he tries to get back to him, he doesn't answer.

"Must I make you something to eat?" he asks the lady in question.

"No thank you." she replies.

He makes both of them drinks and he finds his

way back to the lounge. She's glued on her phone she doesn't even look up to see him approaching.

"Thank you." she says without looking up.

"What's got you so intrigued." he asks digging into his sandwich.

She looks up and she suddenly craves it.

"An accident. Apparently the king of Kwa-Zulu Natal was involved. I didn't know we still believed in kings." she said going back to her screen.

"King?" he chocked.

"Turn on the news." he dumped the plate on the table and scrambled for the remote.

His heart is beating out of his chest and his palms are sweating as he tries to fiddle with the remote. He succeeds in turning it on and goes to the news channel.

The first thing he sees is his brother's picture. He feels his heart getting stuck in his throat.

"I think that's him." she said looking in his direction.

"Authorities say it was nearly an accident that was caused by reckless driving. It is unfortunate that it has resulted in the untimely death of KZN's monarch, King Zwelibanzi, just 3 years after the death of his father, the late King Mhlabawesizwe Zulu and the late prince Langaletu..." he switched it off and stood up in a haste.

"Are you okay?" she reads the room.

His hands are shaking, he's hoping that what he's hearing is not what it is.

He fetches his phone from the kitchen and calls Jama back. This time he answers and the first thing he hears in the background are uncontrollable screams, heart piercing cries.

“Jama?” he asks with his voice breaking.

“Buya ekhaya Zulu.” that’s all Jama says.

His phone slips out of his hand and crashes on the floor. He sinks down along with it and stifles a sob as he feels a stabbing pain in his heart.

“Mr Zulu.” Mathapelo runs into the kitchen in a haste.

As soon as she puts her hands on his shoulders, he lets out a loud scream.

She doesn’t much, she just rubs his back and comforts him.

Chapter Sixty-One

Amile Gumede

It’s busy around here, but no one is letting me

do anything, they even threatened to lock me up in a room if I don't sit still. They don't understand that I'm just a tip away from losing my mind and the longer I sit still, the closer I am to going crazy, and they don't know crazy if they think that what I've been the past few hours is crazy.

I stopped crying on the scene after they took his body, now the tears just won't come. I'm all over the news, social media, tomorrow I'll probably be on the front page of the newspaper.

And just like that, he decided to leave. He chose the easy way out, and that was death. Although I know he didn't intend to die, he didn't fight for his life, not for the sake of me, or his children. What am I going to tell them, MaMzobe is in hospital, unconscious or so I heard. Why couldn't I be her, she's in a much better situation than I could ever be.

I can still smell him on my skin, just a few hours

ago, we were together in harmony. Lord when I said I wanted to experience him for the last time, I didn't mean you should take him away from me.

The door opens and my mom walks in. I could jump up and run to hug her to show her how happy I am to see a familiar face, but my body feels numb, heavy. I don't think I can move from this bed.

"Hey baby." her eyes are red and puffy, just like mine.

She's holding a tray with a teapot and tea cups. I wonder who told her I'm looking to have a tea party.

I don't peep a word.

"How are you feeling?" she's asking me as if I just healed from a minor flu.

This hurts worse than it did losing that foetus.

“I bought you some chamomile tea to calm you down.” she places it on the chair before she comes to sit next to me.

She holds me and forces me to lay my head on her bosom. I don't know if she's expecting me to cry or what. I can tell she feels helpless, but she's trying to hold herself together, and that's what I need right now, strong people.

“Mama, why me?” I asked removing my head from her bosom.

She tried to make me rest again, but I refused.

“That lady, that man's side kick, she said that my father knew about this. Is it true?” she took in a deep breath and wiped her tears.

“I don't know sthandwa sami. He never told me anything.” I believe her, but I need answers.

“I don't deserve this right?” I asked her.

“You don't my baby.” tears kept streaming down

her face while my eyes are as dry as the Khalahari.

“Then why is it happening to me?” She held my cheeks and looked at me dead in the eyes.

“Because maybe there is something in you that no one has. Something that told the ancestors that you could do it, no one else but you.” she herself doesn’t believe what she is saying.

“And what is that thing mama, being passed from brother to brother like some toy?” she drew in a deep breath.

“What about my feelings? First it was Nkosi, he made me fall in love with him only for him to not fight for our love and he happily passed me down to his brother, now his dead brother is here to claim me from the one I married, as if I haven’t spent the last few months getting to know him, adjusting to life with him. And it’s not like I’m being given a choice in all of this.” she

poured me a cup of tea.

I won't lie, it smelt amazing. She handed me a cup and I took it, inhaling the steamy hot contents.

"I'm sorry my angel, it hurts me to see you suffering like this and I wish I could take all the pain and bear it for you. I just feel so useless." I closed my eyes.

"And what am I supposed to do with all these feelings I have for Banzi? The memories, good and bad? What about that?"

"Don't focus on that now my baby. Just focus on saying goodbye to him, all the other things will follow, just take time and don't rush your healing. I beg of you." I nodded.

She engulfed me in a hug and melted in her arms.

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I'm in that garden again, the fruits look just as beautiful as they did the last time I was here. Only now I know not to dare touch or eat them, no matter how juicy and fresh they look.

I have a white basket with lilies inside. They look beautiful too, but I don't know if I picked them, or I should plant them.

"We should go plant them that side." the voice behind me.

I turn and meet her beautiful face.

"MaNdlela. I'm so glad to see you." I said.

I ran up to throw myself in her arms and she hugged me back. Her hands were so warm, her embrace felt like home.

"Yes, same here my child. I'm so glad you came. But you can't stay for too long." yes, I know that well by now.

"Did your son ever come visit you after that

day?" I asked walking towards the direction she pointed me to so we can plant the flowers.

"He didn't and I'm very sad." I turned to look at her and her face did indeed look unhappy.

"He will come visit one day, I promise you. Just hold on to the faith." she gave me a little smile before she continued walking.

A little boy dressed in baby blue overalls and a white top underneath came skipping towards us. He smiled the biggest smile and greeted looking at me before he passed and went to the woman behind me.

"Mfihlakalo?" she asked lifting him up.

The name triggered something in me. He whispered something in her ear and I saw her face light up immediately. She then put him down and he ran back in the direction he came in.

I looked at her, hoping she would read my mind

and answer my questions.

“He said his father is here.” I looked around.

The excitement on her face cannot be missed.

“Hurry now, we need to plant his flowers before he comes.”

She pulls my hand and she leads me towards the plot of land. It’s very big, quite dull and depressing compared to the rest of this place. I understand why we would want to plant these flowers.

I started planting the flowers and she stood on the side telling where and where not to plant. I’m enjoying this, feeling the soil in my hands, the smell of the earth hitting my nostrils, it’s giving me so much peace. By them time I’m done, the whole place looks healthier, livelier and prettier!

I stand up and go wash my hands on the tap located on the other side of the garden. I

watched the dirt dripping washing off my hands and I saw my hands glistening. They felt and looked so clean, I loved the feel of it.

I raised my eyes and I saw him standing there, his shirt is still drenched in dried up blood. His face also has droplets of blood on it, but it's not as bad as it was when I last saw him. I felt warm tears running down my face as he drew closer and closer.

“Can I also wash my hands?” I stood there speechless.

He crouched down to open the tap and the water, looking so clean, gushed out the tap. He rinsed his hands and the blood washed off leaving his hands squeaky clean. I stood there in awe at the sight of him. He looks handsome, I just wish I could strip him of the bloodied clothes and wipe the blood on his face.

He wet his face with the water and the blood

got washed off. Maybe he's reading my mind. He got up and looked at me. He then removed the shirt, folded it up in a ball and threw it on the ground. I looked at it, then back at him.

My first instinct was to pick it up for him, but when I was about to crouch down and pick it up, MaNdlela's voice behind me stopped me.

"Leave it, I got him a new one." I turned to see her.

She held a neatly folded white shirt on her palm. I took it from her and gave it to him.

"Ngiyabonga MaGumede." he clapped his hands twice before he took it and put it on.

"Ngiyabonga ngokungilungisela indawo yami." he said and looked back to the garden of lilies.

He then looked at his mother briefly before he turned to look at me.

"Ngiyabonga MaGumede." that was MaNdlela.

I felt tears trickling down my face. He stepped closer and wiped my tears with his warm hands.

“We’ll see each other again, when you come back, and maybe you can stay for longer.” but I want to stay forever now that he is here.

“I love you.” I said to him.

I closed my eyes expecting to feel his lips on mine...

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“Bayede!” I sit up feeling something chocking me.

I start to cough hysterically and I feel my throat going dry. The room is dark but the rain is pouring outside with no mercy. Mom left me alone.

I feel the urge to cry and I let the tears go. I cry silently, and hit my head against the pillow as I feel a gap in my heart. I don’t know what it’s

going to take to fill this gap, but he's gone. He's clearly not coming back and he was never meant to be mine. Just when I thought I was getting used to being with him, they take him away from me. I guess this was easier because neither of us was going to be willing to let go knowing very well that the other was still alive and breathing. It's unfair on him, it's unfair that he had to lose his life for dead selfish people who couldn't fulfil their duties while they had the chance to, but it's for the best I guess.

I need to pick myself up. Like Thulisile said, I have a big load on my shoulders, and I need to carry it. I have no time to be crying and weeping, I need to be strong for everyone else, even when I'm not feeling strong. I can't afford to break down now because if I do, everything else will fail. They want a Queen, I will give them a Queen.

Nontuthuzelo Zulu

She's just woken up from a deep sleep. She's in hospital, she can tell from the distinct smell, it's not hard to identify. That and the uncomfortable bed.

She still feels heavily drugged, her head still feels heavy, she's struggling to lift it.

"Mgabadelo?" she asks.

"My queen." he stands and towers over her.

"Why am I here?" he clears his throat and his eyes run in all directions.

"You collapsed ma'am."

"Where is Zwelibanzi, did he come and see me?" he didn't answer.

"Mgabadelo!"

"No ma'am." there is pain all over his face.

She forces her body to sit up although she is feeling an intense amount of pain in her lower back.

“Call him and tell him that he has to come and see me.”

“I’m unable to do that ma’am.”

“Why! Tell him to come!” she raised her voice.

In the back of her mind, and her heart, she can feel something is wrong.

“Paul, please! I’m begging you, get him here please!” tears trickle down her face.

“Mgabadeli, give us some space.”

She looks up and see the last person she was hoping to see. Her heart gets stuck in her throat. Mgabadeli walked out as Langaletu made his way in. He had a beanie on his head and as soon as he stood next to the bed, and she made eye contact with him, she saw how tired he

looked, the red eyes and bags. He looks like an unkempt thug.

“You have inflicted a lot of pain onto the family members of this family, especially your husband. But I’m not here for that, the palace is still your home and you still are part of the Zulu’s therefore you deserve to be there and you deserve to know what is going on.”

“Lethu...” he shook his head.

“Nontuthu, don’t say my name. The doctor will discharge you and Mgabadeli will take you to the palace. KaMalinga will tell you what is going on and will take care of you. Then from there on, your fate will be decided.” he spoke very softly.

“Tell me what is going on.” her voice broke.

“You’ve finally succeeded.” he said, cleared his throat and walked out.

“Langa please! Tell me what’s going on.”

She can't ignore the gaping whole in her heart. She can tell that something is wrong. This man hates her, but the kind of calm he's exercising is proof enough that something is wrong.

Mgabadeli walked back in, dragging his feet, avoiding eye contact at all cost.

At this point she feels hopeless.

"Paul, where is my baby?" she gave pleading eyes.

"The baby didn't make it ma'am."

She's been praying for this day to come but now that it has happened, it feels like the worst day of her life. She still can't shake off the feeling that something is wrong. It's not just the pregnancy, it's something else, and it's her fault.

Chapter Sixty-Two

Langaletu Zulu

His head is throbbing. This is officially the third day in a row and he hasn't had a wink of sleep. He won't call that twenty minute moment of shut-eye sleep because firstly, he was sleeping upright, sitting in Thuli's car. It was extremely cold too and he woke up to a dream of his brother crossing over. It's not something he wants to think of right now, his main priority is making sure he is buried in dignity.

The palace is now filled with family, everybody is here and now everyone has seen him. He's been locked up in the car trying to contemplate how he's going to explain how the hell he got here when they all thought he was dead.

Only his siblings saw him, and they all left without having a talk. It was only about Nontuthuzelo's betrayal, it wasn't about how he's been doing this whole time. Three years isn't exactly a blink of an eye, a lot has changed,

he has changed, and now things have to change again. It's not going to be easy for anyone.

But he can push that back for the next few days and do what he is supposed to do for the sake of his brother, the family and the greedy ancestors. That is only on the condition that they let him, and not treat him like the ghost they think he is. Return soldier from the dead.

The funeral needs to happen tomorrow before the sun rises, that's how it's done here at the Zulu's. Unfortunately, he didn't get to witness his first funeral, he was still half dead. That was probably the closest he was to death and heaven. But before the funeral can happen, he needs to dig out his grave, remove the casket and tombstone, because Banzi can't be buried next to an empty grave.

That is what Banzi was planning on doing before he came along and ruined everything. Now just like he did to him, things are falling

into his hands.

He glances over at the digital clock on the screen and he heaves an audible sigh of exhaustion before getting out of the car and stretching his long limbs. As he strides towards the entrance leading him into the lounge, he can hear distinct voice shouting at each other.

“Banzi was my brother! I will plan his funeral, that’s what he would’ve wanted of me!” he might have not been here, but he can’t and won’t forget Balungile’s loud voice.

Family politics! This is what he didn’t miss about this family; the drama.

“You aren’t fit enough to make those kinds of decisions Balungile. Zwelibanzi was the eldest, therefore the second behind him was...”

Ntombizodwa was cut off.

“Me! It is me! And in case you have a problem differentiating between me and Nomalungelo, I

was born first.”

He can't comprehend why it is KaMalinga's female daughters that are sitting and arguing about taking charge of a funeral when it should be the men of the family, specifically MaNdlela's son; it's not like there is a shortage. It also doesn't make sense why they are here, Mhlabawesizwe would've disciplined them a long time ago.

Silence graced the room when he entered. They all dropped their heads and heavy breathing could be heard from all angles. Khethukuthula was the one who had to decency to stand up.

“Bhuti.” he chocked on the word.

“Mntaka baba.” he appreciated that he still could call him that.

Maybe he was the only mature enough to put all of this past them and deal with the matter at hand, and that was burying Banzi. Family

politics could follow after.

“I went to the hospital last night and told Mgabadeli to bring Nontuthuzelo home, she needs to sit on the mattress. KaMalinga will be the one who will tell her about the ordeal.” he spoke softly, so softly that his voice was barely audible.

But not too softly for Balungile to not hear.

“Not my mother! That witch is not allowed back here when she is the one who killed our brother!” he sighed.

Khethukuthula had a crease on his nose. He looked frustrated and ready to punch a hole through the wall at any minute. Balungile can't close her mouth and she is starting to annoy everyone.

“MaGumede and MaMzobe have to sit on that mattress, whether you like it or not.” Mfanafuthi chimed in.

“Our brother said that she has to go! She was kicked out! Akukho mthakathi na slay queen gold-digger esizohlala lapha...” she was still on a rant when she was interrupted by a sweet voice.

“You are the last one to come here and think you can tell these people what and what not to do when all you know is giving babies that you can’t take care of...” yes her voice is sweet and he is drawn.

“And you think you have a say in anything? Mafikizolo, you are here to chow my brother’s money!” Balungile raised her voice so much that everyone in the room turned to look at her.

Everyone except him of course. He finally turned to face her. She’s wearing a straight face and her arms are crossed across her chest. Her hands are clutched on her arms as if she’s feeling cold.

“You getting yourself into a screaming match with someone you consider a child shows me just how little your brain capacity is. No matter what you say, at the end of the day, MaMzobe and I are the only wives of Zwelibanzi, therefore we have the rights to speak up about what happens to him, not you, not any of you guys because you never cared about him while he was still here. It’s too late to start now when he’s felt alone all his life.” everyone was too stunned to speak.

More than anything, they were shocked by the fact she addressed them so violently in a calm tone. Her words are brutally harsh but true, and they were delivered in a such a respectful manner that if you heard and didn’t listen, you would think it was something good. He is mesmerized.

“You can help around, but don’t take away MaMzobe’s right to bury her husband. Bhuti, I

know you will do everything the way it should be done.” she directed to Khethukuthula.

He nodded and looked down. Balungile got up and stormed out feeling an immense wave of anger. A thick cloud of tension lingered in the room as she turned to walk out.

He was still hypnotized, but he quickly snapped out when she walked away, so he followed behind her, doing a little run before she disappeared down the passage.

“MaGumede!” he called out in a deep hoarse voice.

When she stopped and turned to look at him, she crossed her arms again. This stance of her’s is intimidating, he thinks as he scans her from top to bottom. She’s not dressed like a widow; good.

“Where did you sleep?” she asked, just as he was about to speak.

His heart dropped to the pit of his stomach.

“In Thuli’s car. I didn’t want to invade. I was wondering if you could perhaps give me a spare towel.” he rubbed his head, not knowing what to say.

She looked worried.

“Is this not your home?” she asked arching her eyebrow and tilting her head.

“I just haven’t been here for a while, I don’t know how everyone feels about me, it’s not my place to just feel comfortable like that.” she let her arms down.

He felt a bit relieved when she did that, now he can finally breathe.

“So I’m guessing you also don’t have a change of clothes?” she asked scanning him from top to bottom.

He scratched the back of his neck and looked

away feeling embarrassed. He didn't think this through, coming here. He didn't anticipate to stay here for this long.

"I can give you Banzi's clothes, I don't know if they will fit." she said.

You can't miss the severe pain in her voice. Her eyes are also giving her away, she can't keep them in one place. He sighed heavily. It feels so wrong, although Banzi was his brother, he hasn't been gone for even a day and they are already taking his things. But he's left with no other choice, all he can do is hope that he finds something that will fit him, they have completely different body shapes.

He is tall and skinny, Banzi was a little shorter and bulky; but he'll take whatever he can get. He needs it.

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It's like the tired has just evaporated from his body. When was the last time he had a shower!? The hot water felt good against his skin.

He finds her in the bedroom, laying out the clothes on the bed neatly. They look they were just ironed too, she's gently flattening them using her hand as she stares at them lovingly. Maybe he is asking too much of her.

She sniffs before she turns around and startles to see him.

"I'm sorry, I was just putting these down." she said before she walked to the door.

"Thank you MaGumede." he said and used the towel to wipe the droplets of water falling down his bare chest from his beard.

He's never kept facial hair for this long, it certainly does annoy him to a certain extent, but he doesn't plan on cutting it any time soon.

She nods before she opens the door. As she steps out, she's pushed back in by a hysterical Mandlenkosi.

"Where is my brother!?" his voice is breaking.

When he sees his face, he moves back and observes his facial features. He notices how grown he has become, the last time he saw him he was fairly young. He's grown into himself, no longer that little boy who constantly had problems.

"Nkosi!" Amile held his arms and shook him.

"Uphi uZwelibanzi!?" he's already hysterical.

He just stands there and watches the scene.

Amile backs up against the edge of the bed and her bum slams against the bed. Mandlenkosi falls onto his knees right in front of her and lets out a heart shuddering wail. She pulls him to his bosom and comforts him.

"I'm sorry Nkosi."

He doesn't know what to make up of this sight. There is pain plastered on her face, but no sight of tears.

Makhosazane Mchunu

It's been up and down around the palace the whole day. She can't really get herself to keep still for too long, especially when everyone else is working hard. It's just that her situation doesn't allow her to be out and about like she wants to be. The mood in the palace is sombre, and now it's starting to affect her own. She's more worried about Amile's mental health, she feels like she's not taking care of herself. Just a few weeks ago, she mourned her stillborn, now her husband dies and she finds out that she has to remarry into the same family, just a different brother. It's all too much for someone her age

to handle, she's way too young.

She sets her feet up on the little wooden table and leans back, taking a deep breath, closing her eyes and letting all the tired sink in. Just as she is about to exhale, her phone rings in the crevice of her pocket. She fishes around for it and when she sees his name on the screen, a little, tired smile forms on her face.

"Bhabha." his voice comes through.

"Hi lala." she breathed out. He could not hear it in her voice, but she was happy he called.

"You sound tired, are you taking care of yourself?" he asked, a hint of worry evident in his voice.

"I'm doing the best I can."

"And how are things there, how is our princess?"

"It's bad lala, aside from the family politics and

the heartbreaking cries from men who are supposed to have their shit together, Amile isn't taking it well. Yesterday she was hysterical, she couldn't even keep her eyes closed for a few seconds without bursting into tears. Now, today she just woke up and said she is fine like nothing happened. She hasn't even cried today, and I don't think that's a good thing."

One thing she sincerely appreciates about this man and his presence in her life is that he accepts her child like his own, even when she didn't want him to. He has done a lot for Amile, some things Amile doesn't even know about.

"Why do you say that?" he asks.

"She's bottling things up lala. I would prefer if she cried and continue being hysterical. At least then I would be able to pin point what it is she is feeling. Now I just feel useless when she keeps a straight face that gives away no emotions for me to work with. If she continues to bottle

things up, it will hurt her later.”

“But don’t you think she got over it, and realized that crying won’t make the situation better?”

“Crying for one day, in fact, less than that is not enough ta’ kaSiviwe.”

“You can’t put a time limit on healing sthandwa sam. And you can’t compare the time it takes you to heal, and the way you do it, to the way that she does it. Amile is strong, she has proven that to us on several occasions. Maybe now is just one of those moments.”

She feels a wave of anger washing over her.

“This is what all men say, “she’s strong, she’ll get over it.” it’s absurd of you to draw up a conclusion that she is okay when she herself hasn’t said it, she’s bottling things up! A 17 year old knows nothing about being strong, she’s barely an adult, it’s unfair that so many people expect her to be strong when men with high

testosterone can't do it." he sighed.

"I'm sorry bhabha, I didn't mean to upset you."
she exhales before wiping the tears on her face.

"I think I'll just call you later." he knew better
than to try fight her about it.

She hung up and leaned back on the chair,
filling her diaphragm with sufficient oxygen. She
certainly loves him more than she did during
their first pregnancy, and that's what brought
them together again.

It's been a good three months on their
relationship, she finally thinks she's ready to
give him another chance to try and make her
happy and make her wife, not just an orgasm
recipient and baby making machine.

It's just going to be a long process; them
deciding to get married. A long back and forth
that might end up even posing as a threat to
their relationship. The Gumedes aren't exactly

the best people, they are, after all, the same people who blindly agreed to marry off her only daughter to a man old enough to be her grandfather and ran for the hills with the lobola money thereafter. But she's still a Gumede by law, she married Vumani and took his surname whether she like it or not.

But that is a family of hypocrites and she hopes to never associate herself with them, but she understands that if she wants to marry David, she would have to get permission from them, or better yet, they have to be the ones accepting her lobola money. Mthandeni is going to be wealthy off of them.

In all of it she's still trying to digest the betrayal from Vumani. Yes their relationship was unconventional, there was a major age gap between the two of them, and they only got married out of convenience, but she loved him. She wouldn't have mothered his one and only

daughter if she didn't. It just pains her to know that now that he's not here, their daughter is here suffering because of him and she has to stay and pick up the pieces while he rests eternally.

She picked up her phone again and dialed her mother's phone number. She didn't hesitate to pick up, it's like she was sitting waiting for her call.

"Makhosazane mntanami." her voice was shaky.

"It was him ma. Vumani, he is the reason for all of this."

"The king's death?" she asked feeling a sudden confusion.

Makhosazane broke into a sob and buried her head in her hands.

"Talk to me, what is going on."

She first took a minute to take everything in and

tried to stop herself from crying.

“Vumani sacrificed Amile to the Zulu ancestors, that is why all of these things are happening.”

“What!?” she couldn’t disguise the shock in her voice.

“He sacrificed his life for Mhlabawesizwe, and died in his place when he had that plate of poison, and went on to sacrifice our daughter ma!” she sobbed hysterically.

Now that she heard Amile say it, saying her father knew about it, she had to connect the dots. Vumani died like a dog; with nothing. He didn’t have much to leave behind but a few R100 thousands that she used to complete her studies. That’s not what the king’s right hand man leaves behind. He should’ve had more. But he gave away his daughter instead.

“Mhlabaweziwe held onto that promise and made sure to make it happen beyond the

grave.”

“But now the king is dead, what is left for her to do. She has no one to marry.”

“Langaletu is alive, he didn’t die. And if he does die without fathering a child, Amile will have to take the throne.”

She heard her mother screaming in agony on the other side of the line.

“Bakhohlakele labantu bakwaGumede. Oh kodwa ngomntanomntanami.”

And all along Makhosazane had hated her mother for something she had no hand in. Her only downfall was being born into a power hungry family of thieves who don’t care about the well being of others.

She’s praying that what David is true because she can’t deal with seeing her daughter suffering, maybe the façade she is putting up is better than the hurting.

Chapter Sixty-Three

Narrated

13 YEARS AGO

Normally, she wakes up and prepares his clothes for the day, his bath, his food and everything else for work, but she didn't sleep last night, because Amile had a fever and kept them up the whole night. So, he's doing all the work for himself. He really doesn't mind, it's the least he can do for the woman who bore him his first child, probably his one and only.

She's sleeping like a log, he's already taken a bath and dressed up. She didn't hear a sound. He hovers over Amile's cot bed and see's that she's up. When she see's her dad, she lifts her arms up and he carries her.

“Daddy is going to work, are you going to take care of mommy?” she nodded, putting her head on his shoulder.

He put his hand on her forehead to feel her temperature; it’s moderate.

“I love you princess.” he kissed her forehead.

“Love you too daddy.”

What he didn’t realize is that she was still very sleepy, so when she lay in his arms like that, she fell right back into the sleeping state. She dozed off quite immediately and he placed her back in her cot bed. She was starting to outgrow it, her long legs were beginning to be squashed when she slept and he knew that he had to work harder so they could actually leave, and give his little family the life and home they deserve.

He had come very close to doing that, he had already bought the land and erected a shack on

it. Now his main priority is saving up enough money to purchase all the building material to get the project off the ground. It will definitely be his greatest achievements.

He can't wait to leave this place. This may be his family, but they are not people he can be proud of. In fact, they are the main reason his plans have been delayed for this long. Ever since his father died, as the eldest he has been responsible for all of them, even grown ass men who are too lazy to get up and go find work of their own. Blood sucking mosquito's in his life.

He's standing at the door of his hut, staring at the green pastures of land, the mountains, the hills. He's taking in the smell of the fresh morning air, as cold as it is. He appreciates nature, he appreciates his surrounding whenever he can, and this moment, he's doing just that.

His peace is disturbed when his mom walks out

of the main house and stands in the middle of the yard with calamine all over her face, hands on her hips, staring at him like he's committing a sin by standing there.

"Are you not going to work?" she shouts loud enough for the whole neighbourhood to hear.

"I am." he answers in a calm voice.

She scans him from top to bottom before she shakes her head.

"Did you even eat? What are you wearing?" he cusses under his breath when she walks towards his hut.

"I'm going to eat at the palace ma." he said trying to block the way for her to enter.

"Uphi lomfazana wakho?" she peered behind him and saw her wrapped up in the covers.

"Ma, please just leave. Makhosi had a long night." he carefully pushed her out.

“I don’t know what you were thinking yazi Vumani. Out of so many girls in the village, you brought me this lazy girl.”

“Ma, it’s been four years, Makhosi isn’t going anywhere. It’s just one bad morning, don’t crucify her for that. I’m more than capable of doing things for myself.” he said as he walked out and closed the door behind him.

He knows just how much his mother’s words hurt Makhosi, he doesn’t want her waking up and hearing them.

“We used to wake up and prepare for our husbands even when we didn’t sleep the night before. She’s just lazy.”

“Well, she isn’t you. Please ma, it’s way too early in the day to be doing this with you. I’m leaving now, I’m already running late. I’ll see you when I come back.”

He said as he turned back to open the door of

his hut. He walked in and found her sitting up.

“Vumani.” he walked up to her and sat on the edge of the bed.

“I overslept, why didn’t you wake me.” he rubbed her arm.

He’s just glad she didn’t hear the conversation with his mom.

“You were tired MaMchunu, I didn’t want to wake you. I’m done and I’m leaving.” he turned her face and gave her a peck on the cheek.

“When are we leaving this place?” she asked looking into his eyes.

He sighed. Maybe she did hear the conversation.

“Soon mama, we will leave soon.”

They have plans; once they leave, she will go back to school and he will find a better job because although working for the king is something, it isn’t ideal, especially now that

there is a family feud happening within, and that resulted in a family member's death. Things like these tend to get very ugly and if he sticks around longer, he might get caught up in the crossfire.

"Do you believe in me?" he asked and cupped her face with both his hands.

She closed her eyes and just indulged in the feeling of his hands on her skin.

"Look at me MaMchunu. We will leave, get our own house and Amile can have her own room, and we'll be together. You can wake up whenever you want." she laughed at his silliness and nodded.

Today it was harder for him to get up and leave. He sat with his forehead against hers and for a moment they just breathed the same air.

"You need to go. You are already late." she said as he wrapped her arms around his torso.

Who is she kidding, she also didn't want to let him leave.

"Do you want me to leave?" she breathed out and leaned forward kiss his lips.

She does love him, that can't be denied, but so much has happened in the four years and loving him has been harder and harder by the day. She just appreciates moments like these, where it's just the two of them and he makes promises to her, and she believes them, just when both of them are feeling hopeful. That is usually in the mornings just like these, or at night, in those bed sheets, making love.

"Okay go now Vumani." she pushes him gently and he gets on his feet.

"I'll come back early tonight. I want to spend time with my family." she looked up at him with a smile, and nodded slowly.

"I'm sure Amile will appreciate that." he kissed

her cheek.

“Go back to sleep.” she didn’t fight him, there was no use.

She knew very well that her mother in-law was going to be a fire breathing dragon ready to make a clown of her in front of the neighbours.

She slipped under the covers and he when he was content with the sight, he got up and started on his journey to the palace.

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He works alongside uDlamini, the richest man after the king and his family descendants. He is the King’s right hand man slash bodyguard, slash driver, slash friend. His job occupation was any of the above done by Dlamini; just not the friend part of it. These men are too

heartless for him to be fraternizing with them, and they don't fit into the same bracket; age and finance wise. So when Dlamini doesn't feel like it, he drives them around, takes orders from them and protects them. He's doing it quite often than he used to, that's why his salary was increased.

He's just on time, breakfast has been served and they are surprisingly being waited upon by the youngest queen. He sits down and salutes his co-workers. They all live at the palace, they have their servants quarters and they prefer staying here because they are running away from their wives, and some just don't know how to take care of themselves, so they decide to stay here for the benefits, they get their clothes washed for free, they have food and all the other things. He wasn't going to leave his wife and child at home so he prefers to walk everyday to the palace.

“You are late Gumedede.” she bends next to him and places the plate of food in front of him.

He doesn't lift his eyes. He's used to this by now. She loves picking on him for no reason at all.

“Thank you my queen.” she didn't move.

He lifted his head to look at his co-worker sitting across him, he looked away stifling a laugh.

“Yazi Vumani I'm going to tell my husband that you are coming to work late.” he cleared his throat.

“It won't happen again my queen.” she faked a chuckle.

“It better not. Now eat your breakfast.” she pat his shoulder and sauntered away.

Even a blind man can see that she's flirting with him. He's used to it by now, even his co-workers

don't make fun of it. It just irks him so much because what about decency? Why marry an old man if you can't handle them?

"Gumede you should pass her here if you don't want her." Bhengu said clapping his hands with a loud cackle.

Vumani clicked his tongue and continued picking his food. It was just as jolly as it normally is in the servant quarters in the mornings, but he was drowning in thought. He couldn't stop thinking about his little family, and just how much he loved his daughter. He was willing to do anything and everything for that little girl and that was his daily motivation. He doesn't need distractions now, he's come too far.

He's done with breakfast. He gets up and goes to the bin to throw away the empty container. He stands there and lights a cigarette while at it and leans against the wall watching the scenery

again, polluting the fresh air with puffs of smoke.

He felt hands sneaking up his shirt and he jerked up, throwing the cigarette on the floor. He groans in frustration, that was the last one he had, and he's running low on cash.

"What's the issue?" he looks down.

He sees her curly wig first and he is able to pinpoint exactly.

"My queen, please." he begs.

She knows exactly what he is saying.

"I'll get you another one, don't worry." she pushed him against the wall.

"You know Vumani, you can't keep avoiding me." he cleared his throat and looked away.

He's naturally shy, speaking is not his strong point, and this woman is intimidating.

"I don't want to get in trouble with the king." she

closed the gap between them.

“The king doesn’t have to find out.” she places her hands on his chest. He closes his eyes and winces.

“MaJili, please.” he pushed her away slightly, but she forced herself back into his personal space, making it less personal.

“I know you want me too.” this could cost him everything he’s ever worked for, and worst case scenario, his life.

She grabbed his t-shirt and kissed him passionately, in a hurried pace, so much that both of them were running out of breath. His hands were stiff on his sides while she tried to remove his leather jacket. A failed attempt, he succeeded in pushing her off.

“I can’t and won’t do this with you.”

He fixed himself and walked away, not forgetting to wipe his lips. He scanned the area

to see if anyone might have seen anything before he walked away.

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His errand today was going with the king and Dlamini to a meeting. He's just standing idle, pretending to not hear a word of anything being said. This man needs to retire, he thinks to himself as he steals glimpses of him.

"Langaletu is now old enough to take over the throne, why hasn't he married yet?" one of the men on the council asked.

"Bhulubhulu hasn't come forward with a surname." Dlamini answered.

This man is knees deep in Zulu family affairs. Now he knows what is being said in the ancestral room?

“He needs to get one at the reed dance before he gets a girl pregnant out of wedlock.” another council member.

The king is mute.

“No, no reed dance. Those girls aren’t taught properly.” he spoke after a long shot of silence.

“What do you mean Bayede, you got MaJili there...” Vumani laughs internally.

The king does have a valid point. MaJili has proven herself loose.

“She needs to be young and she needs to grow up knowing she is to be queen one day.”

“And how sure are you of the time of ruling you have left my king?” Dlamini asked.

“Very sure. She will definitely be grown enough by the time Langaletu takes the throne. I don’t want anything to taint the royal image. These boys have proven to me that they can’t pick

women. Look at that straatmate Zwelibanzi has married.” he had a pure face of disgust.

“And how are we just going to find a young girl?” Dlamini asked, feeling like they are just heading ten more steps backwards.

“Leave that to the ancestors.” he said and pushed his chair back.

That was the end of the meeting, once he’s finished talking, the meeting is adjourned. His face didn’t look like a face that was willing to let the ancestors deal with it.

Chapter Sixty-Four

Narrated

He’s parked outside the palace gate, as per Dlamini’s instruction. He has no idea what for, he was just told to park, sit and wait. He knows

better than to question their instruction. So he's sitting and waiting. They were coming from council, and they were in silence the whole way, what they did do is directly hop out of this vehicle, climb into another suspicious one with another driver, and left, leaving the dust to collect itself.

Now he's playing some hip-hop, to calm him down. He can't stop glancing over at the watch anticipating their return. He promised that he would be home early to spend time with Amile. He hates breaking promises, especially made to his daughter. He understands the importance of treating his baby girl like the egg and princess she is because if he doesn't, boys are going to be her playground.

The door abruptly opens and a lavender scent fills the whole car instantly. Before he can't even contest, she shouts: "Drive"

He doesn't ask many questions, he starts the

car and takes off as fast as he can. He doesn't know the nature and seriousness of the situation she might be in.

"Take a left here." she directs.

This way is leading them to town, he thinks to himself.

"Is the queen in any kind of trouble?"

"Not yet, no!" she said and gave him a naughty side smile.

He didn't quite catch it because he was focusing on the road. He didn't pay much attention to the answer. Again, he is in no position to be asking questions.

She directs him to a block of run down flats in town. They are located in a shady, unsanitary place. Not a place a woman like her should be seen in.

"Come with me." she said and climbed out the

car.

He didn't move. He sat still in his seat and looked at her. She noticed this and peered through the window with a raised eyebrow.

"This is a dodgy place, I can't leave the royal car here. And I'm supposed to be at the palace." he said folding his arms across his chest.

He doesn't even know her name, why is she always throwing herself at him.

"I'm more precious than a body of metal. I'm sure the king would kill you if something happened to me. So I need you to guard my body." she winked.

In this moment, he hated his job description. He took a minute to contemplate the chances of him losing his job, or his life over this. So he got out the car, and prayed that he wasn't putting anything in jeopardy by doing this.

She led the way into the building. They entered

the first door from the entrance and when he was inside, she closed, locked and pinned him against the wall.

“Guard my body.” she instructed.

She lifted his hands and placed them on her hips. He unintentionally fell into a fit of laughter, hoping she was joking.

“What are you laughing at?” she asked pulling the same hands he has moved away back to her hips.

“My queen, I can’t be doing this with you.”

“This is an act of service, I don’t ask much of you. I just want you to give me a good fuck and we’ll move on.” he’s shocked.

“I’ll make sure Mhlaba adds a little something to your salary.” she held his belt buckle and went down on him.

He’s still trying to resist her by pushing her

away. He doesn't know what her intention is. Maybe this is a trap. Why would they tell him to park right outside the palace gate and give no other instruction, then just leave? Are they testing him, or are they testing the loose wife, because clearly, the king knows that one of his own is a straatmate.

"Stop what you are doing." he tried to shout but his voice was strained.

She was getting through to him, he is a man after all.

"Make me." she stroked him and he banged his head against the wall, surpressing a moan.

When even did she take off his pants?

"My queen." he said holding her hair in his hands roughly.

He pulled her head violently and made her look at him.

“I said stop.”

She smirked and used her mouth to...

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His guilty conscious is eating away at him. He knows what he did was wrong, firstly because it is someone's wife, the king's wife, and secondly, he's married himself. Makhosazane would be devastated if she dare find out. He can't even bring himself to imagine what will happen if Mhlabawesizwe finds out. He's good as dead.

He barely even enjoyed it from the guilt. He did a two-minute job, much to her disappointment. It serves her right for wanting other people's property.

That doesn't ease the guilt and fear. What if she goes ranting about it? Or worse case scenario,

she tells her husband? Maybe she will twist the story and make him the bad guy. He's shaking in his boots.

It's after 8. He's late and the two men still haven't come back. By the time he comes back, Amile will be long asleep. He keeps glancing behind him when he hears a car approaching. He keeps praying it's them, but they all end up passing by.

He leans back on his seat and closes his eyes for a second, trying to block out any thought that may come to mind. He just wants to feel nothing. He startles when he hears a violent knock on the window. His body jerks up and he almost jumps in fear when he sees the king peering inside, looking like he's ready to kill him.

He opens the car door and he climbs out.

"My king." he looks down.

He doesn't respond, he just moves his hand up

to his neck and strangles him. The air leaves his lungs faster because he is trying to scream and fight him off.

“Ngiyakondla, ngikunikeza umsebenzi wena ungithifela ebusweni.” he spits.

When he finally lets go, it’s a struggle for a breath. He’s letting all the oxygen he can get go into his lungs, and he’s holding his neck from the pain. For a sixty year old man, he’s got good grip.

“Mgodoyi, ngena la!” he shoves him into the drivers seat.

He goes to the other side of the car and enters. From there on, he instructs him to drive. Now his heart is stuck in his throat. He knows exactly what he’s done, know the question is it the same thing that this man knows.

His leg can’t stop shaking, he’s swerving off the road here and there.

“Stop the car.” they are in the middle of nowhere, all there is is darkness and bushes.

he watches him climb out the car and slamming the door. He comes to open the driver door where he is looking up at him and grabs him by the shirt, and throws him on the gravel.

He could pick himself up, fight him back, or run. He's strong enough to do that, but he respects him too much, that and fear. This man is rumored to practice heavy witchcraft. No one can even lock eyes with him, he's that powerful.

One blow to the stomach and he rolls on the ground.

“Usithaphi isibindi sokudla umfazi wami!?” he groans in pain.

It hasn't even been 6 hours since it happened. Maybe it was a trap.

“My king, I'm sorry. It was a mistake, it never should've happened.” he coughs out.

That was a hard blow, his lungs feel like they have been pierced. He rolls around trying to find a way to get up.

“Come back here!” he bends down and picks him up like he weighs nothing and throws him on the bonnet of his the car. His strength is impeccable, he might lose his life for this.

“Please my king, please don’t kill me. My daughter still needs me!”

He was about to land another punch to his face, but he stopped mid way and looked at him.

“You have disrespected me, the whole kingdom and my ancestors! I don’t see a punishment fit for you other than death.” he spits!

“I beg you my king, I will do anything, I can leave the palace, just don’t take my life.”

He let him down and his body hit the hard ground and he groaned in pain. He was about to crawl away again when he grabbed him using

hiss torn up t-shirt and brought him back to his feet. He towered over him and gave him a deadly look.

“Your daughter will marry my son.” his heart rate increased rapidly.

“My king...” he begged before a nasty cough burst from his chest.

“She will be raised in the palace and will marry Langaletu on her 18th birthday.” he felt his world come crashing into pieces.

“Everything else my king, not...not my daugh...” he was choked by a sob.

“You owe me your life. I’m doing you a favour by not killing you. Your daughter belongs to me.”

He kicked him once more and went to get in the car, reversed away and left him sobbing and groaning like a bull in pain.

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He's not fully healed, it's only been two days since he was almost beat to death. He didn't bother giving a reason to Makhosi, he just said he was mugged on his way home from work.

She obviously cried while tending to his bruises, she was worried sick, thinking only the worst and for him to come back in the state he was in made it worse. Now she's adamant that he shouldn't go back, at least not now.

He also didn't tell her about what he did. That would just break her heart and he can't stomach seeing pain on her face. He doesn't know how to begin to explain that the king has instructed that Amile go live at the palace. He doesn't want that for his baby, he wants her to grow up normally like other kids, and not live knowing that she has to marry a man.

In fact- if he could- he would run away, and take his family with him. Two errand boys have been here to tell him to go back to work, and said it was orders from the king. That's why he's up now, preparing for work even though he's battered and bruised like a peach.

"I don't like what you are doing Vumani."

Makhosi said holding the kettle with the boiling hot water in his hand.

He let go of it.

"You saw the king sending people to call me back to work. I have to go Makhosi." his mood is off, she thinks to herself.

"You are hurt, ayikho into ozoyisebenza unje!" she raises her voice.

He ignores her and walks away. He picks up his shoes from under the bed and as he crouches down, he groans in pain. As he is doing the shoe laces, his mother bursts in and stands at

the door.

“What’s going on?” she has Amile on her back.

“Vumani is refusing to listen to me Ma.” she had hope that maybe for the first time she’d be on her side.

“Sisi, ayithethiswa indoda. He’s the one that makes money for your and your child, how are you going to stop him from doing that.”

She drops her eyes in disappointment.

“He’s not fully healed.” she mutters under her breath.

“Let him do what he wants to do. You’ll just be here to take care of him when he comes back.” she hates her for inserting herself in their marriage and being biased the way she is.

As a woman, she should be on her side for the well-being of her son. This says a lot about her character as a whole. It’s very questionable. As

she sways out the room with a sleeping Amile on her back, Vumani stands up and goes to Makhosi.

“I won’t stay there the whole day. I’ll just tell Dlamini that I’m not feeling well and hope that they feel compassionate for me.” he held her waist and brought her closer.

“The palace is far, you can’t walk all the way like this.” she said looking at him in the eyes.

He couldn’t maintain eye contact so he looked away.

“I’ll be okay.” he kissed her forehead.

“I love you mamakhe.” she sighed and put her hands on his shoulders.

“I love you too Phakathwayo.”

He exhaled as he just listened to his heart beating in his ears.

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They were served breakfast by MaJili once again, but today she wasn't flirty, she in fact gave him a cold shoulder and a stink eye. All the men saw this, it was quiet obvious, even the way she threw the plate of food at him, the sexual tension between them was something else.

What she didn't know is that her husband knew her dirty secret, because only he got the receiving end of his anger. Clearly he wasn't angry enough if she's still here.

He had hoped to avoid seeing Mhlabawesizwe by all cost, but that was going to be impossible because he works for him directly.

"Gumede, woza la." Dlamini saw him as he patrolled the yard.

When he stood in front of him, he took of his

cap and looked down.

“Why haven’t you been coming to work?” he lifted his face and he saw the bruises on his face.

“What happened to you?” Dlamini doesn’t know? He’s shocked.

“I was mugged when I went home on Wednesday.” he lies again.

“UZulu wants to talk to you. I’m guessing it’s something important.”

He cleared his throat.

“I will go look for him, but can I get the rest of this weekend off?”

“Yes, you can. You should’ve sent word out that you were not in the right state.”

“Thank you mhlonishwa.”

“Go look for Mageba.” he says and pats his shoulder.

He goes inside the palace door. His legs are shaking. He's afraid to see him, but he's hoping for a chance to try to convince him out of the thought to taking Amile. His 4 year old daughter can't be married to a thirty something, that is absurd.

"Step into my office Gumedede." his loud voice stopped him dead in his tracks.

He took two steps back and went back to the door he had just passed. He was sitting there having tea like he's the most innocent man on the planet. Evil people don't drink tea, they drink strong alcoholic drinks that burn and destroy their livers.

"Bayede." he bows and stands by the door.

He's still mixing his tea. He puts two teaspoons of sugar and dips the teabag three times before he takes it out and pours the whole jug of milk into the cup. That is one tasteless tea he will be

drinking.

“What happened to your face?” he asks lifting the cup to his lips, staring at him.

That was meant to be a rhetorical question.

“Sthuli sika Ndaba, I’m here to apologize you you Bayede, you can fine me, or exile me from your land, just please don’t do that to my daughter.”

“Sit down Gumede.” his heart leaps.

He doesn’t hesitate, he sits down and looks down.

“I realized a long time ago that my wife is loose. She’s young, although the time she should’ve been fucking around has passed, she still didn’t get to enjoy it, the thrill excites her.

Unfortunately, you were weak enough to give in to that. Now tell me, when Langaletu is a king, would you want him to have a loose wife?

Isizwe sizoba njani siholwa umuntu

ongumahambe lala?”

“She’s just a baby Bayede.”

“Exactly. Zigotswa zisemanzi Gumede. Uzokhula kahle nje uMaGumede.” the calm in his voice is scaring him.

“It’s that or I kill you, and take her either way.” his heart raced. He felt tears burning his eyes.

“Can you please just give her a normal life. I don’t want her growing up knowing something like that. I want her to enjoy her life, the short time she has to herself.”

“That’s not part of the deal Gumede.”

He got off the chair, got on his knees and put his hands together, tears gracing his face.

“Ngiyakunxusa Mageba, sthuli sika Ndaba.”

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He died that very night. In his bed, in his sleep. He randomly started foaming at the mouth before he had a short seizure and lost his life.

That was traumatic for Makhosazane who had to witness all of that, he died with all the secrets, and the pain he felt. He never shared it with anyone else.

Vumani's mother gave Makhosi an ultimatum, either she went back home, or she got a job to sustain the whole family because living for free was not an option, and that's what she did. Got a job in one of the clothing stores in town and did a short course at the local university. She got a diploma right on time and when the little money Vumani had to his name was given to her, she took it and went to Durban to start over with her daughter, freeing herself from the shackles.

She never saw that land, or the house that Vumani was planning to build for the both of them. She was all alone, and only had Amile as her shoulder.

“Abantwana bafela izono zabazali.”

Chapter Sixty-Five

Amile Gumede

The funeral went by smoothly. The media was able to respect our privacy and let us have the burial in peace as we had promised a memorial service for the masses. As hard as it was, I had to be the one giving out all those instructions, addressing and briefing everyone about what would be going on because no one else was strong enough to do it. Not even my mother helped.

MaMzobe is a mess. I think she's losing her mind. Mandlenkosi is also not taking it well, he's been coming to my room and asking me to talk to him so I can distract him from thinking about it. I also think he's losing his mind. Vukani is still not talking to anyone; that's one person I'm really concerned about. All the boys haven't spent time with their father in a long time. If I'm not mistaken, they last saw him when he was at that trip with them, and that was before I lost Mfihlakalo. It's been over two weeks. They are never going to heal from this, especially Vukani. I'm worried about him.

There's a massive frame tent erected in the yard. I had to hire catering and all those other things to organize all the other things.

Nambitha also came and she has been helping me so much, I appreciate her. I need to go though, and I don't want anyone to see me because if they do, they will start asking me

endless questions that I don't have the answers to. I still need to save my calmness for the media, I know they are going to test my patience today.

I climb in his van and drive out the yard. It doesn't smell like him anymore, I think that is because bhut' Langaletu has been using it to run errands the past two days. I know I gave him a hard time at first, but he's been very helpful. He was the one who dug out both graves, his and the one Banzi would be buried in. He also bought all the cows and he was the one speaking to the ancestors. I wasn't really involved there, I didn't want to. I put it all in the hands of the real family members. The elephant in the room, which is the talk of our wedding is still to be addressed, but we both came to an un-discussed mutual agreement to let it slide until Banzi has been buried.

It's drizzling as I drive through the cemetery.

The clouds have gathered in the sky. It always rains on the 31st, its nothing new. I park at the bottom and I make my way up by foot, passing all the other graves. He was buried next to Mfihlakalo, I hope they are together wherever they may be, I hope MaNdlela is happy that her son has finally come to her.

There is someone sitting on the soil in front of his grave. It's still piled up high, he was only buried yesterday morning, it's still fresh. As I draw closer, I realize that it is MaMzobe sitting there. I can tell from the black mourning clothes. We are both the widows dressed in black, it's not hard to miss us.

She's sobbing, sitting on the literal floor playing with the soil. I'm still wondering how she got here. Unlike me, I stole a car, no one knows that I am able to drive, I will be the last suspect, until they realize that I'm not home. But how did she get here without anyone seeing?

“I gambled with you feelings and your life Banzi, I’m sorry.” she says burying her head in her dirty hands.

I stood there and folded my arms across my chest. Throughout all this time, I’ve been the only one who was able to put aside all the things she did, only for the sake of giving our husband a dignified funeral, but that doesn’t mean I forgot.

She is the reason for Banzi’s long term unhappiness. She’s responsible for pain he felt long before I came into the picture, she forced the throne onto him without wanting it, and now the repercussions are hurting her more than any of us because of the guilt she feels.

I miss him. I miss hearing his voice, I miss talking to him. Coming here doesn’t make it better because just like MaMzobe, I’ll be talking to sand. The earth can’t answer me. I long to hear his voice again, and touch his hand, or put

my ear against his chest and hear his heart beating whenever I call him Bayede. I miss him and I haven't felt it this strongly, but now that I'm here, I know I do.

I've been so immersed in trying to get through this, his burial and giving him a proper send off that I didn't take the time to sit and think what my life is going to be like now that he isn't here. This is the last thing I expected to go through when I first arrived here, it's not a feeling I ever dreamed of feeling. I didn't think the time where I would miss him would come.

I wipe the tears as they trickle down my face and I go to crouch next to MaMzobe who's still sobbing on her lap.

"Ma." she lifted her head and looked at me. Her eyes were bloodshot.

"I was here to apologize." she said wiping the tears off her cheeks. She got sand all over her

face.

I used my scarf to remove it and that only seem to make her break down.

“I’m sorry.” I said and put my hand on her back.

I understand what she is going through. Losing a loved one hurts.

“I should be here, not my Banzi.” she sobbed.

I just kept quiet. I didn’t know what to do or say.

“Langaletu has ruined everything.” I drew in a sharp breath.

I wished she didn’t say that. I wished that she would take accountability for all that she did, and not blame it on Bhut’ Langa coming back with her bag of dirty secrets.

I still don’t know those secrets, I just suspect it may have something with his alleged death because why else would they be so angry at her. How does she feel that Banzi died hating her

guts? I wouldn't be able to live with myself.

"We need to go back. The service is starting soon." I looked at my wristwatch. It's broken, the hands are not moving.

She got up from the floor and dusted herself up. I want to ask her how she got here, but she's already making her way down the little path. Now I'm left alone with my husband and 'son'.

"Thank you for giving me the strength to do this. I hope you are at peace where you are, it's the one thing you have always wanted. Now I don't know what to do from here. If anything, show me a sign, how am I supposed to live without you?" my heart is racing.

I feel exactly like I did that day I was running barefoot on that road the day my life changed forever. I feel like the walls are closing in on me and I don't have control over it.

I feel droplets of water on my head, one by one,

they hit my head, my face, my hands. I get up and as I do a fast walk back to where I parked the van, it's already pouring down. I start running as I feel the water soaking through my clothes. This isn't the sign I was looking for, but anything will do.

I tripped on a grave and I almost fell to the ground but I felt arms holding me up and dragging me on the ground. I start screaming. Is this déjà vu?

He's taking the driver's seat and I'm in the passenger seat, shivering from the wetness of my clothes. I take off the shawl on my shoulders.

"You can't just do that!" he said in a stern voice turning to look at me.

I looked forward. I'm not in the mood to be scolded.

"Anything could've happened to you, why didn't

you ask me to come with you?" I ignored him and proceeded to take off my top.

I was left in my bright red bra. It was also soaking wet. I want him to see that he's talking to himself.

"MaGumede." I looked in his direction.

He looks distressed and it's not hard to miss the dark circles under his eyes. Now I feel bad.

"I just wanted time to myself, I wasn't trying to run away."

He sighed and took off his jacket. It's not as wet as my clothes, I guess he was right on time. I hesitated in my decision to take it, but I was visibly shivering so I took it and put it on.

"Thank you." I mumbled under my breath.

He started the car and turned on the heater. I thought he was going to start driving but he just sat back in his chair. Banzi's memorial?

“Are we not going back to the palace. The memorial starts soon.” I searched around the car for my phone.

I left it back at the palace. Sigh.

“I’m not allowed to drive, my condition doesn’t let me. And I won’t risk it with this rain.” what condition is he talking about?

Yes, it’s pouring out, it still hasn’t stopped. How is the memorial going to happen in this rain anyway? I didn’t think about that.

“We are going to miss Banzi’s memorial.” I whined.

I may understand but I won’t let him know I understand.

“I’m sorry but there isn’t anything I can do. None of us here are fit enough to drive in this kind of weather.” I hate that he’s right.

There is a cloud of mist in the air, you can

barely see. It is dangerous. Now I regret coming here.

“We can use this time to get to know each other. I want you to tell me why you keep invading my dreams.” haha.

“Did you plan any of this?”

“I wish I did. I’m missing my brother’s memorial, I already missed three years with him. It’s not easy carrying the guilt of knowing he died for my selfishness.” yeah, everyone is blaming themselves.

I’m smart enough to understand that everything happens for a reason. If this was his only way of finding peace then I’m happy. It might hurt and it’s going to take a lot for me to get used to it, but seeing him in my dream, seeing him happy eases my heart. I still miss him though. I just don’t blame myself for his death, I know it’s not my fault, it’s no one’s fault, except those

who think it is. That is their burden to carry.

“You say as if you didn’t torment my dreams.” I reply to his first question, totally avoiding talking about Banzi. I don’t want to break down and cry.

“I wouldn’t have come back. I was honestly sitting waiting for death to come and fetch me. It just didn’t want to, and every I thought I was close enough, you came and dragged me out of it.”

I exhaled. His jacket smells like him. Herbs and incense.

“Why would you wish death upon yourself.” I asked turning my whole body to face him.

“When you’ve lived the kind of life I’ve lived MaGumede, you’d pray for the Lord to take you everyday.” that’s hectic.

“My father has dictated my whole life, even from the grave he’s still controlling my every

single move.” the oh so hated Mhlabawesizwe kaBhekumuzi Zulu.

“To be honest, my life was better when everyone thought I was dead. Yes I was restricted, and I couldn’t just walk out like normal people, but I preferred it over the life I was living at the palace.”

“And don’t you think maybe he would get off your case if you did what he wants you to do?” I asked. He raised one eyebrow at me.

“Only you can help me with that.” I closed my eyes tightly and took in a deep breath.

“How are you just going to take your brother’s wife?” I asked him.

“He was the one that married my wife, technically.” the amount of ownership these men have over me? The Zulu family feels entitled to me.

“And your marriage with Banzi is null and void.

The ancestors were not appeased and you were not introduced to them because they had turned their backs on the palace.” what is he saying?

“I was introduced, I had a full traditional wedding.” I argue.

“Not recognized by the ancestors. You are technically an unmarried woman.” I shook my head. I don’t believe him.

“And how do you know this?”

“Thulisile is a sangoma. As soon as she walked through to palace doors, she didn’t feel the presence of the ancestors. There is nothing there, therefore they need to be re-introduced. That goat was slaughtered to call upon them so we could bury Banzi and let him cross over to them.” I don’t believe him because Mfihlakalo crossed over.

“What about Mfihlakalo, how did he cross

over?" he stares at me blank.

"Banzi and I's son." I saw his face going sour.

"You have to ask Thuli, I don't know."

"So now I have to marry you?"

"We don't have much of a choice."

"And will I have to give you children." you could see that I was starting to make him uncomfortable, but I need answers.

"That is entirely your choice, but if I don't have a son with you specifically, and I die-which could be any day from now, you have to take over the throne."

No way, now way in hell! Over my dead body.

"I can't do that."

"Trust me I don't want to do it too. The throne is for greedy heartless people like Mhlabawesizwe, and anyone willing to contest me for it can willingly take it, I really don't mind." understood.

Silence passed through the both of us. Only the sound of the engine running and the rain pit-patting on the car could be heard. Why isn't it stopping now.

"Are you planning on going back to school?" he asked after a long time.

"No. My problems are too much for me to be worried about school." and now they seem to be multiplying in fours.

"I'm sorry." he says in a soft voice.

"I'm sorry too." we feel sorry for each other, just like I pity him, he pities me.

"So we are doing this?" I asked looking at him.

"Do we have a choice?" I chuckled.

"Not really. I'm just going to have to pretend I'm 40 years old so I don't feel otherwise about this."

He laughed. He genuinely laughed and I saw his

full set of teeth. His laugh is contagious.

“Thank you MaGumede. I won’t do anything you aren’t comfortable with.”

“I appreciate that.” silence.

We went back to that stillness and I was caught up in my thoughts once again. I hope this is the last stop; that I won’t be moving onto the next brother, it’s getting tiring.

The sooner I accept that this is my fate, the better. I just don’t know what I’m going to do with my feelings for Banzi. I’ll just have to store them in the same place I put Mandlenkosi’s love.

