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By Chance or Destiny by Ndumiso

Chapter 1

I have been staring at her sleeping so beautifully you wouldn't tell it's the same little monster that drives me crazy till I reach a point of wanting to pull my hair and cry my eyes out. I believe she gets these tendencies from her Xhosa grandmother no offence I love my mother but there is something about Xhosa women nengxolo and driving people to the loony bin, beats me how Dad ended up with her and the fact that she a principal of a school and happens to be my boss means I have to work even harder.

She rubs her eyes her face is scrunched it's too cute no to take a picture I snap a few and send them to father I know how he will love them.

He calls immediately my whole face lights up this man is my rock he has taken a role of being a father to both me and Siyamthanda Nqobile Zwane.

"I want her back" he says with laugh

"Am I that invisible,unimportant that you don't ask how I am"
he laughs even more

"That's my princess I am coming over to take her for the weekend" he says

"Hau what about me" he laughs ending the call I really don't have a child I should have named her Ngowethu since she isn't mine.

I make myself useful by cleaning and cooking I think I should call Sizwe but my mind goes against it,My father doesn't like him at all but Mom is different well I think it's because he has money speak of the devil he walks in I tend to forget that he has keys to my apartment.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Hey Baby" he says kissing my cheek.

"Hey I thought you were working today" I say but his eyes aren't focused on me he is busy looking around

"No I came to take you out for lunch" he says with a serious tone.

"I am sorry I can't Siyamthanda is around" he nods and I can tell he isn't impressed when we started dating I told him that I have a daughter and he was okay but lately he has been weird well he hasn't said anything but his actions tell a different story. He stays for lunch and leaves when my dad arrives.

"I don't like that boy" he says settling on the couch.

"Baba please not today" I say dishing up I don't like arguing with him

"When will you see that this boy is not in it for the long run" I huff and place our plates I say grace he looks impressed.

"Baba let me learn from my mistake please" I say taking a sip of my juice

"Like you did with Siyamth.." he stops when he realises what he was about to say I stand up and go get Siyamthanda's clothes waking her up is no hassle the mention of Grandpa bear has her in different socks and messed up hair heading out.

Dad called to tell me they arrived safely I didn't feel like talking to Siyamthanda because I knew my heart would just break,I

remember when I found out I was pregnant at 17 the first thing I thought of was who, who is my baby's father and the second thing was to have an abortion and forget it all. Tears descend when it hits me I don't know who Siyamthanda's father is all because of one stupid night, Last paper celebrations and I lost my virginity to a stranger I still remember he was not loud not in terms of speaking just the way he carried himself he grabbed and commanded attention without talking all the girls were gaga over him and when he approached me I took that as a chance to have my first kiss but it turned out to be more than that, he took me to his place I think and that's when it happened but when I woke and I was in his arms the room reeked of alcohol and that was it I sneaked out ashamed and feeling dirty not knowing I was carrying his seed. My daughter will one day ask this big frightening question and I will have to break her heart and reveal that her mother was a one night stand.

I wipe my tears away with a smile not once did I ever resent or hate my baby girl because somewhere deep down in my heart I think it's not by chance but destiny that she is mine.

#2

I call my mom just to thank her for the dress she chose it and had it delivered to me.

"Enkosi mama nge lokhwe inhle"

"Only the best for you mntanami" she sighs heavily I know she will ask about her husband "you father told me what happened he is sorry he didn't mean to say that you know we love you guys and only want the best for you right" she says on the other end

"Ma when will he ever forgive me kunini ngixolisa sometimes it feels like he loves Siyamtha more than me" she laughs

"Oh hayi Phiwo mntanami your father loves you he just hates Sizwe and I don't get it lamfana is respectful and he loves you" she says mom thinks Sizwe will be her son In law.

"Then he shouldn't bring the past up I know I messed up big time" I say with tears threatening to come out.

"Okay I will talk to him I love you my baby" she says and I can't stop laughing she still treats me like a child.

"I love you too mama"

"Before I go are you still sure that the boy didn't take advantage of you" she asks her voice breaking she still can't get over what happened.

"Ma for the last time Siyamthanda is not a child of rape okay I might not know or remember her father but what happened was consensual" I end the call my parents can be too much at times.

We all have that one friend who is fake the one that never says nice things about you, the type that smiles but it's not genuine you know them moes they are good at passing remarks well I think I have one of those friends, I am accompanying Sizwe to one of his many business dinners if it's not their long boring speeches it's the pretentious laugh and rude comments. If I didn't love him I would spend the rest of my day giving to the needy

I twirl one more time for Aphiwe and Mpumi the dress fits perfectly it's a black body hugging dress with a slit and a plunging neckline.

"Mtase you are beautiful Sizwe will love it" Aphiwe says with a smile.

"Yeah but the neckline is just too much" Mpumi says drinking her glass of wine Aphiwe tilts her head I know my cousin wants to blow a gasket but she just laughs sarcastically.

"Oh well the dress is here and it looks good on her" She says with a smirk

"If you say so though you know nothing about fashion" Mpumi says with a smile these two are cat and dog but either way this dress looks good on me and Sizwe will definitely love it.

The two argue about the dress while Mpumi plays fashion police Aphiwe plays the critic it's the same thing basically just different names, Aphiwe is my cousin from mom's side of the family the only person who never judged me when I told her how Siyamtha was conceived, you see when your parents love and support you they stand by you no matter how many times you have mess up and then comes your whole family they might not understand or get it, It really doesn't matter because eventually they turn out to be your biggest enemy and critic especially those that go to church Lord help those people they are the most judgmental bunch.

I take a quick shower and fix myself up my man will be here any moment now, I tie my weave and go for a more natural look on the face, I look great presentable and worthy to accompany Sizwe, I wait for him till he calls telling me he is outside I have a thing for sleek cars but also big cars though I am clueless when

it comes to them,he gives me a kiss opening the door he doesn't even pay me any compliments he is focused on his laptop probably work stuff.We get to the place and it is packed as always with big spenders who have eye candy's on their arms sometimes I think these dinners are just a front to flaunt and boast about who has the most.

We walk hand in hand he has a smile on his face as always Sizwe is the only child and his father gives him everything on a silver platter not that he's not hard working but you know what I mean born with a silver spoon,his business partners are always flirtatious throwing compliments here and there as always nothing special.see I prefer Alpha males not the foward I have money type of guys .we mingle till my feet hurt.

"Baby my feet hurt I need a chair" he forces a smile and leads me closer to the bar.

Phiwo this is an important night for me please don't embarrass me" he says coldly I am taken aback by his statement since when am I an embarrassment.

"Haibo Sizwe I am tired and I will take a seat" he roughly grabs my arm in a discreet way.

"I see this sluttish dress is driving you crazy" he say under his breath oh that's why he hasn't said anything the dress upsets him.

"You will let go of me now" he tightens his grip having me wince in pain.

"You will not talk to me like that fatherless child of yours uyangizwa" he says with so much disgust I raise my hand to slap him but he holds it.

"What did you just say" I ask with a ping of hurt I was going to tell him when the time was right.

"You heard me seqamgwaqo ndini" I pull away from his grip and strut my behind to the car. I don't care if he is coming or not I tell the driver to get me home immediately. I get home unlocking the door as soon as I turn on the lights someone grabs me by the hair and smashes my head to the wall the lights turn on and to my surprise Sizwe is standing over me I have always known that he had a temper but did I did not see coming.

"So you give yourself up to strangers but not me your boyfriend" he says charging towards me.

"Sizwe wait I was going to tell you I just didn't know how" he chuckles when I say that.

"How about Sizwe I was once a whore and I have a fatherless child" he hisses my anger rises.

"That is my child you will not talk about like that" he pulls my hair making me stand and slap follows making me tumble to floor "Sizwe please" he looks different like angry different.

"Today I am going to teach you a lesson you have to know who is the man between the two of us" he takes of his belt and starts whipping me you know those thick expensive leather belts that tear into your flesh that's what feels like. I cry till I can't blood is coming out from eye the cut from the wall, he undresses me and I feel like a corpse dead my father has never beaten me up even when I told them about the pregnancy he just walked out.

He picks me up and gets me into the bath tub I scream in agony this hurts but in a few minutes my body goes numb to the salty water he lifts my head up and tears fall from his handsome face.

"I love you okay both you and Siyamtha are my life" he says I just stare back at him no emotion on display I just want him away from me.

"I am talking to you dammit" he shouts but my mouth feels tied up

"Phiwo don't test me" he shouts more I have this thing of feeling agitated whenever someone shouts at me. And the fact that i have stubborn streak going on isn't helping he forcefully

lowers me into the water drowning me, I scratch his arm he brings me up for air.

"I said I love you" he says one more time but I can't I just can't say it.

"Why are so stubborn huh why can't you be like other women submissive and respectful" he pulls my weave one more time.

"I love you too Sizwe" I say with tears strolling down he kisses me and I feel disgust this can't be my Sizwe.

He helps me out the water drains the water and helps me into my pyjamas the gash on my upper eye is covered up nicely you would swear he has some experience in all this because the house is already cleaned up.

"Why did you hit me" I ask looking straight into his eyes.

"Because I love you and I don't want to lose you" he says and my inner me laughs at such a pathetic answer what happened to communicating.

He tucks me in and says he will come back he just needs a few thing from the pharmacy as soon I hear the door a scramble out the bed looking for my phone and I can't seem to find it the door is locked and I am stuck oh Lord what have I gotten myself into.

#3

The weekend is over and I have been locked up I haven't spoken to my baby and that alone hurts but it's for the best, I am even afraid to ask for my phone incase he snaps just like when I asked him why he locked me up he almost chewed my head off. Sizwe is handsome and arrogant but I never picture him as an abuser. I walk out my bedroom and find him shirtless making breakfast this picture doesn't even make me wet, when I first met Sizwe I told him a lot of things one being I am celibate and during the weekend all that went out the window five years of being celibate and just like that he wanted sex and I gave it to him but what I was I going to do after being bashed the sex wasn't what I thought I would so much for day dreaming he wasn't even that gentle prick.

"Morning I made breakfast" his mood is on a high today

"Oh thank you" he offers me food and I can't enjoy it what if he put poison.

"I am sorry I shouldn't have done what I did but you are healing nicely" he says nervously I nod and eat

"I would appreciate a response when I am talking to you" I swallow hard and force a smile because I don't know what to say.

"Who told you about Siyamthanda" I ask chewing down this delicious bacon

"No one I just heard it in passing and I got angry to think that the woman I am planning a future with is hiding something like" he pauses wiping non existing sweat.

"Sizwe I wasn't hiding anything but that didn't give you the right to hit me"he laughs a bit a sinister laugh.

"One day you will see that I did that because I love you and said I was sorry drop it" he says banging the table we eat in silence once that is done he washes the dishes and kisses me goodbye.

I start cleaning like a mad woman every coner of this house needs to be spotless I somehow think cleaning will erase what happened but it won't the wall will remain a constant reminder or maybe I should paint.

I take a bath and wear my long black and white dress that shows off some ass I tie my weave take my keys and drive

home. listening to freshlyground's buttercup I miss my baby so much the drive is long because I need to brace myself mom's hugs can be a drag they are that fuzzy warm place that opens up flood gates.

I drive in and the moment I kill the engine Siyamthanda is outside she has one hand in her hip tapping a foot.

"Hey baby" I say thinking she is going to run toward me but nothing she taps her foot one more time then turns on her heels.

I walk inside and the whole family is here konje it's holidays.

"What happened to you I tried calling you but ibi shaya epalini" Aphiwe asks with a silly smile if only she knew.

"Maybe she was making another Siyamthanda" Zoleka says putting some emphasis on my baby's name we all know what she means.

"Hayi Zoe what's wrong with you" Aphiwe asks

"Miss high and mighty here had a child and no one said anything but when I got pregnant you all had something say" she says her voice a few octaves high

"And this is why my Dad dislikes your side of the family" I say clicking my tongue my mom's side of the family is a joy kill, I

proceed to where Siyamtha is a frown on I go on my knees the things we do when grovelling.

"I am sorry" she looks at me with her eyes squint

"Don't you love me anymore" she asks tilting her head.

"What I love you more than anything you are my heart" she smiles when I say the she is one of those extra ordinary kids well that's what the doctor said when I couldn't understand some of the things she was doing at her age and her smart mouth mom loves Siyamthanda and always drags her along to wherever she goes and brags about her super smart granddaughter.

"I missed you" I attack her small body inhaling her hair she's got beautiful long hair never been cut before

"Do you love me" she asks with her smile

"Yes I do"

"Why" she asks giggling

"Because you are my baby and I gave birth to you" she shakes her head laughing

"I do trust you mommy" she says running off that's how most of our talks end with her running away.

If I knew this place would be crawling with kids I would have bought a few things on the way, I haven't seen father and that works perfectly fine with me. Mom walks over and joins me.

"We missed you over the weekend" She says brushing my hand.

26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto; ">"I was busy ma but I am here now" she nods

"Ma has Dad ever laid a hand on you" I ask looking at the carefree kids.

"What never your father may look scary typical Zulu man but he is the sweetest in fact he detest woman abuser" she pauses for a while I think my question is sinking in "You of all people know this he puts such people away for a long time"

"I hear you Ma" I say sniffing

"Is everything okay my baby" I simply nod and rest my head on her lap we stay in awkward silence I wish I could cry out so loud but I can't I can't let my daughter see my tears not if they aren't tears of joy.

I run around chasing the kids they look so happy, Aphiwe comes running telling me that Sizwe is in the house looking for me.

Siyamtha runs before me she loves Sizwe so I guess it's natural she acts this way I run after her and find her in his arms.

He stands up and kisses my cheek Mom is smitten by all this.

"I am sorry for coming like this I came to fetch my fiance" he says cheerful

"What" I ask dumbfounded

"Hau baby didn't you tell your parents the good news" he asks
haibo what good news I must be slow which is not good Ma starts ululating.

"Sizwe what is this" I whisper

"This is us getting engaged" he says his grip getting tighter on my waist.

"Your father is going to be excited this is great news
Phiwo,Sizwe will take care of you oh my baby is getting married" she excitingly says

"Ma will you stop it please just stop" I snap something I don't usually do

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The drive to my place is long and awkward we just dropped Phumi off at her place.

I am angry that Sizwe thinks he can dictate my life this one needs some boiling oil.

We get home and the place is set to a more serene beautiful romantic scene.

He leads me inside the house and get down on his knees with a ring box.

"Will you marry me Phiwokuhle Zwane" I immediately shake my head backing away uyahlanya lo if he thinks I will marry his crazy arse.

"Phiwo I am asking you nicely will you marry me" I lowly chuckle.

"Lalela bhuti I am not going to marry you please leave my house and don't you ever come back okay kuphelile uyezwa" he stands up camly and takes out a gun pointing at me.

"You think this is a game huh put the ring on" he says with a straight face he looks different like those people with multiple personalities but that's not it maybe Sizwe was always like this I just didn't see the signs.

"Sizwe please I don't want to get married" he cuts me short.

"So awungifuni" he asks with a smirk

"Sizwe it's too soon please put the gun down" he cocks the gun and images of Siyamthanda laughing pass and tears stream down like Victoria falls " Hawema please don't kill me"

"Then put the ring on" he shouts I oblige putting the ring on he pulls in for a kiss.

"I love you Phiwo" he nods like he is trying to convince himself

"I know" he hugs me tight while I hold my breath if this is how fear feels like then I am sorry this is not for me.

#4

I don't know what's wrong with me am I a fool for staying with this man yes you heard right I am officially engaged to Sizwe he says he loves me and I know he does heck who am I fooling I am scared of what my family might think I couldn't keep Siyamtha's Dad then and I can't keep a man now, fear of having people talk behind my back it's silly I know.

I haven't seen my own family in a week I remember telling Siyamtha that I would never leave her alone now that I would be always there but here I am reminiscing about broken promises tears fall when I look at my bruised face I laugh at my reflection who would have thought me the daughter of the most highly respected Judge turned to a punching bag, but that's just hypocrisy talking anyone can be abused. I wipe my tears when I hear the door unlock.

"Hau baby were you crying" he asks with a frown

"No I was practising tears for your funeral" he laughs kissing my cheek

"Oh you are full of jokes" he says sarcastically

"Sizwe I want to see my daughter" I say with my hands clasped .

"Hayi what will my princess say when she sees you like this" he says

"Can I call them atleast please I won't say anything" I beg but he flat out refuses.