I’m fucked up.

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When the rain stopped miraculously, he took a

chance and drove us back to the palace. The palace is two minutes away, I'm guessing he came here by foot because it's not that far. There isn't much of an awkward vibe between us anymore, talking helped. I just need to remind myself not to over familiarize myself with him because at the end of the day, he's still my elder.

The sun is shining like it wasn't raining cats and dogs a while ago. I climbed out the car and covered my chest with his jacket as I made my way through the crowd of people standing outside moving up and down. Now it's going to look suspicious, we are coming out of the same car, I'm half naked with his jacket on me.

I thought I was safe when I made it passed the lounge without anyone calling me, but an elderly lady stopped me.

"Sisi, uvelaphi?" I turned and looked at her.

She wasn't here when the whole world found out about Banzi's death. Bhut' Dumisani's mother. She didn't come.

"I was at the cemetery." I don't know why I'm explaining myself to her.

"Uyacanasa uzenzela umathanda kube kushoniwe layikhaya." I gripped onto the jacket tighter to try and hide my bare chest.

"Amile kwenzekalani." that's my mom coming behind me.

They locked eyes and I saw something different on the woman's face.

"I just wanted to go visit his grave." mom held my free hand. My voice is suddenly quivering.

"Who are you?" mom asked looking at her. I don't think that's the right question.

"Queen mother, MaJili. Who are you?" she asked and crossed her arms across her chest.

I don't understand why she has so much attitude.

"Makhosi Gumede." mom extended her hand for a hand shake.

She never introduces herself as a Gumede, why is she doing it now? MaJili's face changed.

"Vumani's wife?" was there really one Gumede in this place?

She shifted her eyes to me once again and it seemed like she noticed something. Hey, my dad is famous.

"In the flesh." there is something here.

"You are Vumani's daughter?" her face was going pale.

"Yes, I am." she put her hand on her chest.

I gave mom a look and she gave me the exact same look.

Next thing, the woman hit the ground. What the

hell!?

Chapter Sixty-Six

Amile Gumede

Her sons tended to her. I had way more important things to do. The press is waiting, the memorial has to start. Mom is following me to my room, I know she wants answers, answers I don't have.

"Where were you?" she asks shutting the door behind her.

"The cemetery, ngishilo nje." I said taking off the jacket, throwing it on the bed.

"So why are you naked if you were at the cemetery. Why are you wearing Langaletu's jacket?" how the hell does she know that it's his jacket?

“My clothes were wet.” I’m stripping off the rest of the clothes so I can get dressed in something appropriate.

“From what Amile?” I see where this is going.

“I know what you are thinking mama, I’m not sleeping with Langaletu, cut me some slack.” as I turned around, a hot slap landed on my cheek.

I felt dizzy and I held on to the edge of the bed to maintain balance. I can’t believe this.

“Mama.”

“Mama my foot. You do not speak to me like that, I’m not your friend.” I felt tears burning my eyes.

“Don’t think that we are the same age just because you are married, you are still a child and you will always be, don’t forget that.”

“Yes mom.” I said and attempted to walk away.

“Come back here and tell me what the hell you are doing with your life.”

I think she’s just having moods of her own and she’s taking them out on me. I stood in front of her and crossed my arms across my chest.

“Uthi zimanziswe yini izimpahla?”

“It was raining.” she’s looking at me like I’m crazy.

I know I didn’t imagine the rain.

“You don’t believe me?” I asked her dropping my arms.

“Amile my child, I’m not a fool. You can’t be doing this mntanami, you want to turn yourself into the Zulu men’s bicycle? Uzehlisa isithunzi.”

“Mama I’m not lying to you. I didn’t sleep with him. Nothing happened. I went to visit Banzi’s grave and he came to fetch me and it started raining and we couldn’t drive back.” she really

doesn't believe me.

Yes, I'll admit it, my reputation is ruined, I've slept with two brothers who share one mother and I felt no ounce of remorse, but it doesn't mean now I'm a whore. That's what she's making me out to be. At the end of the day, I'll have to marry Langaletu and I'll be forced to forget about Banzi and Nkosi, and act like I never knew them.

"Who else knows about you and Nkosi?" I sighed.

"Only you."

"Good, keep it that way." she sat on the bed and took a deep breath.

"Mama, Bhut' Langaletu said Banzi and I's marriage was null and void. It wasn't approved by the ancestors, therefore I never changed from being a Gumedede to a Zulu."

"Kanjani manje?" the shock on her face couldn't

be disguised.

“I don’t know, something about the ancestors turning their back on the family after the king died. He said Shlobo knows this.” that’s what I call her, because that’s what he calls her.

“So what, you get to go home.”

“No, I have to marry him.” her face dropped.

I thought I told her this.

“Why couldn’t it be someone else, why did it have to be you mntanami?” you can’t miss the hurt on her face.

“What if he mistreats you? What if he hurts you?” are these the same questions she had about Banzi.

“I don’t think he’s capable of that.” who am I kidding? My first encounter with him, I was shit scared because he looked like someone with anger issues.

He's proven me otherwise though he's past few days, but that doesn't change the first impression I had of him.

"I hate this, I wish I could just take your place."

"It's not your fault mama, it's the greedy ancestors." I think I've accepted my fate at this point. For peace to reign, I have to do this.

"And what about your life?" I shrugged my shoulders because I really didn't have an answer. Sobona khona.

I excused myself and went to get dressed. So I'm guessing after this I'm not supposed to wear mourning clothes because I might some upset the underground gang, and I don't want to do that. When I was ready, I made my way out of the room, all the way outside. When I got to the tent, the service had started, there was a priest doing a prayer. Camera's were flashing left, right and center. If I don't make it to the

front page tomorrow, then I don't know.

I can't believe we are leaving Banzi behind. Tomorrow will be a new year, and it's going to start without him. It's somehow a new beginning for all of us. I hope I can leave all the baggage of the previous year behind, I don't plan to take it with me to the next year.

I glance over to my left and I see Vukani staring at me. He looks exactly like his father, the eye he is giving me is making me guilty, I can't maintain eye contact for longer than 3 seconds. When I face the front, I can still feel his eyes piercing through my skin. He hates me, he hated me the first time he laid his eyes on me, and he will continue to hate me now because I kept him and his siblings away from their father.

"I'd like to call up umntwana uVukani kaZwelibanzi Zulu to come and deliver a speech on behalf of the children." I blinked a couple of times before turning again to look at him.

He stood up and his brothers walked behind him. All the other children stood up and followed behind him. Hallelujah is holding on to his brother, as if he's scared that he's going to disappear. I can't help but feel like it's my fault. Mgcini is holding Halle's hand, trying to keep up with the fast pace they are walking in. They are so young, all of them. It makes it even harder to believe that Vukani and I are the same age, I literally see him as a son.

"Somewhere in the back of my mind, I kinda had myself prepared for a day like this. I knew it would happen that I'd have to have to bury one of my parents, I just didn't think it would be this soon..." MaMzobe behind me gradually started sniffing and her sniffs slowly turned into wails.

"Ubaba was amazing. He was a great man, a great king and an amazing father. Although we didn't spend all our time with him because he was always busy, but whenever he had the

chance, the little time he had, he would give it to us.” he’s staring directly at me.

He’s throwing shade at me? Oh hell no boy!

“He loved his family, and he cared for everyone around him. We will surely miss him. Mom, we are going to be okay, you are going to be okay. And I hope you know that he loved you, and find solace in that.” there’s a lump stuck in my throat, I feel like the walls are closing in on me.

Someone grips on my hand and I look up to see Nambitha. I swallow the bitter taste and take in a deep breath.

“Zulu! Ndabezitha! Mageba! Sthuli sika Ndaba!” the little ones chorused, some getting them jumbled up. They were cute, I wonder when they practised this.

“Thank you mntwana. Now on behalf of the Queen Nontuthuzelo Mzobe and Amile Gumede, miss Nambitha Makhathini to deliver a letter.” I

looked at her confused. I know nothing of a letter.

She stood up and I stood up with her. Mom tried to pull me back.

“Stop.” she shout whispered.

She mustn't dare. There is press here, I don't want to cause drama. I took my hand back and followed behind Nambitha who was already standing on the podium. I went to her and told her to move aside. If it's anyone that's going to speak about my husband, it's going to be me.

I heard murmurs as I stood on the podium and the camera flashes became worse. She handed me the so-called letter and I looked at it, seeing nothing in the nature of what I would want to say to my husband as he rests eternally. I crumpled the paper and threw it on the ground before fixing my shawl and adjusting the mic.

“I don't anyone to speak for me, no one spoke

for me when I loved my husband, I told him myself, and I will tell him now, whether he is here or not.” gasps. I’m not rude.

“In the three months that I spent with him, I got to know him beyond what everyone saw on the outside, even when I didn’t want to. I liked it, I liked what I saw inside of him and I wouldn’t have traded the three months I spent with him for anything, no matter how rocky it was.

Bayede, I never got to call you sthandwa sami...” I took in a deep breath as tears ran down my face.

“I miss you baba. I miss hearing your voice, I miss hearing you calling me wakwami, even though I hated it every single time. I miss putting my head on your chest and falling into a deep sleep, knowing I’ll wake and you’ll be right next to me. I miss your scent, and not amount of perfume I put on my body will give me that scent; your scent. I miss your love Bayede,

feeling it, and knowing that I'm okay because I am yours. I hate that the sun will rise tomorrow and you won't be here to see it with me. Thank you for making this bearable- this life that I was living-I wouldn't have made it without you. Ulale kahle baba ka Mfihlakalo, and know that no one will ever take your place in my heart."

My eyes darted to the door where he was standing. He had his arms folded across his chest staring at me. The last time I saw him around here, he was pressed up against my bosom crying like a little boy. Why is he looking at me like that?

I got off the podium and went to sit back where I was. I didn't even get the time to look around to see the beauty of the decor in this tent. They really outdid themselves, I'm seeing my money's worth. Who am I kidding, I don't have a cent to my name.

That went by smoothly, I know mom is still

going to scold me for going up on that podium and speaking for myself, but I got that off the chest, and now the whole world will know that I loved Banzi and that our marriage wasn't what they thought it was. I did say I'm trying to leave everything behind to face the new year with an open mind and an open heart. I'm not rushing my healing, but being sad about it won't help.

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Lights are on in other households, night has taken over the day and we are drawing nearer and nearer to the end of a year that has been nothing but miserable to me.

The yard is clear, that's why I'm basking alone under the star lit sky. Even family scattered like ants after that memorial, they left no trace of their existence. Bhut' Khethukuthula took the

boys with him, I'm guessing that is where they will be staying for the rest of the holidays.

MaMzobe is in no state to take care of children, and her fate is yet to be decided. She did -after all-commit a sin and made the ancestors turn their backs on the whole family.

Zululand is officially under no governance. The King they knew has bowed out, as they say in IsiZulu. Langaletu still needs to be welcomed back home, to the ancestors and to the public. All of this has to happen before he is ordained and put on the throne. That and our wedding.

I still don't know how that is going to play out, the wedding part I mean. Will I also not be involved in this one, and will it be something that my elders are in charge of. As far as I'm concerned, the last one was planned by MaMzobe. It's definitely not something I would plan, not in my range of style too. But who am I kidding, I never wanted to get married in the

first place.

I don't know, I feel like this is my last wedding. And I might have felt like that with the first one, but this time I'm certain, and if I'm given that power, I certainly won't miss out on the chance to go all out! It's always been my dream to have a luxury wedding.

I'm so consumed in thought that I don't hear his footsteps approaching. I only feel the warmth of his body next to mine. I don't say anything, nor do I turn to face him. I just face forward, breathe and listen to the thoughts running through my head. He's doing the same.

Question is, how do I know it's him when I didn't even turn to face him? His cologne gave him away; even after all these months, I can still smell him from a mile away.

He tilts his head and gazes at the brightly lit sky. I finally turn my head to look at him. His Adam's apple is bobbing up and down.

“Why are you sitting alone?” he asks in a trembling voice.

“I need it. I haven’t had time to myself in a long time.” I lean back on the bench.

This bench is perfect in the mornings to sit on and watch the sun rise and admire the smell of the morning dew on the roses. It is also perfect in the afternoons where you can turn it around and face the other side of the valley and stare at the sun setting, and the birds flying home, creating marvellous patterns in the orange sky. Now I see it is also perfect in the night, the cool breeze kissing my skin while I tilt my head up to gaze at the stars in the sky. What a perfect place to be in.

“How do you do it?” he asks and turns to look at me.

I can’t maintain eye contact with him so I look away.

“Do what?” I ask

“Be alone, with just your thoughts, in the silence. How do you do it?” he looks broken.

“Silence is golden, and once you dwell in silence, your mind runs wild. Healing is done in silence. It’s not loud.”

There is a loud cracking noise in the sky. I jolt my head up and see the beautiful lights in the sky. I forgot that it’s New Year’s Eve, it’s probably the excited children testing out every single firecracker in the box because this is the only time they get to experience something like this. It’s not even twelve o’ clock yet. I want that excitement back in my life.

“And are you healing?” he asked.

I sighed and sat up.

“I don’t know. Maybe I am.” I shrugged my shoulders.

Silence passed between us again, and we just watched the fireworks going off in the sky. I could also hear his heavy breathing here and there. As his breaths got heavier and heavier, I turned to look at him and he had tears cascading down his face. I put my hand on top of his and squeezed it. It was cold, I didn't like that.

"What happened to him?" he asked in a trembling voice.

I exhaled and closed my eyes.

"He was driving, and he lost control on the road." he's lucky he didn't see him in that state.

The only reason I could wipe that image out of my mind was because of the picture I saw of him in my dream. That's the one that appears first whenever I think about him. Above all the other memories we shared, that one stands out.

"I shouldn't have left, I shouldn't have ignored

his calls and let him deal with so much alone. Maybe he would still be here..." I squeezed his hand.

"Hey, it's not your fault, it's no one's fault..."

"That's easy for you to say, he loved you, and he told you everyday. I never got to hear it, and now I never will." I turned my whole body and looked at him.

"If there is one person Banzi loved and cared for the most, it was you Mandlenkosi. Everything he did, he did to make you happy, to protect you. The amount of sacrifices that man made for your happiness, your well-he loved you so much and it really did hurt him that you ever for one second doubted that. Even when he tried so hard to show it to you. "

"The last time we spoke, he said he wanted us to fix our relationship as siblings. I wanted that, I wanted to get to know him."

He's making me emotional all over again, and I thought I had made it past that stage.

"Maybe your relationship didn't need any fixing. Maybe all you needed was that assurance, and both of you got it. He's resting, and I know that it's cliché but he's in a better place, and he's happier there than he could've ever been here in the land of the living. That's all he wanted."

He squeezed my hand back and I used my shoulder to wipe the tears that were trickling on my face.

"I'm sorry for everything that transpired between us." he said. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath in.

"For what it's worth Mandlenkosi, I really did love you. And I know I didn't understand then, but I know now." he put his arm around my waist and pulled me closer to him.

I snuggled on his chest and he hugged me

tightly.

“I really am sorry.”

I nodded and closed my eyes.

I’m not angry at them, both him and Banzi, because I know for a fact that the same thing he saw in me, was the same thing Banzi saw. They saw their mom, and that’s why they thought they loved me. If he was really afraid of losing me, he would've fought, but he knew he would have me in his life forever either way, that’s why he let things be. Just like I said before, everything happens for a reason, and I haven’t served my purpose here yet, I am yet to.

I’m just not crazy enough to believe that love will ever exist again for me. I’ve tried and tried but it never works for me. I loved people who never loved me for who I am, but for what I have. And that’s okay. I just need to start loving myself now, and if I do, I’ll learn to see what real

love is.

Right now, my focus is healing, and letting go. I haven't exhaled just yet.

Chapter Sixty-Seven

Nambitha Makhathini

I just arrived from the palace. My feet are killing me, I need to rest. This has been the longest week of my life. I should be celebrating the end of this year that I've been looking forward to my whole life, now all of these things are happening. I can't be happy when my best friend is suffering, I'm suffering with her. I can't imagine what she must be going through, or what she is feeling.

She's been acting strong this whole time, she didn't cry nor did she look like she was in pain.

She held it in. I felt the pain though when she delivered that eulogy. The way she poured her heart out made me so emotional.

This environment is not healthy for me anymore. I need to go back home. It feels like I've been leaving but staying at home for about one or two days. I've been hiding behind Amile the whole time, even when I just wanted to see Nkululeko, because he insists that going back to Durban is not part of his plan.

I have my feet up on the coffee table in the lounge. He finally got couches, they are not in the best condition. I'm guessing maybe they are second hand just for now while he saves a bit more money, and then when he can afford to, he'll get a better lounge set, but this will do for now. At least we are able to sit.

He sits on the edge of the table and lifts my legs to his lap and starts massaging them.

“You’ve been working hard. You are a good friend.” I closed my eyes and breathed out.

“Yeah right, it’s been a long week.”

“Indeed it has.”

Besides the news of our king dying so abruptly, and my best friend losing her husband, I almost got into another bitch fight with Nontando. It’s no where near healthy, I know, but she pisses me off so much. She just insists on getting on my last nerve.

“It’s been a long year.” he said leaning in.

“I don’t know about you, but this year has been good to me.” I said opening my eyes to meet his face.

His eyes were slowly turning red. He’s just as tired as I am.

“Really, what was so good about it?” he’s asking me as if he’s a statue.

I gave him that look and he laughed, tilting his head back before he looked at me with a smile on his face.

“So it’s me?” he asked and traced his hand on my leg.

“It’s you baba.” he gave me a wide smile, with teeth and all.

I leaned in to meet his face halfway and kissed his lips. i thought it would be a quick kiss, but he made sure to suck on my bottom lip as much as he could.

“I want to make you pregnant.” he said as he pulled me closer to his body.

I don’t think that registered quick enough in my brain. At first, I thought he was joking, but he gripped onto my bum and placed me on his lap in one swift move. He has to be kidding. I laughed it off and pushed him off me gently.

“I hope for the sake of your life you are joking.”

“Nana...”

“You are joking right Nkululeko?” I chuckled, hoping he would join me.

But he pulled a serious face and looked me.

“I want to put a baby in your stomach.” he rubbed my stomach.

I’m sure he doesn’t understand the seriousness of his request.

“First of all, you haven’t even gotten your real job, you are still waiting to graduate. Secondly, you already have two offspring from two different mothers and you aren’t even married. You haven’t even spoken to me about marriage and you are already skipping the step to children. You can’t even afford proper sofas, how are you going to afford a third child.” I pushed myself off him.

He frowned. I wasn’t trying to be mean, but he’s being totally unrealistic.

“So what, you want me to marry you?” I put my hands on my waist as stared at him in disbelief.

“It’s not about marriage Nkululeko. My parents would never allow that. I’m young, I’m not about to tie myself to somebody for the rest of my life.”

“Oh so what you are telling me that this relationship is a joke to you?” I pointed my finger at him.

“Do not put words in my mouth, you know I didn’t say that. You know exactly what I mean.” he’s being unreasonable.

“My life is just beginning, I just got out of high school a few weeks ago, I still have a lot ahead of me. I can’t be popping babies for a man who has no history of wanting to be a better man after having a child with a woman.”

“Okay, so what do I have to do for you to give me a child. Must I send a delegation?”

Nkululeko has officially lost his marbles.

“Listen baba, I’m too tired to be having this conversation with you. It’s been a long day, I just want to rest.” I removed my legs from his lap and got up.

“Nana.” he called out as I walked down the passage.

“You’ll find me in bed!” I heard his heaving a sigh.

I closed the door behind me and leaned against it, releasing a sigh of my own. Everything is just moving too fast for me. I feel like I’m standing on the outside looking into my own life. I hate feeling like this; this is the time when I should be in control. My whole life has been dictated to me by my parents, I’ve been living to please them. Now Nkululeko is here, and he’s demanding things from me; things I can’t give to him.

A baby!?! A whole human being? He can't be serious. First of all, I don't like children, I never have, and he made it worse when he introduced to his the way he did. Not only did I have to compete for his heart with people I can't compare to, but I also had to fight women because of him. All the things I didn't sign up for when I gave my heart to him.

I don't even want to think about what he did to me. Thinking about it makes me want to snap his neck in to two, so I refrain from thinking about it. We are better off pretending it never happened.

"Nana open for me." he knocked softly.

I turned and opened the door for him to enter. He walked in barefoot and shirtless. Looks like he's just taken a shower, his hair is wet and his eyes are now proper red.

He doesn't look keen to talk about what he said.

He walks past me, takes off his pants and climbs on the bed butt naked. That's how he sleeps, it makes me uncomfortable sometimes, but I'm slowly getting used to it. Sharing a bed with him has become the norm, so much so that when I have to sleep alone, I barely get a wink.

I get out of my dress and leave it on the chair. I don't have the energy to go take a shower, so this man will have to be strong. In just my underwear, I climb onto my side and with my back against him, I pull the covers up to my shoulder and sleep. I leave all the lights on. At first, there is a cold space between us, but soon enough, he had closed it and had his arms wrapped around my body. His skin on mine. His breath was hitting my skin, making me warm up.

His hand travelled to my cookie jar and he rubbed me over the material. I turned around and faced him. His lips were parted and his

breathing pattern started changing.

“I love you Nambitha, what should I do to prove it to you?” I removed his hand from my palace.

“Don’t rush me into things I’m not ready to do.”

He nodded before he captured my lips with his. I found myself panting, drawing closer to his body. His hands swiftly removed my underwear and he lifted me up onto his body.

I placed my hands, palms facing down on his chest and positioned myself on his thing. This man is forever horny, while I on the other hand, hate sex with my whole heart. At this point I only do it for his enjoyment, other than that, it is not a preference.

He grabbed my hand and helped stroke him as he closed his eyes and moaned, biting his lower lip. He was enjoying this so much, I felt why not push my boundaries for the first time.

I moved back and lowered my head, pushing my

hair out of my face and popped him into my mouth. It felt like the sides of my mouth would tear as he stretched my lips further and further. I only went half way in and started gagging.

“Oh nana.” that seemed to turn him on further.

He grabbed my neck very roughly and made me go back in, pushing himself to the back of my throat. I felt like everything I had eaten would come back up, so I slapped his hand and he let go of my neck. I don't think I'm doing it right, I had tears coming out of my eyes and I was struggling for breath.

He sat up and looked at me when I started coughing. The idiot just laughed at me.

“What were you trying to do?” he rubbed my back.

“I'm trying to be a bad girl.”

“Ungayenzi into ongayazi.” he said with so much cockiness, and an underlying tone of

mocking.

“Yeah right.” he chuckled and grabbed my arm, and turned me around.

“Let me hit it from the back.” one thing about Nkululeko Dlamini, he lacks romance. He has none whatsoever.

“Why, so you can put a stranger in my stomach.” I’m speaking but he has his tip rubbing against my entrance.

I bite my lip.

“If you know what’s good for you, you will shut that little mouth of yours.” I have unleashed the animal.

You could hear the in the distance, people doing the countdown to midnight.

6...5...4...3...

“I swear Nkululeko if you make me pregnant...”

He stuck his finger inside my mouth and he

slammed into me, forcing my chest to hit the bed. I screamed as I felt my walls stretching to accommodate him.

“One!” I moaned.

“Happy New Year baby.” he continued ramming into me...

It will only be by God’s grace that I wake up with my legs working tomorrow!

Amile Gumede

It’s a new day, a new year. Not necessarily a new me, we agreed on the fact that I wasn’t going to rush anything. Not my body, not my heart. We are taking things one step at a time, a day at a time. Things certainly feel different.

I woke up early today so I could take a nice bubble bath and get ready for the day. When I

was done, I made my way to the dining room. The smell of freshly baked bread and eggs dancing in a pan welcomed me in the passage and my heart smiled. I haven't eaten a proper meal in days, I suddenly feel a gaping hole in my stomach.

When I walked into the dining room, Bhut' Langaletu was sitting alone having breakfast. I really wasn't expecting to see him, and I really wanted to turn around and go back to my room, but he had already seen me, and I was too hungry, I wasn't going to do that to my stomach. I went to grab a seat across him and greeted in a low voice. I haven't seen him since we came back from the cemetery. I wonder why he is sitting alone.

"Good morning to you too MaGumede." he picked up his fork and resumed eating.

Sis' Melo walked in carrying a tray and gave me the food. My mouth started salivating.

“Thank you.” I won’t lie, I missed this.

I’ve realized that staying here has made me a lazy spoilt brat. I can’t do anything on my own anymore, even basic chores that used to be an everyday thing, like cooking and doing the dishes. Now taking a plate to the kitchen has become an extreme sport.

“Did you have a good night?” he asks looking at me in the eyes.

I’ve said this before, this man has an intimidating look. He sounds as friendly as could ever be, but his face, it says something completely different.

“I did, thank you. You?”

“I can’t complain.” oh how I wish we could eat in silence from here onwards.

If I’m really honest, there is no need for me to be conversing with him. We exceeded out talking bundles yesterday with that not so

awkward, awkward conversation we had parked in that cemetery. I had hoped that I wouldn't act weird around him after that, but I'm doing it now.

"Did your mother leave yesterday?" I feel like he is forcing it as well, it's not working out.

"Yes, she went to her mother's house."

"Mmmh." that's all he said before he concentrated on his plate.

After a long shot of silence and tension thick enough to be cut with a knife, he looked up at me again and said:

"You and Mandlenkosi are close?" it didn't sound like a question, it was more of a statement, and I don't know what he's insinuating by saying it. For my sanity, I will pretend as if he was asking me.

"Yes, we are." That's all I can afford him. Further explanation will lead to my detriment.

“Thank you for that...He’s always been a special child and he suffered greatly when he lost his mother. I was there when it happened, it wasn’t something nice to watch. He has been looking for that love in everyone, even his father. I saw that MaMzobe tired, but it was never the same.” he just took this to a whole other level.

He just confirmed what I have been longing to hear. I longed to hear Nkosi admitting to me that our relationship wasn’t based off of love, but that I posed as a mother figure to him. I reminded him of his mother, both him and Banzi.

“MaNdlela played a big role in all our lives, losing her wasn’t easy. That is why I will do this ceremony, for her, and our sanity.”

“How come she was the first wife but wasn’t married?”

“Her family disowned her when she fell pregnant so they didn’t want to continue with

the wedding. They only accepted lobola and damages. I on the other hand was introduced to the ancestors first, and although my mother didn't marry into the family, things were done right by me, that is why I'm on the throne. Banzi wasn't paid lobola for."

That makes no sense at all.

"So technically, he should be a Ndlela, not a Zulu?"

"By right, yes, but I think he did sort that out. Now we have to marry MaNdlela to Mhlaba so we don't suffer." he always mentions suffering when he talks about this.

It truly is beyond me. It makes a little more sense now, but I still don't understand the significance of it. She's dead, who is going to accept her wedding on behalf of her family?

"Thulisile will explain it better. I'm as clueless as you are." I chuckled and looked down.

I wonder where she is vele, uShlobo.

“I need a favour from you, if you don’t mind.” I looked up and nodded.

“Can you organize a press conference for me. I want to address the public, and let them in about everything that is going on.” I exhaled.

I don’t know why I feel so heavy, but this has to happen either way.

“You don’t have to, I understand...”

“No, it’s not that. I just can’t grasp everything quick enough. Time is moving quickly and I feel like I’m being left behind. I just wish everything would slow down.” ever since he came back, everything has been happen so haphazardly.

“I know it’s overwhelming, but I’ve got you.” he reached over and held my hand that was on the table.

It didn’t even last for a moment. Mandlenkosi

walked into the room and looked between us. By then, Bhuti had his hand tucked away under the table.

“Mandla.” Bhut’ Langaletu called out to him.

He shook his head and turned and walked out. I’m guessing he’s having a hard time processing everything going on. How is he going to take hearing about our marriage? I feel terrible for him.

Chapter Sixty-Eight

Langaletu Zulu

Thulisile is back. She brought back the rest of his things that he had left behind. Now he is fully transitioning back to the palace, he’s not left with much of a choice. He’s still sleeping in the allocated room, he still feels like an outsider,

and he doesn't want to cross the boundaries just as yet.

Thuli is sitting on the floor folding his clothes and packing them neatly into the wardrobe.

"I have a meeting with the council later today." he announced.

"Oh yes, and when is the press conference?"

"Tomorrow. MaGumede organized everything."

"How is she holding up?" he gave a small smile.

"She's a resolute young lady. Her strength is admirable and she's making this whole transition easier for the both of us."

"So she agrees to the marriage?"

"Surprisingly yes. I mean she understands the reason why we have to do it, but she's on board."

"For everyone's well-being." he nodded.

“I’m going to miss having you around shlobo.”
she said throwing a t-shirt at him.

He caught it and laughed.

“How are you going to miss me when I was half
dead most of the time?”

“You gave me back my love for healing, now I
can go back to helping people.”

This went downwards for her after her brother
died. She had to be strong for her sister-in-law
like her brother asked her to, and she forgot
about herself. When he came, it was right at the
time when she as trying to get back to her feet,
and he made everything easier.

“I owe you my life. In fact, you should be my
right hand man, and the royal seer.” she shook
her head.

“You know I can’t. I’m a woman, they would
never agree upon that.”

“At the end of the day, that decision is mine to take, not anyone else. Imagine having a repeat of what happened to Banzi. I know I can trust you, and I know I won’t find anyone as good as you.”

“Ufika nje, usufuna ukuphula umthetho?”

“If they want a queen ruling the kingdom, surely they can bear having a woman as the royal seer.”

She shook her head and continued packing his clothes.

“Thank you shlobo.” he said throwing the t-shirt back at her.

She laughed and threw it on the pile of unfolded clothes.

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He's ready for the meeting with the council. He asked MaGumede to accompany him because he doesn't know these men, not that he expects her to know them. She's just coming with him for moral support. He needs it.

He's sitting in the lounge waiting for her. He keeping himself occupied with his thoughts because he has noting better to do. He hears wheel rolling down the stairs. He stands up and see's MaMzobe carrying her luggage. Three bags to be exact. He rushes to her and blocks her way.

"Where are you going?"

"Home, I have nothing waiting for me here anymore. The children are with Khethukuthula, that's if you will fight me for them." he grabs one bag.

"I shouldn't be letting you go. You have fucked this family over, we are where we are right now

because of you and by right, you should be in jail.”

“Banzi is dead. I’ve made peace with that. I think it’s time you do the same. That is why I’m leaving, for the well being of everyone.”

“Nontuthu?” he’s stunned to say the least.

“What? Arrest me if you want, I don’t know how that will change anything. It will only be a lifetime of bad luck on your side for arresting the love of your brothers life.” emotional blackmail.

“Even in those mourning clothes, you are still conniving and sly.”

“Ungithanda nginjalo.” she pushed him out of the way and he flew like lightweight.

He staggered and held onto the table next to him, almost knocking over the vase on it. He was not expecting that.

“I’m ready.” he stood up straight and turned around.

She was standing in the passageway staring at Nontuthuzelo. He couldn’t read her face, both their faces.

“Does Nkosi know about this?” MaMzobe asked looking directly at Amile.

She swallowed hard and kept a straight face.

“What he doesn’t know won’t hurt him.” that was Amile’s response.

He can’t help but feel that there is some underlying issue here. Maybe he missed something. He still had questions about what he saw that night, but he is in no position to be questioning her about her life, he is a non-factor. Maybe it has something to do with that reaction he gave yesterday when he walked into them ‘holding’ hands. He’s not going to pry though, the best bet is to shut his mouth and continue

with life. It will come up when it is supposed to.

“MaGumede let’s go.”

They are already running late, and last time he checked, anyone who’s late to a council meeting gets fined. He’s not king yet so he’s not excluded from that rule. She walked past the staircase where MaMzobe was standing, staring at her, and out the door, her heels making a loud clicking sound on the tiles.

“Go, if I even see you breathe next to those children, I won’t be responsible for what I do to you.” he hissed.

Sometimes he gets flashes of anger. He knows this is because he bottles things up and when they build up, he always bursts. He’s been harboring so much hate for Nontuthuzelo, from the time she left him for his brother, to finding out she was plotting to kill her. He’s still holding himself back, if it wasn’t for the circumstance,

and who she is to him, he would've shred her to pieces already.

She saw the look on his face and rushed passed him. She knows better than to try him when he is like this. When she was out the door, he slammed his fist against the wall and took a deep breath in, trying to calm down as he felt his heart racing.

"Not now." he said gasping for another breath.

He put his hand on his chest and practised breathing exercises. He believes she's not worth it, he can't let her win.

Amile Gumede

I didn't mind agreeing to go to this council meeting with Bhut' Langa. I haven't been out of the house in a while, and although it's not an

ideal place to be excited to go to. It's literally just around the area, but if you were me; always cooped up in the same house being stared at by the same walls, you'd be happy to just get out of the yard. It's an excuse to dress up, who wouldn't take the opportunity.

So MaMzobe decided to go all bitchy on me when I didn't even take a second look at her. I didn't understand where that was coming from; I wanted to. Just two days ago, I was there fighting for her to be allowed into the yard for her husband's funeral. Now she's here trying to expose me to this hella intimidating man, after I've worked so hard to try keep this thing between Mandlenkosi and I buried back where we left it-back in Durban!

I don't even know what's worse; the fact that she sat there and pretended to be on my side when Nkosi spun that little story that he did, or that look Bhut' Langa threw at me. I don't know

what to make of it. I saw her carrying suitcases, I hope she leaves and never comes back, she's caused too much harm and heartache in this family.

Mgabadeli is driving us. I'm guessing he asked him to, because right now, he really doesn't have a job, his employer is gone. We are riding in silence, he kept wincing in pain every now and then, but every time I turned to look at him, he put on a brave face and soldiered on. I want to know what the hell is wrong with him. He once mentioned something about death knocking at his door, he can't possibly be dying right now.

He's still again, his breathing has become normal, so I won't ask. When he arrive at council, he climbs out the car and Mgabadeli comes to help me out. I'm not used to walking in heels, in fact, I regret making the decision to wear them here. First of all, women don't attend

these kinds of things, I must expect some form of backlash from these patriarchal men who still believe that women belong at home, barefoot and pregnant.

As expected, it is a room filled with men hugging their massive beer bellies, making such a racket that you can hear them over the clicking of my stilettos in the passageway. I got a whiff of Banzi's scent as we passed one of the offices and I immediately felt dizzy. I should come here when I miss him, if I can still smell him, that means I'll find so many more things about him.

It went dead quiet when they saw me walk in, it looked like they were seeing a woman for the very first time in their lives. Oh, excuse me, I'm a girl. They are seeing a girl, that's why they look so stunned.

"Gentlemen." I forget that this man is their age-mate. Shocking if you ask me.

“Mageba.” they chanted in unison.

As expected, they ignored me like I wasn't there. They were all on their feet and he went to occupy the seat that was left open, leaving the throne empty. I...

“MaGumede, please.” he pointed me to the throne.

Hha!? never. What happens if my bums get set on fire. I'm not doing that. I saw the higher power working right in front of my eyes when that spear rolled to him on a flat fucking surface. I'm not risking it.

Now they all had their eyes on me waiting for me to go sit there.

“I can't.” I shook my head.

They all stood up and bowed at me. Did they not recognize me this whole time?

“Ndlunkulu.” they said in unison again.

I was so overwhelmed. I cleared my throat before I walked closer to the chair. My knees were literally shaking as I walked that short distance to the chair. I was surprised I didn't trip over my own feet in that moment.

They waited for me to sit, so I took the chance, and I did. Then after that, they all sat. I kept my eyes down the whole time and I felt tears burning my eyes. I wanted to blink them away, but it was hard. I can't describe this feeling, sitting in this chair. It is so overwhelming.

"Thank you for this opportunity, I know everything that is happening is abrupt and taking a toll on everyone, but the palace is near a collapse and that is why I am here." he sounds so professional.

I want to look at him, but my eyes are glassy, I can't let them see me, because if I even dare make eye contact with any of them, the tears will flood my face, and I won't be able to

explain myself then.

“Kwenzakalani Zulu?” one of the men asked.

“There is a lot going on, but what I am here to explain is that Zwelibanzi was wrongfully placed on the throne, and the ancestors turned their backs on us.”

“He was placed on the throne because everybody thought you had died.” another man speaks.

I lift my eyes and they immediately meet with Bhut’ Langa’s. I quickly look away again.

“I know that, and that was all thanks to MaMzobe, who was the one behind my accident. I came back home because the ancestors are unhappy and they are going to make everyone’s life a living nightmare if I don’t fix things.” gasps all over.

“Zwelibanzi married the wrong woman, the one who was chosen by the ancestors as my wife,

the real queen.” he pointed at me with his eyes and they all turned to look at me.

I hardened my face to stop myself from crying. I bit the corners of my mouth and avoided locking eyes with any of them.

“So what is going to happen now?”

“Their marriage was null and void. You can bring in any seer to clarify that, there are no ancestors dwelling in the Zulu homestead. So before anything can be done, they have to be brought back, MaGumede needs to be introduced as a Zulu wife officially and we have to marry MaNdlela and my father.” he chocked on the last part.

I wonder why he has a hard time acknowledging him as his father. It’s not going to change, he’s his blood!

“Zulu konakele nje.” one of the men pointed out the obvious.

“I’m just curious to know where MaMzobe is, and how is she still on this land after committing such to the royal family.” another spoke.

He only cleared his throat.

“I don’t know about the rest of you gentlemen, but I believe that the palace needs this to happen.”

“I agree. We knew the state of the palace wasn’t very good, and we thought that Mageba bringing in a second wife would lessen the load, we didn’t think things were this bad.” its because they are all a bunch of lazy men who are only here to enjoy the benefits.

Bhuti should fire all of them in fact.

“I will be addressing the public tomorrow, and make it clear to them about the plans that are being made, but I can’t do that without the guidance of you, because as much as it is the

Zulu palace, but it belongs to each and everyone of you, as you have contributed so much into it.”

“You have our blessing. The well-being of the palace is our main priority as the council. Mageba.” they all stood up.

“ZULU!” they chanted and bowed.

Now it’s just awkward with me sitting on the throne when it should be him. He technically hasn’t died, he said I would inherit it when he dies.

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The meeting was wrapped up and I couldn’t wait to get out of that chair. I was starting to feel the heat, and I know it was my mind playing tricks on me, but I genuinely freaked out. He’s a

bit lighter than he was when he came here on the drive back. Now it's just the two of us at the palace left. Mandlenkosi, I don't know about him...

I have my shoes in my hands, I'm walking in front of him. There is still silence, but it's less tense and awkward. As he walks through the palace doors, I see torch lights and I turn to see a car driving into the yard. Who other than Mandlenkosi. He's here? I want to wait for him to climb out the car, and question him about what happened yesterday morning. What he did didn't sit well with me. Why was he storming off, jumping to conclusions over something he needs so explanation to?

I didn't wait though. I walked inside and I walked into Bhuti leaning over the couch. He was groaning in pain, you could hear it in his voice.

Just when I was about to rush to him, Shlobo

walked in and rushed to give him a glass of water. He took it and gulped it down. His whole face was turning red. I dropped my shoes on the floor and ran to him.

“What’s going on?”

“He needs a hospital.” Shlobo said.

“NO. I’m fine.” I frowned.

He had his hand on his chest, and it was bouncing up and down.

“Zulu, it’s no use resisting the help. You need it.” he unbuttoned his shirt, the first two buttons and leaned against the couch again.

“What’s happening to him?” because clearly, he’s not in the right state of mind to answer me.

“He’s having a heart attack.”

WHAT!?! And we are still standing here? For what? She says it like it’s something so normal.

“We have to go to hospital bhuti.” I pulled him

by his shirt.

“Don’t MaGumede.” he slapped my wrist, a little two hard for my liking.

I’ll let it slide.

“Stop being stubborn Zulu.” how is she still using her calm voice. Here my heart is racing.

“Hey!” I turn and look at Mandlenkosi, he looks kak drunk.

I’m quarter to screaming, this family is going to drive to an early grave.

“Mandlenkosi your brother is having a heart attack, we need to get him to hospital.” now tears are burning my cheeks.

“My brother died; you all killed him.” I might as well be speaking to a brick wall.

Before I knew it, this tall man was on the ground, unconscious.

“Zulu!?” Shlobo goes down to check his pulse.

“We need to get to a hospital, now!”

I can't lose another person now. No way!

Chapter Sixty-Nine

Amile Gumede

I've never been so scared my whole life. I've never been so afraid to lose someone like this. I can't even help feel like I'm to blame for everything that is happening to him; that he's dealing with everything he's dealing with because of me.

My leg won't stop shaking, I'm terrified, the doctors have disappeared for almost an hour and no one has come to report something. I hate it more because my eyes are dry; I can't even cry. It's draining, it's scary, I don't know what to do with myself. Shlobo has been

holding my knee to try stop it from shaking several times, but it has proven not to work.

I feel as if I should have known. I should have bothered myself to ask him what his terminal illness is, and not just push it to the back of my mind every time he mentioned it. What kind of wife am I going to be? Imagine what it would be like if Shlobo wasn't there, I wouldn't have known what to do, Mandlenkosi is just as useless as I am.

He actually followed us here. After he refused to come help us carry him to the car, he literally got in his own-as drunk as he was-and followed us to the hospital. I'm angry at him for that, he definitely knows how to ruin a good thing. I literally thought we were finally in a good space, where we could just sit, talk and be civil with each other. Now he's turning to the bottle again, and I feel it is not my duty to tell him he won't find the answers he's looking for at the bottom

of all those bottles.

My head is pounding. I let down my hair, thinking it was the ponytail, but it's still hurting like hell. I'm sitting here contemplating how quickly things could change if he were to lose his life in there. I would be doomed, I know nothing about running a whole kingdom! I'm sure the rest of the family would shit on me, and maybe try to bewitch me for taking over, and that is drama that I'm not ready to face.

"I've been telling him to go to the hospital, he didn't want to listen." Shlobo spoke, dragging me out of my thoughts.

"Is it not something to do with him not being on the throne?" I looked up.

She shook her head. She looks just as stressed as I am, the crease lines on her forehead make her look even less pretty.

"He's terminally ill, he needs a heart transplant,

his heart is giving up on him.”

New information alert. I'm shocked. A heart disease is not something you can just ignore and live with. You can literally spend all your days in hospital and we could expect you to die at any time.

“Is it a hereditary thing?” I think I heard somewhere that King Mhlabawesizwe had a heart failure. I could be wrong.

“Yes, it is.” I sighed and she sighed right after me. We are a bunch of stressed girlies.

“He's not going to die just yet. I just hope the doctors can help him, I hate seeing him suffer like this.” oh?

I seem to forget that she can see into the future, or some creepy shit like that. And that feeling is suddenly coming back; what the hell is going on between these two people? Shlobo, really?

“Your highness.” the doctor bows in front of us.

I didn't even see her coming towards us. I stand up and look at her to give me the answers I want.

"He's okay, just heavily sedated. He has a coronary heart disease, that is why he suffers from severe chest pains from time to time. He suffered a heart attack, a blood clot was blocking the blood from flowing to his heart."

"So how are you going to stop this from happening again?" Shlobo asked standing up too.

"Angioplasty surgery to reduce blockage of the arteries." I know this, I learnt about it in biology last year.

"Please use simple english." Shlobo.

"They will insert and inflate a tiny balloon to widen the artery so the blood can flow properly." I broke it down for her.

The doctor looked at me impressed.

“Yes, that is the gist of it.”

“But that doesn’t guarantee success. What if the artery narrows again?”

“His artery isn’t severely blocked, therefore this would be the best procedure. It also has a 99,7% success chance.” I don’t want him to be that 0,3% of people that don’t survive.

“Trust in me my queen. The prince is in good hands.” I believe her.

“Can I go in and see him?” she hesitated a bit.

“I don’t think that is a good idea. He’s still very out of it.”

“I will go in, I just want to burn some incense for him, it always helps him.” Shlobo suggested.

Still with hesitation, the doctor spoke.

“I can only allow you in for two minutes.”

“Thank you.” we both said.

“His surgery is scheduled for tomorrow morning.” well damn, he was supposed to be addressing the press tomorrow.

“Thank you.” I said.

She led us to where he was. He was hooked up on pipes, one was in his mouth and he has an oxygen mask on. He’s still tall as hell, his feet are dangling at the bottom of the bed, they even had to remove the foot board. My heart hurts, it hurts so bad.

“Mageba, it’s me and your wife. I know you don’t know this place, you will go home soon. Nakhu okwakho.” the smell of impepho filled the whole room.

I’m sure this is illegal, that is why there are smoke detectors going off. She’s burning it next to his head and I’m standing on the other side of the bed, watching. Two male nurses rush in with fire extinguishers, but stop at the door

when they see me.

“My Queen, we are going to have to ask you to switch that off.” why are they talking to me? I’m not the one who lit the incense.

Shlobo paid no mind to them. When she was finished talking, she walked passed them and I followed behind her like a lost puppy.

And I know she didn’t just tell him that his wife is here. Oh hell no!

Nambitha Makhathini

It feels great to be at home. I’ve been spending time with my family, and I think I was just trying to ease my guilty conscious for not being with them the whole festive season. I really missed them though. I have been ignoring Nkululeko’s calls ever since I came back, I’m tired of him, I

just need a break. It hasn't even been a full two days and he's already blowing up my phone. He must relax, I'm still angry at him for what he asked.

He was being ridiculous. And I'm praying to the lord that he didn't succeed in his plans. His sperm has proven itself strong.

I'm squashed and sweating. Zimkhitha and I are forced to share a bed because there isn't enough room for all of my siblings in this house, and my older sister, the other one, Janet and her kids are occupying what we now call Zimkhitha's room. That used to be our room as girls, and this one belonged to our brother.

When they all moved out, I got this one, and that one was allocated to Zimi because she's always here.

Her big bums are pushing me to the edge of the bed, that is what I was subjected to the whole night. Not nice if you ask me.

I rolled out of bed and walked out of the room. It's bloody hot outside, I know if I was with Nkululeko, we would have slept with the air-conditioning on and I wouldn't be feeling this sticky. There is already a storm going on in the kitchen. Mrs Makhathini is cooking up a storm and her husband is sitting with her, drinking tea in this kind of weather. I don't wish to understand the logic behind that.

"Good morning." I greeted as I walked past them.

"Morning sweetie." they greeted back.

They are too jolly for my liking. My parents barely smile at each other. And I've been saying this; they don't love each other, it's probably a marriage of convenience. These people have four kids, and double the number of grandchildren, they have spent almost half their years on this earth together. Splitting up would be useless.

I don't want that to happen to me, I want to love the same person the rest of my life, but stay with them because of love, not because of things keeping us together.

I got a glass of cold water, downed it and as I was about to walk out the kitchen, my mother spoke.

"How is Amile, how is she holding up?" I sighed.

"She's strong, the whole time I was there, she did not cry."

"I saw her there on TV giving that speech during the memorial." mom said.

"They were also talking about her on the raid. They were judging her for taking the stand. Something about a wife in mourning shouldn't be doing something like that. Maka Vika, don't let them tell you such things. If you want to say things at my funeral, you should." dad threw in his two cents.

The media is being ridiculous. This thing that they believe in that the widow cannot present a speech at her own husband's funeral is nonsense. Utter bullshit if you ask me. That should be reserved for widows who have nothing to say, or who are not strong enough to stand there and put something together.

"I didn't really get a chance to speak to her after that, she was really busy and, but I know that she's acting strong. And if she doesn't deal with it, she's going to find herself drowning in sorrow and heartache."

"Hhayi Nambitha, she's still young. You say this because you are not going through what she is. Even I as an adult don't wish to experience what she is going through." she places her hand on her husbands shoulder.

I'm guessing she's talking about being widowed. Oh yes, I know nothing about that, but I know about how painful being in a relationship is, and

I hate it. Love hurts sometimes. But if you don't deal with your pain head-on, it will haunt you.

I left them talking among themselves. I need a shower, maybe I'll cool down a little. I can't stand this heat. I ran myself a cold shower while I played some good music. It feels so surreal to not share my space with someone. I feel like I'm always with Nkululeko now, we share everything, my space, my body, my vagina.

I love him though. No matter how fucked up it may sound, with his toxicity, I love him. I would die first than to stand to lose Nkululeko, even though he gets under my skin one hundred percent of the time. I'm willing to cross rivers and fight anyone for this man, tell me, is that not real love?

I'm feeling much cooler now, and my mood has suddenly picked up, thinking about the good parts of my relationship with him does that to me. I can hear several voices conversing in the

kitchen so I rush past so whoever it is that is here, doesn't see me. It's way too early to be having guests. Whoever it may be does not have a life.

This room is stuffy, and it smells. Zimkhitha is still fast asleep, the air is thick with sweat and other smells I can't describe. I got straight to open the windows, not that it will make much of a difference. There is no wind coming in, only more heat.

"Waze wanesicefe Nambitha."

"Wake up, I think we have guests." I announced as I looked through the wardrobe.

"It's too early for guests." my exact same sentiments.

As she was peeling off the covers off her body, mom barged in.

"Nambitha." she didn't look very impressed with me. What have I done now?

“Yes ma.”

“Woza.” oh damn.

I didn't even lotion, I grabbed the closest dress and threw it on, and quickly put on deoderant. I know better, when my mom calls me like that, she doesn't care what you are doing, you drop everything and you go. So I'll go as creased as I am.

When I get to the kitchen, surprise surprise.

“Nkululeko?” I can't contain the shock.

More than anything, I'm trying to understand why he is sitting on my family dining room table, next to my father, with a glass of juice in front of him, like he's a noble guest? I thought he was a Zulu man, he doesn't just go into a girl's home like he's doing now?

“Kanti uyamazi?” that was my mother. My dearest mother.

Dad grabbed her hand and made her sit down.

“Hlala phansi kaGxabhashe.” my father, such a sweet man.

I lowered myself on one of the chairs, the furthest one from all of them.

“This man right here claims he wants to marry you.” I looked up at my dad shocked.

I then turned to look at Nkululeko, who just smiled at me. There was an envelope next to my father, that I didn’t seem to notice until now. Oh hell no.

“I know this is not how things are done mhlonishwa, but I really love your daughter and I would love to send my people to come meet your people, and maybe find common ground, a way on how I can make her mine.”

This man is slowly losing his marbles.

“Nambitha?” dad asked.

“Ayy Jabulani...” my mother intervened.

Why does it seem like my dad is sold?

“Kahle mawabo. Nambitha, do you know him.”

I don't know what to make of this question; does he mean do I know him or does he mean do I want to marry him?

“Ye...yes, I do babana.” I glanced over at Nkululeko.

I'm boiling inside. Dad slid the letter back to Nkululeko, unopened.

“Send a proper delegation if you want me to read this. I should be fining you for coming to my house like this.”

“Mhlonishwa. Gxabhashe.” he raised his hands over his head.

He stood up and I stood up too. Mom gave me a deadly look that warned me to sit down, but I wanted to find out what the hell Nkululeko is up

to.

I followed him outside.

“Are you crazy?” he’s here dressed in chinos and a white shirt like it isn’t over 30 degrees.

I’m fuming mad! And what is he wearing? It’s so unlike him.

“Crazy yes, crazy in love with you.” so cheesy.

I pushed him away when he tried to grab my waist.

“Nkululeko do you understand what you have just done? I told you I don’t want to get married. Not yet!”

“I’m not getting any younger Nana. I’ve played around for way too long, now is the time that I want to dedicate to settling down. I want to start this chapter with you and you only.”

“But you are being selfish Nkululeko...” he grabbed my waist and pulled me into his

embrace. I don't even remember brushing my teeth.

"Selfishly in love. I don't want to share you, nor do I want to lose you." he kissed my lips.

Okay, I might be falling for his tricks, but he's not forgiven just as yet.

"My parents could walk out at any moment." I whined in between the kiss.

He smells amazing!

He let go of me and fixed his pants. I won't lie, he really looks ridiculous. I think it's because it's not something he would wear on a normal day. I guess I have to get used to it because being an accountant means I'll be seeing more of this.

"I'll find people to come represent me. They'll come with all 11 cows for you and I'll make you my wife." I dragged him through my teeth and looked away

“Ngiyakuthanda MaXulu.” I blushed.

I pushed him towards the gate.

“Goodbye Nkululeko.”

“Call me.”

I chuckled and watched him walk to a car. He’s not driving his Golf. It’s a black BMW. I don’t know models so I can’t really pin-point which one it is, but it doesn’t have a number plate. Shit, I left my phone in the house.

Where did he get all this money all of a sudden?

Chapter Seventy

Amile Gumede

I’m starving! I’ve spent the whole night here, and the only reason I know it’s morning is because Bhut’ Langa was wheeled out to surgery just

over 20 minutes ago. Shlobo left, she can't stay in one place for too long, and all the different spirits and energies in this hospital were bothering her, so she left. I can't afford to leave; I already feel like it is my fault that he is here, if I'm not here when something doesn't go well, I won't stop blaming myself for the rest of my life.

Nurses have been walking past me, looking at me with pity. One even brought me a blanket. It's not that cold, but I appreciate the gesture. I might be relaxing here, but deep down I am extremely concerned about that press conference that is supposed to happen approximately 2 hours from now. Bhut' Langa is on a hospital bed, I'm here and I'm not planning to leave his side.

Who is going to address them? MaMzobe left, she no longer identifies herself a part of this family. Her dragging her suitcase after exposing my dirty laundry to Bhut' Langa was proof of

that. Mandlenkosi is a drunkard, and it seems as though he has not processed any of the things going on in his life; it's only alcohol on his mind. Therefore I can deem him as useless. The rest of his siblings are as good as dead to him; to us.

One thing I have noticed about this family is that there is no unity. Even after the man responsible for this divide is gone, the children, (grown men in this case) still don't look out for each other. Sis' Balungile was very quick to try and take over everything when Banzi died, but she had not been here a single day when he needed her, or any of her siblings. Even when Banzi called to them, they did come, but they ran at the sight of problems. He was on his own.

Even now, none of them have bothered to come through and check up on me. I know I mean nothing to them, but I meant something to their brother. Doesn't that count for something? Or

maybe just show face to support their brother, who they just decided to give a cold shoulder after he came back. I totally understand that he came at the wrong time, but he's still their brother, they should be sticking together. At this point I would've preferred for them to be here causing drama and trying to fight me for the throne, but it's just peaceful. It just goes to show how much they don't care.

There isn't much left for me to deal with, hopefully, I'll find spiritual peace when all of this is over and done with, and the sooner I accept that this is the life I'm destined to live, the better I will live in it. I guess it's just me and Bhuti from here onwards.

"Ndlunkulu." only one person calls me that.

I fluttered my eyelids open and he was crouching down in front of me.

"Jama?" I stretched my limbs. I fell asleep.

My eyes feel heavy, so does my head. My body is also aching, I've been in the same position for too long.

"We have an issue at the palace." he says, staring at me as if he was awaiting an answer.

"What is the problem?" my thighs are sweating, it's the blanket.

"The palace is swamped with the news people. They said they were invited by you for a press conference. It is chaos going on, Mandlenkosi is shitting himself drunk and they are having a field day with him." sigh.

Can't I deal with one problem at a time?

"I can't go, Bhut' Langaletu is in surgery. I want to be here when he wakes up. I can't leave him alone." the look he is giving me screams judgemental, but I'm not going to let him do that to me.

And is he not going to ask what is wrong with

the man on a hospital bed?

“Tell them to go.” I said standing up.

He stood up too. I don’t wish to see myself in the mirror, I’m sure I look hideous. And I’m starving.

“Don’t you think we’ve tried that? There isn’t enough of us to fight against almost fifty people. There is no one else to call but you. Just please come and talk to them, and get Mandlenkosi in order before he continues to make a fool out of himself in front of the press.”

Jama is contradicting himself. Does he want me to go deal with the press, or his drunkard best friend? I’m sure he’s more than capable of doing that himself. I don’t want a drunk Mandlenkosi hurling insults my way, I already feel like shit.

“I’ll deal with the press, you can see what you do about your friend.” I’m getting to a point

where I'm slowly starting to get pissed off about Mandlenkosi's behaviour.

He gave me a cold look. I'm not Nambitha, he must not try that with me. As I was about to follow him out the hospital, the nurse that came to give me a blanket earlier called my name.

"MaGumede." it's very rare to hear someone other than these men I live with call me that.

"The prince is out of surgery." she's not looking at me, she has her eyes locked with Jama's.

He looks pissed and she, I don't know. I can't put my finger on it. Kind of disrespectful if you ask me. Why are they addressing their sexual tension on my account?

"Is he up, can I go in and see him?" her eyes are back on me.

"Yes you can, but please don't burn anything." she laughs a little.

I don't. She sees that I'm not laughing and straightens her face. The joke flew right over my head. I can tolerate anything, but I will not tolerate someone who disrespects my beliefs like that. She clears her throat in embarrassment; good.

"What about the press?" Jama asks, grabbing my wrist as I attempt to walk away.

"I told you, my priority right now is making sure that man in there is okay. He is the only family I have. The press can surely wait."

I free myself from his hold and follow the nurse into the ward.

"I can only allow you in for a few minutes." she announced before she walked out.

He's not hooked on any pipes now, just the oxygen mask covering his face, helping him breathe. I see they got him a longer bed to accommodate his long legs, he fits on this one.

I'm trying so hard to stop myself from crying, but my tears are betraying me. I have barely healed from Banzi's death; having to see him in that state, down on the floor, shaking in pain as if he was going to leave me right in that moment, it scared me. I didn't realize just how I am afraid of losing people until that happened.

"MaGumede." he lowered the oxygen mask.

I didn't realize he was awake. I quickly wipe the tears and walked closer to his bedside.

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm perfect. I want to go home." he's not at liberty to say that.

"No, you need to rest. You had a heart attack." that's not something to be overlooked. It's a serious matter.

"You can't, you just got out of surgery." he sat up.

I tried to stop him, but he was already sitting.
This is another level of stubborn.

“That was barely a surgery, I’m okay.”

The doctor that was tending to him walked in and smiled at the both of us. She’s nice.

“How are you feeling Mr Zulu.” she asked taking her stethoscope and putting it on his chest.

You can tell that he’s uncomfortable as she touches him.

“I’m fine. I want to go home.” he declares.

“Unfortunately, that can’t happen. You had a heart attack, I have to keep you in for at least the rest of today to monitor your progress and make sure you don’t have another one after the procedure.”

He looks at me. I can’t help him.

“I agree with the doctor, it’s too soon.” I said looking at him.

He sighed. I'm guessing he has realized that he has no choice but to listen to me.