"Till you get it through your thick skull that you are mine and we are happy just behave and stop making me look bad then maybe I will let you call" he says walking away I collapse to floor what happened we were happy he worshipped the ground I walked on but but now he despises me.

I take a bath and relax put on some clothes and make-up to look good this will be a long day, I walk to the kitchen and find a note attached to the fridge.

I am sorry take the my card and go spoil yourself take my car don't even think of going home I am picking Siyamtha for lunch My blood boils he can mess with me as much as he wants but not my baby girl.

I make a few stops at the shops and get some food for the shelter I usually help out at, the ladies are happy to see me, I see new faces and there is one in particular who looks so handsome I could jump him.

"And then who is that guy" I ask Simmy

"Oh you mean the hunk" she says laughing "Not sure he is knew, he barely speaks or says anything he has been coming here for past few weeks hence you don't know him" she says with a smile

Oh" I say looking around he seems to have vanished.

I unpack a few things and head for home I can't wait to see my baby the drive home is rushed and sloppy I hit someone causing an accident,a part of me wants to just run away and the Christian in me gets out and I realise I just knocked the poor homeless guy damn he look to handsome to be homeless I chastise myself for thinking like this a kind gentleman calls an ambulance by the time it arrives I provide details since I am responsible for his accident might as well put him up in a comfy hospital.

Instead of driving home I head back to my apartment that crazy bastard might have brought Siyamthanda with.

I park outside and just as I have said his car is here I run to my apartment and the door is slightly open I hear sounds more like pleasure screams and moan I walk to my bedroom and Sizwe is deep in balls and everything inside Mphumi.I gasp and Sizwe jumps up his manhood still sprung,Mphumi has a smirk on her face.

"Sizwe" I say my voice coming out in a whisper he tries touching me but I back away it hurts but not that much.

"It's not what it looks like baby please let me explain" he say dressing up I look at Mpumi and there is no ounce of remorse I

think back and the things Sizwe would beat me up for are exactly what she would say talk about venom.

"It was you wasn't" she looks surprised

"Ukhuluma ngani" she asks playing dumb

"You told Sizwe about Siyamtha's father" tears fall when it clicks all the rumors he came home with were some dirty pillow talk between the two of them it's partly her fault that I am living this hell.

"You fed him lies about me how could you Mphumi I thought you were my friend kanti you are just a whore you know what you can have him you deserve each other" I say slapping Sizwe

"I told you baby Phiwo needs to be taught a lesson" she says like a headmistress I go from Sizwe to Mphumi I pull her weave I am going to take out all my anger on her.

She screams for her man who yanks me off her throwing me against the wall

"Ukufakile ikhubalo ngiyabona" I say lifting my head that the problem with stubborn people we just don't know when to give up.

He starts hitting me I swear I will have a concussion my head is banged to the wall blow after blow he keeps punching he finally gives in and stomps on me.the pain is immense I can't even

breath properly I hear footsteps and sound out of reach.the door slams hard and that's it my friend and fiance left me for dead,I crawl using my stomach my whole body is aching but there is literally one thing in my mind I made a promise and I failed if I make out alive I will do right by my daughter.I reach my bag if only tears could leave a trail like this blood then people would realise I cried till I couldn't,till making it out alive was the only option.

My eyes are almost shut he really did a number on me,I call my Dad his number is on speeddial.

"Baba please help" he sounds irritated I sob a bit louder each time I inhale or exhale the pain shoots right to my heart.

"Phiwo what's wrong" he ask in a panic

"Baba I am sorry" My phones switches off before i can say anything further maybe this is me paying for leaving that guy and not bothering myself I close my eyes basking in the pain it's a pattern of sharp blows I drift away holding on to hope that my father gets here in time.

5

I wake up to the smell of fresh flowers and slaps which are not pleasant the bright light is sensitive to my eyes but I open them non there less,Siyamthanda is ontop of me the pain is bareable tears well up and fall I hold her tight well I think I am because my arm is bandaged.My head hurts seeing my baby makes my heart melt but who in their right minds brings a child to the hospital my parents though.

"Khulu mommy is awake" she says jumping up and down

"Ouch" I say flinching Mom is by my side in seconds

"Serves you can right" Dad says walking out his act breaks my heart.

"Baba" I call out with every bit of energy in me.

"Calm down Phiwo" Ma says pleading

"I am sorry Ma" I say blinking tears away Siyamthanda looks confused, Ma takes her and walks out with her she comes back afer a while wiping her tears.

"Why Phiwo that's all I want to know,why would you put your life at risk like that" she asks with a sad smile.

"I don't know Ma I am sorry" I say running out of words

"Hayi everytime nguwe no nyori nyori Phiwo do you know how many women lose their lives at the hands of their partners huh do know that women and children get abused killed each and every day in this country why" she shouts breaking down

"Have you seen me cry huh bruised and battered by your father,where did you see that because in my house we never exposed you toxic things only teachings Phiwo" she says slowly breathing out

"Mama please" she shakes her head

"You didn't think about us nor did you think about your child" she says kissing my forehead and walks away.

I sob trying by all means to muffle my sobs my throat is parched my head feels like it's about to explode.

The doctor walks in and immediately walks toward me she smiles wiping my tears,she is beautiful she backs away composing her self .

"It's good to see you awake" she says with a soft laugh I spot grills or is it platinum at the back she has this tom boyish look going on I know this because I grew up in a house full of boys and I became one of the guys.

"How long have I been out" she looks uncomfortable by my question.

"How long" I say insisting

"Just a couple of days your head injury being the main cause, few bruises and the broken arm" she says jotting something down.

"Oh I see" I say swallowing hard my throat is burning.

You were lucky to have been brought here in time anyway" she says like she just remembered something "I am doctor khaya
She says with an awkward smile.

"Can you get me some water please" she nods bringing a glass of water helping me drink she is too close that I inhale her man cologne someone clears their throat she quickly moves almost spilling water on me.

My Dad walks in and Doctor khaya hurriedly walks away, my father is one of the most respected and feared people I know but under all that he is a softy grandpa bear as Siyamthanda calls him, I try sitting up to no avail my stomach hurts and he is just standing there doing nothing. I hate feeling helpless I look up with tears coming out I try one more time but nothing so I just give up and look down.

"Why can't you ever ask for help" he asks sitting down

"I hate the fact that my stubbornness has rubbed off on you that my pride has rubbed off on you" he says with a chuckle

"I am sorry" I say my eyes still not looking at him.

"Are we such bad parents that you would stay and not tell us that boy was hitting you" he asks clenching his fists.

"It's not your fault Baba you are great parents please don't blame yourself" he shakes his head

"Then why make me understand you know the cases I make rulings on how exhausted and painfully draining my findings are, you want me to preside on my own daughter's death again" I shake my head biting my lower lip remembering how my older sister died.

"How did it start" he asks I stay mum tears spilling

"Don't make me repeat myself how did it start and when" he shouts startling me

"It's been weeks and he would lock me up and it all started with rumours" he nods prompting me to go on.

"I didn't mean to stay but he would apologise Baba and I would find myself forgiving him" he looks livid by my statement

"Do you know how many times I have heard that from different women, you make me so mad right now" he shouts I have never seen him this angry my breathing changes from normal to abnormal.

"Your brothers are coming home" my head hurts even more

"Hayi baba" he says walking away I call out his name but he walks away, I know how he feels about the current situation of woman and children abuse.

I open my eyes upon hearing footsteps and the guy I bumped is standing before me this guy shouldn't be on the streets.

"He hates me and I don't blame him I was a fool for staying and I paid dearly" he doesn't say anything but sits down "I love him but he just wanted to own me and break me, I so badly wanted to be loved by another man other than my father that I stayed even, I wanted to keep a man so bad that I stayed" admitting everything hurts but it's true I stayed for selfish reasons and fear.

"You probably think I am weak but I am not this was my first relationship and I thought it would work out" I say letting out a dry chuckle till it forms into tears. He stands up and fits himself on the hospital bed. I am hesitant to rest my head I barely know this man yea brother man goes to gym.

"I just wanted to be loved by another man other than my father experience what my mother has and give my daughter a father that I had growing up" I say clutching at him could this man be mute.

6

What is life without mistakes and judgment would you say you have lived your life with no regrets should it come to that question, No one is perfect but we all try and strive to be better versions of ourselves and some not so better. I know people might think I am pathetic and a weakling of a woman but trust me once you are in the is no easy way of coming out, I have been there and I became what I told myself I wouldn't be a helpless self made victim who had ample chances to walk away but didn't I stayed when he bashed me because I somehow convinced myself he was just acting out of character that it wasn't him and when he held me and apologised I believed him and gave him the chance to prove me otherwise. I blame the society for condoning and not condemning such beastly behaviour from man who are supposed to provide and protect don't get me wrong I am not blaming them for me staying till it was too late,

I am blaming the society we live amongst that turns a blind eye that has turned such to a norm and culture. some kind of rite to womanhood and the kuyabekezelwa emendweni nonsense.

People in high position preach about children and women abuse but they are also molesters and abuser protected by money, wealth and status. there are families who are harbouring

criminals who do despicable acts on young children and turn a blind eye, There is a church going women right now who is devoted to God but can't break free from the chains of abuse because she fears what people will say about her.

I take the closest thing to me which is a glass of water and throw it against the wall. I am angry at myself for staying, I am angry for adding to the highest statistics in the country, I am angry that my father hasn't visited since and yes I don't blame him I understand his frustrations. I sit up straight and look to my side I could have thrown the vase but it's heavy and it has flowers from my friend not just any flowers sunflowers my favourite. My hospital stay has been pleasant because of him he has been checking up on me since I landed myself here, still wearing the same clothes shame but clean and fresh speaking of him he stopped coming.

Doctor Khaya and Aphiwe walk in they both spot the broken glass and exchange looks just because I was beaten up doesn't mean I am an imbecile these people.

"I will send a nurse over to clean the mess, Ladies" she says nodding

"Morning mtase" she says walking over she has flowers and a box of chocolates I don't like her flowers Shame.

"Morning" I say with a smile

"Yalithanda isende ude uhlale umntu ekubethisa okwe bhokwe amanqindi mtase" she says laughing hard

"Not you too Aphiwe" she laughs even more and grabs a chair.

"You are one of the most vocal people I know when it comes to these type of issues kuthen uhlalele amanyala" she asks brushing my hand

"I don't know and I feel stupid for allowing this to happen to me" I truthfully say she nods giving me the flowers I look at the vase then back at her.

"Dabawo brought you these" she ask pointing at the flowers and my mind drifts off to the nights I spent with him.he made feel good without even saying anything well I doubt he can speak he hasn't said a word during our encounter,that also made it easy to offload on someone who doesn't even know me and wouldn't judge I mean you can't judge someone you hardly know right.

"Hey I am talking to you" she says snapping her fingers

"I got them from a friend" I say with a broad smile

"Whose the friend" she asks with a frown Aphiwe is like a dog with a bone once she gets started.

0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"One the guys from the soup kitchen" her eyes pop and she immediately shakes her head like one of those Einstein mini dolls.

"No not another one of your projects come on if you want a man find a gentleman well groomed handsome not a homeless man uzoba ngumahlalela and sponge off you" she says nodding like she is trying to convince someone I am not sure if it's me or her,Aphiwe loathes lazy people she once dated this guy who lied and milked her.

"I hear you,are they really home" I ask deviating from the current topic.

"Yes they are" she says standing up to face the window

"I don't like this Aphiwe" it's like a bolt of lighting just struck her she turns facing me.

"He should have thought of that before laying his filthy hands on you" she says giving me a deadly stare

"Violence never solved anything you know that" she tilts her head

"Well then Mngqobi and Manqoba will deal with it" I nod looking away my brothers are not evil but they not exactly angels they are ruthless to say the least.

Aphiwe leaves after preaching a sermon and a half about Sizwe being trash and scum of the earth and keeping me company for almost the whole day Doctor khaya and her exception not that I mind but I can't wait to leave this place the food is horrible and everything about this place grosses me out.

Doctor Khaya checks up on me as I am about to sleep,I wonder if she does this to all her patients

I doze off quicker than a tired Siyamthanda

Into my sleep i feel a hand cover my mouth

I open my eyes and he's standing next to me with one finger cautioning me not to scream we all know that finger shh gesture.he slowly removes his hand and I let out heavy breath.

"You could have woken me up you know" I say sitting up straight

He doesn't say anything but hands me a paper,he then caresses my face I close my eyes taking in this moment his palm holds the side of my face and I voluntary rest my face,he brings his face closer and I am swallowing hard waiting for his lips to

touch mine like thirst. He trails his finger to my lips and all my senses are awoken so much power I think to myself, he plants a smooth gentle kiss on my cheek instead. After a while of inhaling me I think he pulls away and walks.

"No.no.no.no don't go please stay" I say already on my feet but he is long gone.

I reach the door and just like a shadow it's like he was never here. I walk to my bed and open the paper it's not that dark so I read.

"Dear Phiwokuhle Zwane Maka Siyamthanda

You are beautiful, strong and resilient"

What that's it I turn and straighten the paper hoping more words will appear who does that walk into your life and disappears I want to cry but I hold my tears Aphiwe did warn me not another one of your projects she said I fold my tiny letter and put it together with my things he is worth remembering.

7

I have been home for a week now I left that place with both a broken and happy heart I already miss my friend but then again some people are not meant to be constant in our lives, look at Sizwe for instance he is one of them he has been bothering me like a pest till I blocked his number and told him if he knew better he would disappear from the face of the earth, Siyamthanda doesn't care if I am around or not her schedule is busy Shame and because she is a five year old that bothers me, if it were up to Mom she would have been to school by now just imagine but Dad chose home school, people with money are so demanding and extra shame.

This garden stroll isn't doing much for me dammit my mind keeps going back to him even if I were to bump into him I doubt I would recognise him but his eyes left me naked in the true senses of marking me and embedding remembrance. I sit down and take out his letter despite the dirty paper his handwriting is beautiful and those words automatically look beautiful as well. I hadn't noticed my father when he peaks I quickly fold it back and put it in my pocket.

"Baba I didn't see you" he doesn't look surprised in fact this is the first time he has sat next to me since I came back.

"I miss you" he says opening his arms I fly in quickly before he changes his mind.

"I miss you too and I am sorry" tears escape my eyes I want to cry so bad I am not sure if it the right time.

"It's okay daddy is here and I am not going anywhere" he smoothly brushes my back and the flood gate opens my dad is my rock my first true love the first men I ever fell in love with if you know what I mean, yes my mom is around and I love her but I love the fact that my father is enough for all us. after staining his shirt I pull away snorting he wipes my tears blinking away his.

"So who wrote you that stupid letter" he asks with a smile nose as much.

"A friend of mine baba" I say beaming showing him the letter.

He reads the letter and erupts into a loud laugh it's a good thing he doesn't have a belly or it would be dancing to the tune of his laugh.

"Give me back my letter" I take it and look for whatever is funny and nothing dololo.

"Strong and resilient yes I agree with him but the beautiful part hayi udlalile ngawe lomfana" he says laughing even harder

"I am beautiful you just jealous" I say to my defence he stops laughing and composes himself.

"Where have you seen a female version of a man looking beautiful huh" he says pulling me for a side hug stifling a laugh

"So what if I look like you ngimuhle hau" i say standing up he shakes his head laughing while I have tears ready to pour

"No you are not you are ugly just like me" he says still adamant

"No take that back" he laughs standing up to join me

"I am kidding you are beautiful my sunflower" he says with a bright smile

"I love you Phiwo" I smile till he says "but one day ngizokufaka isbhaxu" he kisses my forehead and walks away that's my Dad he has never lifted a hand on me huh but it's quite a complete different story when it comes to my brothers. speaking of those two I have been avoiding them at all cost and I guess they don't care because Siyamthanda has been taken to more than a thousand shopping sprees I will just take some of my stuff to the orphanage.

I call Aphiwe to join me for lunch guys my cousin is everything, She suggests coming over. so I fix my self up and take another shower wearing my summer floral dress she

arrives after an hour of lying to me about being at the gate
mxm African time neh.

"Really Aphiwe time is everything" she laughs bulldozing her
way in

"I was stuck in traffic" I tilt my head kahle kahle lying runs in the
family

"Mhmm whatever makes you feel better I made cocktails" she
beams I think this one is an undercover drunkard

"Zisa I am thirsty" she says gulping one instantly this is going to
be a long day.

I make my way to the kitchen to get some yoghurt nothing feels
good like frozen yogurt except for icecream.

"Khaya likes you" she shouts firm the lounge and I almost choke
on my saliva hell no I don't roll like that

"Are you listening" she shouts

"Yeah but you know I don't roll like that I love my man
long,wide and strong" she laughs at my response,I have heard
that lesbian eat pussy better than guys but I will pass I don't
want to complicate my life with a hot doctor.

"And look where you ended up" she says sighing.

"Phiwo come and see" she shouts I rush to the lounge and find her on her feet pointing at the TV she looks spooked.

"Siyamthanda's Dad" I look at her then back at the TV

"He was there I swear" she says pacing up and down.

"You know how many guys I have seen and thought they looked like Siyamthanda" I say brushing her off

"This is different I just saw an original photo copy of Siyamthanda" she says sitting down

"Lalela Aphi I have come to accept that I don't know the father of my first born and that's okay as much as it hurts it's okay, The poor guy is probably dead or something" I say settling next to her a part of me wishes what she saw is true but I have been through this and had my heart broken because of the little hope I had.

My phone rings breaking the silence and distracting me from the sad truth. I look at the call great it's my older brother Manqoba.

"Bhuti"

"I need you to come to the hospital now" he says sounding calm as ever.

"Why what's going on" I say trying to match his calmness

"What's wrong" Aphiwe asks

"Is that Aphiwe give her the phone" I shake my head this is my phone

"No i won't give her the phone first tell me what's going on" I protest,Aphiwe snatches the phone she nods a few times and hangs up.

"Siyamthanda is in the hospital" I zone out to the first time she was hospitalised I went crazy.

"Did you hear me" she says holding both my arms roughly shaking me.

"Aphiwe not my sweet baby" tears flow when it sinks in my baby is in the hospital.

Aphiwe drives like a maniac and when we get to the hospital my family is already there we rush to where they are Mom has her arms open I swing in.

"Where is she" I ask they look at me with sad eyes.

"In ICU" my brother says with a clenched jaw

"Why how was there an accident" He shakes his head.

"Then what" I ask pulling away from my mom's embrace

"We don't know" I sink to the floor it's happening again I am going to lose my baby girl.

8

Ever felt hopeless and useless that's how I am feeling right now, My baby is in pain and there is nothing I can do to help I have been pacing up and down waiting for some news any news. I can't lose her those words keep flowing out my mouth involuntary she is my source of strength my lifeline.

"She is going to fine" Manqoba says hugging me

"Bhuti I can't lose her if she dies on me I will..." My father cuts in

"You say no such thing baby bear will be just fine" he says sternly

"You need to be strong she will pull through" I nod but the truth is I don't know how to be strong I am failing at be strong and I am here thinking the worst.

Khaya approaches us my parents rush to her, I cling on to my brother biting my lower lip.

"How is she" Mom asks

"She is stable for now we sedated her" she says looking my way

"So what's wrong with her" I ask

"We don't know yet but the rash on her skin could mean an infection we are not sure" she says her words are not convincing

"Khaya please save her she is the only thing I have" My words must be unsettling because all eyes are on me.

"We will do our best you can see her for now only two people are allowed" she says walking away I follow behind taking my father's with me

We get our selves cleaned and walk in to see her,her body has tubes one helping her breathe and drips,I put a hand over my mouth when I see her she looks like she is in pain her body is badly covered with what seems like redish sores that form a pattern.

My father gasp his eyes expand if I wasn't a mother I would be afraid to even come closer.

"Baba what's wrong with my baby" I ask cluching at my chest he holds me tight while I sob I haven't seen anything like this what type of disease spreads so fast in one day.

I hold her tiny hand and kiss it.

"Hey baby bear Mommy is here I know you are in pain but I want you to fight for all of us grandpa bear is already miserable without you" I say forcing a smile "And I can't breathe with you,I never told you this but we all thought you would be a boy

hence your names you are a warrior now fight for me" I sob while my dad has a hand over my shoulder. she moves slowly crying out she whimpers and my heart breaks.

"Baba call the doctor she is in pain" he goes out while I try soothing her pain but nothing works.

Khaya walks in and asks us to step outside

My father gently pulls me outside. I collapse in his arms catching my breath gasping for air, you know that painful shocking pain that has you spilling tears but no sound of a cry comes out that's me right now.

"Pull yourself together Phiwo this is not the time to fall apart" Mngobi says picking me up he walks with me outside.

"Look at me we are the Zwanes and with us everything is possible and nothing is impossible" he says reassuring me

"Hope that is all I need from you" I nod wiping my tears

"Here drink this and take some time I will be right back" he says walking back in, it's a good thing he left his car keys behind. I start the car and drive out to I find myself in a park not far from the hospital it hurt seeing my baby like that I would trade bodies with her anytime given the chance.

I step out and scream so loud not caring if people are watching on not I cover my face with both hands my knees on

the ground, I suffered during my pregnancy, the humiliation I went through the talks of how loose I am did the rounds the constant reminder of how I am one of those people who give birth to potatoes, tomatoes and cabbages the only difference is that I don't know her father but still I was painted by the same brush, I can't I just can't lose her not now. After my outburst I stand up tall fixing myself up and drive home. I find no one home I am tempted to drink some wine but my heart won't leave me if I drink it I numb the pain while my baby suffers.

I walk to my bedroom and decide to just sleep the day away.

I am woken up by some noise my bedroom curtains are pulled the sun is bright but I feel dull and gloomy. I didn't even sleep well I kept turning and tossing all night.

I walk to the kitchen and the people in this house seem to be in each others throats I greet them opening the fridge I am not even sure why.

"Morning my baby" Mom says

"Morning Ma" I respond seating next her

"Take a look at this" Manqoba says shoving his tablet in my face.

"CHIEF JUSTICE ZWANES DAUGHTER GOING CRAZY JUST HAD A MELTDOWN"

The headline is so bold you can't miss it even if you tried

Advertisement

I look at my Dad who is drinking his coffee I am embarrassed the pictures could easily be mistaken for anything including me being a junkie.

"I am sorry Baba" he simply nods he is miles away

"It's okay my baby your father will fix this go get ready we are going to the hospital"

I walk to my room and take a quick shower wearing a long grey dress I rush out.

Her condition is still the same we have been here for hours and still nothing she looks in pain the only thing numbing her pain is the injection. My dad decided to stay behind I am not if it's because of me or not.

"I am afraid we there is still nothing new" Khaya says holding my hand

"What do you mean it's been 48 hours and you see nothing" she looks defeated

"MaZwane I am trying my best trust me" she says pulling me in for a hug but in all honesty I need someone who feels the same pain as me someone who knows how it feels to be torn.

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It's been weeks I and I mean horrible painful weeks of nothing, My father has tried everything but all these doctors see nothing it's ironic really the only thing they offer is pain medication and well I can't take her home.

I wake up from my sleep I look ugly as hell I removed my weave I wanted to cut the thing off but my mom was kind enough to remove it for me.

A knock comes through it's probably someone who wants to bug me with food and meaningless things the news about me going crazy have started doing the rounds.

Mom walks in followed in by Dad they both settle down.

"Nana we need to talk" Mom says standing up to open the curtains

"Okay" they both look at each other.

"I have been raking my brain and I talked your uncle we need to see a sangoma in fact we are seeing one today" my Dad says sternly

"Okay" that's all I say I will do anything for my daughter.

"Let me help you get ready so we can leave" Mom says while dad excuses himself, She helps me bath and dresses me in a long skirt covers up my shoulders and kisses my forehead.

"Everthing is going to be okay mtanami ubaba wakho uzama ngakho konke" she says pulling me for a hug my hands are just dangling my heart feels like it's been ripped out of me.

It's still early and the road is a long one, I am seated with Aphiwe and Mom at the back while Baba and Manqoba are in front we left Mnqobi at the hospital.

We reach the place and there are a few people here we join in the cue apparently this man is well known and knows his stuff ,when it's our turn Manqoba stays outside.

The place smells of incense it's not dirty or anything but it's a sangoma's hut.

"The child I hear a crying child" he says looking at me

"Yebo Makhosi" my father says that old man chant and groans like he is in pain.

"There is nothing I can do you need to find the child's father" I shake my head my worst nightmare has come true with

"We want to know what is wrong with the child" My father asks

"Why would you ask why you already know the answer Zwane" he says looking up doing incantations he sings weirdly his shoulders moving up and down.

"What do you mean makhosi" Mama asks looking at my father and I am confused as hell.

"The child I see is suffering from the ancestors wrath which resulted to umlilo wabaphansi" my father nods clearly he understands this

"What do you mean" Mom asks

"The ancestors are at loggerheads her father's ancestors are claiming her while yours are doing the same too" my father shakes his head the man goes on and on about umlilo wabaphansi till we leave his place.

"We have to look for that boy" Mom says looking at me, Aphiwe once said I should look for him in social networks by

putting a video out there explaining my situation maybe it might reach the right person.

"I think we should go with Aphiwe's idea" the one person who was against this says

"But Baba that's my sister airing her laundry for the whole world to see" Manqoba protests

"I will do anything to save my baby bear" I look at Aphiwe who has a smile on her face

"Tomorrow then" she says pulling me in for a hug.

I don't know what to say words are failing me only God's will and grace has been keeping me going, it hurts when doctors finally tell you that there is nothing more they can do and the only thing you can do is pray, I have been praying and fasting that God saves my child, praying that I find her father in time to have whatever ceremony that needs to be done. I get up and the first thing I do is kneel and pray.

"Dear heavenly father I come before you let not my sins hide my face from you, hear my pleas, hear my cries my baby hasn't done anything she is innocent in all this please save her please bring her back" a heart wrenching sob escapes my mouth my heart is bleeding I can't go any further. I pull myself together I am a mother, a daughter and mostly I am a woman I have to be strong and take this head on,

Aphiwe runs me a hot bath I slip in the bath tub filled with relaxing oils. I close my eyes and hear Siya's beautiful squeaky laugh from afar it's fading I open my eyes in hopes of seeing her but nothing. today I am doing the video though Manqoba doesn't like it, I understand his sentiments but Baba okayed the whole thing, I finish up lotion and wear a long black dress the house is so quiet and sad it breaks my heart, If it was any other day I would have had to drag her out of my father's study they

developed this bear thing from watching an old "Brother Bear" movie. I wipe my tears up with a smile God truly blessed me with an Angel.

"I think it's time I want people to wake up to this video" she says pulling me by my hand to the mirror

"Do you think it will work" she nods even looks optimistic I wish I was like her.

"Let me fix you up just a little bit" she says trying to put some makeup on.

"No I am fine the way I am" I say getting up

"Okay fine let's go to the garden then" I nod but chose to fix my bed first clean the bath tub and open the windows for some air.

Everyone is out in the garden about to see me re-tell my night with a stranger how I opened up my legs and had him take me willingly I wasn't even that drunk and I never regretted it till I found out I was pregnant and that made me question my act. Mom is no where to be Seen probably inside she still has this weird idea of rape in her educated mind and when this topic comes up she tears up for me and Siya mom is just too much but I do get where she is coming from, your only daughter whom you shared everything with and taught so many things could easily be fooled. I look horrible that even Manqoba makes a joke about it to lighten up the air my brother

is like deputy parent since he is the oldest. I seat and Aphiwe rolls the camera. I don't even know what i should start with tears well up and Aphiwe tells me to start again, The three men of the house are now next to me.

"Maybe we should postpone" Manqoba says

"It's okay I can do this" they nod and walk away I sit up straight. and Aphiwe starts again.

It's been two days since I uploaded the video and it has been trending for good and bad reasons I really don't care I am hoping it reaches the right people.

We will find him" Mnqobi says with a smile

" I don't think so people have been calling to prank me and they don't know the hurt I am going through" he nods pulling me for a side hug

"What's important is that she is awake and hanging in there" I smile thinking of how she is such a fighter

"That's the smile I want to see" he says matching mine

Family is everything and I must say mine is amazing through everything.

Xulu

My mother walks in without Knocking she has this look on her face.If she is not meddling in my business she is disturbing me I grunt rubbing my forehead.

"I am so happy matanami God has finally answered my prayers" she says wiping her tears women and their not so far emotional tears.

"What is it Ma shouldn't you be with Baba or something" she quickly shakes her head lord help me I hope it's not another date.

"Just look at this and tell me what you think please" She says handing me her tablet I look at it she presses play.

"Hello I know some of you already think I am crazy but I am not a video of me lashing out has been doing the rounds" she pauses for a moment wiping her tears. "Five years ago on the 24th of November I went out to celebrate writing my last matric exam paper and I met someone there whom I had a one night stand with" her eyes light up but are soon clouded by sadness. "He was wearing black jeans and a white t-shirt I don't know his name but he took my virginity and months after our encounter I found out I was pregnant,I am pleading whoever you are and wherever you are please contact these numbers please come forward I don't need your money or anything but I

need you to save our daughter my baby girl is dying and she needs her Father's family I left something that night please help me" by the time she finishes she is in tears breaking my heart.I look at the ring hanging around my neck it's a purity ring didn't think black people had these till she gave it to me in honour of what we had shared. I clench my fist looking to my mother.

"Is it her" I nod looking away this is more painful that I imagined

"Ngakutshela remember my dream and I begged you to look for whoever you impregnated" she says angrily

"I know Ma" I rub my eyes thinking of that night I knew she was different by just looking at her,Carefree and full of life but shy she couldn't stop smiling and bursting into laughter.I tried looking but I wasn't even sure what I was looking for exactly.

"You do realise you wronged Zwane's daughter" Mom says.

"I will discuss this matter with Baba"

10

Calls have been coming through some claiming it was them but non of them remember the ring or anything concerning that night or are men just ignorant that they are oblivious to pivotal information anyway Baba and Mama are bringing Siya home today her condition is still the same but the fever is gone and I really miss her.

I wake up at the crack of dawn and prepare my bedroom I need everything to be perfect and accommodating for her. I even cook her favourite meal I doubt she will want any but it's better she comes home to a home cooked meal.

Aphiwe waltz her beautiful self in my bedroom beaming like a retard.

"And that smile" completely ignoring me she attacks me with a hug.

"Okay now I am getting worried" she laughs pulling away.

"I am happy because Siya is coming home and things are looking up" I smile not wanting to burst her bubble yes her idea might be helpful but the right person hasn't come forward

"And it's all thanks to you" she nods with a smile she starts helping me around.

"I can't wait to see her" she says fluffing up the pillows Siya is not even home yet

We head to the kitchen and a knock comes through I quickly attend to the persistent knock and a man wearing black appears he looks like one of those movie drivers a chauffeur yes those ones.

"Hello I am looking for a Miss Phiwokuhle Zwane" he says all professional and stern

"That's me how can I help you" I ask I am sure my eyebrows are furrowed he goes to the car and comes back with a teddy bear a beautiful white with a pink bow teddy. It's cute my heart immediately melts.

"Mam" he says giving me the bear and a card then walks away just like that.

"This is great you bought her a teddy" Aphiwe says hugging the human size thing.

"Not me but I think it's grandpa bear" I smile thinking of my Dad

"Read the card then" she says pointing at it I open it up and it's written

"For Siyamthanda" and that's it I pass the card to Aphiwe who looks shocked as I am

"If it's not one of us then who is it" she asks with a wary look on

"I really don't know" I say looking at the paper but nothing gives me a clue. We carry on preparing till the door bursts open and Manqoba is carrying Siyamthanda she smiles opening her arms I hold my tears which seems impossible.

"Oh baby" I take her into my arms careful not to hurt her, she looks different but she is still my beautiful baby girl she spots the teddy Bear and beams

"Thank you Khulu" she says with one big smile my father looks at me with a surprised look I shrug my shoulders concentrating on Siya nothing matters right now but her.

"I missed you so much" I take her to the bedroom and make her comfortable.

"I love you my baby" I kiss her forehead and watch her go crazy over her stuffed human whoever the stranger is just made her day she refuses to eat but Mom takes her with after throwing a tantrum.

The door shuts this moment right here reminds me of my childhood memories Mom would whoop my arse real good. We all know that death is inevitable but what happens when it comes knocking at your door faster than it should, When it

constantly reminds you that you mortal and you could lose what you value in an instant. I look around my bedroom all these priced possessions are worthless but life is rare and special maybe that's my take because nowadays people care more about possessions than life which is taken lightly and for granted. My fone beeps taking my mind off these depressing thought.

"I hope you both love my present" the text reads it has me up on my feet no one has my personal number the one I gave out I just got day after uploading the video. An unknown number calls I contemplate what to do till my thumb decides for me.

"Hello" the caller says

"Who are you" I ask holding my breath

"The ring holder" he says camly

Advertisement

0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"What ring holder" I ask with my fingers crossed.