"I didn't want to leave before you wake up, but Jama was here and he says the press has already arrived at the palace. I'll just tell them that you are in hospital." the doctor was checking other things.

"Don't. You tell them what the plan is." I frowned.

"The main idea was for you to address them." I remind him. I think he seems to forget who he is.

"You can also do it. Don't mention me being hospitalized. They know you, they trust you." I feel terrible about this.

He needs to hire someone to do this on his behalf. I don't think I will be able to cope.

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Jama waited for me, and when we got to the palace, I was shocked, I don't think I have ever seen so many people in my whole life. Some are crowded outside the palace gates, it's hard to get inside. I didn't think it was this bad.

They were gathering around the car, thank goodness for dimmed windows, otherwise they would've photographed me in this state, and I can't have that. But how am I going to go inside the house and shower before addressing them, because there is no way I will show up to the press looking like this. They will have a field day with me.

"Jama go park that side, I want to go shower first."

"There is no time to shower, these people are impatient." he stops in the middle of the turning

circle.

Is he crazy!? they are literally swarming around the car. How am I going to get out? I try to shout for him as he comes to my side to open for me, but he's not listening. He opens the door, and I see flashes going on in my face, blinding me.

"My queen, where are you coming from?"

"Is Langaletu still alive?"

"How do you feel about your brother-in-law acting like this?"

It's questions coming from every angle. They are suffocating me. It doesn't help that it looks like I've just come from a night of agony. I'm just about to do a serious walk of shame. Now I understand what celebrities go through on a daily basis.

"My queen, will you address us or will it be Prince Langaletu?" a microphone is pushed to

my face.

Jama quickly blocks it and pushes me towards the house.

“Please give her space.”

He literally had to cover me as they follow me all the way to the front porch of the palace. I finally get a moment to breathe when I am safe behind the palace doors, and I have left all the noise outside.

Mandlenkosi is passed out on the sofa, Banzi’s expensive sofas, with his dirty shoes on. There is a woman next to him, she’s pressing what I’m assuming is a cold towel on his forehead, Jama’s facial expression has already changed.

“Jabulile?”

“Nkululeko Dlamini.” she says and looks through the both of us.

What is this now?

Sis' Melo rushes in the room.

"My queen, do you need any assistance?"

"Yes, I need a change of clothes and a comb."

"Yes my queen." she rushed out. I rushed into the bathroom down the passage.

Yes, that horrid bathroom. I got in, rinsed my face in the basin and stared at my reflection in the mirror. I've lost myself. I look at myself in the mirror and the reflection is still the same, I still have the same face, just a whole different person, a person I don't recognize. I am no longer a girl who's innocence was the most important thing to her, I am now a woman who has to go around fixing people's shit, people who didn't care to think about the future when they made mistakes.

Yes I'm pissed. I'm mad at everyone who has contributed to me being here in this current moment. I hate it here, I hate the person I am

becoming. This is not the me I want to be. I am miserable. And it doesn't look like it's going to get better than this.

"My queen." a knock on the door.

I open and Sis' Melo is standing there with a navy body-con dress with dramatic sleeves hanging on a hanger. I've never worn this dress, it's part of the wardrobe that MaMzobe picked out for me. I would never buy something like this.

"Please help me with my hair." I asked grabbing the dress from her.

I'll shower later I guess. I took off the dress I was wearing and threw on the other one. She helped me comb my unruly hair. I didn't treat it after removing my braids, I have been hiding it under a scarf ever since Banzi was pronounced dead. I actually want to shave it off.

"You have beautiful hair my queen."

“You can have it, I want to shave it off.” you can see that I have just insulted her.

“Please don’t, this is your crown, and it’s beautiful.”

“I don’t have time to maintain it. Maybe when I have time again, I will.” this will be the first time cutting my hair, it has never even crossed my mind. But now I want to do it.

She tied my hair is such a cute little bun, I loved it. When I looked presentable enough, I thanked her and we walked out the bathroom.

Mandlenkosi had risen from the dead, although he still looked as dead as could be.

“Amile.” he called out to me.

What are people supposed to think, why is he addressing me on first name basis in front of this person I don’t know.

“Zulu, lay low.” that was Jama. Good, he must keep him like that.

I walked out and realized that I was walking barefoot. I didn't care. There was a podium set up with a few microphones from different news channels. When did they do this?

"Good morning sizwe sako Zulu, and anyone who may be watching. Firstly I'd like to apologize for the delay, things haven't been going well this morning. I am aware that I have called upon you to come as you were expecting an address from umntwana uLangaletu, but due to unforeseen circumstances, he can't join us this morning." I felt a presence next to me and I looked up to see Jama.

"Can you tell us where he is?" one journalist shouts.

Did I not just say due to unforeseen circumstances?

"No I cannot disclose that." I closed the case.

“Indlunkulu is facing a lot of challenges in the current moment in time. It is no secret that you have lost a monarch, and I a husband, and we are all still grieving, but many things have to be fixed, and if they are not fixed now, isizwe sako Zulu will crumble.”

“My Queen, who is to succeed King Zwelibanzi?” another journalist asks.

“I will allow for questions when I am done. I am here to announce that umntwana uLangaletu will be taking the throne and will be the king of isizwe sako Zulu. This decision has come after he has come back, as he was initially the one to succeed the late King Mhlabawesizwe, before his accident. He will be introduced to the ancestors once again and will be put on the throne at the end of the next month. With that said, I will be taking my place beside him as the queen, as his wife.” gasps and murmuring.

“How is that going to be possible?” one asks.

I'm this close to shutting this whole thing down and going back to the house. They are pissing me off.

“Umntwana uZwelibanzi was placed on the throne wrongfully, therefore the ancestors did not recognize him as the king. I have been betrothed to umntwana uLangaletu without my knowledge, without any of the elders knowledge, that is how I ended up here in the palace, married to umntwana uZwelibanzi. Things are going to be fixed, but that is not going to happen without the public's support and respect.”

“How did umntwana uLangaletu survive the car accident and where has he been the past three years?”

“He has been in recovery, connecting to his ancestors. He was found by Miss Thulisile Mfusi and has been recovering under her care.”
yes, I do know Shlobo's name!

“And when will the wedding be?” the same one asked there in the front.

“As it is a sacred ceremony that has to be performed for the ancestors, I cannot disclose the date.” I say that because I do not know myself.

I just know that it has to happen before the coronation, and I know that everything has to happen before the end of February otherwise we are doomed.

“And after umntwana uLangaletu, who is next in line for the throne?” annoying!

“No comment. Thank you for your time.”

Camera flashes everywhere! It’s a frenzy out there. Jama is back to shielding me from the stampede and he is leading me back inside. We definitely need a stronger security force in this place, this is not it.

I definitely was too quick to complain, this is

only the beginning of the madness! Langaletu must recover, we've got a palace to fix, and a nation to lead!

Chapter Seventy-One

Langaletu Zulu

He's never been happier to see Amile like he is now. He finally gets to get out of this place.

"I know it's no use asking you to take it easy my prince, I know you won't listen." he folds the towel on his lap and stands up.

"Ngiwumqemane mina! I'm as healthy as an ox." he says fixing his shirt.

He definitely needs new clothes, he can't be dressing like a commoner anymore, especially now that he's going to be seen with someone like Amile, she's always looking on point, even

when she doesn't put in any effort.

"I'll make sure he rests doctor." she said grabbing the small bag that was on the bed. He didn't stay for too long, but it felt like he was here for years.

They walk out of the hospital after he signs his own discharge forms. Amile is still considered a minor in South Africa, not looking at the fact that she is about to get into her second marriage. Jama is standing there waiting for them, and when he sees them approaching, he quickly takes the bag from Amile and opens the door for the both of them.

"Thank you Mzizi." he said as he climbed in after the lady.

As soon as they are settled and the car is moving, he asked:

"So what did I miss?"

"Not much. Just that people are accusing us

that we killed Zwelibanzi. Or rather, I instigated everything so I could keep the throne. I'm also being dragged for being a plain jane who doesn't put that much effort into dressing up. That's just the gist of it." he laughed.

It wasn't because what she was saying is funny, but her attitude towards it.

"People will always talk MaGumede, don't pay any mind to them. I think you have an amazing dress sense." he means it, he's not saying it just to cheer her up.

She smiled a little and looked out the window. Maybe it actually bothered her more than he thought. He caught a glimpse of Jama staring at them in the mirror with a look that he can't fathom.

"Is Thulisile at the palace?" he asked looking directly at Jama.

Not that the question was directed to him, he

just wants to understand what his problem is.

“Yes, she’s been doing something, I don’t know what it is.”

“I have to set up a meeting with the MEC so we can discuss the proceedings of the ceremony.” she shook her head.

“You just got out of hospital, you need to take it easy. Maybe I should handle all of those things.”

“I don’t want to put pressure on you. You still have to go back to school after your results come back.” she frowns.

“I don’t want to go back to school.”

Maybe there is a lot that they need to discuss in private, the extra pair of eyes are making him very uncomfortable. Also, there is more than school things that they need to discuss, like the baby matter.

“School is the last thing on my mind right now, especially now that I’m supposed to be running a whole kingdom. I can’t do it.”

“I understand.” he’s closing the topic, but only for now, he’s going to bring it up later when they are alone.

When they arrived at the palace, he felt relieved to finally be home, he hated the hospital with all his heart. The helpers were already standing at the door awaiting his majesty’s arrival. He was shocked to see them all looking so neat and smart in their uniforms and he felt a sense of belonging, something he hasn’t felt in a while, something he longed to feel when he first arrived here. He’s been feeling out of place for so long.

They praise him as he stands in front of them and smiles. This is the first time he’s actually meeting them all, and now they are aware that he is to become the head of this family for good.

“Thank you so much for the warm welcome, I really appreciate it.” one rushed to take the bag from Amile who was standing just behind him.

They made their way in, and Amile followed him to his bedroom. It’s not something permanent, things are supposed to change now, even his place of sleep, but he feels it’s still too soon for him to be moving into the room his brother shared with his ex-girlfriend. But he’s settled into this one, Thulisile already packed all his clothes into the wardrobe. When Amile closed the door behind her, he exhaled.

“I was thinking that trip wouldn’t end.” he sat on the bed.

“Jama?” Amile asks sensing the discomfort on his face.

“What is his issue?”

“I don’t know. He’s always like that. I know you should be resting and taking it easy, but I need

you to please speak to Mandlenkosi. He likes you, and me, not so much. He is plummeting into a borehole of depression and dragging bottles of alcohol along with him. I don't know what to say to him anymore, just two days ago, he was drunk here when the media was here and he made a complete fool out of himself. He is bringing our reputation to shame, and we are already doing that ourselves."

He can't miss the worry lines on her face. This must have been stressing her the whole time he was away. Among all the other things stressing her.

"He hates me too, but I'll try to talk to him. He's not that young Mandlenkosi who would easily listen to me, but it's worth the shot."

She came to kneel next to the bed and buried her head in her arms. She looks exhausted, how come he didn't notice this earlier. He placed his hand on her shoulder.

“I’m sorry if this is all too much on you.” he said suddenly feeling bad. He thought they were getting somewhere.

Maybe it’s wrong of him to assume that she is always going to have it together. She is human after all.

“Can you please cut my hair.” he frowned.

“What?” she looked up at him

“Can you please cut my hair. I don’t want it anymore.” he wasn’t expecting that.

“Uhhm, okay, but we don’t...”

“There is a machine in Banzi’s room, can you please get it.” her voice is suddenly breaking.

He doesn’t think twice, he stands up and walks out the room. It’s like she was waiting for that moment where they were all alone for her to let it out like this. As he was walking out, he saw Thulisile sitting on the floor in the lounge, she

was doing that thing of rocking herself back and forth, singing. He knows better than to disrupt her when she is doing that. She isn't here, she is in another world and no one can get her to come back. What the hell is going on around him.

When he walks into the main bedroom, he is overcome with emotion, but something heavy sits on his shoulders as he takes small steps towards where he could possibly think to find the shaving machine. He looks at his reflection in the mirror and he sees MaNdlela standing behind him. She has a green scarf on her head, wearing a black dress. She's dressed just like Amile is right now. He freezes on the spot and takes in a deep breath to try and fathom what this might mean. She then slowly starts to unwrap the scarf from her head and it is bald, not a single hair on the head.

He closes his eyes shut, hoping to open her

eyes and the reflection will be gone, but he opens his eyes to see her rubbing her bald head, now with a smile on her face. It's not a wide smile, it's just a sign that she's happy.

He ignores it and opens every single drawer searching for the bloody shaving machine. When he finds it, he rushes out the bedroom. Things in this place are getting weirder by the day.

When he passes the lounge, Thulisile is still trapped in her spiritual world, and she's humming a familiar tune to him, he just can't put his finger on where he's heard it before. He rushes past, and into the bedroom, where he now finds Amile, in her black dress and a green head scarf, standing in front of the mirror, tears cascading down her face.

"MaGumede." he called out to her.

Why does she look exactly like MaNdlela, even

the way that she's staring at him through that mirror.

She turns and looks at him, wipes her tears and removes the scarf from her head, revealing her long luscious straight hair.

"Are you sure?"

"One hundred percent." He nodded.

He went to go plug it in on the wall before he came to sit on the edge of the bed. She sat down on the floor, in between his legs, with her knees on her chest and watched their reflection in the mirror. He turned on the machine and took a second breath before he ran it through her hair.

"All of it?" he asked as he left it short.

"All of it." she murmured in her little voice.

He's heard that a woman cutting her hair is symbolic of healing, a new start, and maybe a

fresh perspective on life. She's starting afresh.

A smile slowly emerged on her face as all of her hair fell onto the ground, and by the time all of it was off her head, the smile reached her ears, much wider than the one MaNdlela had.

"You look beautiful." he said running his hands on her now bare head.

"Thank you."

"Please don't cry anymore." his mouth slipped.

Her smile broadened.

"I won't."

"We are doing this life thing together, I've got you and I'll hold your hand whenever I can, I promise. I just need you to ride with me and I will ride with you."

She nodded and got on her knees, facing in his direction.

"So it's a forever thing?" she asked with her

eyes glistening.

“For as long as I’m around, it’s a forever thing.”

“Thank you kaMhlaba.” she lowered her head.

That feeling he felt when he walked into that room, that heaviness and darkness he felt, it’s gone. He feels lighter than he’s ever felt before. KaMhlaba, he’s never liked anything that has to do with his father than he does now.

Nambitha Makhathini

I have a headache. I know I said I was avoiding Nkululeko, and I was here pretending to be mad at him after he came here the other day and made a fool of me in front of my parents, but I actually miss him. He’s been unavailable, I’m assuming he’s been busy with palace matters, or whatever else that could keep him busy in

Zululand. Those are just my insecurities coming out to play. It's no secret that Nkululeko is not a man that can be trusted easily.

I've been trying him on the phone the whole day, and it hasn't been going through, that is why I have a headache.

"Nambitha, Amile is on the TV, come see!" that is my mother, forever spending her time in front of the television.

That's what she spends time doing every waking moment, being a housewife does that to one.

I rushed out of the room either way and made my way to the lounge, where both my sisters were sitting on their edge of their seats, staring at the TV. I wonder what they are anticipating.

They are discussing her, the news people, apparently, she has said something controversial.

“There are quite a number of things that are going wrong in the palace, she’s a child, how are they going to put the whole of KZN on her shoulders?” one of the news people said.

“This is stupid mama, turn it off.” I said standing up.

One thing I cannot stand are people bashing my best friend. She has gone through a hell lot for that family, they should give her some form of credit.

“Yima, isn’t that your ugly boyfriend.” Zimi pointed out. I glanced at the TV and indeed, it is Nkululeko.

He’s just standing there next to Amile while she speaks. They aren’t actually playing the speech, they are just showing a clip and they are talking over it. When was this? I sat back down.

“What were you thinking vele?” Janet asks laughing.

It's really not funny. And I don't know where they get the audacity to call my man ugly.

"He's not ugly, he's made in God's image." they laugh even louder, the two.

Mom is just quiet, she seems pissed off in fact.

"What is your problem Nambitha?" mom.

The two hyena's seized their laughter at the seriousness of mom's voice.

"I send you to Zululand to support your friend, wena uqomana namadoda."

"It's not like that." Janet and Zimi stood up and exited, leaving me burning alone in the fire.

"Do you want to embarrass me?"

"Ma, don't say that. Is it because he is ugly?" she chuckled, but she wasn't at all amused.

"I will slap you so hard you will see stars mntanami. Have you forgotten who I am?" I shifted uncomfortably in my seat.

“You are too young for marriage, you should be concentrating on finishing school and getting a job. Nawe ufuna ukumitha ufane nalemjendevu eyodadewenu?”

“No.” I answer lowly.

“Awuziqoqe, this man looks older, he is using you, ayikho into ozoyishada.”

“I never said I wanted to marry him.” I mumbled under my breath.

“What did you say?” I looked away.

“Don’t provoke me. I’m telling your father, and there is no more going to Zululand.”

“Hhayi ma, you can’t do that!”

“Usuyaphendula wena manje?” she asks lifting her hand, almost slapping me. I was glad to use my reflexes and get on my feet.

She’s still sitting down.

“You are getting out of hand.” She pointed a

finger at me.

I wanted to roll my eyes. I think I'm better off kwaDlamini.

"Ma, I'm old now. I'm out of school, I can make my own decisions. I never said I was going to marry Nkululeko, but I love him, and he's my boyfriend he isn't going anywhere. You won't stop me from going to Zululand." I say and folded my arms across my chest.

"You are having sex Nambitha?" she squinted her eyes at me, disappointment on her face.

My heart thudded and I quickly dropped my arms. She stood up and walked towards me.

"You are having sex?" I looked away.

What happened next was something I was not expecting at all. My cheek started burning and tears formed in my eyes immediately.

"Suka emehlweni ami. Manje! Suka!" she

pushed me out the lounge.

I don't want to cry, but I probably have her hand mark on my face, so I can't hide that from my nosey sisters. What just happened has triggered me, it's not like I wanted to, sex was forced upon me by the man I thought was my protector. I still love him, but I will always hate him for doing that to me, and if this drives a wedge between my parents and I, I will never forgive him.

Chapter Seventy-Two

Langaletu Zulu

“Isikhathi sesidliwe yinja. UMaGumede kufanele abuyele ekhaya.” he sighed and looked at her.

“And is there no cleansing that needs to be

done before I leave?" Amile asks looking directly at Thulisile.

"No, that gogo that was here did all the cleansing you needed. You are on a clean slate. The ancestors need to be brought back home, sishadise uMhlabawesizwe noMaNdlela, then proceed to have your coronation."

"All of this in a space of two months?" she asks again.

"Unfortunately, yes. Too much time has been wasted."

He's just sitting there quiet, observing everything. He still can't get over that weird thing that happened earlier, it still freaks him out. Amile seems to have changed into a whole different person after cutting her hair, and that was only a few hours ago.

"Shlobo, my grandson is getting married this weekend, I have to be at home. So I need to

leave on Wednesday.” today is Monday. He sighs.

“So I have to go live kaGumede until the wedding?” Amile asks.

“Yes, unfortunately.”

“I don’t want to stay there for too long, those people don’t like my mother, and if they don’t like my mother, they won’t like me. I don’t want to be mistreated.”

“You won’t go now. When Thulisile comes back, you will go.” he finally spoke

“For now I need to set up a meeting with the MEC, officially let them know what the itinerary is and we can set official dates. I’ll go talk to Mandlenkosi now and we will go get a goat for tomorrow.”

He stood up.

“Are we done?” Thulisile asked watching him.

“Yes, we are.” he walked out, leaving them staring at each other.

What is this, are they exchanging negative energies in this house? He marches up the stairs, past the vacant bedroom he has no desire of entering again until everything is cleansed, to Mandlenkosi’s room. He knows he’s home, he saw his car parked when they arrived.

He knocks softly on the door and waits for a response. He comes to the door half naked.

“Mandla, we need to talk.”

He looks uninterested, he leans his head on the door frame.

“I’m in the middle of something.”

“Well I’m sure that something can wait, this is important.” it’s probably not a good decision to

come here in a foul mood, he has to get him to open up, but his energy has just plummeted.

He saw that his face said it's non-negotiable.

"I'll meet you in the dining room." he said closing the door in his face.

It's in between him sleeping at this time of day, or him having a girl in there. He highly suspects it's the latter. He doesn't fight though, he makes his way to the dining room and waits for him to come down. He doesn't take too long, he comes back looking somewhat decent; he has a t-shirt on. It's crinkled up which means he could have taken it out of the washing basket and threw it on. He looks unkempt.

"Do we have an issue?"

"Sit down." he instructs him.

He doesn't want to, but he does so anyway and slouches in his chair.

“How are you feeling?” Nkosi chuckled.

“Are you serious?” he maintained a straight face to show that he was serious.

“You called me here to ask me how I’m feeling?”

“Yes I did, and I want you to answer me truthfully.”

“I’m fine.”

“Really?” he asked once again.

“You know what, I don’t have time for this.” he pushed the chair back in attempt to stand up.

“You know alcohol won’t solve your problems.” he stopped and looked at him.

“Trust me, I know more than anyone. I’ve been there before, it won’t take you anywhere.” he sat back down.

He has him right where he wants him.

“Who hurt you?” he sighed and buried his face

in his hands.

“Talk to me.” he’s trying to sound less aggressive so he can let him in.

“No one hurt me.”

“Then why are you doing this to yourself? Why are you ruining your life like this?” he doesn’t lift his head.

“If it’s a woman, don’t. Don’t let it ruin your whole life, impilo iyaqhubeka.”

“I thought it was woman.” he lowers his voice.

He didn’t interrupt, he just let him speak.

“It’s my mother. I can’t seem to find a woman I love because I keep looking for her in every one I meet, and when I don’t find her, it always seems like I’ve wasted my time.”

“Then why don’t you stop.” it’s easy for him to say that, he never had a mother, he was thrown around the different woman his father married

until he was old enough to take care of himself.

“It’s not easy. Now I had found her, only for her to leave me.”

“Did you love her for who she is or what she has?”

“I don’t know, I just can’t seem to let her go, even when I can see that she’s moving on. I thought I was moving on, but now I’m back to square one.”

He wasn’t expecting to come here and listen to relationship problems.

“Did you try therapy?”

“It didn’t work. I ended up fucking my therapist and after Banzi died, I’ve been ignoring her, I can’t bring myself to call her.”

“And why is that?”

“I felt like I was using her for how she helped me, not because I loved her. This relationship

thing is draining.”

“Then why don’t you get the love of your life back if life was easier with her?”

“She’s not meant for me. I can’t have her and the sooner I accept that, the faster I’ll heal.” he lifted his head and stared at him dead in the eyes.

He looked at him like he had a bone to pick with him, like he had stolen the biggest treasure and he looked just about ready to murder him right there and then.

“You will soon realize that not everyone you meet is put on this earth for you. Drinking yourself into a stupor because a girl you love is not meant for you won’t get you anywhere, it will only take you a million steps backwards, and you might end up like me, living with heart disease and three years wasted because of stupid decisions.”

He sighed. He can tell that he is hurting.

“I need you now, we are both grieving the loss of our brother and I also have to deal with fixing this family. No one else has my back, I can’t put it all on MaGumede’s shoulders, I need your support Ndabezitha, but I can’t have it when you can’t even put together a sentence.”

The mention of MaGumede has Nkosi looking away.

“So you are ascending the throne?” he asked with pain in his voice.

“Yes, and I need all the support I can get, all the support you can give me Mageba.”

Nkosi stands up and goes to his side. He also stands and unexpectedly, he pulls him into a tight squeeze.

“I have your back Mageba, but I need help.” he whispered.

And right after that, he broke down into a sob.

“That is the first step to healing Ndabezitha.” he let him have his moment.

This Mandlenkosi he is cradling now is no different to the Mandlenkosi he had to fetch from school and assure that everything would be okay after he was expelled for bad behaviour. He would always cry like this; he would ask him impossible questions like why is this happening to him. He’s still that little fragile boy that need love. And that’s all he’s ever wanted to feel, love.

His suspicions were spot on, he did have feelings for Amile, but it wasn’t love, and it could never be love, he was just searching to fill the void his mother left when she died, and maybe she gave him that in a nutshell. He thought he was okay, and he was doing well, clearly he isn’t. It’s his job to make sure that his siblings are okay, especially him, the fragile that is there deep inside of him.

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“Mageba, I’m sorry about earlier, and how I broke down, I just...”

“No, don’t do that. You promised to have my back, I will also have yours.” he smiled at him.

They just came from getting the goats and chickens for the ceremony. Thulisile said they could even have it today so as to speed up the process. The reason for the one goat is to ask permission from the ancestors to slaughter while they are in mourning. The other one is for tomorrow to cleanse the palace and the chickens are for a tea for Mhlabawesizwe, because none of his sons have bothered to have one for him.

They are doing all of this on a Tuesday, during the week. The tea will be later this week

because there is no use in having one without traditional beer. It's a lot, and he only came back from hospital a few hours ago, it feels like it's been days unending. The tea is to say thank you, not necessarily to their father only, but to all the ancestors, because they wouldn't be in this predicament if it wasn't for Mhlabawesizwe and his predicament. He's thankful for surviving the heart attack, and he hopes to stick around a little longer than his life expectancy. He'll thank them for other things when they actually do something in their favour.

When they come back, they are shocked to find a few cars parked in the palace. What are these people doing here?

"Did you tell the rest of the family?" Langa asks, taking a glimpse at Nkosi.

"No, I only spoke to Dumisani, and he's all the way in Durban." he didn't mean to have his question sound like a threatening question; he

honestly wanted to know.

It's not like anything happening at the palace is a secret, they are the ones who have deliberately distanced themselves from family affairs, he's not going to go around chasing grown people to give him support. He has Amile, the ancestors and Nkosi, and that is all he needs.

They leave the livestock in the van and go inside, anticipating what could be going on inside. They are welcomed by none other than Balungile the family parrot who will talk for the whole of Zululand.

“Wena, who do you think you are, rising from the dead, or wherever you were, to come here and dictate things to us?” she points right at him as he enters through the door.

He scans the room, his eyes meet with Amile's and he hopes she will say something to save

him like she did the last time, but she's quiet.

"Yini, wabuka lo? Uzokwenzani?"

"Balungile stop this nonsense, okay. Asizele lokhu lana." Khethukuthula intervenes. He's always been the level headed one. He also has a soft spot for his brother.

He moved her out of the way and came to stand in front of him.

"Why is it that we have to find out from the news about things happening in our own family Mageba?"

"Cha nje, basijwayela kabi laba!" Balungile again.

"You haven't been here Mageba, you have not come here since Zwelibanzi's funeral."

"And we don't have cellphone for you to call us and let us know!?"

"Angithi I'm a dead man, how do you expect me to have a cellphone?" she got what she needed.

He's actually pissed off, even Thulisile is surprised at that answer. Not today Balungile.

"None of you have had to endure half the things I have in your lives, ever. Your father left you all legacies and good memories while Zwelibanzi and I had to suffer for his selfishness. So you Balungile, don't you dare peep a word. Anyone who wants to be here, will be here, angkaze ngixoshe muntu." he speaks up.

"Siyaxolisa Sthuli sika Ndaba." Mfanafuthi apologized on all their behalf.

Mandlenkosi walked passed them and up the stairs, leaving them standing in silence.

Balungile is violently tapping her foot on the floor.

"There a goats and chickens in the van outside. If you are willing and want to be around for the ceremony, you will stick around, and we will help each other out like siblings should." he's let

them walk all over him for too long.

“Ihhe!? hayi bandla.” Balungile claps her hands and storms out. She’s always being difficult, it’s nothing new.

“Our mother is in hospital, she suffered a stroke on the day of the memorial, that is why we haven’t been here.”

Amile and Thulisile excused themselves and the brothers went to sit in the lounge.

“I am very sorry to hear that boMageba. I hope she will be okay.” he says, guilt starting to kick in.

“Thank you bhuti.” Mfanafuthi said.

“So MaGumede was the wife we have been searching for all these years?” hes surprised to hear this. They have been searching?

“Yes, she is.” he said looking at both of them.

“So how did the ancestors let her marry

Zwelibanzi if she was meant for you.”

“There was no ancestors in this place, not until now. They still need to be welcomed back properly, and that is why we are doing all of these ceremonies. The only reason MaGumede found her way here is because MaNdlela is sitting on her shoulders.”

“Mhlabawesizwe just won't rest, will he?”
Khethukuthula says with clear distress in his voice.

That is one person who truly understands the struggle of being his son. All three of them felt his wrath while he was alive, and that is why they couldn't wait to get away from him.
Langaletu just wasn't lucky enough. Banzi too.

“It's time we fix this division among us. We are siblings, we may not come from the same womb, but we are blood, and if we don't have each others backs, all our efforts to try and fix

this place will be in vain, no matter how powerful one may be as an individual.” they both agreed with him.

It’s another step towards the right direction, things are hopefully going to start looking up now.

Amile Gumede

I’m back here! I can feel my heart beating in my ears from the excitement. I have so many questions, so many things I want to say, and most of all, I want to see Banzi, my precious Banzi.

“Boy, come here!” the boy in the blue overalls comes sprinting towards me.

He’s just below my hip, he’s looking up at me with a wide smile on his face.

“Where is your granny?” he doesn’t speak, he just looks at me.

I grab his hand and we walk. His hand is cold. We walk past the beautiful fruit trees , and I can’t help but admire the flowers that are starting to bloom on each tree. The last time I was here, it wasn’t this beautiful.

“Aw ntomb’ yami.” that tight squeeze that I have been longing for.

She runs her hands on my head and I feel chills running down my spine.

“You look beautiful sthandwa sami.”

“Thank you ma.” she peeled away from the hug and kept me at arms length and stared at me.

“The king wants to see you.”

My heart rate increased.

“Did I do something wrong?”

“No, you didn’t do anything wrong. He’s always

wanted to see you, it just was not the right time. Now he is ready for you.” she ran her hands on my bald head again.

I exhaled. Was it my hair?

“Come let’s go, I’ll leave you at the door.” why is she leaving me?

Before I could protest, she pulls my hand and we walk through the forest of trees. I’ve never been to the ‘palace’ where she said she stays, I’m terrified. She told me that the king is always grumpy, how do I know how to deal with a grumpy man.

There it is, the only standing house in this place. Not as beautiful as I was expecting it to be. It’s just mediocre, I really expected something magical, something on par with the standard of the garden and the forests.

“This is as far as I can go. He is inside waiting for you.”

“I’m scared.” I announced.

“Don’t worry, he’s harmless, he likes you. He won’t do anything to you.”

Yeah, as if that makes everything better! She gave me a little push and I stumbled forward before I picked up my feet and walked towards the house.

When I entered through the door, I was met with a vacant house with white walls. It’s actually quite airy in here, better than what it looks like on the outside. It’s also unbearably cold.

I looked around and I couldn’t see anyone, there are no corners and walls, just one big open space.

“Hello?” my voice echoed.

“Who are you?” the bold voice spoke.

I startled and turned around. He was standing towering over me. I couldn’t tell if he was

deliberately frowning or if it was the natural structure of his face.

I was forced on my knees and I looked down.

“MaGumede, Amile Gumede.” I reported in a stutter.

“You have finally listened MaGumede, thank you.” he hit his cane on the ground twice and I felt my body lifting up.

I was now on my feet, my head leveled with his chest. He’s just as tall as Langaletu.

“I could have changed my mind and let another take your place, in fact, I already had, but the ancestors hand picked you. I guess you can’t put something out in the open and turn back on your word.”

“I never wanted any of this.”

“Then I will do anything for you to want it. Talk to me.”

Every time he spoke, my heart raced. That possibly can't be normal. But then again, what is normal about my life.

I don't know, but I feel like I am at the liberty of asking for anything and everything from him and he will give it to me. Is that why I'm standing and not kneeling? Are we equal?

"Stop torturing us, let us rest, give us peace."

"Bring my wife home and I will grant you your wish. What else do you want?"

What the hell does he mean I must bring his wife home, she's here?

"Mandlenkosi. Let him find love, let him heal." he chuckled.

"Consider it done mama wesizwe." those heart palpitations again.

"Drive MaMzobe crazy, her and her accomplice for ruining Zwelibanzi's life, she doesn't deserve

peace, she ruined people's lives."

He banged his stick again, twice on the ground and everything rumbled.

I looked at my arms that suddenly felt heavy. I was wearing beads and bracelets on each wrist and had a big neck piece on, it was gold. The white dress is back on.

"Go give this to him. It's his."

He handed me his cane, I hesitated to take it at first, but he forced it into my hand.

"Amile, the Queen!"

I heard several voices shouting behind me and I walked out the house, out the door. I'm too afraid to turn around, so I'll walk as fast as I can.

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Chapter Seventy-Three

Amile Gumede

Mom is still not hearing a word of me going to live at the Gumede's for a whole week. She just doesn't want to understand that at this point, it's a life or death situation.

After that dream, things are going smoothly! No hassles.

We had the tea, spilled umqombothi for Mhlabawesizwe and the rest of his gang, Bhut' Langaletu met up with the MEC and has him on his side, which means the government agrees. His brothers are also on his side and so does the whole of Zululand. Yesterday, there were maidens at the palace who came bearing gifts for him. I was very shocked to see them. All of this just proves that Mhlabawesizwe isn't such a bad ancestor after all.

I told Bhuti about the dream, he didn't say

anything to me. Later that night, I heard him in the throne room, talking to his ancestors. I didn't sit and eavesdrop. That is private to him, I'm just the messenger.

Now as part of the deal, I'm being shipped off to the Gumede's for a week because I'm getting married next week! Yay? Not so much. How can one be excited for her second wedding in less than a year? I certainly can't, and technically, this isn't my wedding, it's MaNdlela's wedding, I'm just standing in for her, because she can't be here physically.

On the brighter side of this busy life, I got my matric results! I passed exceptionally well. I only lost one distinction, and that was for my maths paper. As expected; when I was supposed to be studying for that paper, I was pressed against a wall fucking my brother-in-law. It's sad that I don't get to use them, they are only going to be a decoration; university is

the last thing on my mind right now.

It's been an eventful three weeks!

"I don't appreciate this, I don't like it at all." that is my mother.

She's talking to Bhuti who is standing at the door of my room, watching me as I finish packing the last of the things I need for this dreaded week ahead.

"Ma I understand that the environment is not very healthy, and I am just as worried as you are, but we really are left with no other choice."

He calls her Ma, even though he's older than her. How sweet.

"Angibafuni laba bantu eduze kwengane yami!" I've decided to keep quiet because the last time I spoke, I was hushed very quickly.

"She won't be alone, she is going to go with her maid, and Dlamini will be there with her all the

time.”

Jama has gone from being Nkosi’s chauffeur/escort, or whatever he was, to being my bodyguard. He never leaves my side now, I hope Nambitha doesn’t mind!

“Those people are evil, they hated me, and they will surely use this opportunity to milk my daughter dry; you included.”

“I’ll make sure that doesn’t happen.” he turned and looked at me.

“MaGumede and I have spoken, she knows how to deal with it.” I appreciate him for putting so much trust on me.

“Zulu you better make sure of it.” my mother.

She turns to look at me and you can clearly see the fear in her eyes. She came to embrace me and started crying.

“Don’t let them poison you, please mntanami.

Be careful.” I closed my eyes and took in a deep breath. I am honestly at that point in my life where tears don’t really come that easily. But I understand, mom is pregnant, the baby is making her emotional.

She was planning on hiding this pregnancy from me, but it was hard because she’s already popping up like a balloon. I must give it to her though, she looks way more prettier than she was when she was pregnant with Siviwe.

“I will mama.” I reassured.

“MaGumede, we need to get going before it’s dark.” that was Jama standing next to Bhuti who was now leaning against the door frame.

He looks drained, I actually feel bad for him. He hasn’t rested since he came back from hospital, from day one he has been going up and down. I just can’t wait for this to be over. The last thing I want is for him to be back on that hospital bed,

because whether he has that stent or not, he can still have a heart attack from stress.

He moved out the way and Jama made his way in to come get my bags. When he was out of the room, I hugged mom again, just to reassure her that I was going to be okay. She was staying behind, she wasn't going to accompany me because she's pregnant, we don't want to risk it with those people.

Bhuti held my hand and led me out of the room. At some given point, I know I need to stop addressing him as Bhuti. This is someone I am going to have to marry, spend the rest of my life with, bear him children. I can't be calling him bhuti.

"Are you ready?" he had now let go of my hand and we were walking alongside each other.

"I am. I'm not scared of anything as well, I know I'm protected."

“That doesn’t stop you from being careful. Don’t eat anything they...” I chuckled.

“Yes baba you told me a thousand times already.” he laughed.

And baba? Where did that come from?

“Let’s go ke.” he walked in front of me.

So what is going to happen here is Jama is driving his Golf 7 to kwaGumede with all my clothes, Sis’ Melo, and everything else I need, while Bhuti and I drive in the royal cars with Mgabadeli. This is to avoid the press knowing that I am moving there for the week. So Jama will arrive prior, and we will follow. We know the press will want to follow and know where we are going. If it does happen they see us, we hope they don’t know that I’m going to live there.

We are sitting at the back, and we are already on the road. He’s busy pressing his newly bought phone. He’s still struggling to use it, he

didn't even want it in the first place, but he had to get it because people need to get a hold of him. I'm reminded how old he is every time he holds it close to his face and uses his index finger to slowly press each function on the screen. I'm even past the stage where I laugh at him. I'm still teaching him how to use it.

"You see these phones of yours, you should have gotten me a Nokia." I laughed. He always says that whenever something is difficult to understand.

"I doubt they make those anymore." and it can't be that he disappeared before they invented touch screens.

Three years wasn't that long ago. He's just making the most of the situation.

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Like expected, the press was tailing us, and by the time we arrived KwaGumede, they were already setting up their camera's waiting to invade our privacy as always.

"My King, what are the recent developments about the wedding?"

"My King will you enlighten us about you visiting this place, who do you know here?"

As soon as we climbed out the car, the started bombarding him with questions. Mgabadeli had to ask them for space and walked us out towards the gate.

He leaned in and whispered in my ear.

"I'm going to have to sit inside and wait for them to go." I shook my head. I could reply, they were still in a close vicinity, they will publish me for what I wanted to say.

People of this household are already standing at the bottom of the gate staring at us walking

in, he already looks uncomfortable. I searched for his hand and gripped on it as we walked in.

The old lady; I remember her being there when they sold me off to Banzi; starts ululating, causing a scene when we are close enough to where she is standing.

She pulls me into a tight squeeze.

“Oh umzukulu wami omuhle! Oh Vumani would be so proud of you sthandwa sami.” she’s just being extra.

No father would be proud to have her daughter dick hopping brothers. But I’ve mastered the art of pretending, I’m here smiling as if I’ve known and loved her all my life.

She then went on to greet Bhuti with a handshake, because he was now wearing the meanest face, the one that tells you not to mess with him. I think I know him well enough now to understand that he doesn’t really mean

it, his face is just built mean I guess.

“Please, come inside.” I’m looking around and I’m not really excited about going inside.

His hand is back in mine, he’s holding it tightly. We walk behind the woman and she leads us into the lounge of the house. You can see that they really tried to make everything spotless, it’s the thought that counts. I’m not going to judge them, they aren’t rich.

“Please, take a seat here, I will bring you something to drink.” before she walked out, Bhuti stopped her.

“There is no need, I’m not staying for long.” she lowered herself on the seat.

“Your highness.”

“Thank your for welcoming us, we won’t bother you for too long. MaGumede needed to go home, and this is her home.”

“No troubles my king, this is her home, her umbilical cord is here, she could never bother us.”

“We will fetch her on Friday, by then all the necessary proceedings leading up to the wedding.”

“Zulu.” she praised.

“Did her bodyguard already arrive here?”

“Yes, they did my King. They have already packed her things in her room, all she need to do is eat and rest like the queen she is.” she laughed alone. It’s not funny.

“Thank you. Please walk me out MaGumede.”
he stood up and I followed suit

He really was not here to play. I lead him out and and we run into Jama. He exchanged a few words with him before I walked up with him to where we entered.

“So now they will see you going?” I asked stopping just in front of the gate.

“They will talk, whether they see me or not. They really have no respect for royal affairs.” right?

“When everything is settled, we will have to hire a PR team, your personal assistant and accountant.”

“And what will be your job if we are hiring so many people?” he’s wearing his joking face, so I know to relax.

“To stand next to you and look pretty.” I teased. He laughed and looked away.

“You are already excelling at that, keep it up partner.” he’s looking across the road, and when I cast my eyes towards where he is looking, I see someone peeking with a camera.

“We are being recorded.” he pointed out.

I got on my toes and used my hand to turn his

head to look at me.

“Don’t look at them.” he chuckled.

I went back flat on my feet and he stared at me.

“Cela uziphathe kahle KaKhondlo.” I felt flutters in my stomach.

I nodded and cast my eyes to the ground. I felt his bulky hands on my shoulders before he lowered himself and placed a kiss on my forehead.

That was the first move he’s ever pulled, and to be honest, I don’t know how to feel.

“Uhambe kahle kaMhlaba.”

Yeah, it’s like that now. I appreciate this very much, and I can’t wait to have a peaceful life with him, I can just sense that this is the beginning of a very lovely life ahead. Whether we love each other or not, but we’ve established a beautiful friendship, and that’s all that matters.

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Sis' Melo has just made me some nice food, my stomach is full. I'm sleeping in my parents old room, that is where I was allocated. It looks nothing like it did in the pictures I saw of when I was a little one. My mothers furniture has been removed, and they just left a small bed. There is little to no furniture left and the room looks unkempt, besides the fact that they tried so hard to clean it. But the whole house looks exactly lie this, I'm not surprised.

They tried to give me food, but I politely declined and proceeded to have the lovely dinner that Sis' Melo made. I can't believe I have to bath in a basin for the next five days, I am really suffering.

"Your water is ready my queen." that was sis'

Melo.

“Thank you, you can go rest, have they shown you your allocated room?”

“Yes, they have, thank you my queen.” still hasn’t outgrown that habit.

As she was going out, Jama walked in escorting the old lady. I will dare not call her my grandmother, the only grandmother I know is Mamu Mchunu, no one else.

“You can go Ndodana.” she dismissed Jama.

He instead turned his head to look at me and I told him with my eyes not to go, so he stayed. The lady turned to look at him and saw that he was not here to play. If what she has to say is important, she will say it in front of him.

“I was here to tell you that you will go to the river with all the other maidens in the morning to fetch water.” I frowned.

“I’m not a maiden, I can’t go with maidens.” that is very smart of her to say.

“Manje uzohlala la wenzeni wena? Everything will be done at your beck and call?” oh so this is the she-devil that my mother met? Oh wow.

“I’m not disrupting anyone by being here, I have my own things, so it would be a good idea for everyone to stay away from me too, respectfully.” I said looking directly at her.

She pretended to be shocked. Acting is not a skill in her books.

“Uuhlaza ufuze uyise.” wasn’t she the one saying she’s happy to have me and what not.

I signaled to Jama that I’ve had enough of this woman.

“Okay griza. Let’s get out now.” I appreciate him too, so so much!

“You won’t stay here for free my girl, you and

your king will pay!” she says as Jama pushes her out the room.

It is going to be the longest week of my life.

Chapter Seventy-Four

Nambitha Makhathini

I’m packing my bags against their permission. I’m leaving, I hate that they want to dictate things to me. I’m an adult now, I’ve made my own decisions and it’s not like I’m not sticking to them.

They are forcing me to want to agree to Nkululeko’s marriage proposal when I don’t want to. I don’t want to marry him, all I want to do is work and study, I’ve secured my dream job, I got amazing results for my matric, I’m set for the rest of my life. Marriage will be a set back, that

is the last thing I need right now.

My friend is getting married again in two days, I need to go and be with her, and support her.

Mom is delusional if she thinks I will not attend my best friends wedding just because she forbade me. I'm an adult, I can't be controlled like a little child anymore.

Jama can't come fetch me, so I'm travelling with the prince. I had suggested to take taxis to town and that is where he would pick me up, but he said he would come pick me up personally. I feel bad for him shame, he's just watching the girl he loves being passed between his brothers like he didn't have her first. It really hurts, it even hurts Amile, because I know how much she loved him.

"Mom forbade you from going, why are you packing?" that was Zimi standing watching me, speaking so loudly that probably the whole house could hear.

“Are you trying to sell me out!?” I whispered.

She laughed and walked into the room and closed the door.

“What? Are you planning on running away?”

“No, I’m not running away, they will see me walk out with my bags, I just hate that mom is always treating me like a child.”

“Hhe, is that guys dick really that good for you to be disobeying your precious parents like this?” I looked away.

“Who said I slept with him?” I’m embarrassed in fact.

Is it really that obvious? I thought my body was still in shape.

“Unuka phu umthondo wena. Your attitude has changed and parents can pick that up very quickly.” I rolled my eyes, there is no such thing.

“Yeah right. I have slept with Nkululeko, I’m still

a virgin and we are waiting for marriage.” she laughed her ass off as if I was cracking a joke.

“Shame sisi wami, you are still going to grow up, and you will see all of this differently. This man of yours is isihlama, it will either end with you being on his long list of baby mamas or married to him fighting his side-chicks, or worse, a second and third wife. Good luck kodwa, ngikufisela inhlanhla.” she said sitting on the bed crossing her arms.

I’m not in the mood to argue with her so I will shut my mouth and pretend like all the things she just said didn’t strike a nerve in my heart.

“So your friend is getting married again, into the same family?”

“Yes.” I’m now shoving clothes into the bag. My mood just went from a comfortable 50 to a zero.

“How does she do it, she must recommend her sangoma, it’s really working overtime for her.

She only dates power, that is another level of luck.”

“It’s not like she wants to.” I defended. I don’t want to get angrier than I already am, I think she should shut her mouth.

“If she didn’t want to, she should have ran away or killed herself, that’s what all the girls in Swaziland do whenever the king chooses them. She enjoys the money, and I don’t judge her shame, I fail to understand why a girl would kill herself over being chosen by the king. That is a blessing from above.” she’s annoying me.

“I think you were better off wherever you were, not here...” I’m cut short by my ringing phone.

She’s the first one to grab it and she looks at the screen in shock.

“Zimkhitha unesicefe shame!” I screamed.

“Prince Mandlenkosi, hehe, you are rubbing shoulders with royalty? Must be nice hey?”

“Bring my phone!”

“What, are you sleeping with him too?” I snatched my phone from her hand and answered.

“Mageba.” I answered.

Zimi kept pulling faces, much to my irritation.

“KaGxabhashe, I’m here.”

“Okay, I’ll be out in a second.” I hung up.

“Haibo Nambitha!” Zimi warned.

“Shut up Zimkhitha, give me space.” I zipped my bag and pulled it to the ground.

I dragged it out of my room, leaving her with her mouth open wide. The first person I ran into as I was making my way out was my mom. She gave me a death summoning stare before she asked:

“Did I not forbid you from going to Zululand?”

“My friend is getting married, you can’t do that to me.”

“I am still your mother young lady, you still live under my roof and you will respect my rules. I strictly forbade you for a reason. All you are doing there is letting that good for nothing scumbag put his penis in your vagina.

Izokufikisaphi leyonto!?” one thing about this woman, she will talk. No filter whatsoever.

“Does it not matter that I have obeyed you all my life mama? Have I not made you proud all my life, have I not pleased you enough? This is my life I’m living, you are not living it with me. You can’t forbid me from making my own choices, I’m a grown woman, I’m very much capable of doing that myself.”

“Well then grown woman, if you walk out that door, just know that you will never come back.” I looked at her, hurt and tears welling up in my eyes.

“I can’t believe you.”

“Go ahead and try Nambitha.” she showed me the door.

This is in between choosing to stay here and always be judged for my sister’s actions, and going out and creating a life of my own, a life where I can be happy and free. I choose the latter.

“For what it’s worth mama, I wasn’t going to marry Nkululeko, it wasn’t part of the plan. Now I’m left with no choice.”

She was shocked that I said that, but what did she expect me to do, turn and go back to my room. Hell no.

I walked out the kitchen door and walked up the drive way dragging my bag. When I turned around, I saw her standing at the bottom staring at me with her hands on her hips. There is the prince’s Mercedes, parked waiting for me. It

won't sink in now, probably late in the night when I'm alone with my thoughts. I'm officially homeless.

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We are driving with another lady. She's quite dark in complexion, and has a very thick body, thick thighs and fat ass. She's pretty, she just has a very unwelcoming face, or was it me she was not so fond of.

I haven't seen the prince this carefree in a while. He looks lighter and happier. I love that for him, the lady though, not so much.

"Are you going straight to the palace or must I leave you KwaGumede with the maidens?"

We were now entering Zululand. I can see the palace from a distance, my soul feels calm now.

I just love this place.

“Please take me KwaGumede, if you don’t mind.” I spoke softly.

I know that I’ll be bored at the palace, and technically, I’m not on the groom’s side of the family, I’m friends with Amile. Being Nkululeko’s girlfriend doesn’t take me to the other side.

When they dropped me off at the gate, I was welcomed by a face I wasn’t expecting to see.

“Babe?” he was standing at the bottom of the driveway, looking at me.

I didn’t know he was here, he didn’t tell me. I’ve actually come to realize that we haven’t spoken in quite a while now. That’s no where close to being good.

“What are you doing here?” I asked as I threw myself into his arms. He smells different!

“I’m working.” he said in a very cold dismissive

tone.

He pushed me away a little when he said that. Why is he doing that? Normally, he is the one who can't keep his hands to himself. I finally got a chance to look at him up close. He looks scarier than he usually does, and I've learned not to be scared of him because I see his face almost all the time. He also has fresh incisions on his face! What the hell!?

"Nkululeko what happened here?" I tried to touch, but he held both my wrist very tightly. He's kind of hurting me.

"Ungathinti. Hamba uye endleni namantombazane" his voice is firm, he's not playing.

I try to free my wrists from his hard grip, and when he realizes that he is hurting me, he lets go. He's not acting normally, he is not himself at this point.

“Hamba Nambitha!” now I know something is off, he never calls me by my name.

I scurried away into the yard, and left him standing there with his creepy ass! I ran into a woman standing in the middle of the yard with a broom under her armpit, staring into space.

When I was close enough to her, she finally noticed me, and snapped out of her thoughts.

“Who are you now? Are you also here to finish my grocery?” I didn’t say anything, I just stood there silent, confused about everything that is happening around me. There is a lot going on in this place. And I just got here.

She started sweeping as if she didn’t just insult me not so long ago, pushing all the dust towards me. She spoke over the loudness of her broom.

“They are in that room, move out of my way!” she pointed and attempted to hit my legs with

the broom.

There I was jumping up and down like a crazy woman. My suitcase was on the ground immediately. Aibo logogo!

“Gogo stop what you are doing!” that was Amile’s voice.

She came rushing out the house. She was wearing rags, white rags, covered in red clay all over her face.

“Take your friend and go inside wena, and stop shouting in my yard, you are disturbing my husband at rest!” as if she isn’t shouting herself.

Amile bent down and picked up my suitcase, sneezing in the process because of the dust, and pulled my arm violently.

Is it too early for me to start regretting my decision to come here? It seems like there is a lot I’m still going to have to put up with.

Amile Gumedede

My feet are sore from practicing. I don't know if it is legal for me to be with maidens, I was after all "married" and I had a sexual encounter with a man, therefore I am not a maiden. They know this, it's not a surprise. But I'll go with whatever they want me to do, because they know more than I do.

This woman; the supposed grandmother; she's not okay in the head. I genuinely believe that she is mentally challenged. How can she put up such a facade in front of Bhuti, and just a few moments after he leaves, she swaps directions as if she faking all along. Only mentally challenged people can actually pull that off. She's not okay.

Earlier this week, after she forced Jama and Sis'

Melo to go buy her groceries, she slaughter two of her chickens that she keeps, called all her gossiping buddies and started raving about her granddaughter that is soon to become a queen. She then went on to send me up and down, just so she could boast about me, as if she hadn't just introduced me as a future queen. From my understanding, a queen doesn't doesn't lift a finger, I don't lift a finger.

The only reason why I put up with the nonsense was for Bhuti's sake, he asked me so nicely to do this, because the more I co-operated and did what was said, the faster the week would go. He was right, today is Thursday, and h and his family, my family too, will be waiting for my arrival early tomorrow morning.

Malume, as my cousins called him, is coming today to walk me out through the kraal. He is my father's older brother, he hasn't been here since the day I arrived, but he's coming today.

They say he lives in his own house, a mansion very far from here. I wonder why he doesn't take care of his mother and siblings?

I can hear a rumble in the sky, I'm starting to get uncomfortable.

"Can we go back inside." I ask the head maiden.

She's way older than me, she looks like she's in her late twenties. She has a very mean face, but this is about me, I won't fold because she's giving me a nasty look.

"No, not when you don't know all the songs." I shook my head and moved closer to where she was.

"I'm not a maiden, I'm not supposed to know all the songs." I saw lightening striking in the sky, and I quickly covered my eyes.

Just as I was trying to recover from that, the loud rumble of the thunder rung in my ears and I almost threw myself on the ground from fear.

It's been sunny this whole week, why is the weather being grumpy today?

They were all laughing, except for Nambitha, the one who actually understands just how much I'm afraid of thunderstorm. She came to hold me before she turned and looked at them.

"We are going inside, sesiqedile la. We aren't even supposed to be outside." she was a maiden once, she knows the rules.

"What kind of queen are you going to be when you are still afraid of something as insignificant as lightning and thunder?" one asked and they shared a laugh.

One thing about these girls, they are rude. If I was the old Amile, my feelings would be hurt, and I probably would be crying now. But I'm not, being at the palace has meant I have had to grow a pair, and I'm grateful for that, but my fear of thunder is just something that won't go

away that easily. I've been afraid of it since I was a little child.

“Whether I'm afraid of the thunderstorm or not, I am the one and only woman that will lead this kingdom, whether you believe I can or not. And yes I am afraid of the thunderstorm, so I don't want to be outside anymore, we are going inside.” I said glaring at the head maiden.

“The queen has spoken, inside.” Nambitha added on behind me.

I wanted to laugh so badly, but I had to maintain my serious face. When they queued to go back into the hut, Nambitha kept nudging me. I guess she also wanted to laugh like me. But I wasn't joking, I also want to go inside.

“Zabuyela endlini manje izintombi? Aniqedile ukusina.” the evil salukazi appeared holding a broom.

She's making it hard for me not to believe that

she's not a witch. Maybe she flies with it at night when we are asleep.

“Kuyaduma, ngiyalisaba izulu.”

“There is no such. You want to embarrass us tomorrow kaZulu?” what is she talking about?

“Who said you are invited?” I asked folding my arms across my chest.

It's starting to drizzle.

“Ihhe, this child is disrespecting me!” she claps, and screams as if we are hurting her.

“Ma, what's going on?” great, now her side-kick is here.

“Listen to this child, she thinks she can disrespect me now because she is royalty.” she starts crying, tears roll down her dark skin.

I hate that I look like her so much.

“Amile what did you say to your grandmother, apologize.”

“Amile ungayenzi leyonto.” it was a male voice.

I looked to my side and it was a tall dark skinned man. Yes, I know him. I’m assuming he’s the Malume we’ve been expecting.

“Uthini wena Vusmuszi!? uthi ingane ayingidelele?”

“Vusi you are being irrational.” that was my aunt, Ningi.

It pains my throat to even refer to them as my family. I certainly am not proud of them.

Now we are all gathered in a circle in the middle of the yard, the elder is the one crying like an ambulance. Another lightning bolt glowed in the sky, and this one was brighter than normal. The rumble was so loud that the ground felt like it was shaking. The tree in front of the kraal immediately set on fire. I have never screamed like that in my whole life.

Malume took the chance and went closer to try

an inspect what had happened, but the rain started pouring down on all of us so hard that all the clay I had on my body washed off with no hassles.

We all ran into the main house. There is some weird shit going on, and the ambulance has stopped crying.

“What was that? Vusmuzi what was that?” Ningi was shaking.

Are we not all shocked!?

The door opened and Jama walked in, dragging his heavy boots. He found us all standing around the kitchen table and stood at the door inspecting us one by one. He didn't look once at Nambitha. Awkward.

“Isingenile inkosi esibayeni sakwaZulu.” he announced.

My heart started beating rapidly, threatening to bulldoze my chest. Is that the reason for the

sudden change of weather? This is another level of witchcraft! Shlobo and her shlobo work over time, them and the underground gang.

I was forced down on my knees, just like I was in that dreamed, and I felt my head moving back and forth, like I was being controlled.

“ZULU!”

Chapter Seventy-Five

Amile Gumedede

The worst is over; I am now OFFICIALLY a Zulu wife, the last time was a trial period. There was absolutely no hiccups along the way, everything went smoothly, even after the evil salukazi threatened to ruin the whole thing with her tactics.

She lost it when she met my brother, and saw

that my mother was expecting yet another child. She tried causing a scene, but Jama was there in the forefront as always, and dealt with it before it spread to the public.

It's was weird seeing his long legs exposed, but he looked absolutely handsome with ibheshu on, a real Zulu man. I was expecting him to cut his hair, but I guess that is a bit too far fetched. Is it too much to wish to see his face behind all that hair on his face?

This wedding is revolving around the ancestors, I don't know how many sangoma's I've seen roaming around. I also saw Shlobo having her moment when they started beating the drum during the time when we were bound to each other in the kraal. I felt all the different presence on my shoulders.

Things are done differently here, and everything that was done, had to be done twice, for me and MaNdlela. Not ideally what I had imagined. But

I'm grateful that everything went by smoothly like we had prayed it would. It's just hit noon, and everything has been done, we've done the gifting ceremony, we've danced in the kraal and I've been smeared with the gall. So the wedding is over just like that, quite early if you ask me.

"Come let's go inside." that was my beautiful mother.

She's been here the whole time I was at that horrible family she married into, how lucky is she?

"What about the guests?" I asked panicking

"They are going to get refreshments, come." who am I kidding, I don't know half of the people here.

I don't have any idea what is going on here today, I didn't plan my own wedding, I'm just as shocked as the guests are at everything going on.

She's dragging me to my room. Shlobo is there, along with Nambitha and MaSithole. She's here with a face beat heavier than mine, the lady of the moment.

"You need to change chomie." Nambitha said as soon as I walked in.

"Okay wait, can I breathe for a second!" I said putting my palms out for them to stop.

There is a lot going on and I'm not keeping up.