"The purity ring you gave me the night we spent together" I gasp putting a hand over my mouth what if it a prank but only one person knows about the ring.

"You were wearing a signed shirt well all of you were, but your trousers were cut into shorts and I took you to my place but when I woke up you were long gone" he says awkwardly

"Hoe do you know all this" I know it's a stupid question but I need to hear him say it.

"That's because I am Siyamthanda's father" his admission has me slumping to floor holding my chest this is it, it has to be him I muffle my cries but this burning desire has me sobbing louder than I should in fact I should be happy and hopeful but this call has opened up a few old wounds.

My mother rushes in almost tripping.

"Phiwo what's wrong" she asks cupping my face.

"He called Mama" she pulls me into a hug brushing my back.

"Who called talk to me" She asks

"The man I slept with he called" She squeezes me harder thank God.

"Wipe your tears now mntanami it's going to be okay" she says pulling away and settles next to me

"Ma I am afraid what if it a mistake" I tell her what the guy told me she keeps nodding without saying a word.

"I think he is telling the truth,for now I will tell your father and we can call him to make an appointment with the boy okay" she says kissing my cheek

"I love Phiwokuhle" she says with a smile

"I love you too mama" I hug her one more time before she stands up and offers to look after Siya till I have calmed down.I look at my phone and the text corresponds with the same number that called.His voice is a bit deep and smooth I wonder if he is married or not,does he have other kids beside Siyamthanda maybe I will finally get to tell her that she looks like her Dad or anyone from her father's side.A smile creeps on my face I can wait to see him I can finally put this matter to rest.

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I pace up and and down thinking if I should call just to check up on her or the kid,I am.clueless when it comes to such things my father walks in we share a hand shake.

"What's wrong Ndodana" he asks sternly

"I called Maka Siyamthanda ealier and I think I upset her" he clenches his jaw and I shift away from him

"You did what didn't I warn you not to call her" he asks angry
he looks ready to burst

"I know but I couldn't help it" he shakes his head .

"You just couldn't wait for a few more days but that doesn't
matter tomorrow we are going to her house" he says calmly

"But Baba I need to talk to her first" I say

"You should have thought about that before you called the
poor child and went about becoming a homeless man" he says
breathing heavily

"Baba that wasn't my intention you know that" he looks away
like he is thinking when my sister told me about Phiwokuhle
and the amazing work she does giving back to the poor I asked
to see her photo and I saw some resemblance her smile sold
her out or should I say it pulled me in like the first time and
because I wanted to know if it was really get I stalked her
changed my appearance and purposely got hit by her, I didn't
know she had a daughter till I saw her walking around the
hospital I couldn't keep my eyes off her it was like Dèja vu like I
had seen her before not only to have it click she is a replica of
me the resemblance is uncanny I felt so many emotions hurt
and anger that's why I decided to walk away, Writing that letter
I had so much to say that I ended up saying nothing My father
was more than happy to call on my uncles and have them go to

Her house we were going to figure this out, but things don't always work out as we plan and now I have to do all I can to save my daughter.

"You better be thinking of answers and an apology" I rub my forehead this will be hard what if she thinks I knew all this while and stayed away willingly I have to fix this.

I haven't slept all night thinking about the guy who called I have mixed emotions about the matter, what if his family doesn't like us, What if they refuse to have the ritual are we going to be good parents is he kind and loving oh Lord will this man love my daughter that's the real question here, I take my phone and there are countless missed calls from him maybe he has changed his mind my heart sinks to the pit of my stomach, Hope funny thing that is we hold on to it no matter what even if we fall along the way we still hold on to it hoping that it gets better with time that's me on right now holding holding on to the little hope I have.

I switch off the phone reassuring myself of better outcome.

A soft knock comes and Dad peaks through the door he enters and joins me.

"Morning my sunflower" I smile this old ma takes me way back.

"Morning grandpa bear" he laughs showing off his teeth good thing I also have those beautiful pearly whites.

"Do you know the Xulu's" I shake my head no.

"Are you sure Phiwo" he asks

"I am sure I don't know anyone by that surname" he nods taking my hand into his.

"Well Langa Xulu called me yesterday and they are coming over today with regards to Siya" he says calmly

"Today but I am not ready" I say in panic mode

"Calm down your Mother has gone all out for guests" I breathe out what would I be without my mother.

"Do you know these people Baba" I ask

"Well I used to know Langa now get yourself ready because we don't know when they might show up" he says with a smile.

I know Aphiwe and Ma can hold the fort in the kitchen, I take my phone switching it back on stuff my plan, right now I need to check up on Siya and prepare her this is a big day for the both of us. I have this smile on my face and butterflies in my stomach it's like I am about to meet a long lost friend.

I walk to Siya's room and find her not in her bed instead she is curled up to the bear looking cute as ever I take a few snaps and immediately send them to same number that called.

I wake up and bath her dress her up into a pink fairy like dress that compliments her bear and tie her afro up she chooses to wear black sneakers sometimes I am not sure if I am raising a girl or boy. she puts her tiny hands on both sides of my face and kisses me

"I love you mama" she says lively as ever the sangoma or prophet said he couldn't help but gave us water for her to drink and I am grateful for that.

She rushes put but comes back again and takes her toy.

I walk to my bedroom and take a quick shower phela Manyawuza might send troops for me,I wear a below the knee peach dress and sandals. Walking out I find Ma and Aphiwe in aprons running around.

"Hambo thwala Phiwo these people are at the gate" she says chasing me away I walk to my bedroom and put on a head wrap.and walk out meeting Siya

"Khulu is calling you mama" she says batting her eye lids

We walk hand in hand and Babomncane,Mnqobi and Manqoba are here next to Dad.

"The Xulu's are here" Dad says I haba he should just say they are on their way

"Hlala phansi ngane yam" Babomncane says I oblige and take a sit.

I look at these men and pray they don't kill the poor family I don't trust Manqoba my father is cool and calm but the others

look like they can pounce anytime I excuse myself I suddenly have this urge to vomit.

After a while Mom comes and joins me.

"Are you pregnant Phiwo" I laugh like legit laugh this lady.

"Cha I am not" she nods checking me out and the last time I checked she isn't a nurse or doctor

"Mhmm I hope for your sake you're not" she says

"Trust me I am not pregnant or anything just nervous" I say wiping my mouth

"Okay your doctor friend is here to see you she is in the garden with Siya" she says smiling

"Okay thank you Ma" we both walk out the toilet she goes back in the kitchen while I go check out my gorgeous doctor, I watch her chasing a clumsy Siya my poor baby is not that strong yet.

Khaya is wearing distress jeans with a T-shirt and sneakers she she really looks good.

"Stop drooling and come closer" she says winking at me I slowly make my way to her.

"I wasn't drooling just admiring" she laughs pulling me for a hug and she smells good.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"I came to check up on you guys I am really not staying" she says holding my hand I did tell her that I am not interested in any relationship beside friendship and she said she would gladly take it.

"Let me walk you out" she lifts Siya up and takes my hand we walk her to the car she gives me Siya who rests her head on my shoulder.

"Will see you tomorrow" she says kissing my cheek I hadn't even noticed the cars parking in the drive way.

"Drive and call me when you get home" She nods giving Siya a kiss too we watch her drive and scurry away to give these people a chance to get in.

We use the back and Mom looks displeased.

"Phiwo you can't be kissing your boyfriend whole we have visitors" I almost laugh but realise she is pissed off.

"I am sorry Ma but Khaya is just a friend nothing more" I say and the lady of the house mumbles something.

"Come they are already here and asking about you" she says holding my hand

"Have you seen them Ma" I ask fishing

"No only Aphiwe and she almost fainted your cousin is dramatic Mann" she says in an annoyed tone

Siya runs before us and we follow there are three men seating oposite my father and his squad.Siya goes straight to my father.

The strangers look alike and a beautiful woman beside them the other has his head bowed but the energy in this room I have felt before.

I take a sit next to my mother phela this is no lobola negotiation.

"We are the Xulu's,this is my brother Thobani Xulu, Son Nkosinathi Xulu and my lovely wife" The old man says my heart is beating faster than a ticking time bomb,the old man has some resemblance to Siya or maybe I am just grasping at straws.

"Good to see you Langa" my father says

"Likewise old friend" they exchange pleasantries it looks like everyone knows this except for me

"Phiwo is this the man" he asks pausing for a while "Is this boy Siyamthanda's father" My baby looks up kid hears father and suddenly her hearing skills sharpen.

"I am not sure Baba because I can not see his face" I say looking at him he doesn't bother looking up he takes off a chain

dangling on his neck with a ring on it,he places it on the table and a picture Manqoba takes the picture and smiles shaking his head.

"Ai niyazenza phiwo" he says handing the picture is off him wear wearing black jeans and a white T-shirt the background is exactly the place.

"Mbuso we are here because of you show some respect and look at the mother of your child" his father shouts startling Siya who clings on to me.

He looks up and those eyes are the same eyes that pulled me in the same eyes that healed me not so long ago.

"It's him I saw him the one I saw on TV" Aphiwe says

"Awukahle Aphiwe" I say in frustration

"This man is an imposter it can't be he is the homeless guy Aphiwe" I look at her nodding my head but she looks lost "He is the one i hit with my car he looks different but I swear it's him" I am already on my feet pointing at him

"Phiwo" My father calls out

"Baba this man can't even talk and the one who called can talk something is wrong here" Aphiwe takes Siya outside

"I am sorry Phiwo" he says looking at me how did I not see that he looked like Siya or was it the beards and hair or I was too focused on the Sizwe saga.

"You knew all along who I was and you said nothing saw my daughter and still said nothing" I say through gritted teeth

"Is this true" My father asks and Nkosi or whoever he is nods. I wipe my tears and try to slap him but Mngqobi holds me my outburst causes commotion.

"You are lucky my brother is holding me" I

say

"I didn't know okay I didn't know" he says looking at my father instead of me

"A whole week and you tell me you didn't know I thought you were a friend a mute one a that but I was the fool huh well the joke is on me" I say looking at him

"Thank you for playing me" I walk away with my mother calling me like I just burned the house down I turn around that's the problem with me I am impulsive

"Yini ma this man came into my life and made me a fool" I look at him "If I hadn't posted that video you would you have come forward would you" I shout

"He would have trust me mtanami" his mother says standing up

"No Ma akekho ozwisisa ubuhlungu bam akekho he lied " I put up both my hands to my forehead Manqoba takes me into his arms letting me sob.

"I think it's best you leave" My mom says politely

It shouldn't be hurting this much but it does he knew and he didn't want us, he chose to write a stupid letter and walked away just like that.

12

I haven't changed my mind one bit that man played me that's the thing with us human beings we tend to over do things and over think them, I know I should be calm but I am so angry that I can't move past the few weeks of betrayal I spent with him, My father has been staring at me for almost an hour I think not saying anything.

My eyes are on the floor my lip is on the floor I am like a three year old who hasn't gotten what she wants, Time out who have been better than this awkward stare. I scrunch my nose and that awakens the sinus beast in me the urge to put the palm of my hand over my nose and violently shake my it has me by the balls my father is looking at me attentively meaning I can't do it he hates it when I do that because it leaves my nose all swollen up and I think Siyamthanda has adapted that too. So to avoid a swollen nose I do that awful sound when you have an itch and you can't reach.

"Will you stop that please" he says calmly as ever

"Sorry" I say

"What did I teach you about being impulsive huh" he asks raising his eyebrows

"Never to act or say something without thinking or in anger because I can never take it back" he nods his head

"Then why did you act the way you did why would shout in front of those people didn't we teach you manners" he asks angrily

"But Baba that guy lied another thing he is the letter guy" he shakes head

"I don't care Phiwo" he shouts "All I know is you will fix things between you and that boy for the sake of Siya uyangizwa we are having the ceremony on the weekend whether you like it or not" What that is in two days time I try to say something but his look warns me against it, I nod not even thinking twice.

He walks away I know he is angry and it's been two days since the Xulu's came I am glad that despite my outburst the ceremony is taking place my daughter deserves that at least.

I spend the whole afternoon in the garden with a glass of wine reading a compilation of poems phenomenal woman by South African writers and Maya Angelou.

These poems speak to the women in me but which woman is that the coward selfish one that walked away and threw all her toys or the one that will stand tall put her pride aside and save her daughter's life. I decide I am the latter much stronger beautiful and resilient damn I am even using Nkosi's words, I shake that off and walk back inside only Aphiwe is waiting for me.

"Hey" she forces a smile haibo only a smile

"Really Aphiwe ayisathethisani kanjalo nje jonga I am even trying uthetha" she tilts her head like I just hit a nerve.

"I left Siya's Bear at my place please go fetch it she won't sleep without it and you know that,here's my key" She says walking away oh really now few days nyana and she can't sleep without the damn thing.

I change clothes wearing a short dress and sandals my cornrows are okay I take Aphiwe's key and step out the breezy wind is doing me fine God knows every pore in body needs to breathe.I drive to her complex luckily there are no hassles I get in perfectly fine.The place is dark it's a good thing I know where everything is so maneuvering it is nothing my brain is a bit fuzzy probably the glasses of wine.I stumble on something balancing on the couch

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I switch on the lights and scream my lungs out.

"It's only me calm down" His assurance goes in and out the other ear,till he moves closer putting a hand over my mouth.

"Please don't scream" he says slowly removing his hand.

"How the hell did you get are following me" I ask looking at the door I mean I opened it right.

"Aphiwe let me in" I grasp my cousin just sold me.

"Well then leave I have nothing to say to you" he backs away heading for the door and locks it.

"What are you doing this is wrong you are wrong" I shout and in seconds he is standing too close almost pinning me to the wall.

"Well I have something to say a lot in fact" he says through gritted teeth he smells so great I could just pull him closer.

"Well I don't want to hear it" he chuckles backing away he seats on the one sitter couch his one leg over the other, He is wearing black track suits and they look good on him, he clearly goes to gym I can't believe Siyamthanda's father is so handsome.

"I am sorry for the way things played out I didn't exactly know we have daughter together, I heard about you through my sister and I saw some resemblance but you have to understand I wasn't sure and I had to make sure, I was desperate my mother had these dreams about me having impregnated someone" I am listening attentively my mouth itching to tell him to go to hell. "I know what happened that night I knew you were carrying my seed but I wasn't expecting you to leave like what we shared meant nothing" he softly laughs as a wave of sadness passes his beautiful face.

"You knew why didn't you look for me" he looks angry now

"Look for you I looked everywhere and I couldn't find you, Phiwo you left like a thief you denied me and my daughter a chance, A chance to be a father don't tell me about looking" he shouts already on his feet why is he turning this all on me.

"No, no you don't get to say that I went back there and the place was empty, I was alone and seventeen scared but for you not to tell me who you are and trick me that hurt" I say putting a hand over my chest he closes the space between us and gently pulls me into his arms.

"I am sorry okay I am sorry but this isn't about you but my daughter allow me to do right by her please then you can be angry as you like" he says sounding sincere

"Okay" I nod holding him tightly sob after sob he brushes my back kissing the top of my head. he picks me up bridal style his eyes land on my bare thighs I shouldn't have wore this dress because his hand is on them this feels like Dejà vu all over again, I can't fight him he walks all the way to the bedroom and tucks me in I am a bit disappointed that wine did a number on me.

Doesn't mean I forgive him though

Ever woke up not because you wanted but because you had to, I mean one turn and already your senses are fully at work that's me right now waking up because I feel too comfortable and I feel a pair of eyes on me. I squeeze my thighs great nothing feels foreign I look at myself and I am wearing one of Aphiwe's nightie so that's why I feel comfortable. I turn my head and there he is staring still in last night's clothes he is handsome and all the things I imagined him doing to me whilst I was in the hospital come flooding back, don't judge that's my baby daddy I bite my tongue after that thought I don't own this guy I don't even know him. It's too early to be waking up ngeke it's not even half past five yet.

"Morning" he says and that voice is music to my ears Kwesta can take a four four masihlalisane backseat Mr man here has the voice, he sounds like Liam Neeson and Geoffrey Rush combined except he's handsome and is a black man a zulu one at that these people are stubborn I live with three of them.

"Morning you undressed me you could have woken me up I wasn't drunk you know" he raises his eyebrow what I wasn't drunk vele or was I.

"I have seen it before nothing special" he says focusing on his phone.

"It doesn't matter you shouldn't have" he lifts his head up gives me that look, only my father gives to my mother when she starts being crazy.

For some reason I thought this morning would be different you know like in the movies where boy meets girl spend one night together and boom breakfast in bed.

He stands up and exits the room giving me time to make the bed and visit the toilet.

I do all that and have the pleasure of throwing in Bkck Girls by Zolani and I am a terrible singer but it feels good screaming like a destressed chicken.

I walk out the shower take a towel dry up and throw it on the basket. I wear my dress no undies, I find him on the couch watching TV there are two cups of coffee on the table.

"I made you a cup" I walk over and settle next to him, we stay in that position and the silence is dreadful one moment I want to jump him and the next my heart is racing I am scared of this guy.

"My name is Phiwokuhle Zwane" I say extending a hand over to him.

"And I am Nkosinathi Smisokuhle Xulu" he says shaking it great we are getting somewhere

"I am the mother of your child" I say awkwardly

"I am her father" we both laugh after that till his laugh turns into a cry I thought I was the only one who did that.

"I didn't mean to upset you" he quickly wipes them up

"It's not you it's the joy of knowing I am a father" he says laughing and my toes curl this man.

"And she is smart and beautiful just like you" he looks amused by my admission

"A man is handsome but I will take beautiful" he says nudging me if he only knew his eyes are beautiful his lips probably tender and cold he is definitely older than me kanti how drunk was I vele.

"You kept the ring" I ask pointing at it.

"I just felt like I had to and it's expensive" he says tucking it in

"Are you married or do you have any other kids" he looks annoyed now the scary front is back I stand to go make breakfast and offer him a plate with the works, no water just a dish cloth to wipe his hands, I take my plate to Aphiwe's bedroom and eat there I won't stay in the same room with a grumpy person mina I am being nice and he is being cold.

After a while I hear the door bang I walk and look out the window and see his car drive out he didn't even say goodbye.

I tidy up and spot a folded paper I open it up its a written letter and it is Msiso's handwriting heck I am reading it its now Aphiwe's property making it mine too simple.

"Dear khosi

I know this sounds crazy and it's unusual to have a grown man write a letter let alone that man being me,I found this being a better way to say what my heart truly feels.

I am sorry I couldn't protect you and love you the way you wanted,I am sorry for failing you not a day goes by that I don't think about you,I hate myself for everything I put you through I.."

Before I can go any further the door is swung open startling me and he standing there I shamefully fold back the letter and put it on the table suddenly every inch of my body itches,if only the ground could open up and I wouldn't wait to be swallowed I myself would personally jump.

And who writes letter in this time of day and why is he sorry not that it's any of my business.

He slowly walks over to me takes the paper shoves it in his pocket.

"Abakaze kabakushaya neh" he whispers in my ear my body goes numb is he another Sizwe.

"I am sorry it won't happen again I promise I will behave" he looks at me for what feels like forever.

"What did you just say" he asks his face frowning

"Nothing I think you should leave" he nods and walks away I lock the door behind him, I need to get a grip and mind my own business.

I drive home still thinking about the letter I really wanted to ask who he wrote it too but that man is intimidating and big. I am welcomed by a chirpy Siya who has her bear with this child is an early bird. She throws her self in my arms.

"Hey Nana" she giggles pulling away.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Ubuyaphi mama" I ruffle her hair and smile

"I had to go see someone" she nods running to the garden it's a good thing that rash hasn't spread to her face it no longer burns like it did. I walk in shooting straight to my room.

"I saw you njalo buya lah" My mother shouts this is not okay I need to find a place pretty soon.

"Sawbonona Ma" she removes her reading glasses and looks at me from head to toe.

"Uvelaphi" I scratch my head a bit thinking of something that will shut her up because seriously it's too early for such.

"Khaya had a problem and I had to help her out" she claps her hands and laughs

"Phiwokuhle don't tell me you are dating that doctor" she looks flushed this is hilarious

"Ma I can date whoever I want" I laugh looking at her expression

"Your father is looking for you and Smiso's family is expecting us tonight" she says with a smile

"But why Ma" she raises one eyebrow this is my cue to leave.

"Are you sane Phiwo or should i slap some sense into you" I shake my head

"I am sorry for sleeping out Ma" she smiles shooing me away, I find Aphiwe's in my bed with my laptop.

"Hey you are back how was it" she asks smiling too hard.

"You sold me and you ask me how was it mybe I should strangle you and show you how it was" she pulls the blankets over herself completely closing me off. this reminds of one night the

parents were away and we were left with the boys, Aphiwe and I heard some noise and we went looking saw a human figure screamed and ran for our lives only to have Aphiwe hide under the blankets and leave me outside luckily the person was Mnqobi.

"For your information it was awful and awkward ngiyayisaba leya ndoda" she peaks and laughs

"Hau didn't you two have some steamy parents reunion" I am dumbfounded by her statement not that it didn't cross my mind.

"No we didn't" I lie back thinking of tomorrow Siya will finally belong to her father's family.

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Everyone is all packed Siya is excited about the trip to KZN she heard Durban and couldn't contain her excitement, I don't get my father sometimes, personally I would have preferred flying but no not Mr Zwane we are driving kanti imali ngeyani if you won't spend it.

The drive to kwaMnyathi is long and tiring I have been texting Smiso the moment we got on the road but still no response, the place is not bad it's beautiful reminds me of our garden except it's unruly and more beautiful the mountains and streams, I shouldn't even be comparing mother nature at her best and a

few pot plants and trees what am I saying this place is beautiful.If there were to be a natural disaster it would be flooded.We finally arrive Manqoba is excited to be amongst other men and Mnqobi well he is okay.

"Mama where are we" Siya pipes up I look at Mom who shakes her head.

"Let's go in first baby Mama will tell you everything" that's a relief she hasn't asked the why speech.

His family welcomes us with joy and singing the moment we reach the first gate by the time we reach the second one his whole family is outside.we receive hugs and I hate hugs they sometimes creep me out.

His father leads the whole family to one of the Rondavels introduces everyone and let's us go.We are taken to the main house before the designated ones.

"It's so nice to see you I didn't think you would agree" his mother's says giving me a hug

"It was wrong of me to act the way I did Ma I am sorry" she smiles

"My son was wrong for lying in fact I will call him just now he got here before you" she says walking out this family is monied Siya is so clingy hanging on my hip forgetting she's old and heavy.

Smiso walks in his eyes don't leave Siyamthanda it's like he is seeing her for the first time. he seats down still looking at Siya who is popping her eyes looking at this man she probably recognises him but can't nail it I clear my throat and those beautiful taunting eyes look at me and only me.

"Siya remember when Mama said she will explain why we are here" she nods with a smile

"Well this is your daddy" I blurt out she looks confused I mean I have always practised the I don't know your father speech not this one Smiso smiles Oh he is finding this funny he moves closer goes down on his knee and looks at an uneasy Siya.

"What your mommy means is that just like she has grandpa bear as her daddy, from now on you have me as your daddy" she looks at me with a smile then back at Smiso

"Aunty said I don't have a daddy" she says looking down I will kill Zoleka.

"Well that's not true I am your father and I love you" he says opening his arm Siya hesitates but eventually gives in.

"Mama come hug my daddy" tears silently fall from his eyes and so do mine. I join in and take a chance at wiping his tears.

We stay like that till his mother mother comes back.

"I didn't mean to disturb you guys, I just wanted to tell you Sisi that you will sleep in the Rondavel with us" Smiso looks at his mother

"Hayi Smiso don't look at me like that you know Siyamthanda has to sleep there" she says attempting to take her boss lady here is clinging on to her father.

"It's okay baby" he says kissing her cheek his mother walks out. I move closer and wrap my arms around him I feel like he needs this hug he pulls away after squeezing me so hard.

"Can I come get you when everyone is asleep" I don't think twice I nod

"Keep your phone with" he says haa Ini ngizoyifaka emabeleni.

14

We are strangers in this part of the country but the welcome we have received has chucked all that aside, it feels like we are family one big family, After my talk with Smiso I don't why but I love this name.

I walked back to the Rondavel with his help of course and the moment I walk inside all eyes were on me questioning eyes, The place smelled of cow dung emsamo was the traditional bear, Snuff, incense some B.B and raw meat you can imagine all those smells infused in one.

"Some of these women want bhuti to marry their daughters"
his sister said politely

And Siya was still awake telling anyone who cared to listen about her father and Grandpa bear, she couldn't stop asking about him, And me I took my phone and put it in my bra I said I will do it right I even asked Aphiwe to borrow me shaving cream if she had one and she just laughed at me saying my bush reminds her of Cynthia Nixon the one whose husband cheated from SEX AND THE CITY and speaking of her which married couple has sex wearing shirts I mean what happened to skin to skin.

Back to last night we started dancing all the women had fun, to say I am pissed is putting it mildly it's like me saying I spilled a carton of milk and wiped it off.

I waited even got some sweat on my phone phela there was a fire and dololo man, he didn't even call and I could hear they were also having their own party outside and my brothers happen to know indlamu and we all know how people from emakhaya look down on you when you no longer know your ways or can't do a simple Zulu dance I don't blame though. It's a good thing my father never compromised when it came to other things.

We have been up since dawn well not me thanks to Siya that's my weapon she has been nagging me about seeing her father traitor.

"Mama you promised" she looks sad about to pop a cry

"No your father is busy okay" I say pointing a finger at her.

"No I want my daddy" I look around this one will get it yaz I close my eye not wanting to see her face phela these kids are manipulative. she starts screaming haibo drawing attention to us.

"Do you realise she won't stop" Aphiwe says startling me.

"Smi..I mean Nathi is busy and I don't want to disturb him"

Aphiwe laughs clapping her hands

"You are just angry he didn't call you last night" I look away and find him staring he fast walks towards us, his focus is on my legs I look on my side and Siya is pulling my dress making noise, she spots her father and runs towards him. He looks heavenly even without trying, the two walk away and I am left helping the other ladies.

I am glad the day is almost over my father says things went well and luckily they didn't shave Siya's hair, We are now in the Rondavel the one we slept in men and women different sides it's just family his father is the one leading the ceremony. so much has been done now it's the last step to thank the ancestors.

"Zulu

Gxabhashe

Donna wase Nkweleni, Sonkephe ka Zilingane nabefokazana.

Wena owashaya phansi kwavel'abantu nezinkomo" his father says praise naming

A young boy goes around giving snuff and some of that thing old man smoke. An older one follows with the traditional beer

helping everyone drink after all that is done his uncle clears his throat.

"Xulu" he says

"Xulu" the family repeats

"Gxabhashe" he says

"Gxabhashe" the family

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Donda" he says

"Donda" the family

"Siyabonga" he says proudly there is a loud roar from the men we are asked to start serving the food.

Everyone is in a happy mood the older women are dancing and drinking beer.

"Did you know Nathi slaughtered the cow one man" Aphiwe asks grinning

"You wish" she laughs

"Well I saw him that should be proof enough" she says walking away a part of me is impressed but I don't believe Aphiwe that was one hell of a bull.

"Oh I forgot Mamzo said you should dish up for ibabazi yakho"
She shouts from a distance, I fix myself up first I have never heard of such but hey I dish up for him and find him seated with other men, I don't know what to do all eyes are on me probably waiting to see. I move closer my head down and bend my knees giving him his food.

"Look at me" he says calmly I look up and he has this look I just don't get as if I offended him.

"Please stand up" I do as told still looking at him

"Thank you" he says taking his food wow that was intense I walk as fast as I can and join the other ladies, Siyamthanda is with both her granmothers I think she is having fun but I fear her being spoiled it's like she just became that ray of sunshine the light at the end of the tunnel. My feet are killing me and these people are still around it's getting darker outside, I walk out in hopes of clearing my mind but notice Smiso's door open plus I need to talk to him.

His back is facing the door so clearly he can't see me but the view is great delicious to be precise. I clear my throat and have him turn there is blood on his arm.

"Hi I was just umhm walking around and I saw the door open"
he nods his hand still on his arm

"Let me help you with that" he sits and allows me to clean him up

"What happened" I ask wiping him clean why doesn't he have a shirt on this man.

"Just a stubborn bull" he says like it's nothing I can't take my eyes of him.

"The ceremony was beautiful and I love the names" he smiles he decided to name her Thandolwethu Ntokozoyami Xulu.

"I should be thanking you Phiwo" he says taking my hand kissing it, he moves closer paralysing me his lips touch mine kissing me,I have been waiting for this moment and it feels good sparks are flying,My heart knows this man he pulls away catching his breath he looks shocked he must have felt what I have.

"Did you feel that" he smiles but a sad one

"Don't fall in love with me" he says standing up leaving me in shock he closes the door and I don't know if I should laugh or cry.I blink away the tears but that doesn't work they fall.

"You shouldn't give up on him" I look around the lights are dimmed and there is no one the door is still closed and I didn't even close my eyes for long.

"Who's there" My voice is panicked

"Tell him I forgive him that I know he tried" the voice echoes

"Whoever you are please just stop okay" I am at a point where I will pee on myself.

"His happiness lies with you now always has and mine with him but that's the past" the voice continues

"Who" I ask already on my feet the door seems Jammed I can't get out.the door opens and Smiso walks in.

"Phiwo what's wrong" he asks trying to touch me

"Get away from me" he looks surprised

"Calm down" he says coming closer

"I said don't touch me lakini niyathakatha" I look at his facial expressions and his focus is not on me but the door.I turn and find his father standing there and he just heard me Hawema ngizogeziswa umuzi.

15

I heard someone speak to me and it could be some ghost or maybe someone was playing a prank on me, I don't know or was I just caught up in my emotions that I imagined the whole thing, his father is looking at me as I try to explain what happened that I heard a woman's voice talking to me I leaving out what the voice specifically said, he tells me to start again and slowly this time, I do exactly that he keeps nodding and looking at Smiso

"Baba I didn't mean to disrespect your house I will welcome any punishment or fine" he shakes his head raising his one hand I shut my pipe.

"It's okay ndodakazi I understand and don't worry there won't be any fine may I speak to my son please" he says calmly as his son still maintaining his smile.

They both walk out and I am left looking around this place creeps me out, What if his father is telling him I am crazy this I will take to the grave. he walks back looking more tired.

"So what else did the supposed voice say" he asks taking off his shirt

"That was all I swear I am not looking for attention or anything I heard the voice panicked and when you came in I didn't know

what to think" he looks convinced I mean what do you do when you hear voices.

"Come here"he says pulling me in for a hug

"You have to tame yourself you can't be hot headed and act impulsive you will get yourself killed one day" he says staring down on me I hate that impulsive line so what if I happen to be vocal and my emotions are always ready to dance my parents raised me well but that doesn't mean I shouldn't vent be scared,frustrated or all these other emotions.

"About ealier me falling in love I think you were right" he completely pulls away.

"I will take the other room you will use mine" he says showing me his bedroom it's super clean the colours are black and white he shows me everything then attempts walking away.

"Please don't leave stay" he looks unsure but non there less stays with me.

"I promise after leaving this place I will stay out of your way" he is not even looking at me now.

"What do you mean" he asks

"You will see Ntokozo as much as you want and I won't stand in your way just promise me you won't disappoint her" he looks uneasy unsettled and for a moment I am worried.

"I wouldn't dream of hurting you guys" he says still not looking my way I move from where I am standing and join him on the bed.

"Smiso please tell me what's wrong" I say with one hand on his jaw his face facing me.

"Nothing is wrong I am the happiest man alive I have a daughter and her beautiful mother to top it all" he laughs at least I see a smile on that handsome face.

"Okay then we better hit the sack it's a long day tomorrow" he nods helping me out of my shoes.

He puts his arm over me I feel protected but I can't close my eyes what if it comes back, his father said I shouldn't worry but I am ashamed I insulted him in his own home.

"Phiwo are you asleep" he asks out of the blue

"No just thinking" he helps me face him

"I know it sounds silly but can you call me Siya's f.. never mind" he says awkwardly

"Ulale kahle Baba ka Siyamthanda Ntokozoyami Xulu" he releases a soft manly laugh if only I could see the look on his face.

"About the voice" I tell him

"Let's forget about the voice okay just sleep" he says sternly oh well I did say I will take to the grave.

The trip to back was tiring my brothers took turns driving my father wasn't having non of it,Siya was on my lap like the baby she thinks she is not that I mind I almost lost her seeing her smile brings joy to my heart now I get to have my energetic bubbly bear back.

I am woken up by her slaps I thought we were passed this period.

"Mama" She opens my eye using her finger

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"What is it baby" she giggles poking me

"Can we go see Baba" I open my eyes this child must be crazy we were with him this morning.