"What's the story now? The wedding is finished right?" I asked after having my moment

"Yes, the traditional one, now you have to change for the other ceremony."

"What other one?" I turned to look at Shlobo, because she is the only one I trust to give me a straight answer.

She just smiled at me, you know that smile that just screams relief. She looks relieved. She

doesn't look willing to answer me. My armpits are starting to perspire.

"Your husband thought you would appreciate a moment to wear that white-ish dress and maybe walk down the aisle, so he put this together. To accommodate you and make this seem like a real wedding, because it's your last." not that it's fake.

"Mom, seriously?" I don't know how I feel.

"What, you don't want to?" everyone's faces have fell, Shlobo included.

"No, I didn't say that, I just wasn't expecting it."

I turned around and gave Shlobo a hug. I know her and her friend are behind it. It's not ideal, but at least I'll get something I've wanted to experience once in my life.

"Thank you." she laughed and hugged me back.

"Okay mam' Zulu, you don't have much time,

let's get cracking." the pregnant lady announced.

Mam' Zulu huh? I think I like Queen Amile better.

Nambitha was going to do my make-up.

MaSithole is also installing a weave on my not-so-bald head, because they all reached a consensus that they don't like my short hair. I like it, it accentuates my facial features.

Shlobo and mom left the room to go deal with other things I would assume, and then that's when the gossip started.

"So babes, how do you feel?" MaSithole asked.

I've just realized that I don't know her name.

"I don't know, I feel free I guess. Like things are finally coming together for everyone, and it's been a rough couple of months."

"Yeah right. Thula has been a zombie ever since Bhut' Banzi passed away, and now MaJili having a stroke just seemed to add on. At least

some things have been lifted off their shoulders.” I’m assuming she’s married to Bhut’ Khethukuthula, hence the nickname.

“How is she doing by the way?” not that I care much. I don’t like that woman, I don’t know why.

“She’s better, her speech is improving now, she just can’t walk still. Her whole left side is paralyzed.” all of this from hearing that I am Vumani Gumede’s daughter? Something is fishy.

“We have to go see her once all the dust has settled.” I said. I know that is never going to happen, I’m not going to let it.

And no, I’m not heartless.

As we were still talking, a knock sounded on the door. Nambitha went to open and surprise surprise, it was Mandlenkosi. Behind him walked a lady, they were holding hands, and she looked scared.

“MaGumede, I hope I’m not intruding, I want to

introduce you to someone.” my eyes widened.

“No, you aren’t.” I’m shocked for the most of it.

He pulled her to standing in front of him, she looked down.

“MaGumede this is Mathapelo, my girlfriend. Babe, this is MaGumede, one of the most important women in my life.” that went straight to my heart like a dagger, the last part I mean.

How is she supposed to feel when he says that?

I stood up and went to her.

“It’s lovely to meet you Mathapelo.” so this is me now, mother of the whole nation?

I gave her my hand to shake and she did so, before she bowed.

“It’s lovely to meet you too my Queen. It is my honour.” wait until she finds out that I used to be her boyfriend’s girlfriend, then things will change.

This is exactly what I prayed for; I prayed that he would find someone who he can love for real, and it seems like he loves her for real, and if that is so, then I am happy for him.

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I'm afraid to stand in front of the mirror. I'm even more terrified of going out and having anyone have to see me. I haven't felt beautiful in a long time, maybe my beautiful isn't as beautiful as I last checked.

"Must I bring the mirror now? We are going to be late." mom pestered.

"I'm scared." I said shaking my arms.

The dress I'm wearing is perfect. I've never worn something as perfect as this, and I can't help but wonder when they got the chance to

have this made, it looks like it took a long time to make. The detail of the beading, the pattern, I'm so in love, I don't want to take it off.

"What are you scared of, your own reflection? Come on Amile, time is going! Langaletu and your guests are waiting." yes, they are on a first name basis. Everyone respects the pregnant lady.

"Okay, bring it." she rolls her eyes.

She's thinks I'm being dramatic, but I really am not. Nambitha fetches the mirror and places it in front of me. I have my eyes tightly shut, and I'm still doing a silent countdown before I can open my eyes.

"Just open Amile." I take a deep breathe and open my eyes.

A smile spreads across my face when I meet with my reflection. I hardly recognize the person in the mirror, she's too beautiful to be me.

“Do you see how beautiful you look?” MaSithole put her hands on my shoulder and leaned in with a smile on her face.

I nodded, feeling tears in my eyes. Nambitha rushed with the tissues and caught every tear that escaped my eyes.

“Don’t ruin my make-up.” we all laughed at her.

“Thank you guys.” I said looking at the women responsible for my sudden transition.

“They are welcome, come. Your husband is waiting!” mom knows how to spoil a beautiful moment.

It’s not like he’s panicking wherever he is. He knows I won’t run away, if I wanted to, I would have ran a long time ago. We finally made our way out the bedroom like mom had been anticipating, and I was walking slowly, trying to steady myself on the stilettos they had me wearing.

There he is in the lounge, his back is facing me and he is fixing his shirt, I guess he is waiting for me. I still can't believe this is actually happening.

I'm suddenly nervous, my heart is sitting in the pit of my stomach, and I feel like it is doing somersaults in there. Behave!

"Mageba, sesiqedile." Mom announces our presence once again.

He turns around and our eyes meet. I can't help smile when I see his lips stretching into a smile. I look away feeling flushed, this is definitely a feeling I could grow accustomed to, it's a lovely feeling.

"MaGumede uzobukisa ngami." he scratches his beard.

We all laughed.

"Ngiyabonga MaMchunu." he said walking closer to me.

I guess that was his way of dismissing them because mom grabbed their hands and they both followed her out the door, and closed it behind them, leaving us alone.

He grabbed both my hands in his, and he tightened my little hands in his big ones. They were warm.

“Thank y...”

“You look...” we both spoke at the same time.

I looked away and chuckled.

“You go first.” I said to him.

“I was going to say you look beautiful kaKhondlo, Mnguni kaPhakathwayo.” I smiled.

“Thank you kaMhlaba.” this clan name praising thing, I’m not so good at it.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

I swallowed hard and nodded. He nodded back and he led me down the passage. We are

heading to the throne room.

When we got there, I waited for him to open the door before he led the way inside.

“Zulu,

Ndabezitha,

Mntwana,

Zulu kaMalandela ngokulandela izinkomo zamadoda,

Zulu omnyama ondlela zimhlophe,

Wena kaPhunga noMageba,

Wena kaMjokwane kaNdaba,

Wena wenkayishana kaMenzi eyaphuza umlaza ngameva,

Sthuli sika Ndaba’

S’thuli sika Nkombane,

Wena lasihhawuhhawu siyinkondlo bayikhuzile ngoba ikhuzwe abaphansi nabaphezulu,

Wena kanogwaja omuhle ngomlenze,
Wena kaMbambelashoba,
Ndabezitha!”

He called out all the praises as we walked down the aisle to the throne, his throne. I’m following behind him, but it’s not that easy because he’s taking long strides with his long legs. I on the other hand are struggling with stilettos.

When he was at the alter, he waited for me, and when I finally caught up, he helped me kneel on one of the steps before he started speaking to his forefathers and God.

“Sekulungile boZulu kaMalandela, sesikwenzile ebenikufuna, salungisa lapho kwamosheka khona. Cela nisikhanyisele lapho kumnyama khona, sesiyalivusa ikhaya lenu, sekulungile.” he grabbed my hand and squeezed it. I exhaled.

He then got up and walked to the alter and stood next to the throne. He turned his back to

me and grabbed the spear, the one his father gave to me in that dream. He lifted it up into the air, and brought it back down again. He hit it on the ground twice, just like his father did in the dream, and it felt like the earth was shaking. The king is here!

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“I, Amile Gumede, take you, Langaletu Ntsikayesizwe Zulu, to be my lawfully wedded husband. To have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, for as long as we both shall live.” I slid the black metal ring onto his finger and it fit perfectly.

“I, Langaletu Ntsikayesizwe Zulu, take you, Amile Gumede, to be my lawfully wedded wife. To have and to hold, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, for as long as we both

shall live.” he held my hands tightly for the rest of his vows, and locked eyes with mine.

He means them, just as much as I do. I appreciate this man so much! My MTB

“By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife.”

Unlike my first marriage, this one is actually recognized by the state, I am now Amile Zulu on paper, I also have a sparkling diamond ring, somebody put some respect on my name. He gave me a warm embrace, and for the first time, I got to lay my head on his chest, I’m always on his stomach when he hugs me. Thank goodness for high heels.

“Congratulations, my king, my queen.” the judge whispered to us.

We both thanked him and he made his way to his seat. He picked up the microphone and I assumed my position next to him as he

addressed our guests.

“Thank you to everyone for attending the little celebration of our union, we really and truly appreciate your support. Before anything, I’d like to thank MaMchunu, my mother-in-law, for working so hard to make sure that today is extra special for my wife.” I feel my cheeks heating up, I don’t want to blush in front of all these people.

“S’thuli sika Ndaba!” my pregnant mother praises.

“Shlobo, thank you for making sure that everything happens, and that it is done correctly, we wouldn’t be here without you, thank you. Please help yourselves to some food, and enjoy.”

And now that is the end of the wedding. I’m satisfied!

Nambitha Makhathini

He gave me the keys to his car, the new one that I have no idea how he bought, and told me to wait for him there. I understand that he has been busy, but I want to understand his exact reasoning for ignoring me. He has been avoiding me the whole time I've been here, and to top it all off, he has those ugly incisions on his face. They look very suspicious.

I've been sitting here for almost thirty minutes; he said he needed ten and he would be here, but I don't want to be a nagging girlfriend, I'll give him another ten, if he doesn't show up, I won't leave with him.

I've gone through all of my social media platforms, I'm now bored. After turning on some music, I open my emails and see if I didn't receive any coupons from Uber. Not that I can

even use them here in the rurals. My heart sits in my throat when I see one from Mthiyane Construction.

I want to kick myself when I read the date in which it was sent. My goodness, I haven't even read the whole thing and I'm already panicking. They probably think I am incompetent, why didn't I check my emails!?

"Nambitha open." someone is tapping on the window.

I switch off my phone and put it on the drivers seat.

"Jama said you must come inside." it's one of the helpers, how do they know my name.

"I'll be there just now." I don't want to go in there.

As soon as she left, I grabbed my phone and quickly ran over the text. It feels like my soul is leaving my body when I realize that I have to be

there, in Margate by Monday to start. No way in hell!

And it's not like I can blame it on them, they sent the email almost two week in advance. If anything, I'm the unprofessional one. I'm not getting out of this car, their Jama must come here and take me the fuck home. I'm wasting time, precious time.

After a while of me sitting in utter silence, processing all the things I had just seen, his scent filled up the car. At least he smells normal now.

"I sent Makha to come get you, why didn't you come?" no hello?

"I didn't want to. I need to go back home." I reported.

"Right now?" he asked closing the door, starting the car.

"Yes, right now. I have work on Monday." he

scoffed.

I don't understand what that is supposed to mean, but it's making me damn right angry, angrier than I already am at him.

"Work huh ntombendala. Did you see the time? It's dark outside, I can't be driving you back to Durban."

"Nkululeko I have to be in Margate by tomorrow, don't you understand that!" I shouted, feeling frustrated that he doesn't understand, or better yet, take me seriously.

"Sengikhulumile, if you want to go back, go back with who you came with." I was in disbelief.

"Stop the car." I roared.

"Who are you speaking to like that?" tears are burning my eyes.

I don't want to cry, I don't want to seem weak,

but I'm so pissed, I could throw him off this road, and when I'm angry, I cry.

"Nkululeko stop the car." he stopped it.

I was shocked, but I didn't not once hesitate to open the door, and walk out. I slammed it behind me and walked down the road, letting the cold wind hit me. I'm barefoot, I left my sandals on the floor of the car. Tears involuntarily flooded my face. He's not even calling out to me, or trying to stop me.

I realize that what I did was stupid when I actually see how far we are from the palace. We are also too far from his house. I don't know anyone else in this place.

I was almost thrown to the ground when I felt hands roughly gripping into my hair and pulling me. I couldn't scream, there was no air in my lungs.

"Are you insane!?" it's him, his voice.

He's dragging me on the tar, my ankles are bruising.

"Uyangilimaza!" he's still pulling me by my hair.

"Usuyahlanya Nambitha!" he stops dragging me and embraces me so tightly I can hardly breathe.

I slam my fists against his back until he lets me go and I finally see his face, through my blurry vision. He's looks fuming mad, in fact, he looks right about ready to kill me himself.

"Go get in the car before I hurt you." he points a finger at me.

As if he hasn't hurt me. I follow him back to the car, sobbing softly, just so he doesn't hear me.

Chapter Seventy-Six

Langaletu Zulu

Sweat is trickling down his back, down to his butt-crack. He's feeling the heat in his waist as he thrust back and forth, in and out, burying himself inside her warm slippery cookie. His fingers are digging deep into her waist, and he is on the brink of going insane from the softness of her skin, so delicate, so fresh, so beautiful.

If he could, he would get closer than he is, make sure that he never ever lets go of her body, her smooth skin that he wishes he could touch and caress all day and all night.

Her screams are sending him into a frenzy, he doesn't want her to stop, he wants this feeling so badly, and he's doing all he can to chase it, he's so close.

"MaQwabe!" he groans as he rams into her harder and harder.

"Cum with me mkami." he screams using his

hand to stimulate her pleasure button.

She cried out in so much pleasure, and before he could ask again, she splashed her juices all over his thighs, leaving him alone to finish the race...

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He sat up, and felt all his blood rushing to his groin. He sits up, embarrassment washing all over him. He's too old to be having wet dreams, especially as intense as these. His manhood is throbbing so hard, the only way he can go back to sleep is by getting his release.

He gets out of bed and goes to the bathroom, and makes sure to close the door shut. He hasn't been with a woman for a while now, he's been abstaining ever since he found out about MaGumede from the dreams. It's not the first time he's having these dreams, they happened a lot while he was living at Thulisile's hut. She

always aid it was the ancestors ways of connect the two of them, and she was right, whenever he woke up, it would always feel like she was sleeping right next to him, he could still feel her skin ever after he had woken up.

He really doesn't have the guts to do the things he does to her in his dreams in real life. Not only does he respects her, but he thinks she's a child. No matter what terms their relationship is on, it doesn't change the fact that she is young. He is afraid to do that to her, it will make him guiltier that he already is for taking away her life and her chance to explore. He wonders how these other men do it, he's too afraid to even share a bed with her.

They've been married for almost two months now, but they don't even share a bed. She seemed fine with it too, it was definitely a team decision. He just doesn't understand why he's having these dreams again, because he's done

what he was supposed to do, he has married her, she's a Zulu by law and by tradition. He can't accept that it might be his mind, and not his ancestors.

When he was done jerking off, he dragged his feet back to his bedroom. He was startled to see her body curled up on the edge of the bed, hugging the covers like her whole life depended on it. The door was wide open and her slippers were on the floor. Confusion covers his face as he walks to the door to shut it first.

He then goes to kneel next to her and goes on to shake her lightly.

"Are you okay?" her eyes are tightly shut, she looks like she's in a deep sleep.

"MaGumede?" he calls her again, but she gives no response.

Since she's tugging on the duvet, he can't cover her with it. He goes to fetch a light blanket in

the wardrobe and proceeds to cover her with it. When he is satisfied, he goes to his side of the bed and gets in. She's facing the opposite direction, she's sleeping facing the bottom, and he is facing the top. Maybe she was afraid of something in her room, but what could it be?

He sits with the thoughts dancing around his head until sleep overpowers him.

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He's disturbed by shuffling in the room. He shoots his eyes open when he remembers that he isn't alone. There she is, sitting up looking distraught, hugging the duvet close to her chest.

"What happened?" she's frantically looking around.

"You don't remember?" he asked her with a

frown on his face.

Her eyes widened like saucers, and it was then that he realized that he asked the wrong question.

“No, I mean that...” he stuttered.

“We didn’t do anything?” she asks, making sure the duvet covers every inch of her body.

“No, of course not.” he defended.

She sighed. Is it not obvious though, she’s literally on the other side of the bed.

“How did I get here?” she asked as she got out of the bed, and picked up the blanket on the floor to cover herself.

“I don’t know, I should be asking you. I came back from the bathroom and found you curled up on my bed.”

“That doesn’t make any sense.” nothing makes sense at this point, but he won’t say it out loud.

His is embarrassing.

“That is why I asked if you don’t remember.” he added.

“So you are saying I sleep walked to your bedroom?” she asked placing her hands on her hips.

He can’t help but chuckle at the attitude she is giving him. He’s not even offended, he thinks it’s adorable.

“You clearly did. I know I didn’t walk all the way to your room, pick you up and place you on my bed.” she dropped her arms, along with the attitude.

“I’m sorry.” she apologizes and looks away, embarrassment on her face.

“Don’t apologize, I understand.” he doesn’t understand, but Thuli will, and he will ask her what the problem is with the both of them.

Nambitha Makhathini

It's a beautiful day, the sun is shining bright, the breeze is just right. It's nice and cool today. That is why I love April, the borderline between hot and sunny summer, and cold and windy winter. I know normal people call it Autumn, but I'm nowhere close to being normal, so I'll stick to what I want it to be.

I'm enjoying the peace and quiet, it's something I haven't had in a while now; tranquility. It's always noisy in this house, Azande with her teapots and stuffed animals, always wanting to play tea party with, and her father screaming at the television every time he watches a rugby match. I'm actually over it now.

I must bask in this tranquility while it lasts because Banele is coming to join the party later

today, double the trouble, and triple the noise is all I can sense from all of this.

I can't help but wonder what my life would be like if I had actually gotten the chance to get to Mthiyane Construction. Had I not fucked up and chose a man over my family, I would be here rejoicing over a few seconds of peace. I would be working, making my own money, no matter how little it may have been, and proved my parents wrong. I wanted to change they stereotype that all Makhathini girls are low lives who depend on men to survive, but now I'm doing the exact opposite of that. I am the stereotype, the stereotype is me.

I feel pathetic for not being able to stand up for myself. It's my fault that I'm stuck here. I should have fought a little harder to at least get that job. Trying to win over my parents was as useless as pouring water on a ducks back.

I never told anyone about that night. I realized

that I was wrong, I was the one the threw the first hit, and I went on to spit in his face like he was below me. No matter how angry I was, I was never supposed to do that. By doing that, I reduced him to nothing, and stripped him of his manhood. I'm not saying I deserved that beating, because I still have flashbacks of that night, but I shouldn't have done that. I apologized, he forgave me and we moved on.

He paid damages and lobola. I didn't want him to because I didn't want to be bound to him for the rest of my life, but my father didn't refuse the offer. Unlike my mother, I could tell that he was happy that at least Nkululeko was willing to do the right thing, unlike all my sister's baby daddies who don't even buy clothes for their children. He was happy that he had not gotten me pregnant yet.

He said he's still saving up money for our wedding, I don't know who told him I want a

wedding, especially with him. He got his degree, he's graduating in two months time, and after that, he will start working. I can tell that he enjoys working at the palace, that is what he is doing now, basically, my best friend is putting food on my table. Not the life I envisioned for myself.

There is a hoot at the gate. I get up and go inside to get the keys. I pressed the remote and stood in the lounge watching the white Polo drive in. What a beautiful car.

I think I spoke too soon, the owner is even prettier. She looks so elegant, strutting in stilettos like she was born walking in them. She looks so good in those fitted pants and that busy blouse fits her skin tone, she's absolutely gorgeous.

"Hey, Nambitha right?" she asked swinging her keys.

“Yes, it’s me, how can I help you?” I gave her a small smile.

She looks like she’s a nice lady.

“I’m here to drop Banele off. I think Clive told you I would come.” Clive huh?

So this is Banele’s mom? All other things aside, I want to understand how Nkululeko bags such hot women. Not only is she extremely beautiful, but she looks like she has her shit together. And then you get the likes of me, strutting around in a summer dress and slippers in the late afternoon like I don’t have a life. Who am I kidding, I don’t have one.

“Yes, he did mention. He’s not home yet though.” this is awkward now.

I’m not used to this calmness. Ntando is the complete opposite of this lady.

“Oh, where are my manners, I’m Samke, Banele’s mom.” she put out her hand and I

shook it.

“Nambitha.” I don’t have a title like her. I’m definitely not Nkululeko’s wife. I don’t belong to anyone.

“Lovely to meet you sisi.” I was right, she is nice.

“Likewise. I don’t know if you want to wait for him, I think he’ll be back any time from now.”

“No, it’s okay, I can just leave and come back later.” I’m assuming Banele is in the car.

“No, don’t worry, you can come in.” at least the house is clean today.

“Thank you so much.” she said before she went back to the car and carried out a sleeping baby boy.

I’ve met him before, but I didn’t really spend that much time with him. I’m only always around Azande because Ntando thinks she’s a bad bitch and comes to dump her child here

whenever she wants. She's taking advantage of me being here.

On that matter, I should actually get off my ass and search for work. Amile is going to hook me up.

It seems like she knows her way around the house so I sit in the lounge and wait for her to come back after putting Banele down to sleep. She settled on one of the couches; yes, I made him buy couches, and now the lounge actually looks like a lounge. I was getting tired of sitting on those slabs of wood he called couches.

"This place looks amazing now, you've really done so much." she said scanning around.

I haven't really done much, just get him to buy new couches and we replaced the bedding in each room, and the furniture in his room. I hated it with my whole heart.

"Thank you." I cleared my throat.

“Would you like a glass of wine?” I asked after a long awkward silence.

“Yes, please.” she said adjusting herself on the couch.

I got up and went to pour both of us a glass. I took the whole bottle with me to the lounge and gave her the glass. She thanked me before she took a large sip.

“So do you love him?” what is this now? Did she suddenly gain liquid courage?

“Of course I do.” she took another gulp.

I think I judged her too quickly. I’ve only had about two sips of mine, and her glass is almost empty. Maybe she’s just as fucked up as I am.

“Is that why you are here?” now it’s my turn to take a gulp.

“I thought so.” she said chuckling before throwing the contents of her glass down her

throat.

I don't know what that statement is supposed to mean.

"I dated him for four years before he knocked me up. I also lived here, in this house like you. Taking care of Azande whenever Nontando would come leave her here. Is she still around?" I nodded, listening to the thudding of my heart.

"Oh, she's never going to go anywhere dali." I don't even think she's trying to be bitter.

"Do you want more wine?" I asked looking at her empty glass.

"Yes please." she said handing it to me.

I poured for the both of us, and handed it back to her, waiting for her to spill more tea.

"How old are you?" she asked me.

"I'm eighteen." she gasped.

"You are so young, why are you putting yourself

through so much?”

“How old were you when you dated him?”

“I was twenty-three, fresh out of university, ready to start working. I didn’t realize how naive I was then. I loved him just like you do now. Yoh I loved this man so much I left home for him and came to live with him here. I forgot about getting a job and starting my own life, and lived to be his trophy, one he came home to fuck every once in a while, and left after that.” she too another gulp. She’s getting drunk very quickly.

“Has he hit you?” she asked squinting her eyes at me.

I kept quiet and took a sip of the wine. My chest is starting to burn up

“Has he? If he hasn’t, I’m proud of him. You know he always told me how much he hated his father because of how he abused his mother,

but he went on to do the same with me. I met Dlamini, he was a very sweet man, he reminded me of the Clive I fell in love with, but that obviously proved just how men are behind closed doors. He was hurt when he died, he was angry, and although he tried to hide it, you could tell he never got over it. That is when he became a sex machine, and that's how I ended up pregnant." we were disturbed by a little voice calling out in the passage. I forgot that we aren't alone.

"I'll go get him." I said putting down the glass and going to meet Banele halfway in the hallway.

I was surprised that he didn't cry because he doesn't know me. When he saw his mother, he went to her and settled on her lap.

"I guess I can't badmouth his father now." she said before she chuckled.

I want her to carry on, things were getting serious.

“Asking you why you broke up with him would be a dumb question right?” I asked and picked up my glass.

“A very silly question my girl. I hate men, I don’t want a man next to me.” all because of Nkululeko?

“Maybe he’s changed, if he hasn’t hit you then that means he’s grown up and...”

“He did hit me.” I cut it.

She exhales. This is my first time ever speaking about that night. I never told anyone about it.

“But it was my fault, I hit him first and then spit in his face. Even after he told me to stop. I provoked him.”

“And what did he say after that, did he say he was initiated and strengthened?” she asked

with a chuckle. I'm guessing that is a rhetorical question.

"Yes, he had incisions all over his body and face."

"He hasn't changed one bit." she shook her head.

She's taken a pause on the wine, that not good. I want her drunk so she can spill more tea.

"If you feel like you can put up with it my love, then you can stay, but I do not recommend it. This coming from someone who experience all that you are going through. If he hasn't changed now, he's never going to change."

"I love him."

"Love doesn't hurt babes. Think about that." she said before she rubbed Banele's back and closed her eyes, leaning back.

After the silence, she broke into a chuckle.

“I don’t know how I don’t hate that man, after everything he put me through.” I felt tears burning my eyes.

“He took away so much from me, I was just lucky enough to get away while I still had the chance, no matter how difficult it was.”

“I’m so sorry about that.” I said wiping my tears.

“Who did you tell about this?” she asked me.

“No one.” the tears don’t want to stop; I want them to stop.

“Tell someone, maybe they can help. I had no one.”

I nodded and wiped my tears before gulping down the rest of my glass. I have a lot of introspection to do on myself.

Chapter Seventy-Eight

Nambitha Makhathini

I went home with a little hope that things might change sooner than I was expecting. It took a lot for me to ask Amile for a job, I had to put my pride aside and settle for anything, as long as it would get me home, where I wanted to be. But God put an angel in my life, and she is the queen of Zululand. I don't want to get my hopes too high, but if this actually pulls through, and she talks to their seer, I might get my internship back.

I'm not going to tell Nkululeko. I know he won't like the idea and try by all means to stop me from pursuing my dreams because all he wants is for me to be next to him all the time. I'm not Amile, he must not try to compare me to her, our lives are completely different.

It's just the both of us today. Ntando finally decided to show face and snatched Azande from me as if I wasn't the one taking care of her

the past two week. It would have gotten ugly if Nkululeko was here, I'm glad he wasn't.

"Aw wadla mfo kaJama." he said walking through the door, rubbing his hands together.

All because I'm in my nightie getting ready for bed. At least I know I can sleep peacefully knowing no one will wake me up tomorrow morning. He does his own ironing and preparations for the morning. That was one thing I refused to do for him.

"Wadla ini?" I asked turning around to see all of him.

He chuckled and walked closer to grab my bum.

"Izithelo zami madoda." he kissed my neck.

I hate that I can't resist him when he wears that silly smile. It always reminds me of the Nkululeko I fell in love with, the one I still love, the better version of him.

“I’m on my periods.” I pushed him away a little.

I really am not in the mood to be humping right now. Other than the weather being extremely humid for another humans sweat sticking on me, I hate sex. I don’t like it.

“Are you serious?” he asked raising an eyebrow at me.

“I am.” he stopped frowning and relaxed his face.

“It’s okay, we can cuddle. I missed my person.” he knows why he’s saying that.

I’m glad he can see that although I’ve been here with him, that I’m very distant and uninterested in anything he does or says.

“Have I done something wrong, you don’t give me love anymore.” I know he’s just saying as a joke so we don’t get serious, but he means it. Maybe it’s bothering him.

“I just miss home, that’s all.” he engulfed me in a hug.

“Why didn’t you say nana? We can go if you want, I can get some time off from work...” I cut him off.

“My mother wants nothing to do with me remember. They sold me to you, they don’t want me to come back.” he shook his head and held me tighter.

“No, they didn’t sell you to me nana. Don’t speak like that. You are here because you love me, and I love you.”

I could take this to the: “I never wanted to marry you,” conversation but I’m not in the mood to be arguing with Nkululeko, so I’ll shut my mouth.

“Yeah, but they hate me, well, my mom hates me.” I really did disrespect her though, now that I think back.

“We will go anyway. I can’t have my baby

grumpy forever, now can I? I promised to keep you happy at all times, and that is what I'm going to do." he kissed my cheek, and then down my neck.

"I love you nana." I cupped his face and brushed my nose on his.

"I love you too baby, thank you."

It isn't as bad as I was expecting it to be. If this Nkululeko, my baby, sticks around longer, I'd lead a very happy life.

Amile Gumede

We've been kissing for almost twenty minutes now, I feel like I virgin all over again. He has me pressed up against the headboard, with him between my legs, dry humping me. Might I just mention that I am still fully clothed, robe and all.

He hasn't even seen that I have lingerie underneath.

I'm aroused, my skittles is pulsating and I'm literally ready for him to just slide in and get it over and done with. Problem is; he's not even hard yet. Is this what I get for dick hopping brothers? I end up with the least experienced one.

The love we made in my dreams was perfect, where is that perfection now? Mhlabawesizwe, come see your son!

"Okay, wait." I said trying to catch my breath, pushing him off me.

He pulled my legs and I laid flat on the bed. He then untied the robe and left me in the lace. He didn't even take a moment to admire it, he lowered his head to my breasts, started planting kisses on my chest, and massaging my nipples through the material. Very good, this is what I

wanted!

His hands run all over my lower body, and I feel goosebumps marking themselves on my skin as I feel the roughness of his skin on mine.

“How do I take this off?” I don’t think he meant that.

I chuckled and lifted my legs, wrapping them around his waist and helping him unstrap the lace.

“Inamagangozi lento yakho.” he said throwing the top on the ground, exposing my not so virgin tits.

I couldn’t help but laugh, how much more Zulu can he get. He captured my lips again and in that moment, I stopped over-thinking and let go of my body. Maybe he knows what he’s doing, I just need to have a little faith in him.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and brought him closer to my body, hoping to feel

something from him, anything. There's nothing. It's now or never. I pull down his shorts and run my manicured nails on his buttocks, careful not to scratch him. He lets out a satisfactory sound and a shudder before releasing his tongue onto my boobs.

This is slowly getting awkward for the both of us, why isn't he getting turned on. That thought is consuming my brain once again, maybe he just doesn't find me attractive.

"Am I not attractive to you?" I ask him as he plants soft kisses on my stomach.

He lifts his head and he looks at me. He sees the seriousness on my face and he uses his hand to stroke my cheek.

"Mkami, what makes you ask that question?" his eyes are almost half closed, and they are slowly turning red.

"You've been kissing my for over twenty

minutes, but nothing is happening.”

I don't know why I'm so hurt by this, it's bothering me. His response is lifting my legs all the way up to his shoulders and locks his head in between my thighs.

“You are the most beautiful woman I've ever been with.” he lies.

He buries his head in my inner thighs and I feel his warm lips sucking on my skittles.

“You have to understand mkami...that I haven't done this in a long time.” let me guess, he wasted all his good erections on his wet dreams.

“That feels so good, don't stop.” I moan out, unintentionally.

He really doesn't stop, but I'm here trying to recover from the embarrassment I feel after saying that. What would our citizen think if they found out that the same mouth that addresses

them sucks and licks pussy!

“Maybe if you help me...” he swirled his tongue in there and I lost it.

That’s it, I want the real thing. I used my hands to bring his head up to my face, and stared at him deeply in the eyes. His beard was covered in my juices, I looked away in embarrassment. He didn’t waste time, turned my head around and devoured my lips, making me taste myself. I think it’s time we shave this beard now.

He had his thing in between my thighs, it wasn’t fully hard yet, but it was certainly better than it was in the beginning. He slapped my thighs and they immediately closed shut, startling me in the process.

He started fucking in between my thighs, moving his waist in circular motions, slowly, in no rush whatsoever. He was groaning in my ear, panting like he was running a marathon and I

could feel him growing thicker and harder in between my thighs. I've never felt anything like this before.

He was making me jealous, I wanted the same pleasure he was getting, he must not be selfish. I parted my thighs and deprived him of getting more pleasure and leaving me behind. He locked eyes with me and chuckled.

"I think that's about enough now." I said running my hands on his back.

He licked my lips before he devoured them in a hurried kiss. That has to be the sexiest thing a man has ever done to me. I want to scream from the excitement and pleasure I feel. Lord why has this man been depriving me of this goodness!?

He had me bending my knees, holding them close to my chest while he had a full view of my lady part. He positions himself on my entrance

and slowly pushes himself in. I close my eyes and clench my jaws, grabbing onto the sheets. It certainly hurts more than it did the last time I didn't this.

"Hold on to me..." he tries again.

I wrap my legs around his waist, and grab onto his back and feel him slowly sliding into me, filling me up. He groans lowly like a bull and he starts to grind on top of me.

It feels like the first time, my very first time. It's so foreign, the pain is fresh, but so is the pleasure. He's going hard on my neck, driving me crazy.

"So soft mami, shit!" oh hell no!?

His pace continues to increase, he's losing himself quicker.

"I'm gonna cum MaGumede." he's very vocal about his feelings, noted.

No, he can't do that to me. He buries his head on the crevice of my shoulders and his strokes slow down, and he starts to take charge of his body all over again.

He's goes fast and hard again, the slapping of our skins driving me crazy. I start screaming uncontrollably, so much that I have to bite his shoulder otherwise the whole world will know our dirty secrets.

His body starts convulsing on top of me, and I feel my world coming to an end all together. It can't be the end.

"Oh mkami...oh MaQwabe omuhle." he rests his forehead on mine and kisses me multiple times, breathing heavily as to try catch his breath.

He's done, he's gone soft on me, clearly that wasn't for us, it was only for him. I feel so betrayed.

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For the first time in a long time, I wasn't fighting demons in my sleep. I slept like a little baby.

When was the last time. Oh yes, I was serviced last night.

He's holding me tightly in his arms. I won't lie, this feels great, I feel at peace, I feel complete, I'm content. Hearing his heart beating gives me hope that maybe, just maybe this life won't be as bad as I thought it would be after all.

He looks so beautiful. He is a beautiful man when he is asleep, so peaceful. No sign of intimidation on his face, just peace. I could stare at him the whole morning. My hands play on his beard, gosh I hate it so much. I wish he could just get rid of it.

"Ikwenzeni intshebe yami mama?" he asked in a sleepy voice.

“I didn’t mean to wake you.” I said removing my hands from his face. I probably shouldn’t have done that in the first place.

“Why aren’t you sleeping?” he asked tightening his hold on my body.

“I’m not sleepy.” he finally opened his eyes and looked at me.

He cracked a thin smile and kissed my cheek.

“Good morning.” he’s in a good mood.

“Good morning kaMhlaba.”

“Ulale kahle kodwa?” he asked caressing my cheek, just where he had planted a kiss.

“I did baba, you?”

“I did too, thank you.” he ran his hands through my messy hair.

I need to do something about it, it’s grown long enough for me to start braiding now. I need the toilet though right now.

“I need the toilet baba.” I said freeing myself from his hold.

“Must I come with you?” I frowned at him.

I think he didn’t realize the stupidity behind his question until he saw my facial expression.

“You want people to say I’m bewitching you?” I asked sitting back on the bed looking at him. He just laughed.

“I know you did that a long time ago MaQwabe.” yeah right, him and his sus ancestors.

“Ithi ngithi manqa.” I wanted to roll my eyes, but I didn’t.

I just leaned in and gave him a peck on the lips before making my way to the bathroom. Why are we suddenly acting like people in love? Am I also going to fall in love with him?

When I was done, I went back to the room, and I found him stripping the bed. I thought we were

going to stay in bed longer.

“We made just a little mess, I’ll get another one.” by we I guess he means me.

That is so sweet of him, I appreciate it.

“I’ll wash it later baba, please don’t put it in the washing basket.” I stopped him.

I don’t want my dirty linen to be touched by anyone again. The last time my bloodied sheets went missing.

“I have to burn it.” he said throwing it in there anyway.

Exactly why am I bleeding in the first place?
didn’t I lose my virginity already?

“Why?” it’s giving witchcraft.

“To make it known to the ancestors.” oh yes, it’s not our marriage, it’s their marriage.

“I won’t do it if you don’t want me to mkami.” I shook my head.

“No, I don’t have a problem baba, I was just curious.” he came to give me a hug.

He lifted me off the ground and placed me on the bed. Now I was a little taller than him, looking down on him.

“Thank you for being patient with me last night. I promise I’ll make it up to you.” I nodded.

I won’t fault him too much because although I didn’t reach my orgasm, he gave me good loving last night. I held his beard and looked at him in displeasure.

“Are we ever going to cut it?” I asked pulling it.

“No, we like it.” this time it’s not a team agreement, sorry, I’m not on his side.

“What if I want to convert?” I looked at him and my eyes widened.

“Convert what?” he must not try me.

“Religions, maybe I want to join the Nazareth

church.” I just laughed at him and tugged on his beard.

“I’ll book you an appointment at Legends tomorrow baba.” he’s kidding.

I climbed of the bed and went to tuck myself back in bed, leaving him laughing as if I was cracking a joke.

Chapter Seventy-Nine

Amile Gumede

In all the time that I have spent being queen of Zululand, I haven’t visited all the other palaces that my husband owns. This disease I have of always being locked at the palace should stop now.

In fact, I know it’s going to stop. It seems like baba can’t go anywhere without me anymore. I

should have seen this coming this morning when he asked to accompany me to the toilet. He's been glued to my side like a flea on a dog the whole morning and I know that is how it's going to be for the rest of eternity.

We are going to visit MaJili. It's shocking that we haven't made any efforts to go and see her ever since she had a stroke. But she's going to understand, we were very caught up with family affairs. Fixing problems her husband left us with. MaSithole said she's recovering now, and can move more of her left hand, quite better than before. At least she's making progress. It would be a great depression to deal with another death in this place just when things are starting to look up for everyone.

Mgabadeli is driving us, I asked him to pass by the market so we could pick up some fresh fruits and snacks for her, it would be disrespectful to arrive empty handed.

“Which market are you going to go to?” we are driving in town.

I didn't mind leaving the palace to come and look for fruits then go back. It's not like they are going to complain about petrol.

“Any of omama that sell nice fruits.” he looks impressed with me.

What did he think. I know I won't find a Woolworths in this place. These are all the things he needs to start planning. But we can do that another time. I ask Mgabadeli to stop the car when I see a woman who's selling fruits. They look fresher than the ones I've been seeing. I'll just go and inspect them up-closer to be sure. I was expecting Mgabadeli to be the one to accompany me, but the king insists that he stay in the car and he will come with me. What did I say about being attached to each other? Well, he's attached to me.

So there we are, crossing the street as if we are the most normal people on the planet, as if eyes are looking at us. People have dropped everything they are doing and are greeting us as we pass them. The woman almost suffers from a heart attack right in front of us when we arrive at her stall. I crack a smile for her, just so she can calm down.

“Bayede, Ndlunkulu, it is such an honour.” she bowed.

“Sawbona ma. I can see you are selling beautiful fruits.” I said browsing with my eyes.

She definitely has the fresh fruits. They look delicious.

“Yes my queen, the best in the market.” she’s sweet.

“I’d like to buy some ma if you don’t mind.”

“Oh no, I don’t mind my queen, you can even take everything if you have to.” I laughed.

“I just need some banana’s and mango’s. Baba what else do you think MaJili likes?” I asked turning to face him.

I bet he wasn’t even listening. He just has his hand tightly holding mine, looking around.

“I don’t know mkami, get her apples or something.” he doesn’t want to be here, especially to shop for MaJili.

The old lady is now just standing here watching us with the broadest smile on her face.

“Ma can I have you apples too, and add some grapes.” I love me some grapes, those are for me.

I won’t bother to ask him if he wants something, he really doesn’t look like he wants to be standing here any longer. Too many eyes are staring at him, and he doesn’t like that, apparently.

I hand him two of the plastics, and I carry the

lighter one. He can at least participate in this since he didn't help me choose. I don't know why he forced his way out the car when he was going to stand and stare into space.

"Thank you so much Ma, I'll definitely come back another time." I handed her two hundred Rand notes.

She thanked me so much, she wanted to cry. No, I'm not buying my way into peoples hearts.

Mgabadeli brought the car around, so now we don't have to cross the road to get there. He's out to open the door for us, and he grabbed the fruits from our hands.

"We aren't going to stay for long right?" he asked, still gripping onto my hand when the car started moving.

Why is he asking me, we are going to visit his step-mother because she's sick, the one we haven't seen since she got sick. Of course we

have to stay for a little longer than just showing face.

“We’ll stay for as long as we need to baba.” I said tapping his arm using my other hand, because clearly, the other belongs to him now.

“I don’t like that woman.” he said frowning.

“But it’s going to look somehow if we don’t go see her baba.” I say this because I also got very offish vibes from her the first time I met her. she is like a MaMzobe lite.

“She can’t possibly do anything to you with her whole left side paralyzed baba, please.” I want him to stop planting ideas in his head, because he’s going to influence me, and I am very easily influenced, especially by him.

“I’m putting my life in your hands, if something happens to me, it’s your fault.” I couldn’t help but laugh at him.

He’s such a drama king.

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I feel bad that I didn't know that Banzi's boys were home visiting from school. I didn't even buy them anything, let alone bother to call and check up on them in the two months they've been at school. They don't have a father anymore, they also hardly have a mother. No one knows where MaMzobe is, apparently Vukani went to look for her at her home, and she was not there.

He has endured so much, but it's better for him, he's older, and closer to achieving his dreams. Halle and Mgcini are so young, they hardly understand what is going on, and now things had to change so quickly. They are going to grow up to be angry adults who have severe childhood issues of abandonment.

Baba is talking to Vukani. He doesn't look like he's interested, you can tell from his posture that whatever that is being said to him is irrelevant.

I can't imagine him as a parent, uLangaletu. I don't know, I think it hasn't crossed my mind yet that we still have to become parents to a son that will take over the throne when he dies. But who wants to imagine something like death ever coming to be. Thoughts of his death have been postponed now that he got the angioplasty procedure. He went to a check-up a few weeks ago, and the doctor confirmed that he's okay, and that his arteries are co-operating. I was very happy to hear that, no more heart attacks for him.

"How are the boys behaving? Are they okay in school?" I'd assume Vukani is doing his matric now.

"Being in boarding school is a good thing,

otherwise their grades would have been affected greatly by these family problems.” MaSithole answered, flicking her Brazilian.

I want to be like her when I grow up, always looking snatched and ready for anything. I’m sure that must be a full time job on it’s own.

“That isn’t good at all.” I said. I’m sure she can see the concern on my face.

“The little ones are always asking about their mom.” I sigh.

“And what do you say? That must be difficult for you to answer.”

“It is, yazi I can’t even avoid them. I’m glad they understand about their dad, but I can’t really make them understand about Nontuthu. She had absolutely no reason to just up and leave them like that.” I’m guessing she doesn’t know the whole story.

“And I try my best to give them that motherly

love, but I know it's not the same. It's never going to be the same. Especially when they can't even call me ma. It's still Mamncane."

"And Vukani? What about him?"

"He's not speaking to anyone. At this point, Thula and I are praying that he doesn't get out of hand."

"Maybe baba should talk to him." she gave me a smirk.

Why is she smirking at me.

"How cute, you call him baba." I laughed.

I don't know how else to call him. I can't keep calling him bhuti. That is inappropriate.

"Thula doesn't even want me to call him pet names, boSkat and all. He hates it." come to think of it, I've never heard her speaking isiZulu.

She's one of those Zulu's from Joburg. That explains a lot of things.

“I don’t think baba and I will get to that point anytime soon.” I said picking up my glass of water.

Just as we were enjoying the silence between us, Vukani walked in followed by my husband. He started by greeting MaSithole and then he excused me so we could see the person who made us leave our comfy home to visit.

She was sitting in the television room on her wheelchair watching TV. She actually looks better than I expected to find her, the only thing is, she’s tilting to her left side, the paralyzed side.

“Aw bantabami.” she mumbles when she finally sees us.

I can’t tell if it’s excitement on her face, or shock, you can hardly tell with her slanted mouth. So much for her beautiful face. Baba grabs my hand tightly, before he leads me to sit

down on the couch in front of her. He stands behind me and places his hand on my shoulder. I'm guessing I have to do the talking.

"Sawbona ma, how are you holding up?" she tries to pick up her head but, it's not as easy.

It's actually sad seeing someone look so helpless.

"I'm okay. You two look so beautiful my children." she runs her eyes up to him.

His hand grips onto my shoulder. Is he trying to break my bones.

"Siyabonga ma. We are glad you are okay. We were here to check on you." she forces a smile and uses her left hand, the one that isn't paralyzed anymore, to touch my hand that is on my knee.

"Ngane kaVumani...umuhle sisi...Mhlaba..." she doesn't finish her sentence.

She looks at me and tears welled up in her eyes. I turn to look at Baba, and he's wearing a frown on his face. I wonder what the issue is with him. He then crouched down next to the couch I was on and looked at the old lady trying to fight back tears.

"My husband loved you." he said looking at him. You could see that he was very uncomfortable, so he cleared his throat.

"That is why he did this for you." she blinked a couple of times.

We shared a look, the same confusion that was on my face was mirrored on his.

"Nibahle bantabami...ngiyajabula kuze kwalunga."

I hate being lost, and this woman is speaking in riddles. I'm slowly getting irritated. I think he can see it on my face, so he gets up from the

crouching position and standing behind me like before, and squeezed my shoulder. This just got awkward real quick.

“Ma we bought you fruits and some more goodies. We aren’t staying, we just wanted to see you and the children.” she finally removed her cold hand from my knee.

Now I understand why he didn’t want to stay for long.

“Thank you for coming.” she said slowly, and clapped her hands in gratification.

When my eyes met with baba’s face, he was frowning at the woman. I wish he could just pull a straight face instead. The whole reason for our visit was not to show the woman that we don’t want to be here. Now she’s said some weird shit, we can’t hide our confusion, but he can’t at least try.

Without even peeping a word to the old lady, we

said our goodbye to her, and got out of that television room as quickly as our feet could carry us. In fact, we couldn't have left that room quick enough.

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Before we left, I asked MaSithole, who I now know is Lerato, if I could see the boys. I didn't bother asking for Vukani, I know we don't like Amile, so I won't put myself through that heartache.

Halle was happy to see me, I don't know about Mgcini. I guess he was just acting enthusiastic because his brother was doing so. I haven't spent that much time with them for them to decide whether they love me or hate me. I guess it's just easier for them to hate me than love me. I split up their parents and took away

their dad.

They wouldn't understand even if I dreamed of explaining it to them, so I won't bother myself. I'll just use the fact that Halle loves me to my advantage, and maybe I can also get Mgcini on my side too. Two is better than none. I can't force Vukani to like me, that would be like forcing a horse to drink water.

I persuaded Halle and Mgcini to come spend the day with me one of these days. I promised them a day out to do something fun, just so we can bond, and get to know each other better. I saw how skeptical both of them were, the reactions on their little faces told me they were not used to that. I want to do this, especially before they go back to school.

I don't want to think of this as guilt for taking away their parents from them, I'm doing this because I care for them. I fell in love with them the minute they stood at my feet, pulling my skirt

begging me to play with them the first day I met them. If it were up to me, I would even take them to come live with me, with us. But that is not my decision to make, and it is quite a big decision. I'm still a minor myself, I can barely take care of children. It would take a lot of strength for me to take care of two boys, especially grow up boys like Hallelujah and Mgcini.

“What are you thinking about?” he asked brushing my arm.

I shook my head and turned my head to look at him. We are on our way back to the palace. My stomach is full, Lerato went heavy on that meal. I can't remember the last time I was this full. Never mind the fact that we lied to the poor old lady saying we were rushing, only to stay for a whole three course dinner, laughing and drinking with her children. At least she didn't see us!

“About the boys. I just can’t stop worrying about them.” he wrapped his arm around my body and pulled me closer to his body.

I laid my head on his shoulder and sighed.

“You have a beautiful heart MaGumede, it warms my heart that you are thinking about them, even after everything MaMzobe did to you.” come to think of it, MaMzobe didn’t do anything to me. My husband yes, but not me.

Ex-husband I mean.

“The boys are innocent, they can’t suffer for their parents sins like we are doing. I want them to have a good life you know, we are trying to break a vicious cycle here, not make it longer. I don’t want them to grow up hating each other, especially our children, they need to know they have big brothers they can turn to in time of need.” now I’m just blabbing away.

He lifts his head and looks at me.

“Our children.” I look back at him.

“Yes baba.” I lay my head back on his shoulder after seeing that big smile on his face.

He must not get too excited, I’m not ready yet.

Bottom line is:

“Maybe I want them to be close to us you know.” he keeps quiet.

I look up at him and he is wearing no facial expression, he’s just maintaining a straight face. Where was that straight face earlier when that poor old lady was talking to us.

“Just so they don’t feel abandoned.” he raised his hand and rubbed his face.

“Are you going to take them out of their school?” what? He’s actually buying into the idea.

“Swaziland is far baba...” silence.

“I’ll talk to their guardians and see what they

say.” he says when the car finally stops in front of the palace doors.

Mgabadeli comes to open the door for him, and he climbs out. He hold out his hand for me and I climb out. My purse falls to the ground and I almost scream as I watch my phone fall to the ground, almost smashing to pieces.

The same phone Banzi bought for me when I came to Durban after we got married. My first apple. I feel tears welling up in my eyes as I watch him bending to pick up things.

He hands me the smashed phone and holds onto my cards as he stacks them carefully to put them back in the bag.

“It’s your birthday tomorrow?” he asks looking up at me as if I have committed the biggest crime.

Can’t he see that I’m shattered. My phone!

“I’ll get you another one mkami, ungakhali.” he

grabs the phone from my hand and shoves it in his pocket.

He then closes the door behind me and leads me inside the house.

“Why didn’t you tell me it’s your birthday is tomorrow.” isn’t he supposed to know, as the man of the house.

I don’t answer him, I’m still fighting back tears.

“MaGumede I’ll get you another phone.” he says taking it out of his pocket and throwing it in the bin.

I screamed and let the tears fall down my face.

“No baba, don’t throw it.”

“I’ll get you one like mine, leave that one.” does he not understand the importance of having an iPhone. He clearly doesn’t.

“I don’t want your Mobicel, I want my iPhone, take it out.” I ran to where he is standing and

tried to get it out of the bin.

He just laughed at me like I was here joking.

This man must not test me.

He grabbed my arms and lifted my face before kissing my lips slowly.

“Ehlisa umoya. I’ll get you your iPhone.” my heart rate slowly went back to normal.

His kiss worked, but he must not think it’s always going to work. If he doesn’t get me that iPhone he is as good as dead.

Chapter Eighty

Amile Gumede

I’m startled when I wake up without being squished in his arms. I know this is only my second morning waking up in his bed, but still, I slept in his arms, I expect to wake up there too!

I sat up and stretched my limbs, looking around the room, trying to figure out where he could be. It looks like it's early in the morning, the birds are happily chirping away in the sky and the morning sun hasn't really shone through the window yet, which is a sign that it truly is still early.

One thing I love about this room is the amount of light in it. Other than it being painted white, there is a lot of natural light from the windows, and it makes it pleasant to be in here. Unlike that dark dungeon that I was sleeping in this whole time.

I stand and stretch my limbs before going to the window to open the curtains. I let the cool breeze into the room after opening the door and just sit and let the sun hit my skin for a little. I feel refreshed, I even had a good dream. I can't remember what it was about, but it was peaceful. It's so unlike me to forget a dream.

I don't stay out too long because I don't want anyone from the kingdom to spot me out on the balcony basking in only my sleepwear. This sight should be reserved for only one man.

And here is that man, he's holding a single cupcake with one candle on it and he is steadily walking towards me with a big smile on his face.

"Happy birthday mkami." I frowned at him, shifting my eyes from the cupcake to him.

My frown slowly forms into a smile. Is he not going to sing?

"Thank you baba." I said welcoming the cupcake. I wonder where he got it, especially so early in the morning.

I looked at him before he gestured for me to blow out the candle. Does he even know the significance of the candle being there, normally that is where they tell you to make a wish. I don't really expect that from him though, he's a

typical Zulu man.

I blow out the candle, and silently make my wish; that this is one of many birthdays I get to spend happy, hopefully with him.

It's only been a day since we consummated the marriage, and I'm slowly letting him into my heart. It's like that night opened the door to this beautiful friendship that we have. I still have insane respect for him, but he's become my friend. I'm not afraid of him like I was of Banzi, I respect him.

"What are you thinking about?" he snaps me from my thoughts.

"I was making a wish." I say smiling at him.

"Don't tell me you believe in those things." I laughed.

He reached over to the cupcake and removed the candle stick.

“I do believe in them, they work.” he used his fingers and scooped up some cream.

“Well, in our days, we would sing for the birthday girl, and then smear them with cream.” he then proceeded to put cream on my nose.

I couldn't run, the kist was right behind me and I would fall if I attempted to, so I just laughed and let him. He put the remaining on my cheeks and forehead. If I grow pimples all over my face, it will be his fault.

“So how old are you turning today?” he's pretending not to know, seriously!?

“A lady never reveals her age.” I said laughing.

I don't even know how old he is, and I don't wish to find out. His beard and white hairs are enough to let me know that I shouldn't be in his bed every night. But it's grown to be my favourite place, I can't complain.

“Well, lady, the king demands to know at once.”

I rolled my eyes at him and giggled.

“Weeh, wavele waziceba.” I laughed even harder, his facial expressions kill me.

He opened his arms and he gave me a tight squeeze. His playful nature has to be my favourite thing about his personality.

“Thank you Mageba.” he brushed my messy hair.

“I wish you had told me sooner, maybe I would have done something a little extra special.”

“There is always next year.” I said pulling away from the hug.

I also scooped some cream and put it on his nose.

“I put too much effort into making that cupcake for you to be toying with it.” he pulled a straight face, for once I thought he was serious.

But he laughed it off when he saw that I was

shaken. He must not do that to me. He knows how intimidating he is.

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He had a council meeting today. I know this because I am his designated PA, I handle all his meetings and all the appearances he makes. He doesn't want to hire another person, he said he doesn't want another person in his personal space if it isn't me. I only agreed to it because I don't have anything better to do, and I get a salary, so it's all good. But he must not get comfortable, when I want to quit, I will.

I usually go with him to these meetings, but today he said I must stay behind because it's my birthday, I shouldn't be working. He also left his phone, because everyone that wanted to call me for birthday wishes was calling me on his

phone. By everyone, I mean my immediate family and his brothers, since my phone is dead. Everyone else can't get a hold of me, because not everyone can have the king's phone.

I'm sitting in the dining room having my grapes, the one's I bought yesterday, and I'm logging onto my Instagram using my iPad. I absolutely refuse to use his Mobicel, no way never! It's only good for receiving calls, not my social media. I don't know why he bought this phone, I didn't think I would judge him, until I was actually forced to use it today. I can't go from a good phone to that, I'd rather stay phone-less.

Birthday messages from ex-schoolmates, from my old and new school, come pouring into my Instagram. The fact the they still remember shocks me. I have an extra large following now since I became queen, I just don't have time for social media, not like I used to. Nambitha was the one who got the whole world buzzing from

her single birthday post. I appreciate it, I just don't think I can reply to all of them.

"Chomie." her voice brings me back to real life.

I get up and go give her a big hug.

"Happy birthday chomie!" it's always a pleasure seeing my bestie.

"Thank you chomie." she handed me a gift bag. Aw, she didn't have to.

"I tried you multiple times on the phone and you didn't answer."

"My phone smashed last night, it's dead." my heart really hurts about that phone.

It was one of the most expensive things I owned. That and all my Apple products, the iPad and AirPods.

"I'm sorry chomie. I'm sure you'll get another one soon! Is Bayede here, I want to ask him for you. I begged Nkululeko to drive us to Durban

for the day so we could shop.” I laughed.

“Are you serious chomie.”

“Yes, I’m serious!” I haven’t even opened her gift.

“Are you going to ask him, because I definitely won’t.” she seemed to think twice about what she said. I laughed.

“I’m joking chomie. He’s at council and he left his phone with me. Maybe Jama can drive us there so I can ask him.” I actually want to go shopping.

Other than having no proper clothes to put together a reputable outfit as the new queen of Zululand, I miss going out. Like really going out, not just going around the village and calling that going out.

“Okay chomie, let’s go!”

I needed to changed first, because I was sitting in my house clothes. I don’t want to end up on

gossip columns again for not putting in any effort into the way that I dress. It's unfortunate that I can't do much about my hair.

"Are you trying to upstage me?" she asked leaning on the door.

She refused to enter the room as always. I totally understand. Now that I have a clearer understanding of how ancestors work, I know that it's not easy for her to just walk into a room like ours. For all we know, Mhlaba could be sitting on that bed watching us.

"Last time I was dragged for being a plain jane who doesn't put effort into looking beautiful. I don't want that happening, because the next thing, they will start speculating that I'm unhappy in my marriage, when I am happy." she smiled widely.

"I'm happy if you are happy chomie." I turned to look at her, remembering that her relationship

isn't as rosey as mine.

"I'm okay chomie, we're okay." can she see the pity and sorrow on my face.

"I didn't mean to throw it in your face chomie..."

"Nonsense! Your happiness is mine bestie, if you are happy, so am I. now let's go my queen!"

I slipped on my sneakers and we rushed out of the palace. If I calculate correctly, it just hit 11am; it takes us four hours to get to Durban on a normal day, but with Jama's insane driving skills, we can get there in just over two hours, which means if baba agrees, we might leave at 12pm and arrive at 2pm. That gives us approximately three hours to shop. It's okay, I can do that.

I hate living so far from civilization.

"Hello Jama." I give him an enthusiastic greeting, and he returns it with a wide smile.

“Ndlunkulu, happy birthday.” he bowed.

“Thank you.” he’s swapped cars.

We are now going into the royal car. It doesn’t take long before we are on the road to council.

“So how old are you turning now Ndlunkulu.” I know he’s teasing me.

“Jama please, a lady never reveals her age.” I look at Nambitha and we share a laugh.

“And how else are you planning to spend your day?” he asks looking at us through the rear view.

“I was going to sit at home and have some me-time. Not many plans.”

I wasn’t even looking forward to today. That’s why I didn’t even bother to tell baba. But I loved the effort he put in this morning. The cupcakes were delicious.

“That’s boring chomie, now just pray that

Bayede says yes, so we can take you out of your misery.”

We arrived at council, and before I climbed out of the car, I checked the time. He’s probably done with the meeting, so I won’t be disturbing him much. Nambitha stays in the car and Jama escorts me inside. It’s very quiet here, not much movement, I’m assuming he’s alone. Jama waits for me outside his office while I knock and let myself in.

He’s on a phone call, it doesn’t look serious at all, he’s talking casually and smiling here and there.