"Your father is not back yet we will see him tomorrow okay" She starts opening her mouth gasping

"Try me and you will get it" She sniffs this child

"Shall I give you something to cry about huh" I ask ready to whoop her.

"Sorry Mama" she says getting inside good now we can both sleep peacefully.

I take my phone and call Smiso just to check up on him it goes un answered I leave a message telling him how Siya misses him. My body is so tired even my eyes can't keep up. Siya is already snoring next to me I carefully look at her features she looks like her father and those eyes are definitely her grandmother's and the persona she has belongs to this family.

Rain starts pouring I hate thunder strikes I am one of those people who are scared of thunder and uncanny sounds, silence is the worst. I over think and panic resulting to me crashing. My door opens and mama walks in she still remembers.

"Ma aren't you supposed to be asleep" she tilts her head to the side with a smile.

"Oh I thought you needed me but it's okay I will go" she says playfully

"Hawu Ma don't be like that come" She gets in we have Siya in the middle Baba must be fuming.

"Thank you Mama for everything" she smiles her beautiful smile my mother is one of those people that can't stay angry for long she has to remind herself that she is supposedly angry which never works.

"I would do anything for you mntanami I love you" I nod fully acknowledging her love I have always wanted to be like my mother growing up even though i have made mistakes her love has always been consistent,I was inspired by her to start my giving project now I have to broaden my horizons and help more people especially women and children.

"I love you too Ma" tears mysterious fall from my eyes my heart feels heavier.

"Phiwo what's wrong" Her eyes are squint she really looks worried.

"I don't know Ma" I honestly say

"Must be the stupid thunder" she says coming to my side her hugs are the best.

I wake up to some bright light and Mama is on the phone not hers but mine her face is unreadable,lucky for me the rain has stopped Siya is sleeping peacefully.

"Ma what's wrong" I ask

"I will be right back I just need to talk to your father" she sprints out of the bed moments after they both walk in with my father.

"You guys are seriously freaking me out is it Aphiwe" My mother shakes her head.

"Then who Mama what's wrong" I ask looking at my mother's tears

"Mbuso tell her" she says looking at my father

"Langa called and Nkosinathi was involved in an accident and.." I shake my head it can't be

"Baba that's not true he is home his flight is for tomorrow" he comes closer

"No Smiso is..is" Words fail me I am in my father's arms refusing to cry.

"Ahhh" I scream from this sharp pain coming from the lower part of my stomach.

"Phiwo what's wrong" Mom asks

"I don't know ahhh" it shoots again

"I think it's the shock we need to get her to the hospital" My Dad says lifting me up mom attempts to take Siyamthanda but Baba refuses.

"It's best I take her you stay with Siya" he says the pain is getting stronger and stronger I feel faint and hot like every part of me will explode Mama is crying making things worse,As Baba rushes out with me my eyes are failing me getting harder to keep them open.

Nothing feels right and everything feels wrong with my body, it seems like I spent the rest of the night here my father is here and my sexy doctor khaya is here too looking tired though, My body feels like a battle Zone just like when Sizwe used to beat me up except this time there are no bruises. I can't hear them but they are having some sort of a conversation I clear my throat.

"Baba" he smiles moving closer

"Hey you scared me" he says kissing my forehead

"I am sorry I didn't mean too" he shakes his head.

"You didn't do anything okay" I nod looking at khaya

"What happened what's wrong with me" I ask My brain is still foggy the details a bit scattered.

"Don't you remember the phone call" he asks frowning just then my mother walks in, I immediately breakdown her eyes are swollen clearly she has been crying.

"Mama" She opens her arms taking me in.

"It's okay I am here sukhala mtanami" She says her voice shaky

"Is he dead" I ask biting my lip he must be dead right my mother has been crying.

"No he is still alive" she say pulling away and wipes my tears.

"Then why are you crying" I ask looking my Dad.

"Because you are here and I was just scared" she says looking at my father who has his hand on my mother's shoulder.

"You are seriously getting old Baba tell her" he forces a smile and nods

"Doctor what's wrong with me" she pages through a file then looks up.

"Have you been stressed lately doing strainers exercises drinking caffeine" she asks

"Well beside being a punching bag" I laugh and my Dad clears his throat guess that wasn't funny "I have been lifting heavy things nothing big,coffee has been keeping me sane since Siya started getting sick,So yeah I have been stressed not getting enough sleep" she nods jotting all that down.

"Relax nothing is wrong with you, you just happened to experience a case of severe menstrual bleeding but you are perfectly fine your chemical ph imbalances were having a field" She laughs awkwardly I am not a doctor but what she saying is vague the people and their confusing jargon.Can't she just say you are on your period instead of blabbing.

"Mama where is Siya" I ask I already miss her I feel broody.

"I left her with Aphiwe couldn't allow her to see you like this" she says with a smile.

"I want to see Smiso" Mama shakes her head.

"It's too soon my baby let him rest" she says brushing my hair.

"Baba I want to see him please" he looks defeated the power of tears.

"I am sorry you can't see him" he says walking out I look at my mother who shrugs her shoulders I know his word is final.

"Last night when you cried what we're you feeling" she asks holding my hand I remember the feeling very well.

"Sad like a part of me was fading away my heart felt heavier Mama" she wipes my tears blinking hers away.

"Have you slept with Siya's father" she ask what I mean really Siya is proof that I have tasted that man.

"Really Ma 5years and then boom a mini me" she laughs playful hitting me.

"I mean recently since you reunited" I shake my head I almost did but not that I would tell her that.

"Okay" she looks bothered

"Mama is there something wrong" she shakes her head lightly patting my hand and I sense some lie in her something she has

never done this whole day me has been weird if I didn't know better I would say someone died, this takes me to when my sister died.

Mama helps me bath which is completely unnecessary I am not sick just on my period the day goes by and my heart is with Smiso I really miss him and his quiet demeanor he is a special breed that one handsome and most definitely sexy. The fact that he is tall drives me crazy he can fulfil all my desires well a man who can pick up a woman is treasure in my book though he is a closed book.

Mama left and I have been staring at the wall and ceiling this place is driving me crazy, I really want to go home and Khaya says only tomorrow at least I have my phone with the music will keep me sane for now I have songs of ABBA on repeat Siya loves dancing to the movie MAMA MIA I can't wait to watch movie 2 I saw the trailer and it has Cher my favourite

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I fear my baby girl might inherit my weird taste on things, Khaya walks in looking a bit fesh you can clearly see signs of fatigue from afar.

"My favourite doctor in this hospital" she laughs huh at least there is a smile.

"How are you feeling" she asks making her self comfortable on the bed.

"Much better I just want to go home" she smiles staring.

"Tomorrow don't worry" she says her eyes are roaming around.

"Can I see him I just want to see for myself if he is alive" she frowns clenching her jaw she looks sexy yaz.

"Your father said no" she says composing herself

"Khaya please ngiyakucela I just want to see him please" I say taking her hand holding it firmly.

"Okay but only for a few minutes" she says helping me out of the bed walking hurts a bit period pains are the pits.

We walk since she says it's better to stretch he is in a private ward, khaya allows me to enter alone giving me some privacy, he looks different like bruised hurt different his one leg is broken and his right arm I guess a few fractured ribs too.

"Hey it's me Phiwo I just came to check up on you, you look horrible by the way" I wipe my tears softly laughing.

"I don't know what to say Nkosinathi ngicela uvuke if not for your family then for iNtokozoyakho if you don't wake up then in books that means you disappointed our daughter" I say taking myself out of the equation.

"I got admitted yesterday nothing serious news of your accident hit me hard Baba ka Ntokozo if you can hear me wake up even if it's not tomorrow but try" I stand up and kiss his lips

"That's some motivation I am contributing to the struggle" someone clears their throat having me almost fall.

"It's only me I didn't mean to scare you" his mother says

"I was on my way out Ma" she looks so shocked by my statement

"Stay it's his stubbornness to see you that landed him here" My mouth is half open what.

"I don't understand Ma" She is busy fixing him up tucking and fluffing up pillows my eyes land on his crouch this guy is gifted.

"He wanted to see you guys and talk to you his father warned him not to drive but he didn't listen" she says breaking down I comfort her while she sobs for her son.

"It's okay Ma he won't die" I pull away and we both look at him.

"He's handsome is he not" I nod good genes run in their family. She tells me about Smiso growing up she even sheds some light on what happened during there years we apart you guys know what I mean, Apparently she kept pestering him about a child out there till he wrote a letter supposedly to the mother of his unknown child it's cute and funny at the same

time. I will definitely ask him about the letter seems like he is a lover of pen and paper put together.

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Meanwhile Mbuso is pacing up and down in his bedroom trying to make his wife understand he took a decision he thought is best for his daughter.

"Mbuso please we have to tell her" Ziyanda begs.

"This is my daughter you are talking about she already blames herself for what that boy did" he barks his voice rising.

"She is my daughter too" Ziyanda says moving closer to him she places her hands on his chest calming him down she's always had that effect on her husband.

"If you want to lose her then go ahead tell her" he says breathing heavily.

"But Mbuso she has to know so she can move on" she insists

"Zee come on you of all people know how Phiwo is she won't be able to handle this, I don't want to lose my daughter because

you can't keep quiet picture this" he says moving away from his wife.

"Phiwo the reason you were in hospital is because you had a miscarriage oh wait not with one baby but two here's another thing the doctors were busy with you the whole night and they think you might never be able to carry a baby full term but it's okay it's not your fault but that bastard who kept beating you up till you ended up in the hospital" all this while Ziyanda is in tears realising the hidden truth in all this and the damage Sizwe did.

"Oh yini umtanami Mbuso" she breakdown in Mbuso's strong arms

"It's okay she doesn't need to know but I have to call Sibiya and let him know a cleansing ceremony has to be done for Phiwo" he says holding her tight.

"How will you do that let alone have Phiwo agree without knowing" she asks looking at a stressed Mbuso.

"Sizwe's father is a reasonable man he will do this and as for Phiwo I will make a plan" he says kissing his wife's hand

"I love you Zwane" She says kissing him she holds the back of his head pulling him closer.

"I love you too" He says in between lifting his wife up.

It's been a few days and I am back home with my family which is a huge relief phela I am slowly becoming a regular in that hospital and the fact that I have been making trips to check on Smiso he is doing good. Khaya says he is recovering well yes he is still broken but other than that everything seems perfectly fine. Today I am taking Siyamthanda to see her father i just hope it will do him good. Mom walks in with a plate of food.

"I brought you some food" she says putting the plate down.

"I will grab something on the way to the hospital Ma" she sighs heavily

"Phiwo please all you have been doing is taking care of Nathi" I tilt my head to the side.

"Ma you know that's not true" I say packing some toiletries.

"When was the last time you sat down with in the morning and ate breakfast with your family" her voice is rising so what few days nyana without me won't kill them.

"Maybe it's because you are suffocating me Ma. All of you Aphiwe cried on me for no reason, Manqoba and Mnqobi are on a war path angry, As for you and dad the tension is visible I constantly have to ask if you guys are okay, I don't know what the hell is going with this family but it's draining" A slap lands

across my face my mother has never been a fan of disrespect or any form of swearing. she puts her both her hands on my face.

"I am sorry my baby I didn't mean to snap" she says looking down.

"It's okay Ma clearly whatever is bothering is huge" I remove both her hands kissing them I bump into my father on my way out the only person who hasn't tried anything he is still the same man I left when I got admitted a part of me feels a like all this is directed towards him or is it us I don't know anymore I fast walk ignoring him.

"Buya la" he says meeting me half way

"What's are you off too" that question rubs me up the wrong you can't just bath and not be going out in this house to them the only time a person baths they are off to someplace.

"The hospital and I am taking Siya with" he smiles walking me out Siya has her human size bear it's going to be a long ride.

We finally arrive at the hospital Siya runs when she spots Khaya and as always sweets are the treat for the day.

"Hey how are you" she asks putting Siya down.

"I am good just came to visit Mr Xulu" she has this smile on her face more like a bored expression.

"How is he today" I ask looking at Smiso

"Still won't eat and keeps barking orders" I laugh just a bit
Smiso can be dramatic yaz.

"He just doesn't feel comfortable Khaya that's all" she
sarcastically laughs

"But he feels comfortable around you someone who is not even
qualified" okay that's uncalled for.

"I think I should go in" she waves goodbye at an occupied Siya.

I walk in and find Siya laughing odd enough she is already
sleeping next to her dad and the bear is on the other side Smiso
is practically squashed between the two.

"Someone is happy" he eyes me and focuses on his daughter
okay he is not talking to me imohlola, Two nurses walk in with
his food.

"It's time to eat Mr Xulu" One of the nurses says seductively
mxm. she walks closer and I take Siya off him, She fluffs up his
pillow rubbing her boobs on him mxm skhendevu.

"Are your boobs supposedly on the menu too" I ask looking at
the nurse

"I am just doing my job Mam, Mr Xulu would you like your
breakfast now" she asks leaning closer hayibo

"Do I look like a child to you" he says coldly

"I thought today you would like.." he cuts her short.

"Lalela Sisi this is my wife and clearly she doesn't appreciate you trying to feed me right my love" he says looking at me

"Mama are you daddy wife's like khulu and Gogo" she asks pulling my cheeks

"Yes we are" he says with that smile of his that has me wanting to jump him.the two nurses scurry away while I am gobsmacked what's just happened and why is that nurse acting all territorial.

I put Siya on the couch and start feeding him his porridge man hates this thing.

"Why did you bring Olwethu here" he asks pushing the spoon away.

"She misses you" I say pushing it back in.

"At least don't feed me like this in front of her" he grunts looking away.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Yazini Smiso you have to eat whether you like it or not put that pride of yours aside and what's with the nurse" he smiles a silly one at that.

"I asked her for help to the bathroom" my eyes pop he what.

"And what did she see" I ask shoving a full spoon in his mouth.

"I don't know" he shrugs wearing that silly smile of his.

"On the weekend I am going to Sizwe's home for a ceremony his father..." he cuts me short

"Awuyi lapho uyangizwa Phiwo" he says says clenching his jaw I look on my side luckily Siya is busy playing imaginary tea.

"I wasn't asking for permission I was letting you know since your mother offered to look after Siya for me" he looks so angry I think he blow a gasket.

"Are your brothers coming with you" he asks

"My whole family is accompanying me" he shakes his head.

"I am coming with you my brother too if needs be" he says nodding

"But you can barely walk" he chuckles

"Stronger forces have tried but failed I am coming with you Mama ka Ntokozo" I smile untended this man is something else

"Thank you" I say

"Why don't you say it properly" he says with a smirk on,I lean in while his left hand is caressing my face.

"Mama what are you doing" I totally forgot about her we both laugh looking at her pretty little self standing there.

"Nothing mommy is doing nothing" she giggles hiding her face.

"What happened to your face" he asks his finger trailing on my lips

"Nothing just a minor accident" he nods pulling me for a kiss my eyes voluntarily close he taste so good if there is such thing.

"That's to make it feel better" his forehead is touching mine Lord if this man is not toying with me he is teasing me.

Seeing Smiso brought a smile to my baby girl's face,I change routes when thinking about going home I just want to spend time with Siya just the two of us and I know the perfect place.Smiso have me his house keys.The house is big for just one person but hey ushiswa yimali.

Siya is as surprised as me there are picture of her and I in the living room.

"Mama you look beautiful" she says pointing to one of the pictures.

"Thank you my baby" I pick her up but a knock comes through oddly the security guy didn't warn me.

I open the door with Siya on my waist a man fairly in Smiso's age group appears he wearing a tailored suit and a long grey coat. I stand firm not moving an inch.

"Hi I am looking for Makhathini" he says quite a bold voice he has more like a roaring thunder.

"And you are" I ask swallowing hard I sense something dark that has the hair at the back of my head cringing.

"Call me Maziya" he says with a smile

"Xulu never mentioned having daughter and such a beautiful wife" he says looking at Siyamthanda

"Oh you must be mistaken I am his sister in law" he looks disappointed perhaps a bit angry too but quickly flashes me a smile

"I am afraid Mr Xulu is not home" I shut the door on his face and have my back against it. I call the gate telling them not to allow anyone in that man's visit has unsettled me.

I prepare a quick meal and bath Siya then tuck her we are sleeping in her father's room, My phone rings I contemplate taking it thinking it's my father phela my parents share everything and I mean everything I think. I look at the phone and Mpumi's name flashes.

"Hello"

"Hey how are you" She says the nerve of this girl.