“Here she is right now. .” he said to the person he was talking to.

“Mommy says hello.” he says looking at me.

Why is he talking to my mother. I can’t get used to that! And I know that he’s just repeating what was said to him. They wrap up their

conversation and he hangs up before he says I can take my seat.

“Mkami I thought you said you were taking ‘you-time’ today.” I wanted to roll my eyes at him, but I can’t. ngincengile.

“I am. My best friend came to see me and she asked to take me out for shopping.” his eyes lit up.

“Really now?” he leaned back into his chair.

He’s not even trying to be intimidating, but that look of his is making me break into a sweat. All the confidence I had has evaporated. What did I say about not being scared of him again? Is it too late to retract my statement.

“Yes baba. I was here to ask you if I can go.” I stuttered. Not a good sign.

“You didn’t have to come all the way here to ask mkami, you couldve have just called. Of course you can go.” relief.

“Thank you baba.” I stood up and went to give him a hug.

I can't really kiss him on the cheek because his face is covered in facial hair. I pretended to look away when he opened his drawer and pulled out a bundle of notes. I don't think I've seen so much money with the naked eye. Only in movies.

“Buy me something nice too.” I put out my right hand and accepted the money.

“Mageba.” I thanked.

Now this is the lifestyle I should live. I must be a rich housewife as well, queen title should be accompanied by some good money.

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It is my 18th birthday after all, I deserve to live a little.

We are almost home, Jama almost dragged us out of Tashas because we didn't want to leave. He was very stuck up today, I even reminded Nambitha of how he was like this last year. How the time goes.

I thoroughly enjoyed my birthday; it was just me and my bestie shopping, going in and out of every expensive shop buying whatever we set our eyes on. I finished all the money Baba gave me, and I know that was the goal, but I had ideally wished to save some for rainy days.

Oh I bought! Dresses, shoes, skirts, bags! I bought everything I felt like I needed and more, and I am so satisfied. They were right when they said retail therapy is the best type of therapy.

We had a late lunch at Tashas in Umhlanga, and they gave us a private table as soon as we walked in. They then proceeded to give us a bottle of champagne on the house, only

because it was my birthday. Talk about perks honey!

So now I don't know if I'm drunk, tipsy, or quarter to losing my mind. I don't think Jama noticed that we were drinking. I doubt he even saw us sneaking in a bottle of champagne into our shopping bags. We plan to open it at home, and hopefully have a sleepover. Only if her man agrees.

It's just after 7pm when we arrive at the palace. Jama is not talking to the both of us, we literally annoyed him so much during the ride, he ended up pulling the partition up and ignoring us. It was hilarious, but it's the only taste of life I'll ever get ever again.

The car has stopped and he comes to open the door for us, I stare at him and crack a big smile. I know he can't resist it, he's trying to hold back, but he's failing dismally.

“I know you love me Jama, you can’t be angry at me.” he laughed and told me to get out of the car.

As I was laughing my ass out of the car, mom stood in front of me with her big belly sticking out. She’s due in like a month from now. What is she doing here anyway?

“Sefanele siqakane nani manje ezimotweni.” she’s not very pleased with us.

Nambitha is standing behind me looking like a rained on cat. Mom is looking at the both of us.

“Are you two drunk?” I lifted my finger.

“Mama, I don’t think drunk is the right word.” her eyes widened before she pulled me aside, using my arm.

“Amile are you drunk!? This is no way for a queen to be behaving.” she is clearly mistaken.

“Ma, I’m not drunk, neither is my chomie over

there. Just a bottle or two of Moet can't get you drunk, right chomie?" Jama is standing frowning at the both of us.

Nambitha doesn't peep a word. I wiggle my eyebrow at mom who now looks fuming mad, in fact, she looks like she's ready to pop. I give her a big smile, and she can't even resist me, she laughs and pushes me out of the way.

"You are embarrassing me Amile, we have guests in there."

"I swear, I'm not drunk. I promise mamam. Look, I can even stand on one foot." I instantly regretted doing that because I almost toppled over, causing her to laugh even harder. See she can't be angry at me forever.

Okay, maybe I am a little drunk.

"Go and take a shower, and make sure no one see's you like this. You too Nambitha. I'm giving you ten minutes, go!"

I didn't hesitate to run into the house, avoiding the lounge and dining room because I know that's where the guest probably are. I got to my room with no hassle before I threw myself on the bed, and listened to my head spinning.

Okay, maybe I'm a lot drunk.

Chapter Eighty-One

Nambitha Makhathini

Amile's mom showed me a room that I could use to freshen up, and that gives me an opportunity to wear one of my new dresses. I thoroughly enjoyed today, if I could have a repeat of it, I definitely would. It felt good to be out of the house. And although Nkululeko was here right by my side the whole time, he wasn't there as my boyfriend, he was there as Amile's bodyguard, and he damn well stuck to his job

description.

I'm not as drunk as Amile is. While I was watching the amount of alcohol I was consuming, she managed to finish a whole bottle by herself. She didn't even notice that I wasn't drinking as much as she was. One thing about me, I can adapt to my surroundings. Although I'm just a little tipsy, I can act to accommodate my bestie. She's never been drunk before, only tipsy.

It gave me so much satisfaction just seeing her let loose and let go for a change. This is someone who has seen hell face to face, she deserves the break. I was genuinely happy to hear her say she's happy in her marriage. It warms my heart

I feel fresh, and I'd like to think that I look beautiful. I'm wearing a wrap dress, I bought it today and I just love it so much. I can't believe I can still pull off wearing such a snatching dress,

my figure is still in tip top shape. I haven't felt beautiful in a long time, and looking at myself in the mirror right now, I feel so hyped up. The only reason why I'm getting dressed up is because MaMchunu told me that we are going to have dinner in the garden for Amile. How sweet of them to organize that for her.

I turn my head and look at Nkululeko barging into the room, shutting the door so violently like he owns the place. I can't stop the frown on my face. I don't say anything, he hasn't been the best sport today, he was Jama, not Nkululeko, the one I love. He stares at me as I fix my make up. I can see him through the mirror, he's scanning me from top to bottom, I can't read his face.

"Take it off." I turned and faced him.

"Excuse me?" I'm genuinely confused.

"That dress, take it off. I don't like it." there it is.

“You don’t have to like it Jama. I’m wearing it.” normally, he likes it when I call him by his clan names, but now he knows that I’m not trying to be nice.

“You want to continue to embarrass me in front of the royal family huh?” he hissed.

“How am I embarrassing you? What I do, has nothing to do with you, I am my own person. I’m only embarrassing myself if I do something, and quite frankly, I don’t know what I have done for you to say that to me.” I said placing my hands on my waist.

I could see veins flickering on his forehead, and his jaw ticking. Angimsabi uNkululeko.

“What did I say about respect Nambitha!?” he took two strides towards me.

I moved back. Just when I least expected it, he grabbed my wrist and tightened his hold on it.

“Uyangilimaza.” I said as calmly as I could get

my voice to say.

“Did I not speak to you about respect?” he twisted my arm.

I winced.

“You did.” he’s seriously starting to hurt me.

“Nkululeko let go of my arm, uyangilimaza!” I said a little loudly, hoping someone could hear me.

“Why are you making noise!?” he said through gritted teeth before throwing my arm at me.

That hurt, a lot. But I’m not going to cry in front of him, I will not show him my weakness.

“I said take off the fucking dress and wear something decent.”

This man doesn’t know me. I moved away from the mirror and went to the bed where my clothes were scattered. I packed them back into their plastics.

“Uyangizwa Nambitha!?” he shouted.

I didn't answer. I could feel him charging towards me and I turned around. His hand almost landed on my stomach, but he stopped dead in his tracks when there was a knock on the door.

“Namnam, are you done yet sisi?” it was Amile's mom.

He groaned and moved away from me.

I abandoned the plastics and rushed to open the door.

“Yes ma, I'm ready, lets go.” I didn't even waste time.

I could see she was trying to peak her head inside and see what was going on, but I pulled her arm and we walked upstairs to Amile's room. I could tell that she wanted to question me about what she possibly could have heard, but she's holding herself. She knocked on

Amile's door and when she opened, she was done showering, she just wasn't dressed.

"Ahh chomie, look at you looking snatched!" she said pulling me and twirling me.

"Amile, you aren't dressed!?" her mom shout whispered.

"I was still looking for something to wear." she's still drunk, the shower didn't help.

Her mom looked at me and shook her head. I guess she can see that I'm sober, unlike the birthday girl.

"Amile hurry up, people are waiting for you, yeses you are going to send me into early labour." she walks into the room and I stay standing by the door.

I'll never make the mistake of entering this bedroom. I entered her previous one, and slept with her in marital bed. Maybe that is the reason for my bad luck in this relationship.

My heart almost stops when I turn and see him standing at the bottom of the staircase, looking at me like he's ready to kill me. My heart sits in my throat, and I try maintain a straight face, just so he doesn't see that I'm actually afraid of him now. I pray to the God's in heaven, and the ancestors guarding this house, that they save me from going home with this man. Just for tonight.

Amile Gumedede

There are so many people here, I'm actually feeling shy. They decked the tables, they even got fairy lights, like it's a proper dinner, with all the people I care about. This has my mother all over it.

My head is still spinning a little, so much that I feel like I need to hold onto something if I stand

upright for too long. Sigh.

“Happy birthday mzala.” she came and engulfed me in a tight hug.

I haven’t seen her in so long!

“Thank you Buhle, and thank you for coming.”

My brother is also here, he was the first one to come and squeeze the life out of me after he almost knocked me flat on my face. I’m in heels for crying out loud, I hardly have balance.

I think I’ve greeted everyone and it’s safe for me to go and take my seat.

“Wait for your husband.” mom stopped me as I was walking to my seat.

Where is he? Why was mom rushing me so much if he wasn’t even here. And here I was thinking I was the lady of the moment.

“Mom, I need to sit down otherwise I’ll collapse right here.” she sneered.

“That’s what you get for drinking alcohol. Stand up.”

I saw him walking out to the patio, and I’ve never been glad to see someone like I am now.

“Bayede.” my guests chanted.

It’s weird that even his brothers greet him like that, but he’s the king nonetheless.

“I’m sorry to be this person, but can I just have you this side for a moment.” more walking?

I’m instantly glued to my mother’s side as we walk up to him first. I’m avoiding eye contact with him at all costs, I can’t afford to look him in the eyes.

“You look so beautiful MaGumede.” he says taking my hand, I should have expected that.

Mom is now waddling back to her fiance, and has left me with this man.

“Thank you baba.”

Everyone is making their way through the patio door, towards the dining room, past the lounge, out to the front door of the palace. The doors are closed.

“I know that we were putting gifts for the end MaMchunu, but I just wanted to do this now while everyone I still in their senses. “ they all laughed.

He held both my hands and looked at me in the eyes.

“Happy birthday mkami, Ndlunkulu wesizwe saZulu. I am elated to be here, sharing this day with you, and I hope it is the first of many. I bought you something, and I know it’s not what you wanted, but I hope you like it. Ungizumile, I wasn’t expecting your birthday to be so soon, but I had already bought this, I was waiting for the right time.”

He placed a little box in my hands. I huffed,

closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

“What is this baba?” I whispered to him, causing him to chuckle.

“Open it and see.” I don’t see why he would drag us to the front door if the gift is in here.

I opened the box and it was keys. I took them out the box and I saw the Audi logo.

“No way, shut up!” I said reaching to open the door.

“Hhayi Amile!” who other than my mother.

Meanwhile, the man I said it to is laughing.

I’m out the door, struggling down the stairs in my heels to see if he’s serious.

It’s the first thing I see when I stand outside. It’s a white Audi A1, it has a big red bow on it, a perfect indicator that it is the one I am searching for! It’s perfect!

Here I am struggling to unstrap my heels, so I

can run to my car and see it up close. As soon as I succeed, I dump them on the floor and unlock it. When I settle on the driver's seat, I melt into the chair and take in the car smell. I love it! This car is almost as girly as me, it's trimmed in a light pink, and I just can't get over it.

"Now you just need to learn how to drive and get an actual license." he said peeping at the door.

He's holding my shoes in his hands.

"Thank you Mageba, I love it." I got out of the car, and engulfed him in a tight hug.

I couldn't stop jumping around. This is better than any gift he could ever get me.

"Your iPhone will have to wait just a little now MaGumede." he said holding my waist, locking his eyes with mine.

"I really don't mind." I said giggling.

He placed a kiss on my forehead, and I melted into his embrace. I hope we aren't making our guests uncomfortable. I can't contain my happiness this very moment

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As my body guard, and head of security at the palace, Jama has to wait until everyone has left before he can go, just to make sure it's safe for us. It's protocol, he does this every single night.

We have just bid goodbye to my mom, they booked a lodge not so far from here, so that is where they are going. Tata refused to stay here, and I totally understand.

I had an amazing night, my family didn't falter in making this night extra special. The gifts topped it all off; I got things like gift vouchers, jewellery, shopping, and more importantly, a car!

A whole flippen car, courtesy of my lovely husband.

Nambitha has been quiet the whole night, I want to take her up on that offer of a sleepover. It seems like things are tense between her and Jama. I'm not going to jump to conclusions and paint him as an abuser, but he's in some sort of mood, I wouldn't want to risk it.

"Are you ready to call it a night?" Jama snuck up behind me as I was unstrapping my heels in the lounge.

"Yes, you can go, thank you so much for today." I turned and gave him a wide smile.

He didn't hesitate to return it.

"You are welcome Ndlunkulu, I'm glad you enjoyed your day." I took off both my shoes and stood up.

"Can Namnam stay behind please." I begged.

“It’s late now.” he hesitated.

“I know, that’s why it’s called a sleepover. Please Jama, I miss hanging out with my chomie.” his eyes are flickering with jealousy.

I don’t know why he’s jealous, it’s not like I’m going to steal her and run away with her. We offer her two different things, he’s her man, I’m her best friend.

“Mzizi, let her stay.” saved by my husband.

I don’t know where he’s coming from, but I know he’s right on time. I know he won’t say no to him.

He’s still hesitant.

“I’m here, nothing is going to happen to them.” he said chuckling.

I’m guessing he can’t read the expression on Jama’s face. It’s not about our safety, it’s about something else. Something deeper than we

both may know.

“Go home and rest Mzizi, you can fetch her tomorrow.” talk about a man that will do anything to make his wife happy.

After a lot of hesitation, he decided to leave, before he did that, he asked to go say good night to her in the room she was in. I was finally left alone with my man. My handsome cave man.

“Thank you baba.”

“You’ve been saying thank you all night mkami.”

“It’s because I’m grateful for everything you did for me tonight. I’m grateful for everything you’ve done for me, and what you continue to do. I won’t stop saying thank you, because I want you to know that I appreciate it.” he gave me a tight squeeze.

This was not what I was expecting to find when I first found out about our marriage. I wasn’t

expecting to find someone like this, someone I appreciate so much, without even trying. He just made it so easy to let him into my life. All in all, I'm glad he's the one I ended up with. It definitely hasn't been easy.

He made his way upstairs when I said I wanted to see if Jama has left. I took my time walking to the room down the hall. My feet are sore, and I'm not exactly sober, I hope I don't have a hangover tomorrow. I'm surprised the king hasn't noticed. Or maybe he did, he just didn't say anything.

I knocked on the door twice before letting myself in. I found them sucking each others faces, and immediately regretted going in without being let in. But it doesn't seem like a mutual kiss, the way he's holding her wrist, and her stiff body tells me otherwise.

He breaks the kiss and uses his hands to wipe her face. He then smiles at me and she turns to

look at me. Her face is red like a tomato, so are her eyes.

“I’m sorry to interrupt. Chomie, baba said you can sleep over.” I said this staring at Jama.

“No chomie, I’ll go home.” she said, tears forming in her eyes. She was trying to keep her face straight so they don’t fall. Saying I’m concerned would be an understatement.

“But chomie, we said we would stay up and catch up like old times.” I pleaded.

The devil called Jama is just standing there quiet.

“I want to go Amile, please! Just spend the night with your husband, I’ll spend the night with mine. We can do the sleepover thing another time.” she snapped at me.

“Don’t force her MaGumede.” he said grabbing all her shopping bags from the bed, walking closer to me.

Who is he to try make me look like the bad person here. I'm rooted in one place, shocked by what is transpiring before me.

"Nambitha?" I said looking at her after Jama left the room.

She came to give me a hug, and squeezed a little harder than normal.

"I'll see you some other time." she said in a low voice.

"Nambitha?" I asked again.

She let me go and walked out the room, leaving me rooted in the same spot. What the hell was that? Now I'm no psychic, but I know abuse and controlling when I see it.

Maybe this is deeper than she says it is.

Chapter Eighty-Two

Nambitha Makhathini

He hasn't hit me yet. I'm still waiting for him to do it, so we can get it over and done with. I want him to do it so I can go to bed and wake up tomorrow, nurse my bruises, and move on with life. I certainly have better experience with last time's beating. I know what to expect.

I heard the king telling him to let me stay, and I saw the hesitation on his face, but I knew that he wasn't going to say no to him. I guess I counted my eggs before they could hatch. Nkululeko is a manipulative, selfish bastard.

He went into that room, and found me packing the clothes I had left scattered on the bed when MaMchunu saved me from a gut punch. He pulled me by the arm, so roughly that I almost crashed on his chest. He tightened his hand around my wrist again and twisted my arms and said:

“You are going to tell Amile that you don’t want to stay, do you understand me?” I shook my head.

I obviously didn’t want to go with him.

“I don’t want to go with you Nkululeko.” I said, tears forming in my eyes. If he continued twisting my arm like this, I knew they would fall.

“Uthini? Who is the man in this relationship?” he had said, with his teeth gritted so hard that his jaw started ticking.

It started to feel like my arm would rip out of it’s socket. I let the tears fall and pleaded for him to stop. It was like he enjoyed watching me like that.

“Tell Amile you don’t want to stay.” as I was contemplating whether to fight him back or not, Amile knocked on the door.

I knew it was her because she did her signature knock. That’s when he stopped twisting my arm

and grabbed my neck, kissing me like the world was ending. He wasn't being gentle, his hand was still holding my wrist, and he kept biting my lips. I guess that served as a reminder to tell Amile that I don't want to stay, when in my heart, I wished to live here for the rest of my life.

It didn't look like she suspected anything, especially when he cracked her that smile, and told her not to force me if I don't want to. In that moment, I wished I had a knife in a close range that I could use to plunge into his heart.

That tight squeeze I gave her was the only cry for help I could afford her. He was standing right behind me, watching me like a hawk, I couldn't even whisper anything to her. I hope she caught it, it's very vague, but it's something.

He's sitting in the lounge drinking a beer, catching up on his sport. He wouldn't be lounging like that if it wasn't for me. He wouldn't have his feet up like the man of the

house, if it wasn't for the efforts I put in to make his stupid house a home. He would still be sitting on that piece of wood, or better, that chair he loved so much.

Standing in the kitchen watching him, I feel nothing but hate for him. He dragged me here for what? He must at least give me the beating I have been waiting for the whole night, get it over and done with, then let me go sleep in peace.

"Nana please get me another beer." he shouted from the lounge.

I glance over at the watch on the wall and it's almost midnight. Sigh, it's going to be a long night.

I got him his beer, opened it for him and made my way to the lounge. I put it in front of him. When I was about to walk out, he stopped me.

"Come sit with me." he gave me a small smile.

Why is he being nice? He's freaking me out. I went to sit on the three-seat couch.

"Come here, next to me." he patted the space next to him on his single sofa.

He's basically asking me to sit on his lap. He could see that I was hesitating.

"Woza nana. I don't bite." yeah right.

I got up and went to sit on his thigh. He hooked his arm around my waist, and gave me a kiss on the arm.

"I don't like it when you don't respect me." I could feel his breath on my skin, and it was making me so uncomfortable.

"You make me feel like I'm less of a man when you do that, especially in front of people." my heart is racing.

I actually think the beating would have been better than this. I have goosebumps all over my

body.

He turned my face and looked at me.

“Don’t do that ever again. When I talk to you, you listen and do what I say.” I nodded.

“Good girl. Ngiyakuthanda yezwa. I will never hurt you.” my blood instantly went cold.

He grabbed my neck, less aggressively this time, and sucked on my bottom lip. I could taste the beer and nicotine on his lips, I instantly felt like vomiting.

I pushed him away and I gagged. He looked at me concerned.

“Are you okay?” he asked rubbing my back.

“I’m fine. Can I go to bed?” if he can’t see that he disgusts me, then he is the literal problem.

“Yeah, I’ll find you there. Goodnight.” he said leaning in for another kiss.

I gave him a peck and stood up as quickly as I

could. That was awkward, and you can never confirm Nkululeko's next move, maybe he's plotting to kill me in my sleep, that's why he's being nice all of a sudden.

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I can smell his beer breath on my neck. Maybe it's almost morning now, why is he up so early. He's kissing my shoulder, and I can feel his thing on my thigh.

"Ongibhebhis." he can tell that I'm awake. I hate that he can feel it when I wake up, I can't even pretend to be asleep.

I keep my eyes closed as I feel him forcefully opening my thighs and rubbing himself on my entrance.

"Stop." I tell him, trying to push him off.

My body is still tired, so are my limbs, I just woke up, I have zero energy to fight him off.

But does Nkululeko Dlamini know the meaning of stop, no he doesn't. He's forcefully trying to push himself into my dry palace.

"You are hurting me Nkululeko stop." I said slapping his arm.

"You don't feel me anymore huh?" he removed his dick and used his hand to slap me down there.

I felt tears forming in my eyes. He got under the covers and forced my thighs apart again, and started licking me. He kept stimulating me and I felt my coochie starting to release the juices. I was nowhere close to being aroused though.

When he felt I was wet enough, he came back up, and attacked me with his lips. Trying to push him off was futile, so I bit him.

"Feisty girl, do you want it rough?" I instantly

regretted doing that.

I don't know which world he lives in that he thinks biting his lips is being feisty. I'm trying to tell him to stop. He doesn't wait for me to answer, he gets in between my thighs, and pushes himself into me without a second warning.

I cry out in agony, feeling intense pain shoot through my whole body.

"Please...stop please." I scream, digging my nails in his back, trying to get him to stop.

He doesn't. he just groans in my ear like a hungry bull as he goes in and out faster and faster.

The harder I hit his back, and scratch him while crying, is the the harder he bites my neck and fucks harder.

He doesn't even take a mere five minutes before he fills me up with his fucking sperm! I

want to die right there and then. Nkululeko is a useless man.

When he flops next to me, trying to catch his breath, I rush to the toilet and pee out all his sperm. As I sit on the toilet seat, I look at myself in the mirror. I have red marks all over my neck, my breasts too. Those are going to take a long time to fade.

Amile Gumede

“She said she wanted to go.”

He’s surprised that I’m here, and not downstairs with Nambitha. I found him lying on his back, shirtless, staring at the ceiling like he has the whole worlds problems on his shoulders

“Aww, I was so ready to sleep alone tonight.” he said sitting up, grinning at me like a Cheshire

cat.

“Baba, this is serious. I’m worried about my friend. She was crying.” he then stood up and came to help me unzip my dress. He could see I was struggling.

“Why was she crying?” he asked.

“I don’t know. I think he is abusing her.” I just let it rip.

He looks stunned.

“Those are big allegations you are making mkami.” I sighed.

He didn’t see what I saw.

“I know. But Nambitha has changed, she looks like she is unhappy, she doesn’t even appreciate life anymore.”

“Maybe it’s being away from home. It’s not an easy adjustment.” yeah, he’s right.

I also had a tough time adapting here. Her

situation is worse, she can't go back home even if she wanted to.

"Maybe you are right." I said taking off the dress.

"If any signs of abuse persist, then we can look more into it, but we don't want to be caught up in people's business." right.

I'm still going to talk to Shlobo about what Nambitha asked me. I owe her that much.

He took the dress from me and threw it in the basket.

"You looked absolutely breath-taking tonight." he's just fooling me. I didn't even have my hair done.

"Thank you baba." it's my first time being half naked in front of him like this.

When we did it two nights ago, he wasn't exactly looking at my body, like he is now.

"You like?" I asked placing my hands on his

chest.

He chuckled and looked at me.

“Take it, it’s all yours.” I said running my hands on his arms.

He smiled and placed his hands on my bums. He spanked my butt cheek and lowered his head to kiss my neck.

“You should get tipsy like this all the time.” oh my, I’m caught.

Why, because I don’t have control over my mouth, and I’m suddenly aroused by his soft kisses on my neck. I’m praying he doesn’t let me down again.

He unhooks my bra with only his one hand and I can’t help but ask myself if he wasn’t a sex freak in his past life. First he went down on me, now he can unhook bras effortlessly with one hand?

He freed my boobies, and he started fondling them, while he effortlessly lifted me off the ground. You could look at him and underestimate his strength. He may be thin and tall, but he's quite strong.

I wrapped my legs around his waist and brought his face up to look at me. I wanted to kiss him but:

"This beard really has to go." he grinned and captured my lips in a soft kiss.

I'm hypnotized. His minty fresh breath is hypnotizing. I've fallen in love with his natural scent, the natural smell of herbs seems to be stuck onto his skin, and I love it. I love him.

The kiss is working. I can feel him growing under me, that is a good thing, we don't want a repeat of last time now do we.

There is a heat radiating from our bodies this time. A heat that that wasn't there the last time.

The kiss is getting breathier and his hands are caressing my skin. I don't understand why there are still pieces of clothing in between us, I want him inside of me as in yesterday.

He sits on the edge of the bed and I straddle him.

"You didn't tell me how old you are turning?" he asked twirling my nipple in his hand.

"A lady doesn't reveal her age." I said breathlessly.

"Ngeke uyithole ke lento oyifunayo." he breathed, caressing my soft skin.

I love the feel of his hands on my skin, no matter how rough they are. Is he asking because he's trying to torture me, or is he asking because he really wants to know?

"Why do you want to know so badly?" I tilted my neck to give him more access to my neck.

I normally hate neck kisses, but his are magical.

“I want to know how long I’ll serve time in jail.” I giggled and ran my hands on his back.

“You don’t have to worry yourself. I’m legal.” it feels good to say that with my chest! I’m legal!

I’m no longer a minor!

“So I can bend you over?” dirty talk? I like!

“Break my back if you have to.” he did that thing of his that I like, licking my lips.

It drives me crazy, it drove me crazy the last time. He must never not do it.

He lifted me up and used his hands to slide my underwear down to my knees. He then pushed me down on my stomach and lifted my bum to the air, spanking it and grabbing my waist. I can never and will never get used to this side of him.

He pulled me to the edge, and I laid my face on the bed, awaiting to feel him inside me. I felt

him enter me slowly, and his moans filled the whole room as my wet core welcomed him.

He kept planting soft kisses on my sweaty back as his strokes went slower and slower. He was hitting every corner, and my body was taking it all in.

It kept slipping out, that was how wet and slippery it was inside of me. And every time it would, he would groan and slap my butt cheek. He knows what he is doing, and when he slips it in again, it's like I;m feeling him for the very first time.

I can feel my feet starting to tingle and the sensation in my legs can't seem to keep my knees bent anymore. That is that heavenly feeling I was chasing. It's here, he just needs to go a little longer.

"Don't stop Mageba." I begged.

He found my hand that was gripping onto the

sheets, and grabbed it. We are doing this together.

He went deeper and hit one spot that has never ever been touched before, so much that, I crashed onto my stomach and let the feeling consume me.

He watched me with satisfaction trying to recover from the mind blowing peak. He pulled out, he hasn't had his, he still wants more.

He turns me to face him and he lifts my legs, slowly inserting himself again. My legs are still shaking as he moves faster and faster, trying to chase his climax.

I dug my nails into his bum and that seemed to turn him on because he groaned and his body tensed up. He started teasing my skittles, and begged him to cum with him.

My whole body shuddered as I felt him fill me up with his babies. . now this is exactly what I

needed!

He collapsed on top of me, huffing and puffing. Our sweaty bodies coming together, heat radiating from the both of us.

He kissed my face multiple times before he stroked my hair and whispered:

“Ngiyakuthanda.” whatever he is feeling, I feel it too.

Chapter Eighty-Three

Amile Gumede

I’m not in the mood today. I’m grumpy, and I’m starting to feel like I’m always grumpy now. I don’t like being a prune all the time, I’m going to age quicker, and maybe I’ll affect my baby. I don’t want to have a grumpy baby.

I’m sitting alone in the dining room stuffing my

face. That's the only place of comfort and happiness I have, food! Food makes me the happiest woman, that is why kaMhlaba always comes home to a smiling wife. I give an even wider smile when he comes back with more food!

I called Khaya a few minutes ago, they were in a meeting at council so he couldn't talk. I know I hired him as my husband's PA, but he must not spend all his time with him, he must break his schedule into two, and make time for me too, because I don't want to miss out on any of his hot gossip.

I love Khaya, I wouldn't trade him out for anything! Baba loves him too, and that is very seldom that he likes anyone that isn't me.

He's the village gay boy that is judged for speaking model C English, and of course being gay. What I love about him is he is the boy version of what I am. He took over my job of

being my husband's PA after we found out that I'm expecting our very first baby!

He really said he doesn't want me working with his first child in my stomach. He has this crazy fear that because he's old, that our baby might be a high risk child. I don't think he realizes that I'm still a teenager, my ovaries are fresh.

Who am I kidding? I was shit scared when I first found out. It doesn't help that the way that we found out was very unconventional and scary. Just when I was least expecting it, this little seed of joy, planted itself in my stomach. I still had fear about my miscarriage, especially when I found out, it was at the same period I was when I lost Mfihlakalo.

Pregnancy was the last thing we were expecting to find, I was the most normal, most healthiest woman on the planet, I had no morning sickness, no moods, and no cravings. But when the doctor confirmed the pregnancy at two

months, we knew we had conceived on the night of my birthday.

We were all the way in freaking Swaziland when this happened. We were called to Vukani's school because he had a disciplinary hearing. He was in the midst of facing expulsion for selling drugs on school grounds. I've never seen my husband that angry before in my life. Ever!

They had called bhut' Thula and Lerato, as they are their legal guardians, but Bhuti was so fed up with his behaviour that he was just ready to let him be expelled and come spend his time on the farm, working the land like the delinquent he wanted to be. Although baba was angry, he still wanted what's best for his brother's son, so he told me to pack my bags, and we were off to Swaziland to sit through that hearing, and maybe try fight for him to finish his June exams before they kick him out.

He was there with us in that room while we

listened to his principal listing all the things he had done throughout the course of last year, and this year. All those things really made my skin crawl, but I understood where it was coming from, he was seeking attention, the attention he wasn't getting at home.

My agenda had changed as soon as I stepped into that office though, the principals hostility towards me had me wanting to pull that boy out of the school whether they wanted to consider having him stay or not.

Do you know what she said to me? She said:

"Will you be sitting in with us for the meeting miss?" I darted my eyes to baba, who had maintained a straight face. I had then figured him out, and I knew that he doesn't speak when he is uncomfortable.

"It's Mrs Zulu, and yes, I will be sitting through the meeting, as Vukani's mother." I corrected

her with the same amount of hostility.

She didn't bother apologizing. That's when I made up my mind. When she had finished laying out her complaints, and the rest of the panel was done bashing the boy, I thanked them and said we would be pulling him out the school.

Did she not look at my husband and ask him if we are sure about the decision, as if my word wasn't his word too. He simply replied by saying: "My wife didn't stutter."

It turned out very dramatic from there. As we were walking to the parking lot, Vukani was fuming mad. He was mad at me, and I know he wanted to curse me out, but he wouldn't do that in front of baba.

Just when we were approaching the car, I was hit by a dizzy spell, and I dropped to my knees right there, trying to find balance. Guess who

was the first person to catch me, and ask me if I was okay? Vukani!

I fainted after that, and I don't remember what happened until we got to the hospital and they told me I was two months pregnant. It was literally a repeat of Cape Town.

So as soon as we got home, we put out posts for people to apply for the position as his PA. He wasn't sitting in on the interviews, but he miraculously happened to sit in on the day Khaya came in for his. I had already seen a few good candidates, but as soon as that boy left that office, he said I must cancel everything and give him the job. I was stunned, but I was glad I didn't have to sit in on anymore boring interviews. The job had been done.

"I came as fast as I could mommy." he said dumping a plastic of fruits in front of me.

"You are a star." I said opening it, and taking out

an orange for me to snack on.

“You are definitely going to get me fired if I continue to do this.” he said taking a seat next to me.

“Langaletu cannot live without you, so can I.” he giggled.

“So how are we feeling today?” see, this is why we love Khaya.

“We are grumpy.” I said shoving a piece of orange into my mouth.

One thing I’m not afraid to do is be vocal about my emotions. This pregnancy has changed me. A unhappy Amile will say she’s unhappy. A happy Amile will tell the whole world she’s happy, and expect the whole world to feel exactly the same. That, and the fact that I can’t go a second without food.

“Why are we grumpy?” I sighed.

Why am I grumpy? I don't know.

"Is it baby?" I shook my head, trying to finish chewing the massive piece I just threw into my mouth.

"Maybe I'm bored. Maybe I'm tired of sitting in the house all the time, doing the same thing over and over again. And I want an orgasm for crying out loud!"

"Oh wow, okay, that's a lot." I sighed and buried my head in my sticky hands.

"Have you told Bayede how you feel?" I shook my head.

I lifted my head and forced a smile.

"Forget I said anything." that is the embarrassment kicking in.

Yes baba and I are not having sex, but the whole world doesn't need to know that. He knows better than to try and fight me, so we are

moving swiftly along.

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Khaya stayed until his knock off time, and one of the drivers took him straight home. He didn't go back to council, even when kaMhlaba needed him back, I used my tears, and he stayed with me instead. I need friends, I can't keep hogging Khaya to myself.

Nambitha left. I got her an interview with Shlobo's grandson, the CEO of the company and she basically got that job herself. She's still working as an unpaid intern, because although the company is full, they couldn't let go of her talent, so she's working there in return for training. The money from her training is the reason she's unpaid.

She took it anyway. It was way better than just

sitting at home, waiting for Jama to control her all the time. She left without his knowledge, and after almost two months of working, she came back finally told him where she was.

I don't know if they fixed things or not, but he also left. He's working in some accounting firm as the head of nton nton. All I know is, Jama is spending big monies thereby. The abuse, it was never confirmed, I don't know, and at this point, I don't even want to know. They do say ezababili azingenwa for a reason.

I miss her. We talk on the phone almost everyday, but it's really not the same hey, I want her close to me again, maybe I won't be this bored. But I'm happy for her. She's going to start getting paid soon, once her training is done, and she will get a permanent position. This is what we prayed for.

"Vukani, hey. Come sit with me." my heart always smiles when I see him.

I'd like to blame it on this pregnancy. This baby is madly in love with him. That is why he is kicking me like a maniac.

I've resorted to calling this baby 'him' because that's what baba calls him. They all just assume that I'm carrying a boy, so I'll stick to that.

Vukani tolerates me. He puts on a smile just so I won't be disappointed, but it's not hard to see that he really doesn't like me. But I won't stop trying to win him over. I'll shower him with all the love I can.

"Come tell me about your day. Your brother is kicking for you."

KaMhlaba had him go work in the fields, because he refused to go back to school this year after he was expelled. So the deal was, he's going to work on the farm everyday, and when he's made enough money for himself, he can do whatever he wants to do. We didn't

remove school from the table. He can still go back if he wants, and we will pay his tuition in full when he decides to, but he needs to learn a valuable lesson on life.

He took off his boots and left them by the door. He looks exhausted. He settled next to me and placed his hand on my belly, feeling the little flutters caused by my little baby.

I balled my eyes out the first time I felt his kicks. They were the most beautiful thing I had ever experienced, but he never kicks for me. He always kicks for his brothers and his father. Quite selfish if you ask me, I'm literally housing him in my body, he can't do that to me.

"He's saying hello big brother." I said, placing my hand on the side to also feel the movements. It still freaks me out sometimes.

I saw a little smile forming on his face. You could tell he was fascinated.

“How was your day today?” I asked him while he was still engrossed on feeling the moving baby.

“It was good, nothing special?” he always comes back tired, today is no different.

The baby is tired of kicking now, his fascination had died down, now he’s sitting there being awkward. I want him to talk, but I obviously can’t force him to talk if he doesn’t want to.

“I’ve been looking for mom.” he says leaning on the couch, placing his head on his forehead as if he’s deeply frustrated.

This is new news to me.

“And what did you find?” you can’t miss the hurt in his eyes.

“She’s back at home, but she’s mentally unstable, they say she talks to herself, and chases chickens around the yard the whole day, calling them my father.” I guess that is my fault.

Mhlabawesizwe listens, at least he's doing something right. He failed his other son Mandlenkosi, he broke up with Mathapelo, but that's a story for another day. My attention is on this boy.

"We have to help her. Maybe she can come back here and..." I shook my head.

"That can't happen." I stopped him from even continuing. Nontuthuzelo is not coming back here.

"Why!? you already stole my father from her, now you don't want to help her. You ruined my life, I don't have parents because of you!" he shouted, and stood up, towering over me.

"I'm here, Langaletu is also here. Your mother did a lot of damage to this family, she ruined not only the family bonds, but she also ruined umsamo, the ancestors turned their backs on us because of her. Your father wouldn't be six

feet under the ground if it wasn't for her selfishness.”

“You need to stop forcing this relationship, you need to accept that I hate you, I don't like you for tearing my family apart, and I will never forgive you. Stop being delusional, you aren't my mother, you never will be. We are the same fucking age for crying out loud!”

My feelings are hurt.

“Boy, you will not speak to my wife like that!” he roared.

He was so startled that he turned to push himself in the corner next to the couch he was in. I'm sobbing now, I can't even control my tears. I can tell from his voice that he's angry.

“What is your problem boy!” he was so close to giving him a slap, but I stopped him.

“Don't you dare hit him.” I said standing up, wiping the tears that wouldn't stop falling on my

face.

He stopped and came to give me an embrace. Vukani used that opportunity to leave the room. Maybe I should stop trying, and maybe I am delusional for thinking I could mother someone the same age as me.

“Stop protecting him.” he said rubbing my back.

“Hitting him won’t open his ears baba. It’s fine, I’ll stop forcing things with him.” he just shook his head and sighed.

What kind of parents are we going to be? Will my child also not take me notice like Vukani does?

Nambitha Makhathini

I love my job! I prefer being here, doing what I love, for free, over sitting in the house, being

Nkululeko's trophy.

I love it for a number of reasons: I'm building my profile as an interior designer by just being here, I'm gaining experience and knowledge I could never get from going to a school, I'm fine tuning my talent for putting together colours and patterns, and most importantly, I'm gaining independence.

I'm so far from Nkululeko that I can even smell him if I wanted to. I'm so happy here.

The company offers one bedroom apartments for the interns, and I was lucky to find that one of the interns were not stay-ins, and I got the slot.

In fact, I should be grateful to Amile and Miss Mfusi for getting me that interview with thee Mvelwenhle Mfusi. I was shaking in my boots during that week leading up to the interview. I was even sure they wouldn't take me, but my

work spoke for itself, and they offered me the best they could, and that was an unpaid slot.

I took it, I didn't hesitate. I'm living off some money Amile gave me when I left. It was quite a lot, but she said I must take it as a start up, and it has been enough to sustain me, buying food for the past two months, and basic necessities. I can't wait for the six month probation to end, so I can finally start getting paid.

I ran away from Nkululeko, it was no where close to being easy. It was Amile's and I's secret. I knew she was the one person he wouldn't hurt, even if his head was close to bursting. When I came back after that week, it thought I he would take his last breath right there on that chair. I told him I didn't want him anymore, and I broke up with him, while packing up all my clothes.

I had the upper hand because Amile was there, so was Mgabadeli, he couldn't hit me, or lash

out. So he sat on his couch, and watched me packing my things as if he was dead on that couch. I wasn't expecting that reaction from him, and we have not spoken since that day. I only know he's not working at the palace anymore because Amile told me.

Sometimes I miss him, I miss the man that I fell in love with, but I can't be wishing to go back to a situation like that one, a situation where I benefited nothing from. I'm happy here, I'm creating my own happiness, and I'll slowly find my feet.

I don't have friends. None of the other interns like me, since they don't know that I'm unpaid, they think I might have slept my way to the top. I don't know why they are complaining, it's not like I'm stepping on their toes in any way, they got here before me, the important people know them. I was only good enough for running coffee errands the first week of my arrival

before I was actually allowed to start drawing.

So I always walk alone after work, while they all walk in a squad. It doesn't bother me, I'm not here for friendships here anyways, I'm here to secure my bag.

"Hey wait up!" I walk faster.

I know who it is, I don't want to talk to him.

"Ntombi emhlophe." he's also yellow bone, but his Zulu is mixed with tsotsi taal.

I don't associate myself with such. Other than knowing that he is the community penis.

"Why are you walking so fast?" he finally caught up to me, and now he's walking with me in the same pace.

If I continue walking this fast, I'll get to my place quicker than I want to, and I'm still enjoying the fresh air. Uvongo is a beautiful place.

"I want to go home." I said dismissing him.

The last thing I need is to be entertaining men. I ran away from one back home.

“Can I walk you home then?” he said.

“Aren’t you already?” he cracked me a smile.

Dammit man!

“So what’s your name beautiful?”

“Nambitha.” I know his, I’m not going to ask.

“It’s lovely to meet you Nambitha. I’m Muzi, I work there.” he said pointing at Mthiyane Construction building.

“I know, I’ve seen you.” I said picking up the pace again, I’m starting to fall into his trap.

“You work there too?” I’m not surprised.

He’s wearing that regret face, and he’s scanning me. I think he’s trying to remember if he’s slept with me before or not. I’ve heard the stories of Muzi too many times around the office to know not to set foot next to him.

Not unless I want my heart broken and an incurable STD.

“No, you have never slept with me.” I said, putting him out of his misery.

He chuckled, embarrassment blanketing him.

“My reputation is that bad.”

“Yes, it’s that bad.” he rubbed his head.

He smells good. I can smell him from a distance.

“Maybe I can change for you.” I shook my head.

“Don’t go there. I’m not looking for a relationship.” he has no self-respect.

Let alone does he have self-control. How is he standing here trying to court me when he met me a few seconds ago.

“So am I.” he said stopping in front of me.

I had not gotten a chance to see his face up

close. He's a beautiful man. When I say beautiful, I mean really beautiful. He even has pink lips. The typical light skinned player. I can see right through him.

"I'm also not looking for a hook-up." I said crossing my hands across my chest.

"A friendship then?" he gave me a begging face. Do men not understand the concept of no.

"I'm not looking for anything Mr..." I don't know his surname.

"Mr Zungu. Let me carry your bag." he gave me a smile.

I know better than to trust a man with a beautiful smile. Oh hell, why not. I'm tired anyway. He probably won't remember me tomorrow.

"So where are you from?"

"Zululand." he looked at me and smiled.

“A girl from the rurals huh?” why is he fascinated by that.

“I’m actually from Durban. My fia...” I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

He’s not my fiance. He’s not my anything. Remove Nkululeko from your mouth, from your mind.

“My best friend is the queen.” I don’t this he realized.

“That’s so cool, the short girl with the short hair.” I laughed.

Amile is not short.

“Yes, that’s Ndlunkulu to you.” he didn’t seem to care much.

That’s what rich people are like.

We are approaching my flat. I want to tell him he can go back to wherever he was coming from.

“Thank you for walking me.”

“Where do you stay?”

“I can’t disclose that information to you.” I said looking at him.

He scanned the building we were next to.

“The intern flats?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Oh come on, I built these with my own two hands. Come, which number are you situated.”
the lies men tell.

I’m not going to bother fighting him, I let him walk up to my place with me.

“So what must I do to get you to agree to a friendship with me?” he asked as I took out the key to unlock.

“Nothing, I told you, I’m not looking a friendship.” I was trying to turn the lock on the door, but it seemed like it was open.

Oh my goodness, I hope nothing is lost. This man is leaning against the wall looking at me.

“I’ll try again tomorrow.”

“My answer will still be the same.” I said opening the door, turning my back to the door to grab my bag.

I almost fainted when I turned back to meet Nkululeko’s gaze on me, my whole flat is filled with smoke.

“Is there someone in there?” Muzi is peaking his head in, I’m guessing he can see my frozen body.

He got up from the small couch he was sitting on, and came to the door.

“Usungavaya.” he said, snatching the bag from Muzi violently.

Before he could protest, he pushed me inside, and shut the door on his face.

If I don't die today, I never will!

Chapter Eighty-Four

Nambitha Makhathini

It's the monster. Not Nkululeko, but Jama. Right here, in the flesh, giving me evil eyes, and I know that he's going to kill me.

He's not going to pull me by the hair, and give me a mere warning. He's not going to grab my wrist and twist my arm while giving me that stern face that tells me in an instant that I have fucked up. He's going to kill me. Today, right here, right now. He's going to end my life.

He locked the door, and left Muzi banging on the door, while he smashed my bag on the other side of the tiny room. My hands are shaking, so is every single part of my body. Tears are just

pouring out my eyes, and my heart is sitting in my throat, waiting for me to let it out.

I suddenly feel the need to protect myself, and I start manouvering around the room, hoping I could get close enough to anything that could help me fight him off. Anything! A knife to plunge into his heart. A way to get to the door. Literally ANYTHING!

“How did you find me?” he chuckled and folded his arms around his chest, making me feel like a fool for even trying to run away from him.

“You thought you were invincible when your friend was there? What’s it like now?”

His eyes flared with anger. I plopped down on the bed, and let down the lump in my throat.

“I...you wouldn’t let me work...I just...I needed something for myself.” I said gulping down the piles of spit in my mouth.

“You could have just asked me. Did you ever

ask me Nambitha?" his voice is low, but the anger? Oh it's still there.

"I was scared." he's getting to me. Now I'm here feeling bad for not putting him first.

As he walked closer to the one seat couch, he reached for his waist, and pulled out that black metal of sin, the one responsible for taking the lives of many. He carelessly threw it on the little wooden table I have in front of the couch. I sat still, paralyzed with fear. I couldn't tear my eyes away from it.

"What are you going to do with that?" I asked, praying that my voice doesn't show how scared I am. My body is already doing enough of that.

"Sizoxoxisana angithi. I just want my wife back home." my heart sank to the pit of my stomach.

One thing I did not notice this whole time is he has fresh incisions on his face. The last time he had those, he beat me to the pulp. Now he has

his gun at a close range. If I make any mistake, or say anything that may upset him, I'm as good as dead.

Muzi gave up a long time ago at the door. It's silent, only the heavy breathing between him and I is audible. This room is ridiculously tiny, every little sound can be heard from every corner of the house. It's literally better than anything though. It's certainly better than living with Nkululeko.

"You didn't want me to marry you, is this why? You wanted to run away and see other men?" tears started streaming down my face at the sound of his voice.

I'm scared of him. I've never felt the way I do right now. Even when he would attempt to snap my wrist, and tear my arm from my shoulder, I never would waver from staring at him, and show him how much I wasn't afraid of him. It never used to work, but it made me better,

knowing that I tried, and he saw just how much he didn't affect me. That is all different now. I don't know this feeling, I can't even describe it. I just know that I'm scared. I'm scared for my life, and I can't even think of a way to begin to save myself from this.

"I wanted to work Nkululeko." he leaned in and picked up his gun.

My heart started racing, and I moved back.

"Manje awushongo ngani ntombazane yakwa Makhathini?" he said slipping it back onto his waist.

I didn't want to let go of the breath I was holding just as yet. He might just pull it out again and shoot me. No one will ever know. He might throw me in the boot of his expensive BMW and go bury me in a forest somewhere. My family will never know, they don't care about me anyway.

“We are going to do this the easy way then, yeah?” he said cracking a thin smile.

It’s definitely not a sincere smile. He’s being conniving.

“Pack everything that belongs to you, and we are going home.” I shook my head at his response.

I’m not going anywhere with him. I’ve fought too hard for this freedom for him to come here and try snatch it from me.

“We said we are doing this the easy way nana. The easy way is for you to pack all your belongings, and willingly follow me back to Durban, where you belong; by me, your husband.” he stood up and kicked over the wooden table.

“I’m not going to have my wife living in a crap hole like this one.” if this is not psychopathic behaviour, then I don’t know what is.

“I’m not leaving.” I chocked out the words.

“You want me to drag you out of here? Trust me I’m capable of doing it.” I’m now against the wall, at the head of the bed.

I’ve slowly been shifting, so much that I ended up here.

“I’m giving you a choice here.” he said taking out the gun again.

I have no where to go.

“Nkululeko please don’t do this to me.” I pleaded as he came closer to the edge of the bed.

“I said choose!” he raised his voice.

I whimpered as I felt the cold wall against my neck.

“I want to stay here...an...” he pulled my leg, and dragged me across the bed to where he wanted me.

I screamed as loud as I could before he covered my mouth with his hand. He proceeded to grab my neck, and lifted me up to look at him in the eyes, leaving me with little to no oxygen to breathe.

“I said we are doing this the easy way, you don’t want to, we will do it the hard way.” I landed on the floor with a loud thud after he let go of my neck.

I could still feel his hand on my skin as I lay on the tiles gasping for some air in my lungs.

He wasn’t next to me, I could hear him breaking things, I just didn’t have enough strength to lift myself off the ground to see what he was doing.

“Help.” I shouted, but it was futile, my voice was barely audible.

“Don’t make me come there and beat you Nambitha. Don’t make me the man I don’t want to be.” I looked up at him, tears blinding my

vision.

I gathered enough strength, and I crawled across to where he was. He didn't see me, so I grabbed onto his leg, and sunk my teeth into his trousers, through to his skin.

He groaned in agony as he tried to kick me off.

"Still feisty?" he asked, gripping onto my hair, pulling me off.

I should have shaved it off when I had the chance too. I screamed again, this time my voice was much louder, but my throat hurt like hell.

"Mhlali, is everything okay?" there's someone banging on the door.

Our rooms are built close together, and sound travels through the walls very quickly. They might as well be non-existent. I've never appreciated them again.

“Help!” I shouted, taking the opportunity.

he covered my mouth again, and he tried throwing me across the room, but I gripped onto his belt, and his gun fell to the ground.

He immediately let me go and tried running for the gun, but I had my legs in between his, and tripped him. He fell flat on his face before he looked at me.

“You bitch!” I was now holding the gun, both my hands shaking uncontrollably as terror shot through my body.

“I told you I don’t want to go.”

“So what? You are going to shoot me? I’d like to see you try.” he mocked, throwing in a cold chuckle.

He’s taking advantage of the fact that I’m shaking. I’m scared yes, but I can’t give in now.

He slowly made his way up to his feet.

“I’m going to shoot you! Move away from me.” I said lifting the gun up to his forehead.

He lifted his hands and chuckled.

Before I could blink, he knocked the gun out of my hands, grabbed my arm and twisted it so hard, I felt some muscles popping. What was I thinking?

“I’m not leaving this place without you Nambitha. It’s your choice. Either you leave willingly, or I kill you, then I kill myself. Because I’m not living life without you.” he said as he placed the cold metal on my neck.

I flinched and slowly went on my knees.

“Please don’t do that Nkululeko. I beg you, please don’t hurt me.”

“This is simple, pack your fucking belongings, and come with me. I’ll get you a better job in Durban, a paying job. Not this.” how the hell does he know that kind of information?

Before I could continue begging for my life, I heard the wooden door breaking down, and a male voice shouted: “Drop the gun and step away from the woman!”

My cries suddenly grew louder and louder. I couldn't see them, my back was faced towards them, but Nkululeko didn't seem fazed, he still had the gun pressed up against my skin. It was starting to hurt.

“Do you know who I am?” he asked, as he dragged me, and had me facing the man.

It was the security guard at the gate. I'm definitely not making it out of here alive. I have absolutely no trust in him.

“I don't have to. Let her go, the police are on their way.” he has him at gunpoint, he has me on gunpoint.

If he dare shoot him, he will end me.

“Tell him that you will co-operate with my

instruction and be a good girl.” he said whispering against my ear, his breath hitting my neck.

“Jonas, he’s not going to hurt me.” I said, with tear running down my cheeks.

“Ma’am...”

“Jonas! Get rid of the gun!” I shouted, feeling a wave of frustration.

He lowered his gun, and Nkululeko removed his from my neck.

“Go pack! I’m giving you two minutes!” I’m not going to get everything in two minutes.

But this is not the time to be disputing Nkululeko’s word, I’ll do as he says.

As I stood up, I could see the other interns gathering outside the door, looking in like they were watching a film. I wanted to scream at them, but I had two minutes to gather my

belongings, and he had already scattered some of my clothes all over the floor.

I shoved them into black bags. I had no time to pack my suitcase.

“Hurry up nana!” he warned.

He came and grabbed the first black plastic and told me to leave the other things. I carried the other one and he pushed me towards the door where Jonas was standing like a boulder, watching everything. Useless people these are.

“Move out of the way, idiot!” he spat.

Jonas moved. That is Nkululeko for you.

Even the girls standing outside the door quickly moved out the way, and some even made it to running back to their rooms.

I could see his car parked in the parking lot as we made our way down the corridor. I can't understand how I missed it when I walked in the

first time. In fact, how did he even get in?
boJonas are very useless.

He's whistling behind me like he's the invincible.
He's succeeded in ruining my life, and now he's
finding joy in my tears. I hate him so much. I
hate him with my chest.

As we made our way to the parking lot, we were
stopped by guns and police men standing
around the exit way. The guns were pointing at
us, well at him, and he couldn't really pull out his
gun then.

My heart leaped when I saw Muzi's face, and I
didn't hesitate to drop the plastic, and run to
him.

"Nambitha!" he shouted, the anger dressing his
voice.

He embraced me and I cried in his arms. He
rubbed my back and I tightly shut my eyes.

"Drop your gun and put your hands in the air.

You have the right to remain silent, you are under arrest for trespassing on private property, and assault, and attempted kidnapping.” I heard one of the police said to him.

I had my eyes closed, I couldn't bear to look in that direction.

I felt my soul jumping out of my skin when I heard a gunshot, in fact, several, and a scream following it.

That was when Muzi carried me out of that parking lot as I screamed Nkululeko's name.

“Shhh, it's over!” I started feeling dizzy.

“I didn't say kill him!” he threw me in the backseat of a car.

I've never cried like this in my whole life.

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My body feels heavy. I don't know where I am, but the bed is too comfortable to be mine.

My body jerks up when my mind takes me back to those gunshots, and I let out a shrill scream when I register what might have happened.

Muzi rushes into the room and quickly embraces me when he finds me.

"Shh, it's okay. You are safe. He's not here." he hushed me, but I don't think I'm going to get over this. NEVER!

"Your friend and her husband were here earlier, but you were sleeping, I didn't want to disturb you."

"Tell her to come back." I begged.

She's the only person I have now. I have no one but her. I need to tell her everything, EVERYTHING! I can't leave out any little detail.

He walked out the room to make the phone call,

and when he came back, he came back with tea.

“My sister always said chamomile is good for calming nerves.” I don’t like tea, but I’ll drink it anyway.

“Thank you.” I mumbled.

He just sat there staring at me. I know he has a burning question. You can tell just by the way he’s staring at me. But I’m not in the mood to be answering his questions.

“Your friend said she’s coming.” I nodded.

My heart is racing. I just won’t stop going back to that moment. I didn’t see anything because I had my eyes closed, but I heard it. I heard his screams, those gunshots.

“Hey, hey. Calm down.” he held my hand that was suddenly shaking.

He grabbed the tea and placed it on the bedside table and held both my hands.

“Stop thinking about it. He’s never going to hurt you again.” he said looking me in the eyes.

“Is he dead?” I choked down the question.

“I don’t know. I’m still waiting for an update.” I nodded, trying to stop more tears from flooding my face.

There was a hoot at the gate and he got up.

“I think that’s your friend.” I nodded and watched him walk out the room.

I got on my feet as soon as she walked into the room and engulfed her in a tight hug, careful not to squish her bump.

I didn’t know she was pregnant!?! but that’s a story for another day I guess.

“Chomie I’m so sorry!” she sobbed with me.

She cupped my face and looked at me, her eyes blood red, tears running down her face.

“Did he hurt you?” she asked.

I shook my head no. He didn't hurt me physically, but he scarred me emotionally. Forever.

"I should have known that there was something off about him." she said, shaking her head.

"No, it's not your fault friend."

"We almost lost you, how was I going to live with myself, knowing I was the one that introduced you to him?" she hugged me again.

"I'm disappointed in him."

I know how much she loved her Jama, and how much she considered him a big brother. But we met two different people. He met the loving Jama, I got the abusive one. I got Nkululeko.

"I'm going to make sure that he never steps foot in Zululand ever again." that was the King's voice.

He was standing behind us, he looked like he

was fuming mad.

“Bayede.” I bowed.

“I’m sorry that happened to you.” he said.

I nodded.

Amile embraced me and I felt some sort of peace. Those words have assured me that I may have a shot of normalcy now. I don’t want Nkululeko to die, what about his children, they need their father. I just don’t want him next to me ever again.

“He raped me Amile.” I blurted out.

“He’s going to pay for everything, I promise you Namnam.”

I sobbed in her arms like the little baby that I am.

Chapter Eighty-Five

Amile Gumede

KaMhlaba refused to tell me what happened with Jama. In fact, he hasn't breathed a word about it to anyone. We are all in the dark.

His baby mama, the one that I met all those months ago, she's been here almost four times now. She's pregnant again, almost double the size that I am, and she's been causing scenes, looking for her man, and wanting to beat up Nambitha in the process.

Trust me when I say it's been hectic.

Nambitha is attending therapy, she's in a healing facility in Ramsgate, courtesy of the company she works for. I can't really go and see her because I'm not allowed to be seen in public. Baba strictly said no to telling anyone about my pregnancy. All the staff had to sign an NDA, it's a big deal. That's why I don't go outside.

I have a doctors appointment today, I am officially seven months pregnant, and I can barely see or touch my toes.

I'm in the toilet getting ready, and before I can get in the bath, I need to shave my kitty kat. I haven't seen it in over four months, and I'm struggling. The last time I went to the doctor, I was embarrassed to let my gynaecologist see me in that state, I can't let it happen again.

If I don't finish now, we will run late. I don't need that, otherwise we will sit there for hours, and this man will sit there being irritable and blame me for taking my time. It's happened before, I don't want it to happen again.

I can hear his footsteps walking towards the bathroom.

"Mkami, are you done yet?" I know he's asking because I've been in here for almost an hour.

"No, not yet."

“Can I come in?”

“Yes, you can come in.” I stood upright and waited for him to walk in.

He looks so smart. I jumped at the opportunity to help him change his wardrobe. His sense of dress wasn't very appealing, I was just waiting for the right time, when he would ask me to help him dress himself.

“What's taking so long?” I'm fully naked, staring at him.

Maybe I'm not as attractive as I was before. I have stretch marks on the sides of my belly, and my breasts are twice the size they usually are. Obviously he wouldn't be attracted to me.

“I'm trying to shave but I can't reach.”

“Must I help you?” he's putting me on the spot.

I nodded, acting coy.

He put his hand out and I handed him the

shaving blade. He unbuttoned the cuffs of his shirt, folded the sleeves and came to kneel in front of my stomach.

This is weird, he's touching me here, a place where he hasn't touched me in a long time. I haven't been touched in a long time, so much so that my body is reacting.

I'm trying to hold my breath as I feel his separating my folds. What is he trying to do? Is he trying to turn me on.

"Are you still okay there?" he asks looking at me.

I bobbed my head up and down. He chuckled and continued on his merry mission.

I can feel my body secreting fluids as he continues to brush his hand over my skittles. And I guess baby is enjoying this as much as I am because he starts kicking.

"Hello boy boy." he says and kisses my stomach.

My heart melts.

“Dad is here, I can’t wait to meet you.” not the right moment to be doing this man.

Tears are welling up in my eyes. He knows I’m over emotional, he can’t be so sappy with his feelings, he’s going to make me cry.

“I’m done.” he said getting up.

I can’t believe I just had the whole kneeling for me. If people knew how much this man does for me, they’d really think I’m bewitching him.

“Thank you baba.”

He placed his hands on my stomach and our son started kicking.

“He can feel you, he never kicks for me.” I said looking at him.

“Amagazi ayatshelana mkami.” I rolled my eyes.

“I’m also his blood.” he laughed and kissed my pouted lips.

“Are you always this wet?” my throat dried up, and I felt my face heating up.

“Yes, all the time.” he would know that if he touched me like he’s supposed to.

He cupped my face and kissed me so passionately. He had me gasping for breath, in fact, he had me getting wetter than what he saw.

I miss him, I miss being with him. I can’t help but feel like he’s been so distant. He’s here in the house majority of the time, we sit together, we talk, but I always can’t help but feel like his mind is far from here.

It’s not even linked to the fact that we aren’t having sex; connecting on a deeper level doesn’t always involve sex, it just so happens to be the easiest way to do it.

The first time he told me he loves me was when we made love, and that same night we made our son. That is proof of the connection we

have.

There surely is something on his mind, or something is eating up at him. I just haven't taken the moment to process it, now that he's here, kissing me, I feel it.

"Get ready Mkami, otherwise we'll be late." I was dumb to think that it would lead to something greater. We have somewhere to be.

I cast my eyes down, and I saw that he was turned on. Four months celibate is not a joke.

He gave me a final kiss on the cheek before he excused himself, and left me to take my shower.

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Mgabadelo, our trusted driver, is taking us to the doctor. Is it not insane that ever since I got my car, I have never driven it. Jama would drive me

around in it if I had wanted to go out somewhere, but I ever since I was banned from going out, unless I was going to the doctor's office, or with baba, I haven't used my car. It's very sad.

Vukani uses it for his driving lessons, the ones I still need to get. I make sure not to cross paths with him, even though we stay in the same house. I always make sure never to invade his space, especially after what happened the last time. I'm done trying to force my way into his life. He was right, he's not my child, so are his siblings. The only child I have is the one in my stomach, and the one in heaven. I can never forget about Mfihlakalo.

We've arrived at the doctors office, and we have to use the private entrance to prevent anyone seeing my pregnant ass! I can't lie, we've done a pretty good job at hiding this pregnancy, the press hasn't said anything about my sudden

disappearance.

We are right on time, so the doctor is waiting for us. I like my doctor, she's a sweet lady, and she's very gentle with me. She understands the delicacy of a pregnancy like mine. Being married doesn't change the fact that this is a teenage pregnancy, and I was impregnated by a man who has genetic disease, anything is possible. I have to be monitored closely at all times.

"My favourite parents, please take a seat." she's an old white lady.

My mom, God bless her soul, referred us to her. She was the one who delivered my baby sister, the cutest baby ever. Now it won't feel like she lost a daughter, she has another one. I was so happy for her.

"Mommy how are we feeling today?" she asked grabbing my file.

I looked at my husband, he was smiling.

“We are mellow today. We haven’t been mellow in a while.”

“And I can see you are smiling. And Dad, how are you?” baba laughed.

“I’m happy if my people are happy.”

“That’s good then, we can start. Let’s go see baby.”

I just remember how terrified the both of us were when we walked into this office for the first time. A lot of things were running around our minds, the fact that we didn’t know if his heart disease could be passed down to our son, to the fact that are we even ready to be parents.

We both really weren’t ready for what we found out that day. It was overwhelming, but there is nothing baba and I don’t talk through. We talked it out, and promised each other to walk this journey together. Just like all the journeys we’ve

taken together. And he's doing a stellar job, I just wish he could touch me. I need some loving!

He helped me sit on the little bed and sat comfortably on the seat next to it. That's where he always sits, and he never forgets to hold my hand.

"We got the results from the foetal echocardiography, and we picked up that baby's heart beat has an abnormal rhythm. It might not be arrhythmia, but to be one hundred percent sure, I've booked for a MRI scan tomorrow. Now, I'll just do an ultrasound to check for baby's movement, and maybe check for the gender." I looked at baba.

He looked scared. I know that he blames himself for all of this, but it's not his fault, just like how he was born with it, my baby might be born with it too. He can't do anything to prevent it from happening.

I laid down on the table and lifted my dress. She then applied the cold gel on my abdomen and started the ultrasound.

The first thing that sounded in the whole room was the heartbeat. A big satisfactory smile was plastered on Dr Matthews' face, and I knew that was good.

"You see, that is our little fighter." baba shifted closer to stare at the screen.

"That is a healthy heartbeat right there. I think they are just happy to see their parents."

The fear slowly subsided and tears welled up in my eyes as I continued to listen to the sweet sound of my baby's heartbeat. It's like music to my ears, something I could listen to for the rest of my life.

"Fully developed baby, look at the feet, and that's baby's head. We might need to put you under the knife is baby continues to grow like

this.” he is pretty big.

Even my stomach is big, anyone who doesn't know would think I'm on the 9th month, when I'm only on the 7th.

“And there is the gender, do you want to know?” I looked at baba.

“I know it's a boy. What about you my love?” I turned my head to stare at the screen.

I'm trying my luck by staring at the screen, trying to figure out what it could be. I can't see anything.

“Please tell us doctor.” she smiled.

“Congratulations, it's a girl! Sorry to burst your bubble dad.” he can't even hide the shock on his face.

I'm just as shocked as he is. I feel bad for calling my baby a boy this whole time when in fact, it's been a princess.

“MaZulu, intombikayise.” he said placing his hand on my stomach.

“We are not naming my daughter Ntombikayise.” he laughed, so did Dr Matthews.

“Why not? She’s going to be a daddy’s girl.” he’s really good at hiding his disappointment.

Either way, I’m elated, I’m going to have a mini me, that’s more than enough to be excited about. I can’t wait to start buying clothes, and designing the nursery.

“Just to be safe, please come in tomorrow for the MRI. But I’m happy with today’s developments, she’s a healthy gal.” she wiped me down.

“Thank you so much doctor.”

“Continue taking your vitamins daily, and whatever else that you’ve been doing, it’s definitely working.”

I pulled down my dress and sat up.

“Is there anything you want to ask?” maybe she read my mind.

There is a question burning my chest, and I don't know if I should ask it or not, I don't want to make kaMhlaba uncomfortable, but dammit! I want to so badly.

Here goes nothing.

“Can we have sex?” I don't even want to look at his face.

The fact that I said that with my chest, and feel no embarrassment after, says so much about the kind of person I have become.

“Oh yes, definitely! Go ahead, it speeds up labour, and helps with the labour pains too.”

“It won't hurt the baby?” so that is what he was afraid of this whole time?

Why didn't he ask? Jizas, he was waiting for me

to ask to spare him the embarrassment.

“Never! I highly recommend you do it as much as possible.” she said, cracking a smile, trying to make it less awkward.

We are already an awkward couple, now for us to constantly be having awkward encounters doesn't help. We make people uncomfortable very quickly.

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I'm sitting in my favourite chair, trying to reach for my legs so I can moisturize. It's almost impossible to reach down, and baba is nowhere to be seen.

He's been in his study since we came back. I understand that he had some petitions that he had to read from the citizens. There were so

many of them. The villagers always bring in complaints, so Khaya was the one who sorted them out, and categorized them in order of importance, and how many people wanted the same thing. Khaya's busy is over, he's sorted them for him, now his job is read them. He's lessened the job for him, but it's still a lot.

I was so close to throwing the bottle of lotion across the room, but he walked in, and saw how red my face looked.

"Kwenzenjani?" I just let the tears roll.

"I can't reach my legs." he looked at me concerned.

"Why didn't you call me, I was just downstairs."

He came to sit on the foot stool in front of me, grabbed the lotion from my hands and held my hands.

"You need to calm down my love. You aren't this alone angithi, I'm here. Whenever you need

me to help you, call me. Whenever or wherever you are." I nodded.

"Ungakhali." he wiped my tears and kissed my pouted lips.

What would I be without this man? He started moisturizing my thighs and legs. He's touching me again, and he's going to evoke those feelings, and leave me hanging again.

"You took a shower without me?" it's a thing we do.

We take showers together before bed, and we've been doing it for a long time. Things just changed recently. We haven't taken a bedtime shower in ages, I can't remember the last one we took together.

"I didn't want to disturb you, Khaya showed me the petitions." he sighed.

"I really don't know what I have to do with missing goats and sheep. They have chiefs for

a reason.” I laughed. He genuinely looks unimpressed.

“I’m so sorry you have to deal with all of that, but they are your people.” he shook his head, letting that small smile invade his frowning face.

I know he might not pretend to care, but deep down, he knows he’ll sit down and read all of them, because he does care about the well-being of his people. He can’t do much for the whole of KZN as the king, but he’s doing all he has the power to do for Zululand, his home. He’s an amazing king, his people love him, and he loves them back just as much.

When he was done with my legs and feet, he put them down and moved in to sit in between my thighs. I looked at him in the eyes, and he smiled.

“Ask whatever it is that you want to ask me.”
am I that obvious?

I covered my face as I felt my face heating up.

“Am I not attractive?” he frowned.

“Be honest baba.”

“This is the second time you are asking me this question my love, and my answer hasn’t changed. You are the only woman I see, the most beautiful one I have ever been with.” he gave me a small smile.

“I don’t want you asking me that question ever again.”

“So why won’t you make love with me?” it’s at moments like these where I wish I could control my tongue.

“Because I don’t want to hurt you.” I guess he can see the confusion on my face.

He rubs his face and sits as if he’s trying to comprehend a way to make me understand what he means when he says he doesn’t want

to hurt me. The doctor already us that the baby won't be hurt.

He held my hands and told me to look at him.

"I'm a dominant." there isn't much to work with there.

"You are going to have to elaborate baba." this is really not the time to be embarrassed, it's just the two of us here.

"I take control in bed. Being submitted to turns me on, and it gives me the need to take charge." is that all.

I've heard of something like this, I'm not shocked. But it seems like he has more to say.

"How would that hurt me?" I asked because it seemed like he wasn't willing to spit it out.

"I love kinks." again, he's going to have to elaborate.

"Bondage, discipline, dominance and

submission, sadism and masochism.” he looked at me straight in the eyes.

I don't get it...

No way!

I'm speechless.

“Like Fifty Shades type of thing?” I asked, trying to pick up my jaw from the floor. I don't want him to think I'm judging him.

“What is that?” great, he doesn't know it.

“I don't want to hurt you. I'm not a monster, but this is not something everyone likes. Maybe you may not like it the way that I do. That is why I don't initiate it, I don't want to lose control, it's all that I know.” is that why he couldn't get it up the first time we did it. I was initiating everything, from the kiss, to the last part.

This makes it make so much sense. I just don't know how I feel about it.

“You don’t have to think about it. I can change, it’s just not going to be easy for me.”

I sighed.

“So you’re a freak?” I asked, still shocked.

“Yes, I am.” I love that he’s owning it.

Maybe I have to watch Fifty Shades all over again, just so I can learn a thing or two about being a submissive. It’s about to get very interesting.

Malasties! I'm out! 

Chapter Eighty-Six

Nambitha Makhathini

I’ve taken it upon myself to let go of all the negativity surrounding this place, and focus on

the positive things.

It's a beautiful place, the scenery is absolutely breath-taking and the air is different. It's what Zululand used to feel like when I enjoyed going there.

Am I coping? I don't know if I am. I know I should be coping because I'm here by the grace of the Mfusi's, and I owe them that much for all the money they are spending on me.

I can't help but think this was Muzi's idea, to put me here in this institution and 'get me help' because he couldn't stop worrying about me.

Dreams haunted me, and it would be different dreams on different days. Sometimes it would be his face, and sometimes it would be the sound of those horrible gunshots. And horrible days, I would see Azande, and the guilt of whether he is alive or not would eat at me, and I would want to bang my head on the wall to stop

the pictures from flashing in my mind.

No one has come to see me beside Muzi. He literally comes here twice a week. I appreciate that from him, it's good seeing a familiar face, even though the only thing that made us familiar was this horrible incident that befell on me.

I hope he's not expecting things from me, like a relationship or something, to pay him back for all the things he's doing for me right now. I'm not in the right state to be getting into relationships. That is the last thing I need, in fact, I don't see myself dating ever again.

"Namnam, you have a visitor, do you want to go see them?" they do this, they always ask you if you want to see them. They never force you to go see people if you don't want to.

The nurses here have first class training. The Mfusi's must be paying a lot of money for this

place.

“Is it Muzi, tell him to come here.” I say sitting up from the bed.

“No, it’s not Muzi.” she can’t look at me.

“Who is it?” she keeps quiet.

Before I can ask again, she walks out and leaves me with the burning question.

As I am about to stand and follow her out, she blocks the door and my eyes meet with those of someone I was not expecting to see in my lifetime ever again.

“Mama?” her eyes were bloodshot red, and her eyeliner was already running down her cheeks.

What did I tell this woman about buying cheap make-up. Now she looks like a ghost.

Oh how I hate Nkululeko. He took away so much from me. My love for make-up now feels like a distant dream.

The nurse moves out the way, and my father comes to envelope me in a tight squeeze.

“Oh ntombi yami.” I feel safe again in his arms.

But I can't tear my eyes away from my mother, who's standing there with so much regret in her eyes.

I don't know who I'm angry at the most. My father for accepting to let me go to that monster without thinking twice, or my mother, who didn't want to listen to me, who didn't want to see that her child made a mistake. She wasn't a mother, she projected all her fears on me, and that is why things ended up the way they were.

“What did he do to you my baby?” he's holding both my cheeks, staring at me in the eyes.

I've never seen my father cry, and he's crying right now.

“He killed me.” I may be alive and breathing, but

I'm dead inside.

He murdered my spirit, and took away any form of happiness I could stand to have in my life ever again.

I'm here because Dr Frank believes she can change that.

"You are still here Nambitha, he didn't kill you. I'm sorry I gave up on you my girl, I let you down and I'm so sorry." he says pulling me into another bone crushing hug.

"It's okay daddy." it's not okay.

He should see through my eyes, not a single tear is gracing my face. They must read between the lines.

When he lets me go, we stand in awkward silence, mom and I are having a staring contest, tears are still cascading down her face, but she has her lips thinned. She's trying to act strong, but her eyes are calling her out.

“You can say it mama, you can say ‘I told you so’.” because that’s the only thing I’m expecting to hear from her.

“I’m sorry Nambitha.” she whispered.

I shook my head.

“No, say ‘I told you so’ you were right angithi, and I didn’t listen to you, itsho ke mama.” she should know it’s hectic when I bring out the Xhosa girl in me.

She steps towards me and tries to hug me. At first I resist, but she doesn’t give up and she squeezes me in her embrace.

“uNdlunkulu uMaGumede told us everything, why didn’t you say anything sooner Namnam? Why didn’t you come home?”

The tears are finally forcing themselves out of my eyes.

What would I be without Amile?

“You kicked me out mama, it’s not like I didn’t try to tell you. You just didn’t want to hear me.” I pulled away from her embrace and turned to look at my father.

“And you baba, you were so quick to accept the lobola money, you didn’t even bother to ask me if I wanted it or not. Yes I loved Nkululeko, but I was never ready to marry him, not when he was abusing me.” I said wiping the stubborn tears that were flooding my face.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” dad questioned.

“Ask mom what I said to her the day I left for Zululand.” I said turning so I could see both their facial expressions.

I know how much I disrespected her that day, but it wasn’t even about Nkululeko, it was about the fact that she didn’t want to let me go support my friend, when in turn she had done so much for me.

“I told her I wasn’t planning of marrying Nkululeko. I never wanted to, but it seems like you guys wanted it more than I did.” they both look ashamed of themselves. I’m glad they are.

“I’m here now because he raped me, beat me to the pulp, pointed a gun to my head and almost killed me. I’ve lost my mind and I don’t even know if he’s alive to experience the same pain I’m experiencing or not.” I said as I violently wiped my tears.

“Come back home sthandwa sami.” that was my mom, she put her hand on my arm.

“Please don’t call me that.” words like those trigger me.

“I’m not leaving this place. I may not be okay, but I will be soon, and I will go back to work, and make my dreams come true, just like I had intended to do.” I said hugging my arms.

“Nambitha.” dad intervened.

“Nothing you say will change my mind baba. If you guys love me like you say you do, you will support my decision. You two inflicted a great pain on me, but I will forgive you. I just won’t come home now. I need this. Maybe I can get half of me back.”

They looked devastated, but I’m not going back on my word.

“Nambitha, I bought you pizza!” Muzi stops in his tracks at the door.

“I’m sorry to disturb, I can come back another time...”

I looked at the both of them.

“They were just leaving.” you could see my mother’s heart breaking. She’s transparent like that.

“Kulungile ntombi yami, we still love you and we will always be here if you need us. Usale kahle.” dad said and grabbed her wife’s hand, and

walked out.

I don't know why I don't feel guilty for what I just did. They will forgive me one day, but now they know what it feels like to be disowned.

"You didn't have to do that Namnam." I wiped my tears and grabbed the box in his hands, forcing a smile on my face.

"You said you bought pizza, I haven't had it in a while."

I didn't want to look at his face because I know he was judging me for what had just happened.

Amile Gumedede

I'm sleeping alone. I know this because my husband has a heavy presence, and right now, I can't feel his presence in this bed.

I sit up and scan the room. It's still dark outside,

which means it's still early in the AM's. Where could he have disappeared to? I turn on the side lamp and rub my eyes. His robe is not on the chair, which means he left.

I get out of bed, and as soon as my feet touch the cold floor, I feel a sharp pain under my foot. Then the baby starts moving around in my stomach. This feels weird, it is very unusual, she never moves if he isn't here.

I hear him groan in the bathroom before I hear water running. So that's where he went.

I force myself to walk there, but I'm taking slow steps, my feet are suddenly burning up, and it feel like I'm walking on thorns.

"Baba?" I hold onto my stomach. My baby's movement is unusual.

She's never moved like this. What is happening?

He doesn't respond, instead, I hear him groaning even louder. I curse the people who

made this room so big, it feels like I have been walking for ages.

When I finally get to the door, I find him sitting on the floor next to the sink with his knees on his chest. He looks like he's in pain, a lot of it.

"Baba?" I struggle to rush to him, but he retaliates.

"Go back to bed my love." he commands.

"What's going on, I'm in so much pain, the baby..." tears are forming in my eyes.

I lean against the sink and listen to the pain in my feet.

"What's wrong with the baby MaGumede, must we go to the hospital." he's trying to stand up, but it looks like he's also experiencing pain himself.

I force myself to my knees and crawl to him. He opens his legs for me, and I crawl in between

them. His heart is racing, oh no.

“Is it back?” I ask as I fight the tears.

“No, it’s not back. What’s wrong with my baby?”
he squeezes me and places his hands on my
stomach.

She has stopped moving. Now I look like a fool.

“I don’t know what’s going on Ndabezitha.”
more than anything, I’m scared. I’m scared for
his life, and I’m scared for the life of our child.

“Pray with me.” he says and clutches on my
hands.

He starts talking to God and when I finally find
the voice, I pray with him as I feel tears
cascading down my face.

“Protect my family, protect my wife and my
daughter from harm oh lord. Take me instead,
just keep my family safe.” he begs.

Whatever demon that has tried to come in

between us shall not prosper. He placed multiple kisses on my forehead after we had wrapped up the prayer.

“Ngiyanithanda. Kakhulu futhi.” he said.

“We love you too.” I said wrapping my arms around him.

I don't think he understands that he just sacrificed his life for mine. I don't want to lose him, I still need him.

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What happened in the early hours of the morning still feels like a dream. I don't know when he carried me from the bathroom floor, but I just woke up, and I'm safe in his arms, feeling lighter than I did when I woke the first time.

There's light in the room, the sun is shining. It's morning.

"Sawbona mkami." he says placing a kiss on my forehead.

I don't know how he does it, but he can always tell when I'm awake. I haven't even opened my eyes yet.

His heartbeat is back to normal. I'm still not convinced, we have to go see his cardiologist. Maybe the angioplasty is not working anymore.

"Good morning Mageba." I fluttered my eyelids and looked up at him.

He smiled before he leaned in and place a soft kiss on my lips.

Butterflies in my stomach. That or his daughter is moving. I can't really tell the difference anymore.

We hold a little staring match, and as always,

I'm the first one to back down, because he intimidates me still, even when he looks at me with loving eyes.

I want us to talk about what happened in that bathroom, but knowing him, he will want to avoid this conversation for as long as he can.

"How are you feeling?" he asks first.

"I feel okay, well rested. How about you?" I ask picking at his beard.

"Ngiwumqemane mina." he said enthusiastically.

I shook my head and laid my head on his chest to monitor his heartbeat once again.

"Don't you think we should go see the doctor baba. Maybe you were having another heart attack." he shook his head.

"No. I'm not going to doctors, I'm fine. If it is my time to die, then I will die, but my ancestors are

protecting me.” uhm, that is a little selfish of his to say!

“What about your daughter, what about me baba? If you die who are you going to leave us with?” he chuckled.

He thinks this is a joke.

“I’m dying my love, I promise you, not before I meet my princess.” then what, he’s gonna die then?

“Baba?” I reprimanded.

He ignored me and used his hands to spread my thighs.

“The doctor said I can right?” he asked kissing my neck.

“No, she said you can’t, not before you agree to go to the cardiologist.” I said trying to close them.

I’m just kidding myself, he already has his finger

separating my folds. He's taking advantage of the fact that I'm not wearing any underwear. I don't wear it period, I only force myself to put it on when going to public places, which is hardly these days. Life is a breeze.

"Don't blackmail me with my sugar." he said sticking his finger into my core.

"Don't poke my baby's eyes out with you long fingers." I said, biting my lip trying to suppress a moan.

He chuckled and started pumping them in and out of my core. That was enough to let me spread my thighs even wider.

"Cardiologist!" I said locking my eyes with his.

"Yebo mkami." he said removing his fingers, climbing on top of me.

He positioned himself on my entrance and he slowly pushed himself in.

“I missed this.” says the man who didn’t even want to initiate it.

Oh yes, he’s a freak, he doesn’t want to hurt me.

ADDED SCENE

I want to stop my legs from shaking but it has proven to be impossible. Someone tell me why we weren’t having pregnant sex this whole time, that was the best orgasm of my life, and I’ve had quite a few good ones.

“Ukahle?” he asked in his post-making love voice that I just love so much.

It’s deep and rusky, it always makes me want to go for more, in this instance, I can’t. I might even give birth right here.

“You can’t do me like that and ask me if I’m okay.” I say breathless.

He chuckles and places a kiss on my stomach.

“Ukahle wena nkosazane kababa?” she kicks viciously, sending both of us into a fit of laughter.

“I think she’s answered your question.” I said putting my hand on the side.

“Her head is here.” I say touching it.

“How are you able to feel such things?” he asks fascinated.

“She’s living inside of me baba, I can feel all her movements. What you feel when you put your hand on my stomach, I feel it ten times stronger.” it’s a magical feeling and I wouldn’t trade it for anything.

“God gave women a beautiful gift.” he says reaching up to kiss my lips.

“He did.” I say caressing him.

“I can’t wait to meet her, I’m the happiest man in the world and I have all the things that I need

right here.” he said locking his eyes with mine.

Yeah, I’m also happy, very happy with the way things have turned out for the both of us, the love we have formed, , the joy we have created in each other. I didn’t think I could ever find something like this.

“I’m sad that it isn’t a boy though baba, who is going to take over the throne?” I ask, trying not to spoil the mood he’s in, the mood I’m in.

“She will. Who cares about rules. I know that if I’m beyond this earth and my daughter is here, I will fight with my all for her to ascend that throne. It’s not entirely a man’s world anymore. She must break the status quo.” he said rubbing my stomach.

“And who said we won’t have anymore children?” he asked as he planted another kiss on my stomach.

I laughed. I’ve never imagined myself as a

mother. Even after I lost Mfihlakalo, I couldn't imagine myself with a child, having someone calling me mom. Now that I'm experiencing pregnancy, I'm starting to see it, I can't wait for it to happen. I'm just not sure about being a mother of more than one.

"You don't strike me as the type that wants a soccer team of children." he laughs.

"You are right. Two is enough right?"

"More than enough!" I say giggling.

At least we can agree on that. I don't even think it's because he doesn't like children, he's great with them, I just don't think a lot of children would be good for him. He loses his cool too quickly, he'd always be a grumpy father.

"You must be hungry though, must we go down for breakfast?" he asks sitting up, picking up his shorts from the floor.

I really don't feel like getting out of bed. It's one

of those lazy days where getting up on it's own is an extreme sport. Carrying around a royal baby is not easy.

"It's one of those days baba." I say sinking under the covers.

"So we are eating in bed?" how sweet, he's going to join me.

"No council?"

"No, I want to spend time with my wife." I blush and cover myself with the duvet.

I fell in love with a man thrice my age and I can't stop myself from loving him. It's not illegal. I'm legal!

"I'll get us breakfast in the kitchen, any specific orders today?" he said sitting back down.

He knows my preferences, he's been here throughout this whole pregnancy, he knows what I love and what I hate with my whole heart.

“A breakfast plate with no eggs, no tomatoes and especially no...”

“No bacon, as always.” he cuts in before I finish.

That sends me into a fit of laughter. I don’t know why he bothers to ask because he knows.

I absolutely cannot stand the sight or smell of bacon. Anything pork in fact. It makes me absolutely sick.

He stands after getting my order, I feel like I’m controlling him. I feel so bad.

“Baba...” I call out.

He turns around and looks at me with an innocent smile.

“Mkami.” I melt.

“Can I have fish fingers and tomato sauce instead.” he chuckles.

“White or brown bread?” he asks with a smirk. I know he’s mocking me.

He knows I don't eat brown bread, pregnancy preferences made all of that a thing. I hate the person I've become.

When I attempt to throw a pillow at him, he races out of the room, leaving me with a huge smile on my face.

I get out of the bed and go to the bathroom where I freshen up. My heart is unsettled when I walk into that bathroom, I can't help but rush back to the events of this morning and have fear all over again.

I'm not one to be negative, but I don't know what I would be if I were to lose baba. I wouldn't be able to cope, not when I've learned to love him so much. Not only is he my husband, he's also the father of my unborn child, my best friend, and the king of Zululand. What will I do with all the people who love him so much if something were to happen to him?

We need to go get his heart checked out. I can't be a widow at 18, I refuse.

I'm drawn from the bathroom back to the bathroom by the strong smell of bacon. He better not.

I stand at the door and he has his back towards me.

"Baba." I say. He startles and turns around.

"MaGumede." he licks his lips.

I give him a questioning look.

"Your breakfast is here." he better not forget that I have a heightened sense of smell.

He pats the space on the bed before giving me the tray with a plate filled with fish fingers. On the side is the whole bottle of tomato sauce, knowing me, I'll end up licking it straight from the bottle.

I'm looking at him suspiciously because he

looks guilty.

“Baba?” even when I reprimand him, I call him baba.

Nothing in me could ever allow me to freely call him by his name, the same way that I always remain MaGumede or Mkami. I haven’t heard my name in so long, maybe I don’t even remember what it sounds like.

“Are you eating bacon?” I ask staring at him.

He takes it off his plate.

“I couldn’t resist, I’m sorry mkami. I’m sorry Ntombikayise.” he looks so guilty, I can’t help but laugh.

“If you still want it please finish it now.” he didn’t even waste another second, she shoved all of it in his mouth.

He looks freakishly sexy chewing like that.

“I would kiss you but you have bacon breath.”

he breaks into a loud laughter.

“I love you.” he said before picking his plate coming to sit next to me.

“I don’t love bacon eaters.”

He picked a fish finger off my plate and shoved it into his mouth.

Who am I kidding, I do love him. I’m saying it with my chest.

A/N: this is not a full chapter, it's a continuation of the last, it was too short I've made it longer for the Wattpad gang ;). I'm done with exams, I'll see you guys tomorrow. I'm exhausted!

Mbhalist 

Chapter Eighty-Seven

Langaletu Zulu

He's not a heartless man, but he does believe that wrong doers deserve punishment, and that is what being a fair king is about, thinking about the well being of his people.

Dlamini did more than wrong, he harmed a woman, not any woman, but a woman close and dear to his woman, and anything that affects his family, affects him. He'd do just about anything to make Amile happy.

But he's not only doing this for her. He's disappointed in Nkululeko, the young boy he watched growing up in front of him. He can admit that he didn't have the rosier of childhoods, his parents were the most fucked up people, and it's unfortunate that he had to witness all of that, but he can't hide behind dead people all his life. He's a grown man sane enough to make his own decisions, therefore all he did is considered conscious decisions.

He's in a holding cell in town. He asked the police to keep him there, it's been 2 months. He's going to see him for the first time.

He's given no hassles as he makes his way through to the holding cells. It's still early in the afternoon, there shouldn't be so many people in here.

Inmates, or whatever they are called are shouting for him to let them out as he makes his way down the corridor. The horrid smell is making him want to vomit, even the smell of his own cologne isn't enough to block it out, that's how strong it is.

"This place stinks." he says holding his nose.

"Do something about it, don't these people bath?" he reprimands the officer walking with him.

"Yes my king." he said bowing.

This is his intimidating side that Amile always

says she's afraid of so much.

He is shown to Nkululeko's holding cell. He is alone, sitting in a corner rocking himself back and forth. Sitting alone like this for two full months straight is bound to make you lose your mind.

"Hey Dlamini!" the officer shouts.

He's on his feet in a second, rushing to cling on the bars.

"Mageba, please get me out of this place, I need to see my children." he begged.

"Please excuse us." he said to the officer.

Reluctantly, he walked away from the holding cell. He stood and leaned against the wall staring at Nkululeko who looked like he was close to tears.

"The same way those tears didn't work with you is the same way they aren't going to work on

me. I want you to stand up like the man you have proven yourself to be and tell me why you want to get out so badly, knowing very well that this is where you belong.”

Nkululeko forced himself to his knees and cried. He broke into a heartbreaking sob, it's just unfortunate that it didn't faze him.

“Have I given you enough time to sit and think about what you did, or do you want more time?” Nkululeko shook his head.

“I'm done thinking Mageba, I just want to see my children.” he's not going to stand in the way of a man seeing his children, he's not heartless.

“Have a seat Dlamini, and indulge me.” he said before calling out the officer to bring him a chair.

Nkululeko is still on his knees crying. Real tears are running down his cheeks, and he still has his palms together, begging to be let out. The

officer places the chair in front of him and he sits, crossing his leg over the other.

He's not going to spend too long in this place, it hasn't even been a mere twenty minutes and he can feel all the germs sticking onto him.

"You think that keeping you is enough for the atrocities that you committed? The pain you caused all those people?"

"Mageba please forgive me." he begs.

"No, we haven't gotten to the apologizing part yet, I want to know first. Are you happy becoming the man that your father was?" that struck a nerve because he covered his head and screamed.

"Stop making a noise, we are having a conversation as grown men." he said calmly.

"You saw what the things your father did to your mother did to her. You know the pain that you experienced, why are you inflicting that same

exact pain onto another woman's child? A fragile woman who can't fight for herself? Why are you becoming Dlamini? Do you think your sister is happy with the way you have become?"

"I didn't mean to hurt them, they all just left me, I don't want to be alone." he defends.

"Because of the way you are! Yazini mina Nkululeko I see you as a younger brother, you and Mandlenkosi are one and the same thing to me. You have no idea how much what you are doing hurts me. Why are you doing this?" he asks in a stern voice.

He didn't answer, he just continued sobbing.

"Do you need help, professional help? What do you need?" he asked after trying to catch his breath so he can calm down. His heart is starting to race.

"I need to see my children." he begs.

"Nambitha is in a mental institution. She thinks

you are dead, and that is the only thing keeping her alive at this very moment, that she never has to see you again. What you did is unforgivable, I'm in between being fair, and giving Nambitha a peaceful life, the one you snatched from her, or letting you better yours, because through it all, I know that all of this is not you." no answer from Nkululeko.

He gets up from the chair and dusts his pants.

"So must I give you more time to think?" he asks folding his arms across his chest.

Nkululeko is quick to get on his feet.

"Bayede, no, I want to leave this place my king." he begs.

"To a hospital where you will get the help you need?" he nods vigorously.

"Are you sure?" he asks.

"Anything to get out of here and see my children

Bayede.” he bows.

“Okay. But maybe you can spend one last night, just to say goodbye. Goodbye!”

He says mockingly before he walks out of the holding cells, trying to hold his breath.

He did say he’s not a heartless man.

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He was done quicker than he thought he would, that is why he took a detour to a special place from him childhood.

He hasn’t been here in a long time. Even before his accident, he wasn’t as frequent as he used to be when he was younger. It was better when his mother was also living here, but she also eventually moved to the palace, just before Mhlaba passed away, they had rekindled their

love, and she was just about ready to come back into the mix of things, being a Zulu wife.

They had a big falling out before the accident, that is why he hasn't had the guts to ask anyone about her whereabouts. It haunts his thoughts every night, he loved his mother, and not a single day goes by without thinking about her. Even though she wasn't there during most of his childhood, he loves her.

This was his Khulu's house. That's what he called his grandmother, his mother's mother. He lived with her before Mhlaba took him and raised him himself.

He instructs Mgabadeli to stay in the car, he wants to have a moment. He steps out and goes to stand under the tree. It's still growing mangoes, you can tell that people come here to pick them. There are footprints on the sand. He used to sit here and guard this tree with his life, and his friends would walk past here and ask

him to give them a few. He would always sneak a few, they were his friends after all.

He laughs as he walks away from the tree to the other side that leads to the kitchen door. It doesn't look like anyone lives here, it looks like it's been abandoned.

He opens the door and steps inside.

"Who is that?" a voice asks.

He freezes on the spot. He can hear footsteps approaching. He curses under his breath.

"Langa?" she drops the bowl in her hands and they start trembling.

He's shocked to say the least. He wasn't expecting to find her here.

"Ma?" he takes two steps backwards.

His heart starts pounding his chest. She runs to him before attacking him with a hug.

"My son is it really you?" she asks on his chest,

crying.

He's still in a state of shock, and his chest is getting heavier by the second.

"They didn't believe me when I told them you were alive." she sobs.

He breaks into a sweat as he feels his vision getting blurred.

"Langa?" she holds him up as he falls on his knees.

"Someone help!" she screams.

His heart is slowly failing him.

Amile Gumede

Khaya is here keeping me company since baba had to step out for a moment. They both are having a day off, and initially, kaMhlaba wanted

to spend it with us, but he had something he had to attend to, that is why he left. He promised not to take too long though.

That is why I called my bestie, I've confirmed him as my bestie, and we are gossiping and having foot rubs. All of this in the comfort of my home. I love living like the queen I am, it's not everyday that I get to abuse resources.

"I'm glad we are feeling happy today." he says rubbing my tummy.

"We are very happy today." yes, a girl was serviced this morning, there is absolutely no reason for me to be frowning.

"I see Mageba has everything to do with it." he gives me a side eye.

I giggled and covered my face.

"We went to the doctor yesterday, and she confirmed that we are having a..."

“Wait, don’t tell me! I want to guess.” I laugh.

“There’s not much to choose from, there’s only two options.” I say rubbing my tummy.

“Well, I know for a fact it’s a boy.” he says enthusiastically.

“Well, unfortunately.”

“What!? No, don’t fib.” I giggled.

“We need to start working on HER nursery.” I made sure to put emphasis on her.

They need to stop calling my princess a boy.

“Wait, so we are going to have a new friend to dress up with?” he asked.

I broke into a fit of laughter.

“Yes Khaya, we are having a new edition to the girl gang!” there are enough boys in this palace, right?

“I need to adjust Mageba’s schedule, we are

going baby shopping next week. And we definitely need to start working on that nursery.”

“Yes, we need to make up for the fact that I can’t have a baby shower.” eye roll!

Being in the royal family also has its downs. First of all, I had to keep my pregnancy a secret from the world, (not that they deserve to know) I couldn’t do a gender reveal, and I also can’t have a baby shower. It’s against the rules apparently. I balled my eyes out when Lerato told me. It was also the hormones, but that’s what every pregnant woman looks forward to the day they find out they are pregnant. I was sad, but I’ve gotten over it.

“And maybe you can have a maternity shoot!” he suggests.

I don’t know about that, I’m not so sure.

“Uhh...”

“No, don’t tell me their ruralness has gotten to

you too.” he asks in a whine.

“No, it’s just that I don’t think baba will agree to that. And no one will see those.”

“Then you will keep them for baby girl, it’s good memories. Imagine having a huge portrait of the two of you in your bedroom, or even in the lounge with your big bump. Amazing!” he does the chef’s kiss.

Okay maybe we can do that.

“I’ll talk to him but I...” my phone rings, cutting me mid sentence.

It’s a landline number, probably one of those sales people. I don’t answer.

“I doubt he will agree.” I finish my sentence.

Before he can answer, his phone also rings.

“Who is it?” I ask him, why are our phones ringing one after the other.

“It’s a landline number. Why is it calling my work

number?" it possibly can't be sales people.

"Answer it." I say sitting upright.

He does and I watch as his facial expressions change. I don't think it's a good thing that he is hearing.

"Is everything okay?" I ask him.

He doesn't answer, instead, he dials the phone again and speaks to someone.

"Get Khabazela to bring the royal car around and tell him to hurry."

I watch in utter fear before dismissing the ladies doing our feet. He already kicked the other one unintentionally, something is definitely wrong.

"Will you tell me what the issue is?"

"No, get a jersey and lets go." he says getting up.

He isn't going to leave me here. I drag my

slippers and struggle to stand up from the couch. It's wrong for him to leave a pregnant woman on the couch to stand up on her own.

"Khaya man!" I shout as I waddle to my bedroom.

Yes, I waddle, I hardly know how to pick my feet up properly. I run into sis' Melo on the steps and she gives me a shawl.

"Thank you, do you have any idea what is happening?" she shakes her head no.

"Okay, thank you." I say and rush back down the stairs, praying that I don't tumble and fall.

This better be something good, I'm putting my baby at risk here.

"MaGumede please hurry up." I'm trying okay!

I get in the vehicle that is parked right outside the door and it speeds off. No one is telling me anything, Khaya is on the phone, I can't even

pick up what he might be saying, he's speaking in syllables.

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Was I not dropped off at Enkanyambeni before Khaya and Bhut' Thula took off.

I kept trying to call them but their phones were not being answered. I know they are doing it deliberately because they have them in their possessions.

I try kaMhlaba's number, and it sends me straight to voicemail. When Lerato walks in, she snatches the phone from me.

"Will you please stop calling them." she says handing me a cup of tea.

It's chamomile. What am I supposed to do with chamomile. I want them to tell me what the hell

is going on.

“What’s going on!” I ask standing up.

“Amile sit down, please, we don’t need this right now.” now tears are forcing themselves out of my eyes. I want to know what is happening.

Where is my husband, why isn’t he home when he said he’d be back quickly.

“Where is my husband?” I ask looking at her.

She can’t even maintain eye contact with me. I shake my head.

“Lerato!” I snaps.

“He’s in hospital, he had another heart attack.” she blurts out.

I feel my body heating up. Why am I still here? I should be by my husband’s side, not here.

“Take me to him!” I say standing up once again.

“No, we can’t go.”

“I can’t be sitting here drinking tea when the man that I love could be losing his life in some hospital, I know how to help him, just please take me there! Please.” I beg.

Reality is slowly but surely hitting me. Scenes from this morning flash through my head and the same pain I felt in my lower abdomen hits, this time a lot stronger than it was.

“Please take me to him.” I sob as I almost fall back on the chair.

She catches me and helps me sit down properly.

“He’s going to be okay, just breathe mommy, breathe.”

I don’t want to breathe if I’m not breathing next to him. Never!

Chapter Eighty-Eight

Amile Gumedede

I cried until Lerato was forced to drive me to the hospital. She spoke to her husband first and I'm guessing he agreed to let me come to the hospital.

I'm still crying, I'm angry at everyone, I'm angry at Khaya for just ditching me and not telling me anything, I'm mad at Lerato for keeping me away from going to see my husband. She has no idea the amount of time I have wasted while I could be by his side. He needs me, he needs no one else but me, I know my husband.

Here I am waddling through the emergency room, tears are blinding my vision, but I'll push through, I need to find kaMhlaba.

"MaGumede!" that is Mandlenkosi, I'm always able to tell his voice apart from anyone else.

Even he's here!? it's a family reunion without me at the expense of my husband. I'm the only one

who will be widowed if something happens to him.

“You aren’t supposed to be here.” he says grabbing my arms, gently pushing me back so I don’t enter the waiting room.

“No, I need to go and see my husband.” I say hitting my fists on his chest.

“Amile, you are pregnant, you aren’t supposed to be in public, you know this. Bhuti is fine.” he says whispering, he doesn’t want attention drawn to us.

Well, if that’s what he doesn’t want, it’s exactly what I will do.

“LET ME GO TO MY HUSBAND!” I scream loud enough for everyone to hear.

He lets me go as quickly as he got up from his seat to come stop me, and I took the opportunity to rush past the waiting room where they are sitting, that traitor Khaya is also

here. And an unknown woman, she's sobbing.

"Where is my husband?" that's all I want.

They can see that I'm not smiling with anyone, Khaya is the first one to point me to the emergency room.

I waddle there, he knows better than to challenge me when I'm mad.

He's lying on a hospital bed, fully conscious, a doctor hovering over him.

"Baba." I say as I rush to be by his side.

"Ma'am you aren't supposed to be here." the doctor say as I cling onto him.

He has his other arm hooked around me and I'm crying on his shoulder.

"Sh...my wife..." he manages to say.

He can barely form a sentence and that breaks my heart into shreds.

“Mrs Zulu we are going to have to ask you to excuse us while we run some tests on him. He suffered a heart attack.”

“He had angioplasty surgery a few months back for his coronary artery disease.” he looks at me as if I’m here to take over his job.

I’m not interested in that, I just want my husband to be okay.

“Then maybe his arteries are clogging up again.” he points out the obvious.

“Call doctor Klaus.”

“His doctor is Mhlongo.” I correct.

He gives me that look again before he walks out the room along with the nurse, leaving me with baba. I hold on tightly to his hand and lean in to kiss his dry lips.

“I was...goi...” he attempts to speak.

“It’s okay baba, you don’t have to explain.” I said

wiping the tears that were running down his cheek.

He places his hand on my baby bump.

“We are okay baba, and you are going to be okay too. You just need to be strong like you always are.” I say to him.

He nods and tightens the hold on my hand.

While we sit in silence, Dr Mhlongo rushes into the room.

“Bayede, Ndlunkulu, sekwenzenjani manje.” he already has his stethoscope on his chest checking his heart rate.

“He had another heart attack.” I say looking at him.

“Another, why didn’t you come back after the first one.” I look at him. It’s no time for I told you so but I did say.

“It happened early this morning doctor, we were

going to come in tomorrow. And it wasn't a major heart attack, just chest pains." I explain.

"How long have you been having the chest pains Mageba?"

"A few times." he manages to stutter.

I give him a death stare. Why didn't he say anything this whole time. Is he trying to die? He better not do me like that, not when I'm carrying his baby.

"His arteries may be clogging up again, I'll have to do a MRI to see. If anything, then we are going to have to do bypass surgery. I'm admitting you Zulu, you are a high risk at this point." my heart fell into the pit of my stomach.

"Thank you doctor." I said as I covered his chest after he finished checking his vitals.

He wrote a few things down before he excused himself. I was left with baba and I took that opportunity to talk to him.

“Why didn’t you tell me kaMhlaba?” I asked.

I know he’s struggling to speak, but I want to know, I really want to know.

“I didn’t want to stress you out.” he said breathlessly.

He wanted to continue, but I put my hand on his chest to stop him from talking some more.

“It’s okay baba, at least now you will get help. I love you okay.” I said and planted another kiss on his lips.

He managed to kiss me back. He must never do this to me ever again, EVER.

“Please call Shlobo.” he said caressing my arm.

“I will baba, don’t worry.”

“Go home.” he said before he closed his eyes.

That is what I’m not going to do. I let go of his hand and give him time to rest.

I make my way out the emergency room to the waiting room where the whole family is congregating.

“He’s being admitted, you can go home.” they all just stare at me like I’ve grown horns.

Lerato is the one to stand up and she comes to hold my arms. She must not.

“We are taking you with Amile.”

“I’m not going anywhere.” I said calmly.

“You need some rest, and you can’t be seen in public.” I shook my head and removed her hands from my arms.

“I said I’m not going anywhere. My husband is here, and that is where I am going to stay.”

“Amile...” Khaya tries to cut in.

“Don’t challenge me.” I said pointing a finger at him.

He lifted his arms in the air and walked away

from us.

“You can all go home.” I said again.

I know I’m not going anywhere. They are all exchanging looks, I don’t care. I make my way to one of the couches and sit. After a long time filled with silence, Mandlenkosi is the one to stand up.

“You can go, I’ll stay with her.” he says to his brother.

“But bafo...” bhut’ Thula tries to protest.

“She’s stubborn, she won’t budge, just go home, rest and come back tomorrow. I will find a way to convince her to go home.” his confidence is admirable, but that is not going to happen, unfortunately.

He finally agrees and collects his whole family, along with the woman. I still don’t know who she is and why she’s here, and quite frankly, I really don’t care.

“Mgabadeli you can also go, I’ll call you if we need you.” Nkosi says as he settles on the couch opposite mine after seeing everyone off.

Mgabadeli says his goodbyes before leaving. Nkosi and I are left sitting in silence. He keeps stealing glances at me, and I can tell that he wants to say something.

“What do you want?” I ask him.

“Nothing.” he says quickly.

“No, say what you want to say, clearly it’s bothering you.” I say getting comfortable.

“Why are you like this? You could have just gone home and rested. Bhuti needs you and the baby to be strong and okay, not here, worrying about him.”

“You said so yourself, I’m stubborn.” I said reiterating his words.

He looks away in embarrassment.

“I love him Nkosi, and it’s not even about that only. I’m carrying his first child, I can’t deal with the pain of losing him before he meets his daughter. How would I make it through this life thing with a child when we are supposed to be doing it together?” I could see the pity in his eyes.

“I wouldn’t be able to heal from that, if I lose him too, I wouldn’t heal.” I admit.

I dealt with losing him, then I lost Banzi, I definitely can’t lose kaMhlaba, especially not now.

“You didn’t lose me.” he says.

I sigh. He is right, I technically didn’t lose him because he’s still here. Now that we can sit like this, without things becoming awkward means there is growth, from both me and him.

I just wish things didn’t happen the way they did, we should have never slept together, that is one

part about our relationship I regret the most, because the ancestors knew what they were doing when they stopped it from happening so many times. I'm guessing it happened finally because they had already turned on the whole Zulu family, and I already was a part of it. I would never say that out loud though.

"Thank you Nkosi." I said and wiped my tears.

I'm glad he is the way that he is now, that he's back to being the Mandlenkosi I met almost two years ago. I hated that man he had become, that drunkard of a man who would embarrass himself for the fun of it. He's back to being that Nkosi who stayed in the background, doing what he wants to do, and that is the Nkosi we all knew.

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He got me a cheese sandwich from the cafeteria and a bottle of water because I desperately needed to take my antenatal pills. I'm feeling sleepy, we have been sitting here for almost three hours. I promised to go home as soon as Shlobo arrived, I wasn't going to sit and sleep on a hospital couch knowing very well that I am pregnant.

"I need air." I said after downing the pill.

"Must I get you a wheelchair?"

Is he insane.

"I'm not paralyzed Mandlenkosi, just pregnant." he laughed.

"How far are you?"

"Seven months, I'm due in January." he genuinely looks shocked.

"You look like you are nine months pregnant. Are you sure you counted correctly." I rolled my

eyes, then proceeded to help myself up from the couch, further proving that I'm capable.

"Wait for me." he said standing up.

As we were walking heading to the exit, a nurse pulled up next to us.

"My prince, the king is asking to see you." we shared a look.

"I'm coming." he dismissed her.

"He thinks I left." I say to Nkosi.

My heart is racing, is he okay.

"It's okay, go sit down, I'll go hear what he needs." I shook my head.

"I need air." he looks unsure about me going outside alone.

"I'll be careful, I promise." I said.

He didn't think twice, he ran back to the hospital while I went to sit outside. There was a bench

there and I sat down, feeling the cool breeze on my face.

I know what scares me more about Langaletu dying now is that I would have to succeed the throne. It's worse now that I know I'm expecting a girl, I know I'll sit on the throne until the day I die. Maybe then she can take over as queen, but something like that has never been done. He can't die. I know nothing about ruling a people, I'm only 18, I'm barely an adult.

"He's not going to die." I almost jump out of my skin when her voice echoes in my ears.

"Are you trying to kill me?" my heart is racing.

She replied by laughing at me. She then put her hand on my thigh. I used my hand to wipe my tears and took in a deep breathe to help me calm down.

"I've been sitting here with you for over a minute and you didn't see me. You must really be deep

in thought.” I sighed.

“He’s not going to die, there’s a lot he hasn’t fulfilled on this earth, it’s not his time yet. You have my word on it.” she reassures.

The only reason I believe her is because it’s her. I have no reason to fight Shlobo.

“I just want him to be okay.” she tightened her hand around mine.

“He will be fine and he will be out of this place soon.” she said before she stood up.

“He’s been waiting for you.” I announce as she helps me up.

“I know. You can go home, I’ll make sure he’s okay.” thank God she’s here.

I may pretend to the outside world that I know more about him than they do, but in actual fact, this woman right here, she definitely knows him more than I do. And I’m not trying to compete, I

let her do what she needs to do, as long as my man is happy and healthy.

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We are sitting around the table, one big happy family. There are all kinds of delicacies decked on the table, my mouth is literally watering.

I'm sitting opposite Mhlabawesizwe, he's at the head of the table. Next to me is the boy, and next to the boy is Banzi. He looks ravishing, like a mystical being from another world, I've never seen a person looking so pure.

On Mhlabawesizwe's side sits MaNdlela, she also looks happy. Why am I here, because this seems to be a family reunion?

"I kept my end of the deal." Mhlaba's voice rumbles in my ears.

Why is everyone at the table speaking like they don't see or hear me?

“So did I. Your wife is sitting right there with you.” this old man better not try me.

He gave loud cackle. Even beyond the grave he’s still evil. The wicked never rest, do they.

“No, in fact, you didn’t keep your end of the deal because Nkosi still hasn’t settled down and found the right one for him, and Langaletu is still fighting for his life, going in and out of hospital when I asked you for peace in our family.”

“Mandlenkosi found love and peace within himself. The love for life, and peace of mind.” he replied.

I was left without a comeback to that. It’s true, he’s happier, maybe when I said love, I wasn’t specific enough. I’m just happy he found it.

“But Langaletu is still sick, we aren’t living in peace.”

“Gog’ Mfusi told you that it’s not his time yet.

He knows what he needs to do in order to feel better. These hospitals won't do anything for him."

I drew in a sharp breath.

"I will show myself again, you just won't be seeing me like this anymore." he says.

I look down to touch my bump, it's not there.

I panic and look around.

"My baby? What happened to my baby!?" he gave me a smile.

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"My baby!" I shot my eyes open and my hands landed on my stomach.

Thank goodness! I mumbled a prayer asking the Lord to protect me and my family from harm. I don't know what to make of that dream, I don't know how to interpret it.

"Mhlabawesizwe, what do you want now?" I

said as I rolled out of bed.

I need to get ready to go to the hospital and see baba. There's something deeper here, and it has Mhlabawesizwe written all over it!

Chapter Eighty-Nine

Amile Gumede

I was already dressed, waiting to call Mgabadeli to bring the car around so he can drive me to the hospital when I walked into Shlobo wheeling in baba with Mandlenkosi in tow.

“What are you guys doing here?” baba looks weak, like he could faint at any moment.

My mind tracks back to Mhlabawesizwe's words in the dream. He clearly specified that hospitals won't help baba in any way. Is that why he called Shlobo?

“He needs to be here.” Shlobo reports.

I’m going to be ignorant about what I already know and fight.

“He looks like he might topple over and die right here, what do you mean he needs to be here!? He has heart problems, he needs a hospital, he needs bypass surgery!” I hate Mhlabawesizwe with my whole heart.

I turn to look at Mandlenkosi, and he looks just as defeated as I do.

“Is the throne room open?” Did she even hear what I said? She asked as she pushed the wheelchair.

I didn’t even have the energy to answer her. I watched them as they disappeared down the corridor to the throne room. I turned back to look at Mandlenkosi.

“I tried talking her out of it, she didn’t want to listen.” I sigh and just grab the bags from him.

I make my way to our bedroom, drop off his bags and head back downstairs. I'll sort out his clothes later, he barely even used them I'm sure, he didn't even spend a day. I'm sure Dr Mhlongo is fuming mad wherever he is. This is absurd, and I feel even guiltier for knowing that he is supposed to be here.

I let myself into the throne room and baba is sitting on the floor, his legs stretched out, and his head is hanging. I really don't believe Shlobo should have taken him out of the hospital.

"I don't think he's okay." I say rushing to where he is.

I can't even kneel to I can inspect him.

"He is okay. The doctor said it himself, his heart is fine, it's nothing medical happening to him." it's going to take a lot to convince me of that.

But maybe that is the reason why I had pains while he was experiencing them that morning.

Maybe it wasn't a heart attack.

"Baba how are you feeling?" I ask brushing his shoulder.

No response. He looks like a zombie.

"What did you do to him?" I ask with my voice breaking.

"He's on the other side, not here. That's why he won't hear nor respond to anything we say."

"What other side are you talking about? Is he dead?" I say as I catch the tears falling out of my eyes with my thumb.

"No, he's not dead. He just needs to sit here with his ancestors." she says and puts her arm around my neck.

"Come, let's go." she leads me out.

I keep looking back, he's not moving, he's just sitting still, looking lifeless. I didn't leave him like this back at the hospital.

When we get to the lounge, we are met with that woman from last night at the hospital. She has bags by her feet, I can't help but wonder...

"Where is my son?" she asks as soon as she looks at me.

I could be rude and return the favour, but I'm not bitter, it's too early in the morning.

"Who is your son and where did you leave him?" I ask staring right at her.

She's old enough to be my grandmothers age, you can't miss the wrinkles under her eyes. But even with those wrinkles you can tell she used to be beautiful back in her times.

Wait a damn minute...

"Are you supposed to be the wife?" oh my goodness.

I'm not the wife, I'm his wife.

"Yes, I'm Langaletu's wife." first and last time I

will ever say his name like that.

She's scanning me up and down. Even a blind man can tell that she doesn't like me. Problem is, I'm really not shaken.

"Why did I arrive at the hospital and was sent back because they said my son was discharged? How does that happen, he hasn't healed!?" I turned to look at Shlobo who is just zoning out.

I know better than to try and talk her out of it, she won't hear a word, she's not here.

"The hospital won't help him." I say to the woman who claims to have a son in my husband.

"And what do you know? You aren't a doctor, you barely look like you finished school." she's fuming mad.

Problem is again, I really am not shaken.

"At the end of the day gogo, he's here, and he's

not going to go anywhere because the help he needs is right here. Now if you will excuse me, I need to go take care of a few things.” I say before grabbing Shlobo’s hand and drag her with me to the office.

She’ll snap out of it.

I can hear her ranting to whoever is out there with her. It’s probably Mandlenkosi.

“This girl is not right to be queen!” and she all of a sudden knows me better than the rest of the world.

I really do not want to entertain her nonsense because I know very well that kaMhlaba will take my side any day, especially over a woman who hasn’t been there for him in his hardest moments. It’s not like the world wasn’t aware that he was alive, he’s been crowned king of Zululand for goodness sake, and he’s been on the throne for almost a year now. She has no

excuse whatsoever. She hasn't been bottom line, she has very little rights to be here claiming him.

"MaMfusi." I call out, leaning on the door after taking a deep breath.

"That woman is not supposed to be here." she says in a panic.

"Is she here to ruin things?" I ask standing up right.

Now I'm concerned. Why are things suddenly going sideways, just yesterday our lives were peaceful.

"She needs to go." I don't think that is our decision to make.

I know if I had the choice I would be the one to gladly escort her out the premises, but baba might not be happy about it.

"What is happening with baba? Is he okay?" I

say moving swiftly along from the mommy issue.

“He needs to perform a ceremony for Vukani...” you know I’m really starting to think that Mhlabawesizwe doesn’t use his powers correctly.

“How the hell is he going to perform a ceremony for Vukani when he can’t even stand on his own?”

“This is bigger than you MaGumede, I’d advise you to stay out of it.” she warns.

Her face is straight, that gives me enough reason to stop questioning her. But why Vukani only, and not the other boys?

“Does this have anything to do with MaMzobe?” she doesn’t answer me.

Instead, she asks to be let out of the door and I gladly do so. There is no use keeping her in here knowing very well she won’t tell me a single

thing.

Why Mhlabawesizwe why!? I thought you were on my side.

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I didn't bother myself with going to the throne room for the rest of the day, I let them do whatever they needed to do, as long as my husband is alive and well.