"Mphumi how can I help you" she starts crying

"I am so sorry for what I did to you I never meant to hurt or betray you" She goes on rambling.

"Mphumi it's okay I am over that and I forgive you" I say before she hurts my ear even further.

"Thank you thank you can I see you just to apologise in person" she says sniffing I kinda feel sorry for her

"Can I think and let you know" I say

"Okay I will wait for your call" she says hanging up I look at my phone one more time she really called and asked for forgiveness holding grudges only brings bitterness I don't hate her but I want nothing to do with her.

18

There is something wrong and I can't shake it off It's the same feeling I had when Smiso had an accident but this one has me good it's like a void and all I want to do is cry so hard till I feel whole I don't know If it makes sense or not,It's the type of feeling that has you praying because of fear and emptiness the tears that fall off and by some miracle you end up feeling lighter and somewhat more accommodating. I went through that Ceremony or whatever they called it,Sizwe's family was accommodating and they kept to themselves more whispers that anything I had people watching my every move Smiso's people.Bab Xulu refused to have him leave the hospital not that I blame him Smiso is stubborn and cold but under all that is a loving and carrying man.Things home are great all the tension has run its course,I haven't heard from Mpumi and I don't wish too.

Today I am fetching Smiso from the hospital I am glad he has been allowing me to take care of me,the only problem now is his leg.I am wearing black jeans,black polo neck and sneakers Siya is at my parent's house.

I find him already dressed in his track suits he stands up and welcomes me with a hug and a kiss this has become our thing those small meaningful kisses,laughs and stares has come natural.

"Smiso" He smiles checking me out

"You know you are the only person that calls me Smiso and I find myself loving it" I giggle hiding my face on his chest.

"Well you are the only man that has me feeling some type of way" he stops me from talking with a kiss.

"Lets go before that nurse comes to harass me" he says taking his things I help him out with his bags we walk pass Khaya through the corridors, lately she feels like a stranger than a friend I miss her Siya too but as I once said maybe some people aren't meant to be permanent in our lives seasonal people yeah that's what we should call them.

I am driving to his place he hasn't said any word since we got in the car.

"How about we grab some real breakfast before heading home" I ask looking at him

"I rather we go home" he says forcing a smile I nod putting on some music I know what I said about staying in my lane but I think I love this man. We get home and there is a home cooked meal waiting for him who cooks so early the smell is inviting his mother appears from the kitchen smiling.

"Nathi" she says opening her arms they hug for a long time.

"Ma how are you" he asks kissing her cheek

"I am fine now that you are home" she says holding my hand..

"Thank you Sis for taking care of him you know how he is" we both laugh while he walks away more limping at least his arm is okay.

I spend the rest of my day with him and his family they are good people that for a moment I find myself forgetting about my family and Siya that one can drive me crazy bandla and the fact that Smiso is now in our lives and wants to make up for lost time.

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Smiso is healing well you wouldn't say he was in an accident not so long ago and I decided to give him some space he has been working hard and tonight he has a function to attend going alone he said mxm he thinks he's nice that one,

I am spending my afternoon with Aphiwe at her place it's just us and a few movies with Abu Dhabi men on display those long white robes or whatever they call it looks good on them they look clean sexy and dangerous I wouldn't mind giving it up too one of these men, I have always wondered their bearded is it naturally black or do they dye it but I doubt it these people are too religious and have so many rules. I remember minding my own business and boom I came across an ebook "Royal Bride At The Sheikh's Command" I was bored so I read it and oh my was

I thanking my lucky stars I loved it but I loved Kadir Prince Kadir to be exact he is described in such a sinfully dangerous way that you would want to sin with him willingly.

"These men kill for a living and wena you are drooling and getting wet" She says nudging me to the side

"There is no harm in looking" I say taking a spoonfull of ice cream.

"Can we watch something else other than these rich men who happen to be across the world as in soze ubanuke" she says laughing

"But I want to see what happens next" I am literally begging her to let me watch my movie.

"Someone is going to die or get bombed" she stands up and changes channels

"You are also violent but you don't see me changing my eyes when I look at you" she looks at me tilting her head to the side

"That doesn't even make sense" we simultaneously laugh man I love my cousin and I am dead serious about her being dangerous. She decides to go all out from painting nails to doing make up something I don't do often I look good beautiful even.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"You might as well stop doing that you look like Docas from that movie that has Ibu" I can't stop laughing I almost ruin my make up I look down and there he is Smiso wearing a black suit he is handsome too hot his attire is similar to that of Maziya on his side is a beautiful lady well dressed polished they look good.

"Hayi don't you dare mess up my work" Aphiwe says fanning my face

"He said he was going alone" I whisper Aphiwe switches off the TV and seats next to me.

"I am sorry Phiwo" I shake my head

"We are not together so don't be sorry" I say forcing a smile it all makes sense he has never taken me out and all these moments we shared were private I have been lusting at another women's man I swallow hard yikes I didn't see this one coming.

"You know what we are going out you and me" she says pulling me up we get to her bedroom and she takes out a black freakem dress it fits like a glove though it's too short.

"Stop pulling it down please" she says fixing herself up we look good and I look different I want to put on some sneakersbut she refuses.

We drive out to the club and it's packed and people are drinking expensive booze.

"We dance and we forget about Smiso and that that I don't know" she says ordering up a few shots I am able to down only one while she downs more than me my mind keeps taking me back him.

Aphiwe drags me to the dance floor the beats are flowing if you didn't know you would say we are lovers.

"Beautiful ladies like you shouldn't be dancing alone" he chuckles after that line I turn and Maziya is standing before me.

"Maziya" he smiles I look around and Aphiwe is busy harassing some guy.

"Can we dance" he says moving his hands to my waist I shift moving backwards.

"I don't dance" he laughs the darkness in this man he pulls me closer till I hit his chest he smells good too good that I can't stop myself from inhaling his scent.

"Well I do" he says cupping my face he is handsome yena. I feel strong hands gently pulling me the air suddenly feels thick I can smell him.

"Maziya stay away" Smiso says standing tall they are the same height.

"This one is feisty and sweet I like her and I want her" he says looking at me I am standing behind Smiso who looks pissed.

"I am warning you Maziya stay away" he says through gritted Teeth.

"Ntokazi" Maziya says pumping up Smiso more.

"You know she maybe be feisty but she is deadly and she is mine" Smiso says pulling me by my hand I don't get to say bye to Aphiwe. He opens the car for me and drives off I am bit tipsy but fully aware of my surroundings.

"What the hell was that" he asks camly I give him one glance and look out the window.

"Phiwo I am talking to you" he says with some authority.

"Smiso what am I to you huh some night lady or a secret oh that's what we are to you a secret" I ask the one question I vowed never to ask a man I once read Steve's book "when he is not into you" or something like that at first I thought he just wasn't into me but then he sent me mixed signals.

"Phiwo please you don't understand" I laugh the sarcasm in my tone.

"I swear after today whatever this is between us its over uyangizwa" I shout restraining my tears

"Phiwo don't say that" he says I am not sure if he is begging me or just plain manipulating me.

"No Smiso I love you but you keep pushing me away and today you couldn't even take me with you" I breathe out heavily shaking my head.

"I love you dammit but I can't be with you I just can't" he says hitting the steering wheel.

"You love me but you can't be with me" I nod wiping my tears

"There are so many things I want to do too your body and love you but" I cut him short

"But you can't be with me" I say putting on some music "Pretty little fears" I love the song infact Smiso sent it too me J.Cole's verse in the song is it for me it makes you want to experience all there is too love and I mean everything and I love J.Cole.

He takes my hand into his our fingers entwine he looks hurt but I am hurting more I want it all him or nothing.

"It's you or nothing and you let me go" his hand tightens painfully squeezing mine.

He drove us to his place the moment we got in he threw the keys on the table, And said nothing just sat across me.

We have been seating like this just staring at each other well every time he was about to say something he just stopped and shook his head. he is seated down with his elbows on his knees his shirt is undone and his sleeves are rolled up he looks rugged I am having hot flushes damn I am not even that old. His head is bowed I move from where I am and crouch between his legs I put both my hands on his face making him face me like how Mama does when she wants me to believe in something I kiss him this man's lips are cold and tender.

"Talk to me baba ka Ntokozo" I say still holding him his eyes piercing through mine seeing beyond.

"You are beautiful you know that" he says caressing my face.

"Please don't change the subject" I tell him dead set on getting the truth out of him.

"I want you to promise me one thing" he says sounding sincere and desperate I look at him and I am sure he can see the doubt in my eyes.

"Promise me Phiwo" I nod though I am not sure what I am agreeing too.

"That man stay away from him okay" I hesitantly nod.

"Who is he because clearly you know each other" he tenses up and holds my arms

"No one important if you stay away from him then everything is going to be okay" he says smiling a genuine smile. he helps me up and nibbles on my lips I bite back matching his hunger. I do the most outrageous thing and rip his shirt taking it off buttons go flying and it feels good to see his bare chest I run my hands over his upper body.

He has this smirk on his face like he is impressed. I hold the back of his head kissing him he chuckles lifting me up. he walks with me all the way to the bedroom I would have loved some sex couch and table sex just like those spontaneous couples but heck right now I would love to have him inside me. I can feel him poking me he's so hard I grind on him biting on his shoulder the steadiness and tight grip on my arse has me feeling like a tigress. He slips his finger in me pushing my tongue aside as to how he manages that with me straddled on his waist is beyond me he pushes his finger and I can't help but move it's been long too long. he gently puts me down and takes off my shoes he tears my dress up this takes me back to one specific night Sizwe tore my dress and forced himself on me my heart races I despise the man with everything in me.

"Should I stop" he asks tracing my stomach and circling my navel with his tongue I want to tell him to stop but my tongue is tied I am afraid he might snap what if he becomes angry and bashes me. I feel him move up. he kisses my eyes it's just then I realise I am crying.

"Open your eyes" he says softly I shake my head.

"I won't hurt you look at me" he says calmly as ever I open my eyes awaiting to see a monster but I meet his gentle eyes instead he helps me sit up straight and takes off my dress Opens the covers and helps me inside. I watch him take off his shoes and trousers he hops in joining me.

"Let me get you something to wear" I nod shyly looking down he comes back with a t-shirt comes to my side of the bed and helps me out of my bra and top, this is not how I expected this night to go in fact I never expected any of this. he lifts my face up and kisses me.

"I am sorry" he says pulling me into his broad chest he's sorry for something he didn't do. I hold on tight and cry my eyes out. I once said there is something pulling me to this man and he has my heart all of it and not an inch less. he lets me be till I let out this heavy sigh we stay like that not saying anything. He stands up and walks out I do the same and look at myself in the mirror and laugh. My reflection looks far more better than how I feel I

wash up and walk out the bathroom finding him with a tub not sure if it's Ice cream he has a smile on his face.

"Ice cream" he chuckles shaking his head.

"Come join me" I slowly walk towards him we settle under the covers there's only one spoon and each spoonful is for me. I am being fed like a baby I can't even look at him.

"I am afraid of heights" he says out of the blue lifting my head up I look up and he is staring at me holding a torch of hope, he has a way of making me feel better without even saying a word.

"I am afraid of being alone and failing I fear the unknown and hate not being in control.

I sometimes wake up at night and have these thoughts bombard my mind and then fear creeps in. Sometimes I just want everything to end the sounds to stop but then I think of Siya and her beautiful smile" he puts aside the yoghurt and tries to pull me close but I hold up my hand.

"I want you to hear this Smiso I am a mess and I fear that one day I will drown and never come back never see the surface that I will lose myself and that would be the end of me. I fear not being good enough I hate that I over think everything" he gently pulls me in and lies back with me on his chest.

"We all have fears but we are stronger than them,you Phiwo are stronger than them okay" he says kissing the top of my head.

"I love you Phiwokuhle" he says holding me tight he hums an old song that rips me apart emotionally.

"Forever mine,forever thine,forever ours" he says rocking me back and forth if it were up too me I would stay in these arms till my world seemed better.

I wake up in his full embrace,he looks perfect I peck his lips and quietly get out of the bed.last night was I don't know how to put it I was emotional I even lost out on good sex hawema my emotions robbed me I feel like crying.I take a shower and head to the kitchen and start on breakfast the house is empty no one is in sight.

He comes down wearing track suits he smells fresh.

"Morning" I say flashing him a smile.

"Morning" he says frowning

"What's wrong Smiso" he scratches his head just bit and moves closer to me.

"Are you okay" I partially bring my lips together and nod.

"Last night you were uhmm" he looks uncertain "Emotional yeah that's word and today you are overly happy" he says still looking at me like he is searching for something.

"Kahle kahle what are you trying to say" I ask defensively.

"All I am asking is how often do you have these moments" he asks calmly.

"Smiso please don't ruin this wonderful day for me" he raises his hands up in surrender see we are already starting to sound like an old couple.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">We spend most of our day on the couch getting to know each other, Smiso and I are bad parents shame we just forgot about Siya we haven't called her my poor baby My phones beeps and Smiso gives me the eye.

I look at it and there is a text from an unknown number.

want to know more about your man meet with me

it's reads with all the details of the place we should meet at it has Maziya at the end.

"Who is it" he asks looking at the TV

"Aphiwe and she needs me right now" he nods with a side smile on his face I rush up Change into his tracksuit I look okay baggy but but who cares.

The text specifically said Daveyton Pule's Chesa nyama they sell the best meat its kinda like the heart of Daveyton when it comes to getting it down and wasted the place is always packed,I arrive and all the girls are wearing close to nothing I spot Maziya with two others he stands up when he sees me.

"I didn't think you would come" he says going for a hug I give my hand instead.

"What do you want from me" he gives me a smirk.

"To know you better and find out why you would go for Makhathini" he says sipping on his beer I look so out of place there different kinds of people here the give and take type.These old man have it good I tell you expensive watches,big cars and these young girls throwing themselves at them.And the painful part is that they throw what a six pack of Bernin and the trending Tangueray gin their way then boom sex on a silver platter skoon they release and go back to their wives shame poor wives but then again poor everyone that gets dragged into the whole thing middle life crisis these bastards go through damn the men.

"You said if I wanted to know about Nathi I should come" he laughs I can tell he is pleased with himself and I hate that.

"Straight to the point I really like you, you are so different from Khosi" I raise my eyebrows this is the second time I have heard of this name.

"Who's Khosi" he looks intrigued by my question or maybe he is just taunting me.

"Xulu ubenongoduso a beautiful one too may her soul rest in peace" he sighs taking another sip " Makhathini killed her he is merciless killer after all" he says smirking I swallow hard upon hearing killer.

"What ever you are trying to do won't work on me" I say already standing up this man is playing me.

"Take a look at this" he shows me a video of Smiso cutting off someone's toes with a plier I look up and Maziya is next too me too close for comfort.I hand him back his phone I shouldn't have come here.

I drive home with images of that video flashing in my mind.I get home and rush inside,Everyone is here including him.

"Oh finally mkhenyana has been waiting for you" Trust my mother to say that pssh.

"I was..I.I..needed some air Ma" Smiso softly laughs

"Can I see you outside please" he kisses Siya who doesn't want to let go when she finally does I follow him outside.

"Where were you" he asks rubbing his forehead.

"I was getting some air" I can't use Aphiwe now because she has her huge bum in the house

"You know what get in the car" I refuse firmly with my arms folded he roughly pulls me towards him and sniffs me it's a staring contest me being the accuser and him the accused.

"What did he say because I can smell him on you" he says still holding my arm

"Who"he looks so angry I really shouldn't have gone to that place.

"What the hell did Ngqobhane say to you angithi you were with him" he says through gritted teeth.

"Lutho I swear akashongo lutho" I cross my fingers showing them to him.

"That look you are giving me right now Phiwo" he says letting me go and backs away

"I am sorry I didn't mean to hurt you" I nod wiping my tears

"Is it true ungumbulali" I finally ask biting my lower lip my hands clasped he looks defeated like I just drained all the energy in him.

"Why haven't you gone to the police" he asks

"Because I don't believe him" I say even I am doubting myself

"Or maybe you believe him and you just don't want it to be true" he says.

"Smiso please don't say that ngiy'kucela" I whisper refusing to listen any further.

"The same man who told you that is the very same man who burned my Khosi to death she was carrying my son Phiwo my son and he burned her alive" he says slumping down his back is leaning on the car I am surprised no one has come out yet.

"Hayi Smiso" I shake my head crouching down to his level my heart is breaking for him I bring close.

"I am so sorry" I say still holding him I

should have kept my promise stayed away you know let sleeping dogs lie and I wouldn't have heard non of this.