I forced myself into the kitchen and cooked up a storm, I haven't cooked in a long time, and that was my form of therapy. I'm sitting on a bench in the kitchen waiting for my water to boil. I'm staring up at the television and when I see my face popping up on the screen, I ask the helpers to turn up the volume.

"Sources have confirmed that the king of

Zululand was indeed admitted in hospital after a short illness. It has not yet been confirmed what the illness is, but we wish our monarch a speedy recovery. In other royal news, the Queen uNdlunkulu MaGumede is expecting the king's first child. She was spotted outside the hospital rocking her baby bump. It is the first time in royal history that a queen or a female member of the royal family has ever been spotted pregnant. Could this mark the end of an era?"

"Switch it off please." I say to the helpers.

End of an era my left foot, they were invading my privacy. I can't even get air in private, I'll obviously end up splashed on all news platforms. And how the hell did they know baba was the one admitted? I've let down all those queens and princesses who have worked so hard to keep their pregnancies a secret. To think I was doing so well.

I stand up and go attend to my pots. Just as I

am stirring my curry, Shlobo walks into the kitchen.

“I’ve been looking for you all around, Zulu is asking for you.” my heart leaped.

“He’s up?” I dropped everything in my hands.

“Yes, and he’s been waiting for you so hurry.”

I didn’t even think twice, I followed her out of the kitchen. He was sitting in the throne room, sitting on his throne, with his hands covering his face. He looks stressed, or exhausted, I can’t really tell.

I go kneel at the alter, lower my head and praise him.

“Bayede! Zulu ka Malandela ngokulandela izinkomo zamadoda!”

“Phakama mkami uze sizokhuluma.” my heart started racing at the seriousness of his voice.

Now I’m seriously worried, and I can feel my

insides trembling as I climb the stairs to find my seat next to his.

“Let me excuse you.” Shlobo said before she walked out the room.

We were left alone in a thick silence, you could literally cut through it with a knife. He turned around in his seat and faced me before taking my hands and squeezing them. He looks guilty about something.

“How are you feeling?” I asked him.

His eyes softened up and he gave me that look of love he always gives me when we make love. I love this man with my whole heart.

“I’m feeling better, I just needed to be home, that’s all.” he confesses.

I’m glad that’s the case, he looks better. I just wish he could just get rid of that guilty look he’s wearing.

“Why are you wearing an apron?” he asks wearing a smirk.

“I was doing my wifely duties today and cooked.”

“Ngathi uyazi ukuthi akuve ngilambile, I can’t wait to taste your food.” I blushed.

“I wanted to talk to you about what is happening here at the palace, so you can advise me on a few things, as the the Queen of Zululand, and my wife.”

“Okay.” I say, feeling very unsure.

He took a deep breath in before he opened his eyes and looked at me.

“So you do know that years ago, before Zwelibanzi married Nontuthuzelo, that she used to be my girlfriend.” I retracted my one hand from his hold.

He didn’t fight me about it. My body

temperature is rising. I didn't know this, he never told me!?

Why is this giving my entanglement with Banzi and Mandlenkosi?

"I had asked her to marry me and she had agreed, but I didn't know that she was dating and in love with Zwelibanzi, and not me." I'm still trying to figure out what this has to do with me.

"When I told her I didn't want to take the throne like I was supposed to, she broke up with me and accepted my brother's proposal instead. Zwelibanzi didn't know about this, and till his last day he didn't know that the woman he married was supposed to be my wife." he took a deep breath.

"Baba I don't unders..."

"I'm telling you all of this so you don't crucify me for what I'm going to tell you next."

“She was sleeping with the both of us at the same time, and she ended up falling pregnant with Vukani. Nothing occurred to me then that it might have been my son too, because she was sure that it was Zwelibanzi’s child. Shortly thereafter they got married and Vukani was born into wedlock, therefore he was considered Zwelibanzi’s son, per terms of marriage, and Zulu blood.”

“But?” I asked raising my eyebrow.

Tears are already burning my eyes.

“He’s my son.” he says, failing to maintain eye contact with me.

His voice is barely audible.

I have no reason to be mad at him, or the situation, he didn’t know me then, he owes me nothing.

“I didn’t know until that night you found me in the bathroom.” he’s been keeping something

this big from me?

“I didn’t know how to tell you mkami.” the tears involuntarily fall from my eyes.

“Ngiyaxolisa.” I cover my face with my hands and sob.

I can’t control myself. I can’t help it, my heart is hurting. More than anything I’m angry at MaMzobe for making all of us fools for so long. For Banzi, who raised his brothers child thinking it was his. Vukani himself, who hates both of us to find out that Langaletu is indeed his real father, and the father he thought was his is actually his uncle.

After a minute of trying to compose myself, I wipe my tears and look up at him.

“Does Vukani know?” he shook his head.

“We aren’t going to tell him anything.” I don’t think that is a good idea.

“So he’s going to succeed the throne?” I ask feeling a sense of relief.

“No, he isn’t. The throne belongs to your son.”
oh no.

“By culture, Vukani is Zwelibanzi’s son because he was born into wedlock, but it’s a little complicated than that now because the ancestors want me to claim him as my son, and apologize to Zwelibanzi.”

It really should be the other way around. In fact, none of the brothers should be apologizing to each other, MaMzobe should be doing all of those things.

“So what do you need me to advise you on?” he reached for my hands.

I just looked at him. I feel very betrayed right now, I won’t give him my hands, he doesn’t deserve them.

“I just need my wife by my side, to help me

through this, to hold my hand.” he took one hand of mine. I let him.

“Please mkami.” this is more complicated than it seems.

I really feel betrayed, and I know I shouldn't blame him, but I can't help it. It's how I feel and I don't think I will be okay with him, not now.

“I will if you tell Vukani.” I say.

He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath in.

He doesn't look like he's willing to take my offer. I have no choice but to support him through anything and everything he faces, I just don't think I will be able to do it now. I need some space from him.

“I will dish up for you and bring it to you, I'll be sleeping in my old room tonight.” I say while standing up.

He doesn't protest. He looks defeated.

“MaGumede?” I close my eyes shut and let the tears fall.

I don't want him to see me so I don't turn around before I wipe them. When I finally do, he has his elbows on his knees and he's looking at me.

“I'm sorry once again.” he says.

His sorry is not going to change reality now.

My job now is just to make sure that Vukani gets introduced as Langaletu's son so everyone is happy, and Mhlabawesizwe can finally rest in peace.

It's my job to do that as Langaletu's wife, and most importantly, the Queen of Zululand like Mhlabawesizwe said I was.

Waze wasinda umthwalo.

Chapter Ninety

Amile Gumede

“I don’t think this is a good idea.” I hate breaking the rules, but I have to do this, for my sanity, and for the well being of all of us, especially my family, including Vukani.

“Lerato, please.” I reprimand.

I don’t like weak people, how many times did we go over this plan.

“If Thula or Bayede hear that we are doing this, we are good as dead.” she says in a whisper.

I’m this close to kicking her!

“The only way this could go wrong is if you go running your mouth, which you won’t do. Please, relax.” I’m paying Khabazela a shitload of money for this, it’s not going to flop.

The ceremony is fast approaching, Vukani still doesn’t know a thing. I’ve been sleeping alone in

my old room, because I still feel betrayed by baba. That has resulted in a very tense atmosphere between us. For the past three days there has been limited conversation between us, he just makes sure to come to my room every morning to greet his daughter, and he does the same every night before kissing my stomach goodnight. I don't like it, the tension, but I can't bring myself to just let this situation pass, not until Nontuthuzelo is brought to justice.

And that is where we are headed, Lerato and I. she's the only one on my side on this. She understands the reasoning for my frustration, how am I going to being mothering a person my age, who has made it clear on not one, but many occasions that he hates me.

Baba still doesn't want to tell him, and I think that is what grates my tits more. I'm mad at Nontuthuzelo more than anyone, and that is

why we need to find her, and bring her back to that palace.

I have to protect isidima somyeni wami. He can't be kneeling apologizing to another man for a woman's sin; blood or not.

"This is the place." I tell Khabazela.

I remember Vukani telling me she's back at home, and that is where we are going to find her.

"Do you need me to escort you, my queen?" he asked as he turned off the car.

"No need, just stay here." it's bad enough that we are forced to travel in the royal cars, now everyone on this street will know people of the royal family were here.

I climb out, Lerato is still sitting there like a rained on chicken, she must not annoy me, not today.

“Please get out of the car. The sooner we do this the better.” I say, trying not to sound as annoyed as I feel.

“I still feel like this isn’t a good idea.” I don’t have time to be begging her.

I closed the door and waddled to the gate. Just when I was about to enter because it wasn’t closed, I heard the car door banging and she climbed out.

“You are the most stubborn pregnant person I have ever met.” she said standing next to me.

She adjusts the scarf around her neck. She thinks this is a movie, trying to cover herself up with a scarf. The only thing missing from her cloak is shades.

“Stop being a chicken.” I say as we walk towards the run down house.

As soon as we stand in front of the door, I knock twice and stand waiting for a response. I

really don't want to be here, I'm pregnant, swollen in every place imaginable, I'm tired both emotionally and physically, I really just want to get this over and done with.

"It's the queen. Ndlunkulu." she got on her knees.

"Please stand up ma'am." I begged. I can't be having people older than me praising me like they do.

"Please come in, what do I owe the pleasure of being visited by royalty." she asks making a way for us to enter.

"Asihleli, we are here to look for Nontuthuzelo, we got word that she is here." at least she knows who we are.

"Oh yes, she is. But I'm sad to inform you that she is not well my queen, upstairs I mean." she says gesturing to her head.

She herself looks like she could be a little off

the grid upstairs, but we aren't here for that.

"She needs to go back to the palace." Lerato cuts in before I could speak.

I turn to look at her, this was not part of the plan.

"Really? Is she going to get an inheritance?" she asks in excitement.

We share a look before we both turn to the lady.

"Yes, if she just comes with us, the king needs to talk to her."

"She will definitely come with you. Come this way my queen and I will show you where she is." she leads us to one of the rooms that are situated outside.

They look like they are in a better condition than the actual house itself, which I think is very sad.

There she is. She's counting something on the wall, or she's drawing? I don't know, but she looks very fascinated by it, so much that she

didn't hear us coming in.

"Nontuthu, the queen is here to fetch you." she doesn't turn around.

"What queen, I am the queen." she says.

"Aibo wena! Queen MaGumede." she jerks up and as soon as he turns around, our eyes meet.

She doesn't look crazy to me, she looks very much sane, it's just something is off about her. I can see it in her eyes.

"What are you doing here?" she asks as she scans the both of us.

Her eyes widen as she slowly moves her eyes down to my stomach.

"You are needed at the palace." Lerato again.

"For what? Amadlozi enu angixosha nje." see, this person is sane.

"Ngoba waxova waxova umndeni, wajika washiya kanjalo." I say walking closer to where

she is sitting.

I'm spitting mad. Lerato pulls me back, giving the witch a chance to laugh at my anger. She has no idea the pain she is causing my family.

"Now I have to fix you mess!" I spit.

"Calm down." Lerato whispers to me.

"You need to come back. The ancestors want you back." she cackled.

"What's in it for me?" she asked with a conniving smile as she made her way towards us.

"Your sanity." I say with the same cheek.

She goes quiet. I've got her.

"Are you going to tell Mhlabawesizwe to leave me alone?" she bargains.

He haunts her huh? That's my fighter, at least I know that I can trust in him to make someone's life difficult. He excels in that.

“Depends on your co operation. Right Mhlaba?”
she turns around hastily.

“You can see him too?” she asks in panic.

Is it too late to take back my statement.

“Let’s go.” Lerato says.

I was still enjoying the moment.

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“What is she doing here?” he doesn’t look happy
with me at all.

He doesn’t look happy with the both of us. It’s
worse because his mother is also here, giving
me the same exact look that he’s wearing. Now
that I’m seeing them next to each other, they
are one and the same person.

“She’s here to appease the ancestors. You are

not going to go apologize to the ancestors for something you didn't do." I defend.

"Once again you are defying the rules Amile? You went out in public when you are supposed to be home, and now you are bringing the person I banned from the palace back here!? What for?" he raised his voice.

I startled. He never calls me by my name. Is he really that angry?

"I did this for a good cause!" I retort.

His face is turning red, he's really mad, all that needs to happen now is for him to start fuming at the ears and nose.

"Come with me. Now!" it's not negotiable.

I leave his mother and Lerato and I follow him to our bedroom. I haven't slept here for three days, maybe that's why I feel like shit! He slammed the door behind me and I almost jumped out of my skin. I've just been reminded

why I was afraid of him so much.

“Don’t you forget that this was my problem to deal with, that the ancestors have spoken to me about this, not you!”

“Baba, don’t be irrational...” I bargain. He cuts me off.

“I’m being irrational!? Are you not the one who left our bedroom because you found out I have a son that also didn’t know about until like four days ago? I’m just as overwhelmed as you are, the boy hates me, I don’t even know where to start with him. The last thing I need is you adding on to my problems by bringing Nontuthuzelo here and gallivanting the whole town with my child in your stomach!” so it’s his child when he’s angry!

“It’s easy for you to come here and shout at me but you don’t know what it’s like being tormented by your father. He continuously

haunts my dreams and demands the impossible from me! What am I supposed to do then? I'm trying to bring peace to this family, because that's what he wants me to do."

"It's not your battle to fight mkami. Will you just sit down and support me? Will you? That's all I'm asking of you." I shook my head and sobbed. I dumped myself on the ottoman.

"I feel like all the things that I have sacrificed, my life, my youth, have gone in vain. I'm here, still being tormented by Mhlabawesizwe every single night, even after all the things I have done for him, and his bloody family. I'm just trying to make him happy, so that I can be happy and have peace. Is that too much to ask for, Peace! Is It too much?" he doesn't answer me.

"I was passed from Zwelibanzi down to you, I felt like a possession. My feelings haven't been considered once anywhere, I'm always

supposed to just take anything that is given to me. Don't I have feelings? Do they even matter?"

"That's why I said I need you to advise me on this, and now that you did, I need you to hold my hand, as my wife, because I promised to do this with you, right. Now why aren't you trusting in me? Trusting my abilities to handle this situation like the man of the house."

I can see that we aren't hearing each other.

"You matter Amile. Your feelings matter and your opinion too. You have a higher power and influence on these ancestors, more than I do, more than anyone in this family does. You are not a possession, you are a strong woman, and that is why this has been removed from your shoulders, and been made mine to deal with. You didn't need to go all the way to find Nontuthuzelo, this doesn't include her. I need to do whatever that I need to do to please the

ancestors, and make sure Vukani, my son, is okay with the life that he is living, so that the peace that you want so much can reign. Let me do this mkami, just give it to me.”

I just want Mhlabawesizwe to leave me alone, is that too much to ask for?

“Nontuthuzelo must go back to where she came from, otherwise I will lock her up in jail with Nkululeko and she will regret ever crossing me.” he says as he stands up.

I just saw a different side of him altogether. I can't believe we just had a fight. A real one.

“She needs to apologize.” I'm still standing on that one, and I'm not going to budge.

“To who? To you?” I frown and cross my arms across my chest.

“The people she wronged have forgiven her, she didn't wrong you, get over it.” he says as if he wasn't just telling me my feelings matter a few

seconds ago.

“I really don’t appreciate what you did MaGumede, I don’t like blowing a fuse like that, and I don’t get angry easily. Stop being stubborn and disobeying me. When I tell you to do something, you do it, not the opposite of what I told you to do. No matter what the situation is like between us.” is he reprimanding me?

“Do you understand me?” I let down my arms.

“Yes baba.”

“You are coming back to our bedroom tonight, sengibekezele kwanele. You are not allowed out this house anymore because you can’t be trusted.” I nodded.

“Sit here and take a nap.” he commands me.

I thought he had calmed down, he’s still angry. As he is making his way to the door, I call him.

“KaMhlaba.” he turned around.

“I’m sorry.” I apologized.

His face softened he walked back to me and planted a kiss on my forehead.

I don’t apologize to just anyone, he must be very glad that I did.

Langaletu Zulu

“Why are you so frustrated?” Thulisile asks him as he walks into the office.

“Why didn’t anyone tell me that having a wife is stressful.” Thuli laughs.

“What did you expect, that they will always be smiling in your face? Usenzi uMaGumede?” this is a joke to her.

“Will you believe me if I tell you she went all the

way to kwaMzobe and brought her all the way here because she wants her to be the one to apologize instead of me.” she laughs even more.

“Are you laughing because you know it’s not serious?” he asked concern covering his face.

“It sounds like something Mhlabawesizwe would do.” she says picking up her bag.

He totally agrees, that man was crazy, but what does that have to do with his wife, his sweet MaGumede.

“And here I was thinking she was a re-incarnation of MaNdlela.” she says to herself then sits down, catching her breath.

A lot is not making sense to him.

“What so you think he’s living in her.”

“Maybe not her but the child in her stomach.” he widens his eyes.

“Things like these happen you know. Maybe

that's why they will be king."

"It's a girl child." she looks at him and scoffs.

"Congratulations, you are going to be a great father!" she said to him.

He smiled. His smile quickly faded when the reality of him already being a father hitting him.

"Are you going to tell him?" she asks.

"I don't know if I should. Should I?" he asks her.

She knows everything, she should be the one telling him.

"It's going to ruin him, it's going to ruin his life, and it will cause feuds among them when they grow up if he knows that he is your son."

"What, fighting for the throne?" Thuli keeps quiet.

"Shlobo?"

"This ceremony should be done, but I don't think

you should tell him.” she replies after a long time.

This changes everything. The last thing he wants are his sons fighting over the throne when he’s not alive to intervene and mediate the situation. He knows how badly throne wars can get. Siblings can even kill each other for that chair, and it’s not even that Godly.

He’ll just continue loving Vukani from a distance like he has been doing the whole time, he knows he won’t change the way he feels about him. He already hates him, it’s a bit late to try and change him now. He’s not going to push him further away by telling him this.

“After all of this dies down I want to sit down and have my mother and MaGumede in one room, there seems to be a beef between them.”

“Don’t bother.” Thuli says.

“She’s my mother.” she shakes her head.

“The same reason she left the first time will be the exact same reason why she will leave again. Don’t give her the time of day.” he sighs.

It’s problem on top of problem.

“Forget about your mother and get MaMzobe out of this house before Mhlabawesizwe kills her.”

His heart almost stops beating. It still shocks him how she knows these things.

He doesn’t have a choice, he has to clean up his wife’s mess.

Chapter Ninety-One

Amile Gumede

I don’t know if kaMhlaba is still angry at me or

not. The ceremony that made us fight is over, even against my wishes he went down on his knees and apologized to Banzi.

I'm not really happy with what he did, but I have no choice but to smile in his face because the way he reprimanded me yesterday made me want to never go against his word ever again. I've never been scolded like that in my life, and he did it without raising his voice.

I can't pick up his mood, every time that I have run into him today, he had a straight face, that gave me no hints. We slept in the same room, on the same bed, but he kept to his side, and I did the same. I don't know what to think anymore.

Lerato is here glowing like she wasn't also in the dog house with me. Turns out that they were really angry, like really angry at us. I still don't think it was that big of a deal, and our efforts shouldn't have gone in vain like that.

MaMzobe had to suffer some sort of consequence, I mean, we had her where we wanted her. What was so hard with a little action in this place.

She's glowing though, and I can't help but notice the little moments where she stops and stares into space. Why does she look so happy?

"Miss ma'am, did I miss something?" we are sorting out cutlery in the kitchen.

I need to dish up for the king, and serve him in front of his people like the wife that I am.

Maybe I can score myself some points and he can forgive me. Again I'm going against his wishes, I should be resting.

"It's nothing." she says blushing.

"Excuse me, I thought your husband was fuming mad at you, in fact, both of our husbands were mad at us." she giggled.

"Well, unlike you, mine knows how to put his

anger to good use.” she says as she turned on her heels.

Why didn't I see it sooner. The dirty things that put strangers in our tummies, that's what she did last night.

“Must be nice.”

“Very nice. I might have missed a few good orgasms, but it was worth it.” she whispers the latter of the sentence.

I can't help but burst into loud laughter.

“I don't want to bore you with the details.” she says sitting down.

She really wants me to ask.

“I really want to know, but I don't want to know.” she laughs at me.

“Come sit down, and imagine that Thula isn't who he is.” I didn't even hesitate.

Their empty bellies can wait, this seems to be

good gossip, and maybe I can get a few tips. I literally know nothing about being good in the sack.

“He locked me up in the bathroom before he told me to strip all my clothes and get in the shower. He then had me under the cold running water, that was the less fun part though, that was before he gave me a senseless series of fucks in that same shower. I literally could not walk.” she narrates.

I close my eyes and try not to picture that, I don't want to ruin bhut' Thula's image in my mind. But damn, it really sounds hectic!

“You two are sitting gossiping, your husbands are out there hungry.” the devil's agent spits.

At this point I prefer Mhlaba over her, he is less annoying than this. At least he likes me.

We got on our feet and went to continue with the dishing up.

She's been here the whole week, I don't understand why Shlobo hasn't gotten her out of this place already! She was the one who said she was bad news.

I would have made a plan, but I'm on house arrest officially so no.

"Why are you trying to starve my son, add more meat, he's a man!" she says hovering over my shoulder.

"My husband doesn't like meat, you would know that if you stayed with him." he likes bacon, he likes pork, not red meat.

"I'm telling you, add more." she takes the spoon from me violently.

If I didn't move away quick enough, she would have spilled that whole pot of curry on me. This woman is mad.

"Ma, I don't think you should be here." Sis' Melo says.

She's always by my side, she always protects me.

"Usuke wabonaphi indoda idla ukudla okuncane kangaka? No wonder my son is so thin, you are depriving him of his food!" she mumbles, totally ignoring Sis' Melo.

She's adding more meat on the plate.

Lerato is just standing there now looking at me with pity. This is what having a mamezala is like, I really don't like it hey!

"Ntombazane, bring his tray and spoon. Have you prepared his water?" she asks with so much attitude.

"No." I say looking at her directly in the eyes.

"Wagana kanjani wena ebukhosini. All you know is long nails and gallivanting the street, nothing about taking care of your husband." says the woman who didn't even get a single cow from the royal family.

Sis' Melo ran to fix the water for me. She understands that I'm heavily pregnant, I can't be running around doing everything.

I'm not offended by her long nail comment, it's not the first time and it's definitely not the last time I'm hearing it. The good thing is my husband isn't complaining about them, so no one has a say. And they aren't even that long!

I took the plate she dished from her without saying another word, and placed it on the tray. Baba won't finish this, I know him. She put an excess amount of food and he will definitely scold me for it.

Sis' Melo follows me out the kitchen with the bowl of water and when we get to the dining room where he and his brothers are sitting, I attempt to kneel so I can place his food in front of him.

"No, don't kneel mkami." he whispers to me.

His mother is watching me like a hawk.

As heavy as I am, I go down on my knees. He gives me a sad smile before accepting the tray from me. Sis' Melo handed me the water and I used it to wash his hands.

"Thank you." he said standing up to help me up.

In that moment it felt like it was just the two of us in that room. I seemed to block out all the other people and just focused solely on cleansing my man's hands before making sure he's fed. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be, this whole submitting thing.

Now I need to apply it in the bedroom.

"Go nap, I don't want to see you going up and down now." he says rubbing my arm.

"Yebo Zulu." I say and bow.

I still can't read his energy, but I will definitely take a nap, I need it!

I gave Sis' Melo the bowl of water.

"Indoda iyathotshelwa nje." the wicked witch said as I was making my way back into the kitchen.

I would understand if this was coming from a married woman, but its coming from a woman who couldn't even trap the king with a son when he was promiscuous. That means she was the problem was with her.

"My husband told me to go take a nap. I'm off."
I said waving at Lerato.

"Haibo..."

"She's pregnant ma, and the king did instruct that she go take anap." Sis' Melo interjects.

"Let's go my queen." she says as she leads me out the kitchen.

She didn't even want me in the kitchen in the first place, that's why she's so quick to send me

out.

“Thank you so much.” I say as we walk up the stairs.

“That woman is taking advantage of you, and she seems to be ignoring that you are heavily pregnant. Not while I’m here.” I giggle.

She sees me into my bedroom, and she is the one to cover me with a blanket, and makes sure to leave the air conditioning on because I can’t sleep without it on, and she leaves me to my nap!

I deserve it.

*

We are having dinner again. I’m still in the same seat that I was sitting in and there is my favourite person, Mhlabawesizwe, sitting opposite me, looking at me with a massive grin. My intolerance for him is slowly fading away.

“You can eat.” he says picking up his spoon, shoving it in his mouth.

I don't trust him.

“What are you trying to do to me this time?” he laughed.

I've given up on Banzi, the boy and MaNdlela, they don't see me, and that's okay.

“I'm on your side MaGumede, don't you know this?” I roll my eyes.

“Not when you aren't giving our family peace.” I say.

“It's my family too you know, and I don't like it when my son is suffering. So I'm done.” I shook my head.

“You aren't done when people like MaMzobe still haven't apologized and your lover is making my life difficult.” he cackles.

“Why do you want her to apologize so badly?”

he asked placing his hand on his cane.

“I wouldn’t be in this mess if it wasn’t for her.” I retort.

“You are blaming the wrong woman.” he says and gave me a grin.

“I told you, I have little power from here. Give me time.” he says and hits his cane on the ground twice.

*

I’m getting tired of this man.

I sit up, and I find kaMhlaba leaning against the nightstand, staring at me with his arms folded across his chest. I wipe the corners of my mouth before shifting uncomfortably on the bed. How long has he been watching me?

“I didn’t mean to wake you.” he says walking towards the ottoman.

He didn’t wake me, his father did.

“I want us to talk.” he says pulling up his pants, sitting down on the ottoman.

I don't want to talk. I rolled off the bed and waddled to where he is sitting.

“I don't want to talk baba.” I say looking at him.

He places his hands on my belly before he tilts his head up to look me directly in the eyes. His eyes are red.

“Why don't you want to talk?” he asks using his hand to remove more grub from my face.

“I'm tired of talking.” in other unspoken words, I'm horny.

I put the thumb he was using on my face in my mouth. He gave a low chuckle before he stood up.

“What if this is important?” he traced my face with his finger before he lifted my chin up and made me look at him.

“Not more important than what you should do to me right now.” I say.

I’m going to feel embarrassed later, I just really have an itch right now, and only he can scratch it.

“Right now?” he asks finding my lips.

Alcohol! I can taste alcohol on his lips. His eyes are red, is he drunk?

“Baba?”

“I couldn’t do it sober.” he says before turning me around and going in for a deep kiss.

I’m left breathless as he slowly runs his hand up my thigh.

Do I blame him? No, I totally understand. Is it good for him though? No, his health is compromised. I think he needs this more than I do.

He carefully places me on the bed lifts my dress.

I can't see his face behind the bump but I know he's staring at my palace with pure happiness and satisfaction. He knows it's his, and only his.

He further spreads the thighs apart before I feel his tongue doing the unspeakable. It's wet down there, I can hear him slurping as if he's enjoying some delicious meal, nothing give me more pleasure than that. I must applaud his tongue game, the amount of pleasure it gives me is enough to last me a lifetime.

"There are people downstairs." he says as he leans in to kiss my lips.

I'm on the verge of tears, I don't care that there are people downstairs.

"Don't go baba." I beg.

I reach for his belt buckle and work on it. He stares at me and chuckles.

"MaGumede?"

“You can’t possibly deprive me of my vitamin d baba, I don’t know you as a selfish man.” he laughed and helped me remove his belt.

“I shouldn’t be doing this.” he says unhooking my bra.

He lifts my dress over my head and I help him by taking off the bra and throwing it on the floor where his shirt already is.

He massages my swollen boobs and white water runs down my stomach. I’m already producing milk?

He captures my lips in a slow kiss and then lays me on my side.

“Are you comfortable?” he asks as he positions himself behind me

“Very.” I say in a moan.

He lips are on my neck as I feel him fill me up.

This is exactly what I missed.

“I love you sthandwa sami.” he says as he moves.

I can barely get a word in, I’m biting my lips to try suppress the loud moans from escaping my lips. I don’t need the whole world to know my dirty secrets.

I reach my peak before he does, it goes to show how much I wanted and needed it, more than he did!

When he finally spills his semen inside of me, he wraps his arms around me and breathes out, his alcohol breath fanning my neck. I really don’t mind it though

We are both wet and sticky, and I can feel him still inside me, twitching. I wish we could just stay in this moment forever, where both of us are happy, and overly satisfied.

“How long till I don’t have to share this body with anyone else.” he asks rubbing my stomach.

I laughed and put my hand over his. His wedding band looks so damn good on him.

“A few more weeks baba.” I reply in half a breath.

What an extreme sport. If I’m barely coping from this, imagine what it will be like when we start doing the freak shit.

“Just a few more weeks and then you can show me Fifty Shades of Bayede.” I tilted my head to look at his face and he was wearing a frown.

I laughed at his innocence. I don’t even know if he’s anything close to what those movies were. If he is then I’m definitely in for a ride.

“What is this fifty shades you speak of?” he asks kissing my shoulder.

“It’s a movie, we should watch it.” I say with a giggle.

“I don’t watch movie mkami.” I says in a stern

voice.

Yeah, well, I'm his wife and he will do whatever I say.

I think maybe this is the perfect opportunity for me to say this.

"Baba I just wanted to apologize for what I did yesterday. The stunt I pulled was uncalled for, and I put my life and your baby's life at risk, I'm genuinely sorry for disobeying your word and not trusting in you. That and I never want you to shout at me again because you are scary, I will never do something like that again." he chuckles.

"So if I didn't shout at you, you would have done it again?"

"Maybe, yes. Anything to protect my family. My family is you." I place my hand on his, and squeeze it.

"I forgive you sthandwa sami. I understand that

you are sharing your brain with someone else so..." I slapped his arm and he laughed.

I think I like drunk Langaletu! It's a pity I can't see him more often.

"On a serious note MaGumede, never make me angry again, I don't like feeling like that."

I still remember what I said when I met him for the first time, I said he had anger issues. Maybe he really does. He handles it well though, he's right, I've never seen him angry, especially to that extent before.

"Next time if I make you angry, you must tie me up." I say jokingly.

He spanks my bum and I can't help but startle.

"Don't ask for something you can't and won't be able to handle." my heart started racing.

"I was joking." I say looking at him.

He gave me a naughty smile, and I couldn't help

but blush. He's getting hard inside of me again, round two?

"If I were to tie you up now I'd lose my senses and fuck you so hard you'd give birth right here and I wouldn't care until I finish what I started." I cover my mouth.

He starts moving again.

"Baba you ar..." I gasp when he hits that spot.

Holy shit can this baby be born already, I want to play with the big boys!

Chapter Ninety-Two

Amile Gumede

It's Christmas Eve, the day Zwelibanzi Zulu was born. In exactly two days, it will mark one year after he passed away.

I still remember that day vividly like it was just yesterday. Baba left early in the morning. I don't know where he went, but I'm assuming he went to visit his brother's grave.

I'm so tired today, I don't even feel like getting out of bed. I'm sitting on my phone chatting to Khaya, and scrolling through social media. My life is currently boring, so I'm entertaining myself with other people's problems.

I promised the boys to decorate the Christmas tree with them. The first thing they pointed out when they came back from school was that there was no Christmas decorations anywhere at the palace.

I didn't even care about that, I'm too pregnant to want to do anything, especially worrying about Christmas and all those other things. I left it in Lerato's hands.

They said there is no Christmas spirit, and that

they want decorate the palace so it can feel a lot more like a holiday. They forget that this is not a movie, but I'd do anything to make my boys happy.

So they've been working on that the whole week, the whole place is covered in Christmas lights, Khaya was the one running around buying everything for them. I feel bad for him sometimes.

"Usalele mbhemu." that's the king of Zululand.

It's only 10 in the morning. It's still early, it's not like I have somewhere important to be.

"I don't feel like getting out of bed." he's stripping his clothes.

"It's cold outside." he says jumping into the bed, making me cold in the process.

"I thought Christmas in Kwa-Zulu Natal was in summer." he chuckles.

“That’s what I thought too.” his body is so cold.

“You are going to get a cold baba, where were you?”

“I took Hallelujah and Mgcini to Zwelibanzi’s grave.” I thought as much.

“How are they doing?” he sighs.

“They are okay I guess. They just miss him.”

Silence graced the room. I want to ask about the elephant in the room, but I don’t want to fight with him, but I want to know.

“And Vukani?” he clears his throat.

See, he makes it hard for me to talk about this. He just doesn’t want to talk about it at all. He can’t avoid reality forever.

“He didn’t go with you guys?” I ask again. If I could turn around and face him, I could, but I’m too fat now.

“No he didn’t.” he’s done talking about it, if I ask

again, he's going to snap at me.

I continue scrolling through my phone, if he doesn't want to talk, I can also keep quiet.

"Are you mad at me now?" he asks after some silence.

"No, I'm not mad baba, what makes you think I'm mad?" oh I'm mad.

He has ruined my day already, and it doesn't take a lot to ruin my day.

"Since when do we touch phones in our bed?" I roll my eyes.

I'm taking advantage of the fact that he can't see me.

"I saw you MaGumede." whatever I don't care.

I switched off the phone and put it on the pedestal. He has my attention.

"Didn't you promise to help the boys decorate the Christmas tree?"

“I did, but I’m tired.” I hate breaking promises.

“It’s fine, I’ll do it with them.” he says and wraps his arms around me.

“Thank you.” I said and bit my lip.

“How are we feeling today?” he asks rubbing my stomach.

“We are feeling irritable.” I say moving his hand from my stomach.

“Okay.” he gets out of bed.

Uyangiduba? Really?

“I think you should just sit here by yourself today.” I think we are too old to be throwing tantrums.

“No one wants to sit around a sour prune on Christmas Eve.” he mumbles loud enough for me to hear him.

“I’m a sour prune?” that hurts my feelings quicker than I can blink.

“You are being difficult for no reason Amile. Your moods are up and down all of a sudden, what’s going on?”

“This is not a decoration baba, I have a human being growing inside of me. I’m sorry if I can’t control how my emotions work.” I wipe my tears.

I don’t like crying in front of him.

“I thought we could do something nice today as a family, but you clearly are not in the mood so I’ll cancel.” now I feel bad.

He’s good at emotional blackmail, that I can give to him.

“Don’t cancel baba I’m sorry. I’ll work on my mood.” he drags me through his teeth before he picks his jacket and leaves.

That hurt me, it hurt me so much.

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After I finished crying and put my pride and attitude aside, I went to take a shower so I could join them in the family activities that he planned for us.

Just when I was getting dressed, he came into the room.

“How did you moisturize your feet?” he knows that he does that for me because I can’t do that myself.

I didn’t moisturize them because I was too afraid to call him. It’s not the pride, I was just afraid.

“I didn’t moisturize them baba.” I say looking down.

I’m ashamed of myself. That’s kaMhlaba for you, he will make you feel ashamed of your

actions.

“Sit down.” he commands.

I don't think twice, I go sit on my chair and he sits on the foot stool like he always does, and places my short legs on his thighs. He does my whole leg instead of just the foot. This is why I love this man.

“Thank you baba.” I mumble.

“Why are your feet so swollen today?” I'm nine months pregnant, I could give birth any day from today.

“I don't know, but they aren't sore.” he looks worried.

“You don't have to come downstairs, I can always cancel everything.” I didn't even have to do anything but be pregnant for him to feel remorseful.

He didn't want to listen to me when I told him

I'm tired, but he listens now when he sees that my feet are swollen.

"No, baba, I'm fine, I can come down for a while. I don't want to spoil the mood." I gave him a small smile.

I'm also good at emotional blackmail. We are tied!

He's done doing my legs.

"I'll be down in a second." he kisses my forehead before he goes out.

He does that when he feels guilty. He's out the door before I can even blink.

I finish up and make my way downstairs. The smell of freshly baked cookies has my mouth watering as I make my way downstairs.

There are my favourite people, my boys. They are all gathered in the lounge in front of the tree. They are talking and laughing as they sort out

the Christmas decorations. They look so happy, it warms my heart.

“Mamizana, look baba is almost as tall as the Christmas tree.” that’s what Halle calls me.

He looks so content.

“I can see!” I say going to settle on the closest couch to them.

They moved around the whole lounge so they could put everything on the floor. they’ve been down here for almost an hour, the tree is still empty, what have they been doing this whole time.

“You haven’t started decorating yet?” I ask picking up a box of decorations.

“We were waiting for you.” Mgcini says and rushes to me.

“Okay, these go at the top, so you are going to give them to baba and he will hang them for

you.” I say handing him the decorations.

He looks so excited. I can't help but feel content.

“You can take that box and do the bottom of the tree.” I instruct.

“One day, I'm going to grow tall like baba and I'll also decorate the top of the tree.” Mgcini says jumping up and down.

“Yes my boy, you will, if you eat all your veggies, you will grow to be as tall as baba.”

“Bhuti come help baba decorate the top of the tree.” Halle runs to Vukani who has just waltzed into the house.

I see baba's body tensing up. Vukani didn't even look like he was planning on greeting us, he was just going to walk past us like we are invisible.

Unfortunately, I couldn't give two fucks about Vukani and his stinking attitude. He made it clear to me that he hates me, and he doesn't

want me in his business, so I'm steering far from him, as per his request.

"Halle I'm too old to be decorating trees." he says with zero enthusiasm in his voice.

I don't even want to look at him, I know it's a jab at me.

"But today is dad's birthday, and he loved Christmas." silence graces the room.

KaMhlaba finally decided to turn and look at the both of them. I also turn, and when I look at Vukani, he's staring directly at baba.

"Come on son." he smiles at him.

My heart falls into the pit of my stomach.

"Please bhuti." Halle begs.

He agrees and he drops his bags on one of the chairs and goes to stand next to baba.

"How was work today?" he asks his son.

“It was fine.” that’s all he says before he continues doing what he’s been asked to do in silence.

“Mamizana are we still doing it right?” Mgcini asks showing me his side.

“It’s beautiful my boy.” I give him a wide smile.

Vukani shoots me a death stare. I would gladly return it, but I have to be the adult in this situation, so I won’t bother myself.

The boys start singing a Christmas song to entertain themselves, and I can’t help but join them. I’m enjoying this wholesome moment, a moment with family, where we are all just happy.

By all I mean us excluding Vukani because we don’t know how he’s feeling.

It feels like I’m in a Christmas movie.

“Bhuti why aren’t you singing?” he looks unwilling when his little brother calls him out,

but he joins in, singing in a low voice.

My daughter starts kicking. I rub my stomach.

“Come and feel here.” I call them.

It’s a battle between Mgcini and Halle of who is going to get to me first, they almost trip over each other, causing me to laugh.

“Be careful.” I warn.

They both put their hands on my stomach and feel the baby moving.

“Oh my gosh that is so cool!” they both marvel.

“She’s happy to hear her brothers, right baby?” I say rubbing my side.

She kicks even harder. The fascination on their faces is beautiful.

“It’s a girl?” Halle asks.

“Yes, that’s what the doctor said.” I reply.

“I’m going to protect her and make sure that no

one ever hurts my sister.” he says.

My heart melts.

“Me too! I’m always going to hit anyone who wants to hurt my sister.” Mgcini chimes in as well.

I don’t want to cry!

“Okay, it’s my turn now.” I look up and I see Vukani kneeling in front of me.

He also places his hand on my stomach, much to my surprise.

The hypocrite child kicks even harder. He doesn’t like us, why are you kicking for him?

Right, amagazi ayatshelana.

Baba is just standing there snapping pictures, I’m sure this makes him so happy, because it really makes me happy too.

He receives a phone call just as we are still roped up in the little baby in my stomach.

“Our family activity is ready. Can we go now?” I didn’t know it required us to be outside the house.

“Wait, can I go change?” I ask.

“No, no time to change. Just get something warm. Boys go get your jackets, it’s cold outside.”

I’m literally not wearing underwear and I have on my stay at home dress.

“Vukani are you coming with us?” maybe he shouldn’t have given him a choice. He knows he’s going to say no.

“Yes, I don’t mind.” someone pinch me I’m dreaming.

There is no way I’m going to go out looking like this though.

“Baba I need to go and change.” I say attempting to get up from the chair.

The boys lend me a hand.

“MaGumede you are fine, you don’t need to change.” he doesn’t know fine.

First of all he’s wearing one of his expensive jeans, and he’s telling me not to change.

And Vukani is in a overall, he can’t go dressed like that.

“I’m going to change.” I waddle out the room.

He looks defeated. Good!

When I get to the room, the first thing I pull out is my underwear drawer and place them all on the bed.

I don’t even think they fit me anymore, I don’t bother putting it on at all. I leave them there and go to the wardrobe and pull out a light blue dress with long sleeves. It’s the closest thing to warm I have in my wardrobe that still fits me.

“Yabonake, usenza kancane.” he says walking

into the bedroom.

“Baba, I just got here.” he forgets that I don’t have long legs like him.

Two steps and he’s here. Those two steps of his are equivalent to at least 20 steps of mine.

“Hurry up mkami.” I take off the hideous dress I had on and threw it in the washing basket.

“Liphi ipenty?” I frown at him.

He’s wearing a smirk. It’s really not funny hey.

“They don’t fit me, baba.” he laughs and takes the dress in my hand.

He tells me to lift my arms and he helps me put it on.

“It’s okay my love, you can go without it.” he places his hand on my honeypot before he lowers the dress.

“Please behave Mageba.” I’m wearing a light dress with no underwear.

One mistake, I'll walk around with a map on my ass.

He teases my skittles, and I can't help but draw in a sharp breath. He finds my lips and kisses me softly, not forgetting to make use of his hands. I hold onto his biceps and moan in his mouth.

"Is that good?" he asks making me wetter.

"Don't stop." I beg.

He does the complete opposite and breaks the kiss. Now I'm wet.

He passes me a white thong from the bed. I give him an unsatisfied look.

"I think you'll need this now." he's smirking at me.

Is there a place where we can see husbands. I need a new one!

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Halle and Mgcini are so excited. I thought what I saw this morning when they were doing the tree was excitement, I was absolutely just seeing the starters.

Baba organized a family photo shoot for us. Well, knowing baba, I know it's not entirely him.

The outfit changes, the venue, the photographer, it all screams Khaya, and I'm here for it.

The boys are happy about their outfits, Khaya went wild on this one, he bought them matching Christmas pajamas, and accessories that have them running around, and clothes to last them the whole holiday. Vukani included, although he refused to put on the pajamas because he said they look stupid.

It's funny because baba said the exact same thing. They really know how to ruin a family

picture, so they didn't become a part of it, it was just my boys and I.

Seeing Vukani laughing and smiling was refreshing too, and this is what I know Christmas to be about, bringing family together.

I'm sure this is what Banzi would have wanted for his children, to be happy on his special day.

We also got a couple of themed family photo's. I definitely know the ones I want to have enlarged and placed in the lounge.

We are now sitting in the car waiting for him to come back.

"Boys, when baba comes back, we need to say thank you to him for taking us out today right." I say.

"Of course Mamizana." Halle.

"Did you guys have fun?"

"Yes, we had so much fun!" they say in unison.

Vukani is quiet as usual. It doesn't bother me anymore.

"You aren't going to ask me." he speaks.

I'm shocked, but I compose myself. I don't want him to think I'm afraid of it, I can't give him that satisfaction.

"I know you had fun." I say taking a glimpse of him.

He turns red instantly. He looks like he's about to burst.

Good!

I see kaMhlaba approaching.

"Baba is coming, in one, two three..." the door opens

"Thank you for today baba! We had fun." the three of us said in unison.

It wasn't the smoothest, but I'm sure he heard us.

He laughed and climbed into his seat and kissed my forehead, then my lips before he fist bumped his children. They are his children too.

“You are welcome, and I’m happy if you had fun.”

Mgabadeli starts the car and we are off.

I put my head on his shoulder.

“Thank you.” I needed today.

He kissed my forehead. I still love him, even though he gets on my last nerve sometimes.

Chapter Ninety-Four

Amile Gumede

As the new year slowly creeps up on us, I just want to sit and appreciate all the things that have happened that have led to this moment.

All the people I shared it with, and all the blessings God and the ancestors have sent my way. Thank you Mhlaba.

I remember how sad I was this day a year ago. I felt like nothing was ever going to change, that my life was ruined and I was certain that I would never find peace and joy. Now I'm here, 365 days later, I have a family, I have love; abundant love; I have joy, and most of all, I have peace. This that I have been searching for, I finally have it, and now that it is here, the tears, the heartbreak, and the pain are all worth it. It is the sacrifice that I gave in order to be here now.

My husband loves me, and I love him just as much. Not only has he given me love, but he has given me a family that loves me, and all my heart could ever desire.

I just can't wait to meet my daughter. My excitement peaked when baba and decorated the nursery. It's looking pink and pretty for her

to arrive. I could give birth at the end of this week, or the beginning of the next. I'm always sitting in anticipation, I'm afraid of labour pains more than anything, but I know they are going to be worth it.

He said he didn't like the pink, in fact, it was all over his uncontrollable face. His expressions kill me sometimes. But it's a girl, and I'm the mom, I love pink for my baby girl, and that is what is going to be her persona!

We also bought baby clothes, and Lerato and her royal friends brought me gifts. It was the closest thing to a baby shower, and I'm grateful for that.

My mother is supposed to be the one that is coming down to help me with the baby when she arrives, but she also has a baby of her own, now I'm stuck with my mother in law.

She has been steering out of my direction since

before Christmas, and I have reason to believe kaMhlaba has something to do with it. I'm glad she's not pestering me anymore though, the last thing I needed was someone sending me up and down knowing very well that I might go into labour at any given moment.

I still haven't forgotten Shlobo's words, she's not her for the good, and I hope for the better that when baba realizes it, it's not too late.

Baba took the boys out to go buy fireworks, because that's what they wanted, and they will get what they want, because their father can. He's that kind of dad, it has been refreshing seeing this side of him, and I now know that he's an amazing father.

I'm sitting outside on the bench overlooking the view, chewing on a bowl of ice. I'm feeling hot, and I always heard that pregnant woman eat ice. I'm not really enjoying it, I don't see the hype, but it's doing it's job in cooling me down.

“You want to land in hospital with pneumonia?”
I turned and stared at him.

“Nkosi, when did you get here?” he gives me a smile before he comes to sit next to me.

“I just got here now. They said you were in the garden.”

“And you assumed I was here?” he laughed.

“I knew you were.” he took the bowl of ice from me and emptied them on the grass.

“I was still eating those.” I sulked.

I’m not really mad. My moods have definitely improved, I’m working on them, and not trying to justify them with the hormonal imbalance in my body. Baba made sure of that, he really wasn’t entertaining me, especially because he has moods of his own.

“Uzogula. I heard that the king went to buy fireworks.” I nodded.

“His sons said they wanted fireworks, and they will get fireworks.” he laughed.

“They have him tied down don’t they.” he asked.

“They have him wrapped around their little fingers. And he’s enjoying every single minute of it.”

“And when are you due?” he turns and looks at me.

“Any time this week or the next.” he sighed.

“Are you ready.” I nodded.

“I am. At this point I just can’t wait to meet my baby.” I say rubbing my stomach.

That and I can’t wait to have my body back to myself. Carrying a human being inside of you and being responsible for their life is great and all, but I’ve had enough. I feel invaded.

“You aren’t scared?”

“Surprisingly, no I’m not scared. I fear the labour

pains, they says those are brutal, but other than that, I'm doing very well."

"You are one strong young lady, I admire you." my heart melted.

"And how are you? You didn't come home for Christmas."

"I got a promotion at work, so I had to stay in Durban a little longer and get things in order before I could come back."

"Oh my goodness Nkosi those are great news! Why didn't you say something." he shrugged.

"I didn't think it was important."

"Nonsense! Everything and everyone is important. This is big, in fact, we were supposed to thank the ancestors with some chickens or something." he looked at me.

"There's honestly no need..."

"No, there is a need. I will speak to baba and we

will have one. Stop downplaying your importance in this family. Your achievements are our achievements too!" he gave me a smile before he looked away.

Silence prevailed. It's time that he accept that he is a part of this family as much as everyone else is. He knows that I'm right, that is why he's quiet.

"Where is Mathapelo?" I ask changing the subject.

"We broke up a long time ago." he said chuckling.

"Hawu? I thought it was a serious thing. What happened?"

"She didn't respect me, and the way she loved was not the way I want to be loved."

"And couldn't you work through that as a couple?"

“It wasn’t worth it.” I gulped and kept quiet.

Will he ever find love?

“I’m focusing on myself. If I never find love again, then it’s okay...”

“Mamizana, look at what baba bought us!” we were interrupted by Mgcini’s screams.

He’s running towards me with a small box of fireworks. He looks so excited.

“Don’t fall.” I say giggling at his cuteness.

He finally makes it in front of me and shows me.

“He said this is mine only, he also bought one for you, the baby and Halle and bhuti.” I laughed.

“Okay, but you didn’t greet bab’ Nkosi.” he waved at him after noticing.

“Hello bab’ Nkosi.” Nkosi gave him a wide smile.

“Where is my box?” he asked with a playful smile.

Mgcini looked conflicted, and he started stuttering.

“You can take mine baba.” he said giving him his box.

We both laughed, he’s such a sweet boy.

“I’m just kidding son, it’s all yours. I don’t play with crickets.” Nkosi said giving back his box.

“It’s called fireworks baba!” Nkosi picked him up and tickled him.

He laughed his little lungs out. This is all that I have ever wanted, the sound of his laughs warm my heart, and I can’t help but feel like I’m done, I’ve done what I was meant to do.

Everyone is happy, Nkosi is, Banzi is also happy beyond the grave, and so are his sons, here on earth with us. I’ve done a good job, and I’m proud of myself.

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“Mamizana, can I talk to you.” I turn around and meet with Vukani staring at me.

“Yes, come sit with me.” I patted the space next to me.

I’m trying to compose myself, but he called me Mamizana like the boys do. I’m literally not breathing.

My baby started kicking as soon as he sat next to me.

“Your sister is kicking.” he didn’t think twice, his hand flew to my stomach.

“She does this every time you come close to me me.” I said.

He laughed, the fascination on his face was priceless.

When the baby was done kicking, I asked him

what he wanted to talk about.

“When I dropped out of school, you and bab’ Langa said I must tell you when I’m ready to go back.” bab’ Langa?

It’s okay, I understand. I just didn’t think there was a need to specify.

“Yes, we did say that.”

“I’m ready. I applied to this agriculture school in Canada. They accepted me and I’m set to start in February.” I stared at him in disbelief.

He didn’t think to let any of us of these plans at all? Calm down Amile.

“I need you to help me tell bab’ Langa. I don’t know if he’s going to agree or not.” oh no.

“Can I give you my thoughts on this.” I gave him a small smile.

He nodded. Is he really that desperate? Is that why he’s being so nice to me?

“Maybe you should have mentioned it sooner. The beginning of January is in a few hours, that leaves you with just a month to prepare for everything. It’s not like you moving to Cape Town or Swaziland, moving to Canada is a big step. You need a visa, your passport may need to be renewed too, you need money, shit loads of it. You can’t go suffer in another country, on another continent...”

“So you think he’s going to say no.”

“I’m not saying he’s going to say no, I’m saying he might not take it very well.” he looked desperate.

“Please talk to him for me.” he gave me pleading eyes.

If I was a terrible person, I would refuse to help him to make him pay for all the times he treated me like shit, but I’m not. Deep down in my heart, I care deeply for Vukani, and whether he likes it

or not, he's like a son to me. Whether we are the same age or not is none of my business.

"I'm not going to promise anything Vukani, but I will talk to him for you."

"Thank you mamizana." he said and stood up.

I still can't get over the fact that he's being nice to me.

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He's staring at me. I can feel his eyes on me. I can't even take a nap in peace without him staring at me.

"Baba." he shifts on the bed, and I feel his wet lips on my cheek.

"Wake up now, you've been sleeping for too long." I shook my head and stretched my limbs.

“What time is it?” I remember I decided to go take a nap in the late afternoon.

Being pregnant is exhausting.

“It’s almost eight.” I’ve only been sleeping for two hours.

This man is dramatic, he was just supposed to say that he misses me.

“I don’t want to get into the new year without you.” I open my eyes and stare at him.

That was corny and he knows it. But he’s cute, and I love him. He places another wet kiss on my lips.

“Okay baba, can I go freshen up.” he helped me sit up.

“Wait, I have to tell you something.” he says holding my hands.

My heart raced.

“Don’t look so scared.”

“I can’t not look scared, you look so serious.”
his face relaxed and he laughed.

“Dr Mhlongo called me today and he said I must come in on Tuesday for a check-up.”

“What day is Tuesday?” I asked him.

“The third.” I nodded.

The last time he was admitted, everything was clear, I think this is just his normal routine check. He hasn’t had any chest pains since then.

“I also need to talk to you about something.” he raised his eyebrow.

“Not now baba.” I tried to get up.

He held me down.

“No, tell me now.” this man!

“It’s about Vukani.”

“What did he do?” he asks putting on a straight face.

“He didn’t do anything. He told me today that he’s ready to go back to school.” he smiled.

“He told you and not me.” why does that seem to make him happy?

“Yes baba, because he wanted me to talk to you.”

“Why, so you can soften me up?” he knows these tactics all too well right?

“He wants to go to Canada.” I say.

“He can go. As long as he’s doing something with his life, and he’s happy.” he says and kisses my lips.

“He’s leaving in February baba.” he stops kissing my lips and looks at me.

“This February?” he looks shocked.

“Yes, he says he applied and they accepted him.” he looks conflicted.

“He can’t go, not now. It’s too last minute.”

exactly my sentiments.

“Maybe if he had said this sooner, but a month is not enough for him to move to a whole different continent.” great minds think alike.

“I’m leaving it in your hands ke kaMhlaba, I did my job and passed on the message.” I said and got up.

“Mkami can I shower with you.” he says getting up.

“We don’t fit in the shower together.” he knows this, I’m the size of a whale.

“Ngeke ayikho leyonto.” he says cupping my bum.

He wants me to go into early labour.

I turned and looked at him in the eyes. His eyes, they look somehow.

“Langaletu Zulu?” he frowned before a smile slowly formed on his face.

Why didn't I see it sooner, he's tipsy.

"It's New Year's Eve." he shrugged his shoulders.

"You should say my name more often, it just rolls off your tongue." I blushed and covered my face.

He lifted my chin and kissed me.

"How about that shower ke mkami?"

Why not?

Chapter Ninety-Five

Amile Gumede

Finale

Baba has his appointment today. I can tell that he's nervous, but he's trying to hide it. I don't know why he's nervous because it's just a

check-up. If the last time it was clear, then there isn't anything he should be worrying about.

I wanted to come with him to be his support system, but he obviously won't allow me, I'm too pregnant, I might pop at any minute from now.

I left him in the bedroom getting dressed, and I descended the stairs to go have breakfast.

"Mamizana." he's whispering.

Why is he whispering?

"Did you talk to bab' Langa?"

"Good morning to you too Vukani, yes I had a good night, how about you?" he sighed.

This boy needs to learn some manners.

"Good morning Mamizana. Did you talk to him?"
I give up.

"Yes, I did speak to him." we didn't even speak about it properly.

The man was tipsy, I doubt he hardly remembers that conversation, or if he does, he can't remember the little important things. He was thinking with his third leg that night, that's why he wanted to invade my shower time.

I didn't mind though because I went into the new year a very satisfied woman. That's besides the point though.

"And what did he say?" he asks, eagerness all over his face.

"He said..."

"He said he will think about it." we both startle and see him descending the stairs.

He's dressed in all black, it's so hot outside for his choice of outfit.

We wait for him to finally get to us and he wraps his arm around my waist, and stares at his son.

“Why didn’t you speak to me about this sooner?” the son scratched his head.

“You know that I want you to have an education, and I want you to be successful, and do what you love to do, I would not have stopped you. But February is less than a month away, it’s not enough time to organize everything for you to have a good trip. You aren’t just going to another province, it’s a whole continent.”

Vukani looks disappointed, but this is exactly what I told him, there was no chance it was ever going to work.

“Now I’m not saying I won’t try to sort things out for you, but I’m not promising anything son. I have a baby on the way that I still need to plan for, she could be born any day now. Your brothers are also going back to school.” he nodded.

“I understand.” he put his hand on his shoulders,

and Vukani looked up at him.

“If it doesn’t work out now, we will try again next year.” he reassured.

“Okay.” he tapped his shoulders.

“Let’s go have breakfast!”

He grabbed my hand and led me towards the dining room, with Vukani leading the way.

“Where are my boys?” he asks as he settles in his chair.

“They already ate, they went exploring somewhere in the garden.” Vukani answered.

This is him now. He participates in conversations and is actually nice to us. I’m starting to believe that maybe he needed the ceremony in order to wake up a little, and become this young man that we can sit and be with. Not the zombie that was walking around here.

“Did anyone go with them, it’s not safe.”

“Come on baba, they are in the garden, nothing is going to happen to them.” I reassure him.

He worries too much.

“So what did you apply for all the way in Canada son?” he asks after our breakfast arrives.

It’s just the three of us at the table, it’s not awkward at all. We have made progress.

“Agricultural Science.” he replies.

“So farming?” baba asks putting it in simpler terms.

“Not necessarily. It’s the study of agriculture, to improve crop production, which in turn benefits farmers, buyers and consumers. I can become a farmer with that, but I can also do a number of things with it as well.”

Baba looks impressed with him. So am I.

“So you were enjoying your work eplazini?” baba

questioned.

Vukani just chuckled and looked down. He seemingly learnt a lot from them.

“I did enjoy it. And I learnt quite a lot, now I know I want to do this. Not only do I enjoy it, but it will make me wealthy.” we both laughed at him.

Who doesn't love money though? I don't judge him.

“That's good boy, I'm glad you found something you love.”

Silence graced the room. My child is kicking, I won't say though, because this time it's accompanied by minor cramps. They are minor, I won't make a big deal out of it.

“I don't know if Mamizana told you guys yet, but I'm going to the hospital today.” he says.

Why is he speaking as if he's going to be

admitted and he's terminally ill. He's speaking as if he's not planning to come back. He must not do me like that.

Vukani looked up and stared at the both of us. He wants him to continue, he's not a man of many words, that has already been established.

"I have a check-up with my cardiologist, to see if my heart is still working properly."

Vukani looks scared all of a sudden. They are going to rub off their negative energy on me. I wasn't scared about this, but the way he's acting is starting to scare me. Does he know something I don't?

"It's just a check-up, I'll be back today." he reassures him.

He grabs my hand under the table and squeezes it in the process. He better not do me like that.

She's kicking again.

“Good morning Mageba, Ndlunkulu, mntwana.”
Khaya greets and he bows.

We greet him back. I didn’t know he’s back.

He was off on vacation in Durban since
Christmas Eve. He came back early, this has
kaMhlaba all over it.

“Ndabezitha, we need to get going before you
miss your appointment.” he states, paging
through his diary.

That’s Khaya for you.

Baba let go of my hand before he wiped his
mouth and pushed the chair back.

“Baba can I come with you?” I asked as he
stood up.

He gave me a look I can’t describe. He looks
conflicted.

I’ve been with him to every check-up since his
angioplasty surgery, he can’t drop me now.

“Mkami.” I shook my head.

“I’ve been with you to every single check-up, what’s different about this one baba?” he didn’t respond.

I took that as a sign to stand up and follow him.

“Ave unenkani kodwa.” he says and helps me get out the chair.

Khaya looked at me and smiled.

“Vukani look after your brothers, we will be back before noon.” he instructs his son.

I walk ahead after bidding him goodbye, and I walk with Khaya.

“I feel like you’ve been pregnant for forever! Kanti ubeletha nini?” he whispers.

That earns him a loud laughter from me, and he turns back to look if baba is watching us.

He isn’t.

“She’s coming soon, sesimlindile.”

“USimlindile ngempela.” I laughed and hooked my arm on his.

We are already outside, what is holding up baba inside.

He helps me climb inside the car before he closes the door and goes to take the front seat. We are waiting for the king.

“Hello Khabazela.” I wave at him.

He probably doesn’t like me, I almost costed him his job.

“Good morning Ndlunkulu.” he maintains a straight face at all times.

I don’t know how they do it actually. I wonder where Mgabadeli is, he’s friendlier than him.

“Awufuni nokusala ngephutha.” he says as he opens the door.

I laugh and give him my hand so he can climb in.

He really doesn't need it, but he's my man, we are in this together.

"No, I'm not risking it."

Khabazela didn't waste any more time, we were on the road in a second.

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He's tapping his foot nervously on the floor. I'm starting to get irritated because the wait is also driving me crazy, but that foot tap is making it worse.

Dr Mhlongo took him in for a MRI scan, and he hasn't come back since. It has been almost twenty minutes. Thing is, I wasn't scared when I cam here, but because he's scared, it's literally rubbing off on me.

"Baba please relax." he looks up and stares at

me.

“Let’s breathe in, then out.” I say.

If I could, I would stand up and go hold his hands, but I’m too lazy to stand up.

He took a deep breath in and then he slowly let it out. We did it again and I could see him being relieved a little. And he wanted to leave me at home.

“Ngiyabonga sthandwa sami.” he says and looks out the window.

I’ve never seen him this nervous before.

Normally I’m the one that panics in this room, he’s always calming me. Now the tables are turned. Does he know something I don’t?

“Why are you so nervous baba?” I ask breaking the awkwardness.

He clears his throat. Even his hand is shaking. You won’t see it if you aren’t paying attention,

but because I know him, I can see. He's nervous. "I'm afraid of dying." he says and looks away so I don't see his face.

That cuts deep, like really deep.

"I've never been afraid of death, I mean I've looked it in the eyes and I've technically 'risen' from the dead. Now all of that has suddenly changed Amile, I have a family that I need to be here for, and I can't imagine what it would be like if I were to die and leave you all alone. My children, not after they lost Zwelibanzi." the tears forced themselves out of my eyes.

I put my laziness aside and struggled up from the chair I was sitting on. I went to stand in front of him and looked at him.

"For the first time in my life, I went to the ancestral place, and ever since then, I haven't been able to shake this fear of death off." he confesses.

And what about me? I've been going to that place ever since I started living in the palace, and he's only ever been there once? Ever? It makes no sense.

"You aren't going to die." I say putting my hand on his cheek.

He looked up at me, his eyes were glistening. No, he must not dare cry in front of me, I won't be able to handle that sight.

"You don't know that sthandwa sami." I shook my head and made him look at me.

"I do Langaletu, I know you won't die, not now, not before you meet your daughter, and see her grow up. It won't happen." Mhlabawesizwe promised me, he can't go back on his promise.

He nodded and cupped my face. I pecked his lips multiple times, while I reassured him that nothing is going to happen to him.

The door opens disrupting our moment. He

uses his thumb to wipe my tears before I turn to see who it is.

It's Dr Mhlongo. I can't even read his facial expression, he's wearing a poker face.

"I'm sorry to interrupt baseNdlunkulu."

"Come in doctor." he says.

I move out of his embrace and go back to my chair.

Mhlongo proceeds to take off his lab coat and stethoscope before he settles on his office chair. I can't take my eyes off the file in his hand.

Baba glances over at me before he stares at his doctor. He folds his arms and leans on his chest.

"I was able to get the MRI scans quickly, they are here with me." he pointed to the file with his head.

He's still wearing the poker face. Can he just

get us out of this misery, we've already waited for him for over 20 minutes already!

"And how is it looking?"

"When was the last time you experienced chest pains." he already asked.

"It's been a long time now, the last time I was here was the last time." he cleared his throat.

"I'm not here to deliver good news Mageba." he says and opens the file as to look at it again, just to make sure.

My heart is racing. I can tell by his body language that he's just as terrified as I am.

"Your arteries are clogging up again. It's not severe just as yet, but it won't be long before the stent is almost useless in preventing your arteries from constricting."

I heard my husband heave a heavy sigh, and that broke my heart.

“We have obviously previously discussed the alternative in a case like this one, and I think now is the right time for me to perform that bypass surgery before it’s too late. We don’t want you having another heart attack because that will increase the risk of you being alive longer.”

He turned and looked me.

I know what I said, and I believe it, he’s not going to die. Mhlaba made a promise.

“Doctor he will do the bypass surgery, it’s not negotiable.” I chime in.

“I’ve already contacted my colleagues at eThekweni Hospital and let them know about your case, just give me the go ahead, and I will schedule your surgery for tomorrow latest. In fact, I should be admitting you right now.”

He shakes his head.

“No, I can’t leave now, my wife may give birth

any day from now, I have to be there when she does.” he protests.

“Baba, this is your health.”

“MaGumede, I can’t let you go into the labour ward alone. I don’t want to miss it.”

“You won’t even stay in hospital for too long right, it’s like the angioplasty surgery?” I said trying to convince him.

Am I convincing him or me though?

“It actually isn’t. it takes round about 6 six weeks to fully recover as it is an open-chest surgery.”

“You see, I can’t have that.” he protests.

No, I’m not listening to him. This is the same man that was telling me he’s afraid of death.

“Doctor, book him in.” I said.

“Mhlongo don’t do that, I’m the one paying you.”
oh hell no.

“Baba!?”

“I want to meet my daughter, I want to be there when it happens, I don’t want to risk it.”

“And what happens if you die before I give birth, then what?” I understand we are putting Mhlongo in an awkward position by arguing in front of him.

“That’s not going to happen and you know it.”

“Doctor please, you know what’s best for him, just make that call, book him in please.”

“Amile!” he reprimands.

“Langaletu Zulu you will go to that surgery, I haven’t even started feeling labour pains, I’m not going to give birth now! Doctor.”

He looks at me and nods before he pulls a form and starts filling it in.

Baba is looking at me defeated. I’m sure he regrets bringing me here in the first place.

I'm not going to gamble with his life like that, missing the baby's birth is not that big of a deal, his life is a big deal. He needs to understand that.

"I'm admitting you Mageba. I'll try to schedule your surgery to be either later tomorrow, or the next day. You will be transferred to Durban after I've made that call." he says standing up.

He excused himself and he left us in a room thick with tension.

"I'm doing this for your well-being baba." I say wiping my tears.

He stood up and paced around the room, anger written on his face. I broke into a low sob and I covered my mouth so I don't make a noise.

The thought of him being dead scares me more than the fear of him missing the birth of our child, I'd rather he be alive and around for her life so she can remember her, than for him to be

around for her birth, something she won't remember at all, and not be around for her life. That would be selfish of him, both to me and his child.

He stopped pacing and came to crouch down beside me. He placed his hands on my stomach and kissed it multiple times before tears ran down his cheeks.

He is hurting me. Baba doesn't cry, I don't want to see him cry because that hurts me so much, and I can't handle it.

"I love you, both of you." he says and attempts to wrap his arms around me.

I place a kiss on his forehead and we just stay still like that.

Peace? Will I ever get it the way I want it?

Chapter Ninety-Six

Amile Gumede

Finale

“Where is baba?” the boys are jumping around me.

I had to come back and pack everything for him, and myself. We took the decision that both Khaya and I will go with him to Durban, and we will book accommodation close enough to the hospital where we can visit him.

I’m not allowed to be travelling, even my doctor gave me a scolding, but this is a life or death situation, I need to be by my husbands’ side all the time. It’s a sickness and health thing, a forever thing, I’m not going to drop him for anything.

“Baba is at the hospital, he has to stay there for

a few days so he can feel better.” I say brushing Mgcini’s head.

They are so dirty, you can tell that they were exploring the garden.

Halle is staring at me, he understands more than Mgcini does, he’s a little older.

“Did you have fun exploring today?” I ask trying to trail off.

My mind has a lot of things clogging it up. I feel like I’m running out of breath.

“Yes, Aunty took us for a walk.” I kissed Mgcini’s forehead.

“That’s great my boy! You guys need to get a bath.” I say hugging Halle.

His body is stiff.

“Are you also going to leave?” he asks me.

I sighed. I hate breaking their little hearts, I hate it so much.

“Yes my boy, I have to go take care of baba right, so he can be better and he can come home.” I say.

I see both their faces fall.

“When I come back, I will have a surprise for the both of you, right!” Mgcini nodded excitedly.

Halle still looks unhappy about me departing.

“You want to help me pack?” I’m trying by all means to make it up to them.

“I want to talk to baba.” Halle demands.

My heart falls.

“Okay, I’ll ask Khaya to call him.” I don’t even know if baba has his phone on him.

They accompany me upstairs to my room. Sis’ Melo has already packed two bags, mine and the baby’s. That leaves me to do my husband’s bag.

“Sisi have you seen Khaya around?” I ask her.

“He’s in the king’s study my queen.”

“Please call him up for me. Thank you for packing my things.”

“Will do my queen.” she rushes out the room.

The boys help me take out baba’s bag and I take out his pajama’s and underwear. That’s all he’s going to need, I don’t need to pack him clothes. I also gather his toiletries, gown and a throw.

I’m walking around the room trying to find everything, and put it in one place. I suddenly feel a sharp pain in my abdomen. An involuntary scream escapes my lips. That caught me off guard, and it was freaking painful.

“What’s going on?” Khaya asks as he walks in.

The boys look scared all of a sudden.

“I don’t know.” lean on the wall and listen to the pain.

“Maybe you are in labour.” he comes to help me up.

“No, I’m not in labour Khaya.” I stand up right and take a deep breath.

“You were asking for me?”

“Yes, the boys want to call baba, does he have his phone on him?”

“Yes, he does.” he pulls out his tablet and calls the boys to come and speak to their father.

They both look excited to see him. I continue with my packing when I hear his voice rumble from the tablet.

“How are my boys doing?”

“We are okay baba, when are you coming back?” Mgcini asks.

“Baba is in the hospital because he is not feeling well. But I will be better soon okay.” they both nodded.

Their sad faces got to me. I turned away, I couldn't stand watching those sad faces.

Another sharp pain attacked me.

"Ayibo Khaya what's going on?" that was baba's voice.

"Mageba can I call you back." he says.

"Don't call me back, bring her to the hospital!" I'm a sobbing mess.

"Yes my king."

He comes to help me up and we limp to the door.

"Someone help!" he shouts from the door and practically the whole palace comes rushing up the stairs.

He asks Mgabadeli to carry me down to the car. The pains are worsening by the second.

Mamizana!" I hear one of the little voices crying behind me.

My heart breaks. I'm shaking in my boots, it can't be that I'm in labour, not now.

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"It's called Braxton hicks or false labour. You might experience this often before you actually experience true labour." my doctor explained while she moved the transducer around my belly.

The heart beat is loud.

"She looks like she's ready to evacuate." she says smiling at me.

Someone is holding their breath.

"Can't I be induced then?" I beg.

I'm tired of being pregnant, and the best bet right now is to give birth before baba goes into surgery, which has been scheduled for the 5th

of January.

“Induced labour is only advisable in the case where the mother or the child is in danger, both of you are fine, so there is no need. And it is way more painful than waiting for your water to break on it’s own.” baba squeezed my hand.

I really thought she would agree.

“But everything looks good! I’d advise you to rest, these are the final days, and you will miss these days when baby is here.” she chuckles.

I don’t share the joke.

Baba helped me wipe the gel on my stomach and helped me up.

“Thank you doctor.” he said.

He left his ward as soon as they rushed me in. His excuse was he’s not sick, it’s just formalities that he’s here. He was so scared when he walked in. He was both scared and

excited, thinking I was going into labour. He really doesn't want to miss it, and I understand where he is coming from.

"About your trip to Durban..." she says folding a note and slipping it into an envelope.

"I can't not go doctor, I have to be there for this surgery." I say.

"I understand that, that means I will have to be on stand-by, and I need to inform the ob/gyn at eThekweni Hospital in case of an emergency."

"Please doctor."

"Do you have a midwife?" I don't even know what that is.

"No, I don't."

"Will there be anyone who will be able to take care of you, and monitor you closely at all times?" she asked again.

"Yes, we will be travelling with my personal

maid.” she nods and writes something down.

“Then I don’t think we are going to experience any problems.” she handed me the envelope.

“Thank you doctor.”

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He refused to climb in an ambulance, that’s how stubborn baba is. I refused to travel with him in the same car, so it’s just me and Sis’ Melo in mine.

There are three more cars behind us, and two in front. What for you may ask? Formalities they call it. The security force wanted to add some sirens too, but baba and blatantly refused, it’s already too much that our vehicles have flags flying on them, causing traffic everywhere, sirens would have been over the top.

We have arrived in Durban, but all the cars are driving to the hospital first, because they have to escort the king.

He told me he doesn't want me to be running around, going up and down in the hospital. He gave me strict instructions to stay inside and not come out. I'll only go to the hospital on the day of his surgery, and that is it.

My phone rings, startling me from my thoughts. It's my mom. I haven't spoken to her in a while.

"Umuntu waganwa wasikhohlwa." I laughed.

"Hi mommy."

"Hi baby, how are you?"

"I'm good, how are you, how is everyone there?"
I miss my brother so much.

Being with Halle and Mgcini reminds me of my brother, the close relationship we had, and the love I have for him. My little Siviwe.

“They are good, your sister has started walking.” what?

“So quickly! Wow I can’t wait to see her!”

“She’s too smart, she reminds me of you when you were a baby.” I laughed.

“You sound like you are on the road, where are you going, aren’t you supposed to be at home waiting to give birth?”

“I am, we are going to Durban for baba’s surgery.”

“What? Is he okay?” he sounds concerned.

“Yes, he’s okay, but his arteries are starting to clog up again, so his doctor said it’s best he get bypass surgery before it’s too late.”

“Oh my gosh, we will keep him in prayers. And when are you giving birth?” I sighed.

“Thank you mama. Any day from today. I thought I was going to do it today, but it was

false labour.”

“That’s the worst trust me I know.”

“Of all things mama I just hope baba’s surgery goes well. He doesn’t want to do it now because he might miss the baby’s birth.”

“His health should come first, so he can be there for his daughter.” mom echoed my same sentiments.

“That’s exactly what I said to him. But he agreed, and I can see that he’s crossing his fingers that I go into labour as soon as today, before the surgery. The excitement on his face when I was experiencing false labour pains was priceless.” she giggled.

“Oh man, he’s excited, it’s his first child.” first, not so much.

“Yeah, I understand mama.”

“Where will you be staying, so I can bring Siviwe

and Iyamangalisa to come see you.”

“Some house in Durban North.”

“In Mandlenkosi’s house?” she asks in a haste.

I roll my eyes.

“No, I think baba has property there.”

We are passed that phase where I can’t be trusted around Mandlenkosi, he’s moved on, so have I.

“Okay, send me the location, we might pop in tomorrow if you aren’t busy.”

“I won’t you can come.”

“Okay then, let me not keep you, we will see you tomorrow.”

“Okay mommy, I love you.”

“I love you too baby.”

I hung up and placed my phone aside.

I can see the hospital. I haven’t been in Durban

in a while, the last time I came was before I knew I was pregnant. Even when Khaya went to buy my baby clothes, he left me behind.

The cars are now slowing down, adding on to the traffic that is already caused by the people leaving work rushing to go home. It's peak time!

Sirens go off, and I immediately know that it's that time, they are forcing their way through.

We forge our way through the traffic successfully and when we get to the hospital, the car line up in front of the entrance. I know I'm not coming out, so I'm going to sit and relax till we go off again.

My door opened, and baba stood there. I gave him a smile before leaning in to give him a kiss on the lips.

I don't like fighting with him, that fight we had in Mhlongo's office bothers me, but he's doing what I told him to do, so we are fine.

“Please take care of yourself.” he said holding my hand.

I should be telling him that.

“I will Mageba, and you must also take care of you.” he smiled and placed his hands on my tummy.

“Please listen to Khaya, do not give him a hard time.”

“Yes baba.” I wanted to roll my eyes so badly.

“I’ll see you after tomorrow.” I’m kind of sad that I won’t sleep in his arms tonight.

That is unusual.

“Okay.” I said.

He cupped my face and kisses my lips tenderly.

“I love you.” he whispered.

“I love you too.” I whispered back.

He turned back and Khaya came into view.

“Call me if she gives you a hard time.” really?

I crossed my arms across my chest and stared at him. Wow!

“Yes my king.” Khaya said with a giggle.

He blew me a kiss before his guards escorted him inside. Khaya climbed in the car with me and two of the cars took off with us.

“I don’t know why you guys got so much security. Who’s left at the palace.” I asked Khaya.

“Don’t worry yourself about all those things.” I leaned on his shoulders.

He’s so hands-on, and I know it’s his job, but he’s doing so much more than he should, and it’s making everything so smooth for everyone.

“Thank you Khaya.” I said.

“It’s my job Ndlunkulu.”

What would I be if he wasn’t here?

Chapter Ninety-Seven

Amile Gumede

Finale

I know the boys would have loved this place, it is absolutely beautiful. The garden is absolutely splendid, if it wasn't so hot outside, I would go and sit there. I'm a nature freak, this has been established.

I'm waiting for mom and my siblings to arrive so I can go soak in the pool out. I read somewhere that being in bodies of water reduces labour duration. The last thing I want is to be in a labour ward for hours unending, and it's hot outside, it's the perfect excuse to gear up and get in the pool.

Khaya went to get me swimwear, I'm sitting on the porch under the shade enjoying a bowl of fruits for breakfast. I feel like I'm on vacation, and I know it's not the most of joyous occasions that have brought me here, but I'm enjoying this place.

"My queen your phone." sis' Melo hands it to me.

"Thank you." I take it and check who it is.

It's my husband, he's video calling me, thanks to Khaya who taught him all these technological hacks that he just can't seem to live without anymore.

"Nali ipetshisi lami." I blushed.

"Good morning kaMhlaba."

"Ulale kahle sthandwa sami?" he looks alive and well, not like someone who's scheduled for surgery in less than 24 hours.

"Yes, I slept without being squished by your

hard bones.” he laughed.

He knows I’m teasing, I love sleeping in his arms. I feel incomplete when I’m not on his chest, listening to his heartbeat.

“I’m glad you had a good night my love.”

“Hows the hospital treating you?” I asked placing my bowl on the floor.

“Not bad, they have come to check up on me at least five times this morning, and I told them the same thing, ‘I’m fine.’” I laughed.

He looks thoroughly irritated. I get it, he’s not sick, so the treatment is getting to him.

“You are the king, they will make sure your stay is nice and comfy.”

“They should redirect all the attention to those who actually need it, the reviews of this place are shocking.” he says.

“Baba you know how to search reviews manje?”

he chuckled.

“You want to be tech savvy on your own, no way.” I laughed.

“So do you like the house?” oh yes, I actually wanted to ask.

“I love it, it’s splendid, the view too!”

“It’s my old house, I thought it had been sold after I left, but it’s still here. I’ve been fixing it up these couple of months, so we can have a place to arrive to when we come to Durban.”

“You can surely keep secrets. This place is beautiful, I even asked Khaya to go get me swimwear because I can’t leave without getting into the pool.” he laughs.

“Waze wavelwa uKhaya uwena.”

“Khaya loves me, he will do anything for me.” I say with pride.

“As long as you are happy and you are taking it

easy, I'm happy my love." I smiled.

"My mom and siblings are coming over to spend the day with me."

"Have fun my love!"

"I will, and you let the nurses do their job."

"They can do their job, I just don't want anyone touching me, thinta izinto zomkami." I laughed.

He's so silly.

Nambitha Makhathini

I'm sitting in the pyjama lounge enjoying some television. I wake up early now, it's part of my routine ever since I came back from the institution, or wellness centre as Muzi calls it. We used to sleep early and wake up early, so it's become a part of my habit to do that.

This is what I've been doing on a daily for the past couple of days since I came here, waking up, watching TV, fitting in some exercise like a young jog around the neighbourhood or some yoga, and sleeping.

I thought it was all a lie when people said Muzi is a party animal. The Muzi I met was the complete opposite of what people had described to me. Now I've met that Muzi, it's still festive season for him, he goes out every single night, he comes back drunk in the early hours of the morning with hoes on his arms.

As per our agreement, I mind my business and do what I want, while he does the same. I am in no position to judge him, he's doing me a favour by letting me stay here with him.

I finally reached a decision, and I told myself, 'I have nothing to lose but everything to gain,' and I signed those marriage certificates with my eyes closed. You are looking at Mrs Zungu on

paper.

Now that I have accepted that I have to stay here for the rest of my life - that's if we don't move - I have to familiarize myself with the surroundings, and maybe get to know some neighbours, makes some friends. My plan for today was to bake something and go around my close neighbours and greet them.

I'm waiting for Immaculate to come in. She's Muzi's cleaner, she has the most gentle heart and smile. She comes in twice a week to do the cleaning and laundry. I'm told that once a month she comes in for the full weekday where she does a full spring cleaning of the whole house, and the maid quarters too.

She's coming today, that's why I set today as the day to make a mess, I know she'll help me out.

I'm checking the time and it's almost nine, she

hasn't arrived. She normally arrives at eight. I gather my throw, switch off the tv and make my way downstairs to check if she hasn't arrived.

"Muzi." I call out for him as I walk through the kitchen.

He's not answering me.

"Muzi!" it's in between him not being here, or he's just ignoring me.

As I get closer to the lounge, I hear moans coming from the lounge.

"Muzi!" I'm calling him for the third time.

I stand in the middle of the lounge, and I see a girl sitting on a beach chair, her boobs bouncing all over the place. She's screaming her lungs out.

Fuck, they are having sex!

"Muzi man!" the girl stops and pushes her hair back and pants while staring at me.

He tilts his head at me and gives me a naughty smile.

“You want to come join us?”

“Sies, no. What happened to having sex in the bedroom?” he laughed, he was just as breathless.

“Has Immaculate arrived?”

“She’s coming in today?” I roll my eyes.

He is a useless man.

I drag him through my teeth before walking out the lounge. They don’t even wait for me to turn the corner, the girl is already moaning again.

I don’t even have her number to call her, now I’m worried.

I find myself standing at the gate scanning the surroundings to see if she’s coming or not. Now I’m really concerned, she loves her job too much to miss a day. In fact, she’s always early,

and she's told me on some occasions how she appreciates Muzi for giving her this job because she's able to take care of her siblings.

We've spoken quite a lot in the two times that she's come here. Next week she's supposed to come for the full week for the spring cleaning.

I press the remote to the gate, and as it swiftly moves along, I exit and walk down the street to see if she may be walking here.

A familiar car drives past me and I can't help but turn around and try to read the number plate. It's gone.

I turn around and go back to the house, because I'm suddenly shaking. When I stand at the gate, I see nothing. It's as if the car never even passed here. I'm not crazy, I saw that car speeding past me.

I see it driving much slower this time, coming from down the street, driving towards me. I

freeze in one place and take a deep breath.

How the hell did they find me?

They stop in front of the gate and the first person to step out is Immaculate. Traitor.

“Hello Nambitha, I’m sorry for coming late, but this lady and gentleman found me and asked to direct them here.”

The window roll down and my fathers face come into view.

“Ntombi yami, please let us in so we can talk.”

“How did you find me?” he looks hurt.

“You didn’t want to be found?” I sigh and stare at Immaculate.

I can’t really blame her, she also didn’t know them.

I didn’t say much, I just opened the gate and walked ahead. He started up the car and drove in. Immaculate is already making her way into

the house. She's in for a surprise in there.

"This is not my house, you can't just rock up." I say to the both of them when they climb out.

"Nambitha." mom warns.

"No mama, I asked for space."

"It's been two months mntanami, what more space do you need. You didn't even inform us that you were out of the hospital, you just left." dad says.

"How did you find me?" I asked again placing my hands on my hips.

"We went to the hospital, and they told us you left with Muzikayise Zungu, who was on their records. We looked all over for his address, and when we found it, we didn't waste time. We've been worried about you Namnam." mom says reaching out to grab my hand.

I feel tears burning my eyes. I haven't cried

since I left that centre, now they are pulling me back.

“Please come home Nambitha. You are still our baby and we love you. We accept that we made a mistake, and that is why we drove all the way from Durban to find you.” I couldn’t hold it in anymore, I broke down.

Mom engulfed me in a tight squeeze.

“Come home baby.” dad brushed my back.

I do miss home, I want to go home, but how is that going to work now. I’ve signed those marriage contracts. I don’t know how Muzi will react to that.

I break from the hug and look at the both of them. I wipe my tears and before I could speak, the girl walks past us, holding her shoes in her hands.

That’s when I notice that there is an uber parked at the gate.

“Sanibonani.” she’s doing the walk of shame.

She reeks of sex as she walks past us, I can only dream that my parents didn’t smell that because wow.

We watch her disappear out the gate.

“I need to tell you guys something.” they stare at me.

I don’t think I want to tell them standing like this, because we might go back to that place again.

“Let’s go inside.” I say hesitantly.

They also look skeptical, but they follow me. I’m crossing my fingers that Muzi is at least decent.

I lead them to the lounge, where Muzi is sitting shirtless, with a beer in his hand, channel hopping. It’s his house anyway, but I’m sure my parents are judging him. It’s not even midday and he’s already having a beer. I understand him, he’s probably hungover from last night, and

he's curing that hangover with a beer. They say it works. Personally, I wouldn't do that, sleeping out a hangover is key, that's what Yonela and I used to do in our drinking days.

Oh how far I've come.

"Muzi we have visitors." he sits up and puts his beer on the floor in attempts to hide it.

"Why didn't you tell me your parents were coming." he stands and walks to us.

He reeks sex and a brewery. Gosh if he wasn't rich, then I don't know. He wipes his hands on his shorts before he reaches out for a handshake.

"I'm Muzi, it's lovely to meet you once again." dad gives him a firm handshake. Mom doesn't, she looks disgusted.

"I see you are the one taking care of our daughter." he says.

He rubs his head and chuckles.

“Yes, you can say that baba. Please feel at home.” he leads them to sit down.

Mom doesn't say a word. I go to the couch he was sitting on and take the beer from the floor before they sit. When they are settled, I go to Muzi, and push him out the lounge.

“Not even a young warning that your parents are coming?” he whispers.

“I didn't know they were coming. I didn't even know how they found me.” okay I do, but still.

“Go shower, you stink.” I hand him his beer.

“Mxn.” he walks up the stairs and I hurry back to the lounge.

“I'm sorry about that.” I say before sitting down.

“Uyabathanda labo skhotheni.” mom says scanning the room.

There is nothing for her to judge here, the house

is bigger than she could have ever dream to have hers look. It's just that she seemed to find Muzi in that state.

"He's not uskhotheni mama." I defend him.

Muzi is far from being a skhotheni, he's a sophisticated man-boy who loves to party and doesn't want to grow up and have responsibilities.

"So you are dating him?" dad asks.

I clear my throat and look away.

"That is what I wanted to talk to you about."

You could see on mom's face that she wanted to say something, but she was holding it in, she better. She better hold it right in because I'm still on the tip with them. She must not take advantage of the fact that I miss them, they still screwed me over, big time!

"Muzi and I are friends, we aren't dating."

“But?” mom cuts in.

“Kahle sthandwa.” dad intervenes.

I hate mom for her impatience.

“We signed a contract and a marriage certificate.” my father frowns.

“What for?” he asks.

“He needed my help tata, he’s my friend.” I defend.

“I don’t understand Nambitha, start from the beginning.” he says shifting in the seat.

This is why I didn’t want to go back home, they are judging me.

“His father gave him an ultimatum, and said if he does not marry, he won’t get his inheritance and the businesses, so he needed to provide him with a marriage certificate. In turn, he offered me 30% of all his assets, and we signed a contract, only on the basis of me being his

wife on paper.” they look stunned.

“So he owns you?” mom asked.

“No he doesn’t owe me. I didn’t have anywhere to go when I came out of the hospital, I needed a place to stay, and essentially, an income.” I say.

“You have a home Nambitha!” dad says sounding offended.

“Your wife kicked me out remember.” I said looking at mom.

She looked hurt.

“I apologized Nambitha, you are still holding that against me. Don’t forget that you also disobeyed my rules.”

“Mama you weren’t supposed to kick me out! Was I not your child at the end of the day? If you love your child, you don’t kick them out if they make a mistake, you guide them to what’s right.

I don't remember you kicking out Janet or Zimkhitha when they fell pregnant and that surely wasn't a mistake, not when it happened more than twice. And what about me, I still am childless, but I was crucified? What was I supposed to do mama, also have a string of children with that abuser so you could take me back?" now tears were running down my cheeks.

I violently wiped them away. I hate that I'm crying because I dealt with all of this in therapy, and for it to be making me cry now makes me angry.

"I made a mistake Namnam. Ndiyaxolisa mntanami." I shook my head.

"I forgave you a long time ago, I'm over your apology. Tata, I would love to come home, but I don't know how it's going to work."

He looked at me for a long time, his eyes telling me that he's remorseful.

He then stood up and came to give me a tight hug.

“I love you mntanami, and I’m sorry you had to endure all of that.”

Mom is sitting there with eyeliner running down her cheeks, again.

“I think we should get going.” he says looking at his wife.

My father, ever so soft.

“So we came here for nothing?” mom asked wiping her tears.

“You heard what she said, give her time to talk to the boy.”

“So you are just accepting this Mzumile?” I wanted to roll my eyes.

“You want us to lose this child again? No, she’s old enough to make her own decisions.

Nambitha, we admit our wrong as parents, the

same you did yours, and we are sorry. As your father, I'm telling you that you can come home, but speak to your husband first." I chuckled at that.

"He's not my husband tata." he gave me a smile.

I appreciate what he's saying.

"Thank you." I don't think I want to go.

I can go and visit every now and then, but it's time I get my independence now. I should be in university anyways, learning how to take control by myself. I think I'll stay. And maybe finally start that make-up business I've been going on about.

He asks mom up and they say their goodbye.

"I'll come visit soon." I say looking at them walking out.

"Alright mntanami." dad says.

Mom is in disbelief, or whatever it is, but she

keeps turning back as they walk to their car. It's enough that I forgave them, I don't need to go back home with them to prove that I do indeed forgive them, my word should be enough.

"Hawu, the in-laws are leaving already." his cologne fills my nostrils.

"They weren't here to stay." I say closing the door.

"You didn't kick them out right? That looks bad on me." I roll my eyes.

"No, I didn't." I say and push him out my way.

"Bring me a beer lapho!" he shouts as I make my to the kitchen.

"Take it yourself!" I shout back!

I've just realized that I'm happy here. Awkwardly so.

Chapter Ninety-Nine

Amile Gumede

Finale

“I want him to be transferred back home doctor, we need to go back home.” I said staring at him.

“He hasn’t recovered yet my queen.”

“I’m not saying discharge him, I’m saying I want him to go back to Zululand, his home land.” she’s frowning at me like I’m the crazy one.

I’m not crazy.

First of all, nothing is going right at the palace in our absence, this baby has clearly proven that they don’t want to be born, so let me go back home and sort out the problems at the palace.

“I’ll see what I can do my queen, I’m not promising anything.” I’ve never done this before, but now they leave me with no choice.

“This is the king of Zululand. I am here as the queen of Zululand, and I am telling you that my husband needs to go back home, and that is what you will do.”

“Yes my queen.” she nodded.

I stood up from the chair and attempted to walk out. I felt warm liquid running down my legs and I was paralyzed with shock.

“My queen.” she calls out to me.

“What!?” I shout.

My hands are suddenly shaking, my heart is racing.

It’s time!

“I think you are in labour.”

“And you are sitting there!”

I’m now standing in a puddle of water. I can’t believe this.

She's talking to someone on the phone and before I know it, nurses are rushing into the ward. They ask me to grace the wheelchair, and I don't fight them about it.

They are wheeling me across the hospital to the maternity section.

When I get there, I find a doctor already waiting on me.

"Queen Amile, I am going to be assisting Dr Matthews with delivering your baby. Congratulations." I smiled at her.

"Please help the queen up on the bed. I'm just going to inspect how far you've dilated." she's so sweet.

The nurses prepared everything for me and they helped me up on the bed. I'm still in a state of shock, I can't believe what is going on.

"Where is doctor Matthews?" I ask scanning the room.

It's not because I don't trust her, but there's a lot going on, and seeing a familiar face will ease some of these things.

"She has been notified, and she is making her way here as we speak." she tells me to lie back and I lift my legs so she can check whatever it is that she is checking.

"2cm dilation, that is quick." she says.

"We are going to wait until you get to ten before you can be ready to push. You are going to experience contractions, and your nurse is going to time them for you okay." I nodded.

A sharp pain hit me as soon as she finished saying that.

"That's one of them." she gave me a warm smile.

"I don't like this one bit." I say groaning as I listen to the pain.

Soon enough, it's over.

"It's a beautiful moment, you must enjoy every single minute of it. Is there anyone I can call to be by your side?" I wish she could just pack her up and go home with her. She's so kind.

"My mom, she's here in the hospital." I say in a breath.

"I'll get to that my queen." she bows before she goes out.

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I tighten my grip around my mother's hand and bite my lip to suppress the scream.

I can't do it.

"Can this just be over! Please!"

"It's almost over sthandwa sami." she kisses

my hand.

I just wish it was my husband doing that. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate my mom being here, but I was supposed to do this with baba, and he's not here.

And it's not almost over, I've only dilated 6cm, I've endured almost 4 hours of labour pains. It's 9 o' clock at night, on the 6th of January.

I thought the more I experienced these contractions, I'd get used to them, but they seem to be getting worse by the minute. Is this my welcome to motherhood? Really?

"My queen, I have good news." Khaya waltz into the ward.

"What are you doing here?" the contractions are behaving.

"They told me you were in labour, we couldn't miss it."

Before I know it, the boys are running into the hospital room carrying balloons for the baby.

“Mamizana.” mom stands and allows them space to come stand over me.

I’m guessing they were not told about MaMzobe’s tragic death. It’s problem on top of problem.

“Where is the baby?” Halle asks jumping up and down.

“The baby is still in my stomach my boy, but she’s coming soon.”

“We bought her balloons, uncle Khaya gave us lots of money!” I looked at Khaya and smiled.

This has just lifted my mood.

“Thank you boys, thank you uncle Khaya. You said you have good news.” both mom and I are staring at him in anticipation.

“UNdabezitha has woken up.”

“What!?” my mom said and tears welled up in her eyes.

She has been concerned just as I have. He has no idea how happy this makes me. I don't even care that he won't be here to witness the birth, as long as he's alive.

“How is he, is he okay?” that's all I need to hear.

Another contraction. They are growing close together!

“I'm so sorry my queen.” he says looking so scared at what is going on inside my body.

He waits for me to finish enduring the pain. The boys are rubbing my stomach trying to comfort me.

“We are sorry Mamizana.” they say in unison.

“It's okay.” I take in a deep breath.

How is he Khaya?”

“I haven't gone to see him, the boys and I just

arrived.” he replied.

“Please go check on him.” I say turning to lie on my side.

I feel so uncomfortable.

“Boys, come let’s go get some chips.” mom says grabbing the boys hands.

They shouldn’t see me like this, but I understand that they missed me, and they didn’t want to miss out on anything. I’m happy they are here, but I don’t think they should stay longer. Hospitals are not a place for children.

“My queen, the king has woken up.” the nurse that was timing my contractions walks into the room with a smile on her face.

“Yes, I have been told. How is he?”

“He is well, he looks well.” she says with so much joy.

I forget that he is their king, not just my

husband. That I share him with everyone else. The difference between them and I is a see a completely different side to him, this carefree, loving and joyful side. It's been a hectic two days without my best friend, because that's what he is, my best friend.

"I just can't believe I'll be a mom in a few hours." she chuckles.

"The nurses that tended to the king when he woke up said the first thing he asked was where is my daughter." I giggled.

"He didn't want to miss this moment." my smile slowly fades.

He is missing this moment. He should be here.

"The bright side of this is that he is awake, and he is healthy, and when the first princess arrives, she will find her king waiting for her." that brought a smile to my face.

"Yeah, that's true." I won't lie, some of these

people here are wholesome people, so kindhearted.

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“Are you ready to become a mommy.” Dr Matthews ask as she finishes checking my dilation.

The contractions are going on one-way now, and they hurt so much I’m just sobbing silently, I have no scream left in me.

“I think that’s a yes.” my mom answers on my behalf and she squeezes my hand.

“One more centimetre to go mommy, just one more.” she says.

I thought it was over.

“What time is it?” I ask looking at my mom.

I'm feeling extremely hot, there's sweat on my forehead, and my breasts are throbbing. I can't seem to make sense of that.

"It's 20 minutes to 12." so you mean to tell me that I have been in labour for almost 6 hours now?

Madness!

The doors open and a nurse walks in, pushing a wheelchair. I almost jump out of bed when I see kaMhlaba sitting on that chair. He looks...I don't know. It's difficult to tell if he's in pain or not. He looks better than he did when he was in that 'coma' but he does still look sickly. He shouldn't be here, he should be resting.

"Bayede." everyone stops and bows before him as he is wheeled right across to my bedside.

I am unable to hold it in, I let out a sob. Mom engulfs me in a hug and lets me go relatively quickly.

“My queen.” the nurse bows for me too.

I hadn't had the pleasure of meeting her. Baba reaches for my hand and the feel of it in mine sends me bawling.

“My love. Don't cry...” his speech, it sounds like it's very difficult for him to put words together.

Like he's gasping for air.

“Baba you should be resting...” I say in between hiccups.

I hate being a crybaby.

“I told you, I wasn't going to miss this.” he takes in a sharp breath.

“I heard you telling me to listen, and wake up...that's what I did.” I giggle in between sobs and just squeeze his hand.

“We are doing this together.” he says in one breath.

Now that he is up close, you can see that he's

trying to be strong. But it has only been a day since his surgery, he's obviously still trying to recover and heal. I don't expect him to be healed already.

Another contraction hits me, and I suddenly feel the urge to push. A sharp scream leaves my mouth, and that sends the nurses running to me, so is Dr Matthews.

"I need to push doctor." I cry out.

"Okay, wait on me." she's already inspecting me.

"10 cm, we are ready."

I do breathing exercises. My husband squeezes my hand tightly and I wait on Dr Matthews to instruct me. I can feel my uterus stretching, or whatever it is. It's not the best feeling right now.

"Okay, you are going to give me one push okay, take your time."

Baba kisses my hand as I take that push. I feel

like I'm losing power.

"Breathe, and take your time...one more when you are ready."

I give it my all and push so much, I can feel my whole body tense up and my muscles contracting.

"Good one, that's great, I can see the head. Let's breathe and give another big one."

We kept going in circles over and over again. I don't know if it was getting better with every push, or it was getting worse.

Mom is also here, she's brushing my head, encouraging me to be strong, to breathe and to push.

"Baby is almost here, we just need one more push, a big one." I'm exhausted.

I can't do this anymore.

"I can't, I..." I sob.

“Come on Amile, one more.” mom encourages.

I tighten my hold on baba’s hand and give it my all.

It doesn’t take long before a shrill cry fills the whole room.

Oh my God!?! it’s done!

“It’s a...a boy?” Dr Matthews says holding him up.

Him or her? What?

I’m huffing and puffing, trying to catch a breath.

“You did well my baby, well done.” mom kissed my sweaty forehead.

Baba doesn’t leave my side, he’s awfully quiet. I look down and hold on to his hand. He’s sobbing.

“Thank you MaGumede omuhle.” he says and kisses my hand multiple times.

I wish I could stand up and give him a hug.

A nurse walks up to us carrying our baby wrapped in a white towel. She's coming to me.

"Congratulations your highness, my queen, it's a boy."

My hands are trembling. A boy? What happened to my daughter.

She's wanting to give the baby to me.

"Please give him to his father." I look at kaMhlaba.

She nods. He opens his arms ready to welcome his son.

The sound of his little voice fills the whole room as soon as he lands in his fathers arms.

"Zulu ka Mandela ngokulandela izinkomo zamadoda

Sithuli sika Ndaba

Sithuli sika Nkombane.”

My baby is still crying, so is his dad, I wish I could just freeze this moment forever.

“Wena oyindawo yobabomkhulu, wena ozomisa umuzi woMageba, ubambe usiko, wena oyokhothamelwa, umntwana wa Ndlunkulu uMaGumede, indlovukazi yomuzi wakwaZulu...”
this was such a powerful moment.

And as he continued to praise his son, we all just sat and stood watching in awe.

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“He looks like my father.” he says as I hold him.

My hands are literally shaking. He’s so tiny, he has a full head of hair, and his eyes, although they are closed, they look like they are small, just like his fathers.

The nurse told me that I have to feed him, so mom is helping me clean my boobs for him. It's unfortunate that he's dressed up in pink, now he looks like what his sister could have been.

I'm still in disbelief about everything going on, and this has Mhlabawesizwe written all over it.

I want my baby to open his eyes, I want to see his eyes.

"He looks like you." I say looking up at him.

He's sucking on his fingers. Baba looks so content.

"He's hungry." mom says and takes him from me.

She then helps me position him gently on my hard nipple. He latches on to it, and as soon as he starts sucking, I feel a pain.

"Is it supposed to hurt mama?" she nods and shows me how to hold it for him.

Before I know it, it's getting less painful and more enjoyable. The look he has on his face makes it worth it. He's so precious.

Mom excuses herself and leaves us alone together. He should be getting rest, before he gets hurt.

"I don't know what to do with all this happiness and love I feel right now." he says looking at me.

He's so fascinated by what I'm doing. I'm just as fascinated. Who knew that I, Amile Gumede, now Amile Zulu, would have a little human being that came out of me. I made this. A whole living person.

"He's so precious baba, he's everything and more." I say grabbing his hand with my free one.

He plays with the baby's foot.

"We haven't named him." I say looking at him.

My son. He's my baby.

“The pain, and suffering, and heartache is over now. We have overcome all that we needed to overcome and now we have the chance to start over, to fix things, and have that peaceful life that we always speak about. These are the good days that we have been dreaming about, the better days where everything is just going alright, where we don’t need to worry ourselves. From today on we are going to have days filled with love, happiness and peace my love. I promise you.”

I nodded and my son wrapped his little hand around my finger.

“Izinsuku ezinhle lezi, and we will enjoy every single one of them.” I nodded.

The nurse walked in and she demonstrated how to burp him after feeding him. I don’t even know how to see if he’s full or not. Baba is by my side, gawking at everything we do.

“Is he always going to be sleeping like this.” I ask the nurse.

She giggles.

“Maybe he’s a lazy baby like that.” I poke his little cheeks.

I want to see his eyes.

He’s so beautiful, he looks exactly like his grandfather. I hate to admit it out loud, but it is the pure and honest truth. Oh Mhlabawesizwe, what an ancestor you have been.

Baba requests to hold him, and the nurse suggests that they do the skin to skin bonding so they can create a bond, and baby can familiarize himself with his father.

He goes to sit on the couch, and removes his pyjama shirt, revealing the massive patch on his chest where the incision was made. He hasn’t fully healed yet, but here he is.

His son is carefully taken from my arms and is carried and placed on his chest. He settles on it comfortably, and lifts his little bum in the air, bringing me to laughter. They look so beautiful together.

I grab my phone and snap a few pictures of them together. He looks so happy, the smile he's wearing on his face reaches his eyes, this is all that we needed.

His pitch black hair, he looks exactly like his father. What about me, the one that carried him for nine months in my body? What of mine does he have?

"We are going to have to change his nursery." he says.

He looks so content. I'm waiting for an I told you so from him.

"Khaya will get on top of things." I say and smile at him.

“I love you mkami.”

“I love you too baba.”

Almost losing him showed me how meaningless life would be, I don't think I would survive.

“So what are you naming him?” he asks me.

“You are the king, you should name him first.” I say.

He looks at his son with so much love in his eyes.

“His name is Nsukezinhle. Those better days, those happy days, they start right here, right now, with him.”

“Prince Nsukezinhle kaLangaletu Zulu.” I say looking at him.

“Aren't you naming him?” he asks.

Am I allowed to?

“He is the heir to the Zulu throne, the one who will keep the palace strong, uzobumisa ubukhosi.” I say thinking out loud.

“Smisosobukhosi.” he thinks for me.

“Smisosobukhosi.” I repeat after him.

It has a beautiful ring to it.

“Umntwana uNsukezinhle Smisosobukhosi kaLangaletu Zulu.” he says.

“He will struggle to learn all of these titles.” I say.

He laughs.

“He’s a big man, ngeke ahlulwe amagama akhe.” he says and brushes his back.

He breathes out.

“He’s beautiful sthandwa sami.”

I know, he’s the most precious baby.

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Home sweet home.

Nsuke is almost 2 weeks old now, we finally could leave Durban after the first week. We were both still in hospital, baba is slowly getting a little better than he was when we left the hospital.

There were definitely repercussions for not taking it easy right after he woke up from his coma. I never want to see him experience pain like that again.

The MaMzobe issue? At this point we also don't care. In fact, that was the last of our worries, our focus was on Vukani, who now hates us again for not being here when she was buried. He wanted her to be buried in the Zulu grave site, but that could not happen, baba flatly refused. So we are back to cold shoulder vibes.

Baba is trying, he really is. Mom advised me to give him space to deal with it, and not bombard him. She's right, when he's ready to talk to us about it, he will. At the end of the day, he knows that we love him and we would do anything for him. It just couldn't happen that MaMzobe rest with our ancestors, especially because she took her own life.

"Iphi ingane yami bo!" I know that voice from anywhere.

The door opens, and Nsuke immediately wakes up. I just put him to sleep.

His eyes, they belong to Mhlabawesizwe. Looking at them is like looking him in the eyes. Scary.

"Shlobo." I say shooing her out.

"I'm not here for you MaGumede." I laugh and let her be.

I move away from the cot and she goes to take

him out the cot.

He stretches himself and cries.

“Ampo yona nje. uMhlabawesizwe omncane nje yena.” I rolled my eyes.

“Hello little Zulu, hello Ndabezitha, Mageba.” my son is kicking his little legs.

“Sneaky man.” he says touching my son’s nose.

He stops crying and looks at her.

“Why does my child look like Mhlabawesizwe?”

“You asked where he was, here he is.” he’s now making sounds.

Yeah right.

“What are his names?”

“Nsukezinhle Smisosobukhosi.” she smiled and smeared something on the top of his head.

“They suit him.” she says.

They really do.

Prince Nsukezinhle Smisosobukhosi
kaLangaletu Zulu, born on the 7th of January
at 00:00.

Watch out world!

The End

I had a good night's sleep, that is why I have no problem waking up to go and feed Nsuke. He's been playing on the baby monitor from 04:30 in the morning, and his feeding time is 05:30.

Baba is still fast asleep. For some reason, I couldn't sleep after I heard Nsuke wake up, but because he didn't cry, I didn't bother going to check on him.

I roll out of bed and go freshen up in the bathroom, preparing to go feed him. As soon as I open the door to his nursery, he's standing in his cot jumping up and down wanting me to carry him.

“Why are you so excited in the morning boy boy.” he jumps in my arms.

I place a kiss on his forehead multiple times.

“Happy 1st birthday Mntwana.” I say and clap his little hands.

He giggles and climbs on my lap and tries to lick my face.

“Are you hungry?”

“Mama.”

“Yes baby.” he’s grabbing my top trying to free my breast.

He finds what he’s looking for, and before I can say anything, he’s already latching onto my nipple, sucking for dear life.

My mom says he shouldn’t still be breastfeeding him, she believes I should have stopped as soon as he turned six months. I still havent been able to bring myself to do it. Nsuke

loves his ncence so much, even as a child, he didn't even want bottled milk. This is the only time where we bond, him and I. and yes I live with him twenty-four/seven, but this is how I differentiate from other people, I am his mommy.

I think mom wants him to stop so much because he's becoming spoilt. I can't leave the house without him crying and screaming until I come back.

He's eating solids too, but we will always have his ncence, my big boy. He's strong and healthy, just like his daddy. A few more months and then I will let him stop. As long as my body is pumping milk for him to suck, he will have it.

Baba suggested that we host a little party for him. I wanted to do a cake smash for him with a photo shoot, and Khaya is on it, as always. And then later, we will have an intimate thing with the boys and his other cousins. I want to make

as many memories as I can for him, because he isn't likely to remember any of these, so the pictures will serve the purpose.

He's fast asleep in no time, and I'm also feeling just as sleeping as he is. It's almost six, I know he's going to wake up roughly around eight.

I put him down and quietly make my way out the room and sneak back to my own.

Baba is up, and he's sitting on the bed going through his phone.

"I thought you ran away and left me." he says switching his phone off.

I laugh at his silliness and take off my robe, throwing it on the couch.

"I was feeding your son, he was up at four in the morning." he grabs my waist and pulls me closer to him when I get under the covers.

"Mama, incence mama." he says imitating his

sons voice.

I chuckle and place a kiss on his cheek.

“Incence knocked him right out again, he will probably be up at eight.” I say.

He then runs his hand on my thigh before he picks me up and places me on his lap.

“That gives up enough time to give him a sibling then?” he starts planting soft kisses on my neck.

“More than enough baba.” he lifts my silk dress off in one swift move, and I’m left bare on top of him.

Still no underwear. You can’t blame me, old habits die hard.

He starts grunting when I grate my hips on his frontal.

He did suggest that we try for another baby, and I was down for it. As soon as Nsuke turned 6 months old, we were trying. Nothing has

happened.

Lord knows how much I want another baby!

He starts playing with my skittles and I part my lips, trying to focus on the subtle pleasure he is providing me with just his finger. I spread my legs to grant him access to my palace and I feel him sticking in not one but two of his fingers.

My lips land on his and I start grinding on his fingers to stimulate and quicken my orgasm. I know he likes taking control, but I need this, I need it.

“Baba!” I moan out.

I could feel myself quickly reaching my climax, and he could see it on my face. That is when he flipped our bodies, and had be underneath him. He quickly removed his fingers and I felt incomplete all over again.

“You are so impatient today.” he says popping my nipple into his mouth.

He discards it sooner than later, and he starts planting wet kisses on my stomach, leaving a tingling feeling. This is not where I want to be touched.

I used my one hand to tease my skittle, and the other one gripped onto his shoulder and I started pleasuring myself.

The look he was giving me was sending me over the edge, I felt as though I would just fall apart right there.

“These hands are naughty, mmh.” he says grabbing both of them.

I almost scream at him. He tightens his hold around both my wrists and pops on finger of mine in his mouth.

“Let’s tie these up, shall we.” he says looking at my wrists.

He lifts them up above my head and uses the belt of my gown to tie me up.

I start squirming as soon as he parts my thighs and buries his head between my thighs, and starts devouring me like a meal.

“Mageba please don’t stop, it’s so good.” I cry out.

I can’t even hold him, the best I can do is close my thighs and lock him in, but he’s very good at pinching, and punishing, so I will get whatever I get.

He let’s me go all the way, and soon enough, my legs are shaking, all because of his mouth. That’s his second favorite sexual pleasure, licking my kitty kat.

He unties my wrists and turns me around. I get on my knees and he brings my hands and ties them once again, behind my back this time. I giggle when he spanks my ass not, once, not twice...

“You look so good mkami.” he brushes my

mound.

My skittles is throbbing. I feel him gently separating my butt cheeks before he slips himself in and he grunts.

The sound of our skins hitting against each other drives me over the edge as our sweet moans fill the whole room. He's pounding me mercilessly, I'm slowly losing my senses.

His hands are exploring my body, and I wish I could do the same with him, as he fills me up so good. It feels so amazing.

Before I reach my climax, he unties me once again, and has me climbing on top of him.

"You look so beautiful." he says in one breath.

I have sweat running down my forehead, and all over my body, I'm the last thing that can be considered beautiful.

He cups my face and gives me a soft kiss, and

helps me position myself on top of it.

He holds my waist and directs how I should grind on top of him, and I watch him tilt his head as pleasure consumes him.

There is a sound coming from the baby monitor.

“I think your son is awake.” I say and bite my lip as I continue moving in the same rhythm he was showing me.

“He’s a big boy...” he replies.

“Mommy and daddy are making him a sibling.” he tilts my neck and plants kisses, and starts sucking on my neck.

Nsuke is up, and he’s playing. He will be fine, I’m so close, so so close!

“Baba, I’m coming.” he grips on my ass and I quicken my pace, trying to chase my orgasm.

Finally, heaven! He fills me up and I soon rest my head on his shoulders, still shaking a little

from the intense pleasure I'm feeling.

That was the best morning glory ever!

"It's your turn to fetch your son." I say getting off him.

I need some sleep, I'm exhausted.

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"Uthi angenze njani mengabe usumuhle kanje?" he asks planting soft kisses on my neck.

He wraps his arms around my waist and rests his chin on my head. I'm battling with my earrings, because I wanted to be a bad bitch and have my nails done.

"Sina ugiye baba, I'm all yours." he chuckles and caresses my hips.

"Do you need help with that?" I do.

I give him my earrings and he helps me put them on.

Today I look like a lady that has her life put together, I had my face beat, and I got my waist snatched, and inches installed. Today is my son's day, I need to show up looking good.

We are wearing white, I'm in a white sundress that just looks too good on me, and he's wearing white pants, and those white beach shirts, the first two buttons are undone. He looks so handsome, he looks younger too.

He finally had his beard trimmed, he looks like a husband I could have!

"Thank you my love." I give him a kiss on the lips.

A knock sounds on the door, before the door opens. The first face I see is of my son.

"Mama." he's jumping up and down.

Mom just lets him down and he runs to me.

“Thank you mom.” I say and meet him halfway.

She excuses herself.

“Look at your tummy, is baby full?” I poke his little stomach that is poking out and he giggles.

He’s so fascinated by my face, he’s trying to pull out my eyelashes.

“Okay, go to daddy, you are going to ruin my make-up.” baba laughs.

He goes to him and starts playing with him.

“You look so handsome, and who cut your hair?”

“Dada.” he’s so hyperactive, he’s jumping all over the place.

“Really, it was me?” baba asks laughing.

“Dadada!” he blows raspberries in his face.

He’s such an amazing dad, just like I knew he

would be. He does it all, he changes his nappy when I'm not around, he would stay up at night with me when he would refuse to sleep, and I wouldn't have to stay up alone.

He has been there with him for all the doctor's appointments, and every moment that he wasn't feeling well. He loves his son unconditionally, and I saw him push and break limits, doing things men could never do. They have the best bond, and sometimes I get so jealous, he even looks exactly like him.

I love these two people with my whole heart.

"Let's go, I don't want Khaya to shout at me." he says grabbing my hand.

"Mazima." he starts stretching his arms to me.

He calls me mama, but he also tries to say Mamizana like the boys. His speech is slowly developing.

And guess what his first words were, Dada.

These children will turn against you.

But he's crying for me now, so I take him.

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The photo shoot went well, and oh boy did he smash his cake. But it's his father's money, he can do whatever he wants.

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday Nsuke!" his cousins sing for him.

He's standing on top of his chair, clapping happily as if he understands what is going on. He's such a happy baby.

It's only Khaya here, my boys, baba, my mom and siblings, and Lerato and her boys. It's a little intimate gathering, and that's all we needed for a one year old.

We cut his second cake with him ask his

parents and they take lots of pictures of us.

“We’d like to thank you for coming to celebrate with our prince today, we really appreciate it.” baba starts out.

“Nsukezinhle, my son, you are growing so fast, and just last year today, you were a little baby I was scared to carry. You have brought so much happiness and light into this palace. Mommy and I love you so much.” baba says talking to his son.

He’s not even paying attention, he’s grabbing everything in arms reach.

“Dadadaa!”

“Yes, I’m talking to you.” everyone laughs.

Trust Nsuke to do that!

The boys and my sister go running outside to go play and he wants to follow them, but I hold him, and he starts crying. Next thing, they will

forget he's a child and they will stomp all over him and hurt him.

"Baby." I turn around and look at mama.

Nsuke is still trying to fight to get out of my grip.

"Woza kuGogo." mom takes him from me and I get a chance to fix him his food.

"Yes mama." I say.

"Where is Vukani?" sigh.

"He left mama."

"And you let him?"

"What was I supposed to say? He is legal, he can do whatever he wants to do. We weren't going to stop him ma." she looks bothered.

Vukani was close to losing his marbles. He caused a huge scene here and almost killed me. He tried to hit me when I asked him not to go. It was right after Banzi's monies were released.

He got his cut and he upped and left.

He's somewhere in Durban as we speak. I don't know if he's with Mandlenkosi, or if he's trying to make things for himself there because he wants nothing to do with this family. He blocked me everywhere, and he did the same with baba.

I've run out of options. Halle and Mgcini are also staying with us, and they are attending a school here, that's what they wanted.

That has been the only downside of the past year, but overall, it was a great year, that had a lot of blessings.

"He knows his way back home. When he's done being a spoilt brat, he will come back and he will find all of his family waiting for him with open arms." I say and that seems to shut her up.

Nsuke wants to come back to me now that he can see his bowl and spoon in my hand.

“Let’s go eat khehla.” I say and take him from mom.

I’m happy here, with all that I have, as I have said, Vukani knows his way back home. He will find things the same way he left them, when he’s ready to come back home. His home.

END