20

So many things happened last night and I made a choice took a route of no return. last night I saw myself standing by Smiso knowing the kind of man he is.

I would be naive if I said what Maziya told me had no truth but it does and I chose to ignore it.

It's easier for people to tell you to move on and forgive yourself what's done is done but what happens when your past catches up with you. Living with guilt and pain of that very same past and the secrets we harbour inside us are the very same thing that kills and eats away at us. We may all look good on the surface but a part of me believes we are rotten to the core, we all have secrets be little as it is but still it's a secret and you know it so who am I to judge are my morals and beliefs being compromised and tainted by standing with him yes, yes I agree I have chucked all that I have been taught about right and wrong out the window, why well because I love him I don't want to change him I may not know every detail of his past but should he be ready I will be here.

Thinking back I used to despise people you couldn't tell the truth and found it easier to lie but truth be told it's easy not having to explain yourself not having to justify why you did it. We need to understand that not all of us are the same and that life can deal you hard it's not a walk in the park nor is it

roses. Take me for instance I got pregnant sure it wasn't the end of the world but people couldn't understand how a morally grounded person like me could fall pregnant apparently my father's plates and furniture did it and then I had to come with a fatherless child for a full five years when I look back I was boxed called all sorts of names and Sizwe came along and killed a part of me. I remember when my father asked what more he had done to me and I said nothing a whole freaking nothing and that right there is a lie.

Smiso is in my arms we have been in this position since last night that's how bad things are he couldn't talk any longer he cried more like groaning in pain we cried together I tried my outmost best to make him feel better, I found myself wanting to take away his pain in every way. I silently prayed to God to heal this man so he could be a better father to our daughter and a better man to me. He sat me down last night and told me how Khosi died.

She was killed by Ngqobhane Sibeko (Maziya) his former best friend they kidnapped her and burned her to death she was still alive and six months pregnant. I cried so much not understanding how cruel people can be. "She didn't do anything" he said breaking down I felt his pain and hurt I cried when he did and I held me when I couldn't you use my words.

I shake him so as to wake him I am sure I have sprained ribs
from this big baby of mine.

"I need to talk to you" he looks up and rolls over finally I can
breathe.

"Morning" he says pecking my lips

"I need to tell you something" his face changes

"Phiwo before you say something I know you must be scared
but I promise I will protect you guys just..just don't give yet" he
says holding my hand dramatic much I might be scared but I am
not leaving his side I don't know the full story in fact I don't
want too.

"The moment I got in that car with you I had already made my
choice"he looks relieved

"Remember Siya's ceremony and I accused your family of
witchcraft" he nods smiling "Well the voice I heard was of a
woman and that woman being Khosi" he raises his eyebrows

"I know I sound crazy but she said she forgives you and that you
should forgive yourself too and that it wasn't your fault" I don't
know if he believes me or not the look he is giving me now was
the same look he gave when he asked why I was happy.

"Khosi wait why didn't you tell me sooner" he asks getting off
the bed.

"I was afraid and Smiso how was I supposed to know that she was your wife" I ask defensively

"You know what I am tired of these secrets and lies woza" he says opening a drawer and takes out a knife pulling me by my hand to the kitchen, he lights up the stove I watch as he takes the knife cuts himself on the chest I did say this one is dramatic.

"What the hell are doing Smiso" he walks closer I almost lose balance but the fridge provides, he forceful takes my hand and makes a small cut on my palm

"Ahh" he muffles my scream with a kiss and puts my hand on his chest for a while the pain goes away it feels like I just drank him.

"I love you Phiwokuhle" says pulling away he takes the knife from the stove not breaking eye contact my mind is aware of his actions but I can't move I gladly give him my hand he presses the knife burning me I scream once more.

"You're okay" he says wiping my tears I don't know what just happened he does the same to himself and pulls me in for a long tight hug.

I am feeling this song Unravel me by Sabrina Claudio it's on repeat, I am wrapped up in his towel I walk out the bathroom and find Smiso half naked I heard the shower must have been

him he is cleaning his gun I spot a silencer I swallow non existent saliva my mouth just went dry on me.

"I hope my music isn't too loud" he looks up smiling the sexual tension in this room seriously needs to be dealt with I close my eyes reprimanding myself.Smiso is sneaky I open my eyes and he is standing in front of me my eyes rush down to his lower body.he takes my hand and kisses the palm Lord konje this man cut me huh.

"And this is to say I am so sorry" he says pulling my lips and unwrapping my towel it falls effortlessly he has this smirk on when he goes down on his knees and lifts my leg up resting it on his shoulder his tongue taunts me unravelling my walls I moan when his tongue locates my clit this drives me to edge I have all this tension building up I let go and it feels good like I just exploded into a million pieces.

"I am not done with you yet" he says lifting me and gently lays me on the bed his towel is already on the floor I look at his manhood and excitement creeps in I internally thank my ancestors this man is circumcised and he is gifted.he binds my hands together and leaves traces of kisses all the way to my naval down to my vagina i already have my legs sprawled open he dips in his finger followed by another it's a waterfall down there.

"Smiso don't toy with me" I says moaning

he moves up and devours my lips his eyes are beautiful and right now they are staring at me and mina I need him in inside.He positions himself.

"I love you maka Siya" he says sliding in with Sabrina's Unravel me still playing he moves his strokes are paced and precise I am more of a biter so my teeth dig in on his shoulder he is hissing on top of me.he thrusts in harder and harder.he pulls in and out leaving only the tip of his penis and we all know what that does to a thirsty person I find my self pulling him closer moving my arse meeting him stroke for stroke and thrust for thrust.he releases inside me collapsing ontop of me he twitches inside me stays inside for a while then rolls over he pulls me closer my legs feel wobbly this was quite an exercise and I want more of him.

26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I wake up too Smiso sucking my breast his tongue is doing things to me I move my hands to his penis playing with him man is already hard,he comes on top and kisses me looks at me and chuckles I know he is think of something silly.

I find my self with open legs spread wide resting on his arms while my hands are tired together over my head,my arse is resting on the edge of the bed and he is going hard I don't think my vagina will survive another stroke I shake and move this is

probably the best gift to human kind. Smiso is torturing me I can't bite anything i moan louder and scream harder this right here is sweet I don't want this to end he offers me his hands to bite on this man already knows my preference we both come with him collapsing ontop of me.

"Are you okay" he asks massaging my nipples I nod pecking his lips

"Kuyashisa esgodlweni and I want to go back inside" he says softly laughing I shake my head he can't be serious Smiso has stamina and me all this is new Sizwe preferred to have me lie back like some plucked chicken waiting to be roasted mxm prick. We move up the bed and cuddle.

"Are you sure about us" he asks moving his fingers up and down my arm I am sure what I agreed to but I nod my head.

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It's been weeks of bliss and great sex if I must say, I feel like I have been neglecting my baby bear so today I am taking her to my new place Baba sold the old one well I didn't want him to sell it I believe property is a great investment appreciates when renovated.

I am wearing shorts and she is wearing a dress it's just us girls spending time together, Smiso calls and I put him of loudspeaker.

"Hey baby" before I respond Siya pipes up

"Baba" he laughs clearly shocked.

"Hey baby bear" she giggles looking at me

"Mama is taking me out for icecream" she says showing off her missing teeth.

"Phiwo where are you taking my bear"

"To my new place it needs some blessing and I want to spend time with her" he goes mute for a few good minutes.

"Okay I will come check up on you guys later okay I love you guys"

"We love you too" I say he ends the call since we decided to give us a chance Smiso calls all the time.

We get to my place it just a complex child friendly I didn't want anything expensive just simple, I got food along the way and some games from home.

"Mama I like our new home" she says running around I follow suit till I get tired.

We play games I end up painting her nails and plaiting her hair she, She runs to the bedroom to look at herself in the mirror.

A knock comes through I fix myself up thinking Smiso is already here I open the door and go flying across the room I look up

and see Sizwe is standing there like a body builder my instinct tells me to run, I move to the bedroom and lock the door.

"Mama" Siya says looking scared Sizwe bangs the door so hard my baby jumps.

"Open this bloody door Phiwo" he roars he starts kicking the door, I look for my phone dammit I left it in the lounge I curse holding Siya.

"Mama ngiyasaba" I put my hand over her mouth.

"Shss" I open the wardrobe and put her inside wiping her tears the noise is getting louder and louder.

"Mama loves you okay just don't come out" we both cry "Siya look at me ungaphumi uyangizwa and don't cry okay"

The door breaks open and Sizwe drags me by my hair I try fighting him off but Siya bolts out crying she comes out and tries to fight Sizwe off he pushes her so hard she hits the wall.

"You bastard" I say yanking myself from his hold I swear I feel a chunk of my hair pluck from my skull.

"Siya vuka baby please wake up" I stand up charging at Sizwe I throw punches screaming and shouting for help. He punches me so hard I land next to Siya.

I pull Siya to my chest looking at the deranged Sizwe.

"My baby is hurt" I cry this shouldn't be happening

"Uzongifunda ungazi namhlanje" he says pulling me away from Siya.

"Sizwe please she needs a doctor" I sob still holding her

"Did you care like this when you killed my babies" he says putting his hands on my neck he has no mercy his eyes are filled with rage and what babies is he talking about.

He strips me till am left with my under garments this Sizwe is worse than the one that landed me in hospital, all I am thinking about is my daughter is she okay tears fall freely thinking about her her and how Sizwe dragged me away from her I am angry that the security was no where to be seen, I am disappointed that I am part of a generation that turns a blind eye that believes in minding their own business.

"Phiwo what did you do to our kids" he asks slapping me

"Angazi lutho you and I never had children" he slaps me one more time my face feels swollen.

"Then why did you go to my home huh and have them cleanse you because you know you aborted my babies" he roars pacing up and down he is furious.

"Your father said I needed that ceremony for all that you did too me" I shout back he can't give me kids I never had.

"Of course you needed it you killed my babies my family wasn't even supposed to bother ngokuk'geza you deserved all the bad luck that was to come your way" he says angrily.

"You have to believe me I don't know anything" he laughs mockingly

"Didn't you go to the hospital during these past months huh" he says breathing down my face I rake my brain trying to think I shake my head it can't be I wasn't pregnant I has a severe case of bleeding it happens to a lot of women, I can't be that stupid that I didn't realise I was pregnant.

"I knew that legalising weed was a bad idea uzongibhedela lah" I shoot feeling brave.

"Today I will get the truth out of you" he says ripping my bra off it's happening again he roughly pulls my panty down. I just don't get this how can a man get hard knowing fully that there is no consent given or maybe it's the fear they see in that person that turns them on the will and fight not to have yourself violated.

"You will get pregnant again and give birth uyangizwa I won't stop till I feel like it" he say roughly penetrating me I scream from the pain tears trickling down. Tears after tear he pushes thrusts in violently heaving on top of me I try fighting him off with everything in me but my body is tired my spirit is dying in the process his words keep taunting me "I won't stop till I feel like it"

His been going at it for an hour now I can't feel anything anymore my tears have dried out I am numb he is heavy on me and his sweat is dropping on me the door opens and hope fills my heart.

"Sizwe this wasn't part of the plan" Mpumi says getting him off me.

"Shut up wena" He say slapping her

"Phiwo I am so sorry" she says with her crocodile tears pathetic I tell you.

"Mpumi please help me please" she looks at Sizwe then back at me walking away.

"Woza la" he says dragging me to the floor he starts beating me so hard bashing my face mostly I close my eyes with each punch and kick. I try blocking out everything the pain but that doesn't work.

"I want you to hurt just like you hurt me I loved you Phiwo and you killed our babies why" he shouts pulling me by my hair I can't see him properly.

"I am so sorry please forgive me" I sob begging for forgiveness he laughs so loud and spits on me throwing a hard punch which lands on right eye. My brain juggles up information coming up with one story in particular I was watching Azania's show "real talk" i think and I saw this women tell her story about her boyfriend who assaulted her and just like that those repeated blows in the eye and she felt some warm liquid gush out her eye and right then she knew something was wrong what puzzled me is when she said the hospital took its own sweet

time to assist her she lost her sight later in the show I found out her name is Josina Machel.

He throws me on top of this filthy bed and penetrates me once again he chokes me not carrying his eyes have lost the warmth they once possessed and I happen to be the cause of that.

I wake up and I am alone in this room it's dark and too quiet I start panicking,I can't even move I try calling out for someone but nothing,I feel caged the silence and uncertainty is getting to me,I don't want to die alone this feeling is torture my thoughts consume me and I can't get away from them I want everything to stop I want the pain to go away I don't want to believe I was pregnant and stupid not to notice.

The door opens and the lights turn Sizwe charges towards me at least he will pick me up from this cold floor instead he uses his feet to turn me over and walks away.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">Comes back lifts me up.

"I loved you Phiwo and you lied to me you turned me into this man" he says as if he's about to cry "I watched you pine over a

man you had never known I was never enough for you never" he shouts

"No..No. .no. .no. . " I protest using every will power I have to fight him he's too strong for me the ice cold water touches my skin I scream from the effect the water has on me it penetrates my skin, to my bones and finally reaches my core.

"Talk" he shouts with his hands on my shoulders pushing me under. I can't say anything my Teeth are chattering.

"Okay miss high and mighty Phiwo won't admit her faults ngifuna ukukubhabhadisa wena" he says pouring more ice in the water I can't take it anymore I want to let go.

I haven't been so angry in my entire life something in me told me to drive to Phiwo's place something didn't feel right and when I arrived the place was trashed bear bear was on the floor sniffing and blood was on her first I thought it was hers but it wasn't relief washed over me but anger surfaced who hits a child, I took her to the hospital called everyone the question remained who took Phiwo. After I had called everyone I took my car and drove to Ngqobhane's he has gone to far now,

He denied knowing where Phiwo was after a good beating I know Ngqobhane and when I looked into his eyes he was telling the truth some but I hate the concern he displayed and how his eyes suddenly turned soft.

"If my father is involved you need me" he says walking in..

"Don't fuck with me wena walk away now" I hiss standing up
Manqoba holds me back.

"Bafo calm down Sizwe might be working with someone" he says calmly. The idiot was out of the country why come back now this doesn't make sense.

"I swear if your father is somehow involved even my love for you won't save your family he has gone to far this time" he nods shaking Manqoba and Mngqobi's hands. I look at Aphiwe fixing herself up she refused to stay behind and what worries me is that hours have gone by its now midnight I don't know what they are doing to her.

"You guys have everything right, we need to leave now" Mngqobi says he is quiet but I suspect he is lethal. I also look at Ngqobhane why the care I swear if he's up to something I will kill him.

I think the torture is finally over now he took me out of the bath tub and threw me on the floor I am in a foetal position, I really wish he could cover up my indecency atleast do me that one favour, my eyes are half shut I am grateful I can still see. I am shivering my teeth still chattering. I wish I could curse Mpumi but a part of me feels sorry for her because what is

happening to me in her presence, Might just happen to her in the presence of yet another ruthless senseless woman.

"Clean her up I don't want her dying" he says licking my face roughly biting my lip my voice has left me only my silence remains. I eventually close my eyes.

I hear some noise this is it my demise where is Smiso when I need him. I hear some screams and footsteps. He holds me.

"No..no..please not again" I plead letting out a shriek of pain.

"Baby it's me open your eyes" he says softly kissing me I open my eyes and breakdown

"Smiso" I sob so loud the lump in my throat bursts he covers me up with his coat holding me tight..

Aphiwe pulls Mpumi while Manqoba is dragging Sizwe.

He looks livid Manqoba puts his foot on Sizwe's throat while the two are pointing at me, I hear this thump sound only to see Aphiwe on top of Mpumi bashing her head to the floor there's blood everywhere, blood spatters on her face.

Smiso tries lifting me up but I scream my whole body hurts he curses looking at Sizwe but Ngqobhane shakes his head.

"Mnqobi call Khaya now" he shouts his voice sounding distant.

I thought I had seen it all but when it hits home that's when you really feel it, Seeing phiwo like that tore me, laying in a pool of blood naked bruised and broken it took every force in me not to snap Sizwe's neck and focus on my baby, As soon as Khaya got there we were able to take her to the hospital.

She can't walk, she can barely talk I don't get what kind of an animal does that. Aren't we supposed to love and protect these women damn the men we have become.

I vowed never to kill again never to take life as it is precious so they say, I told myself I would never kill a common man but Sizwe has dragged me so far I won't come back.

I remember the first time I killed a man I slept peacefully no nightmares or guilt it's like I was born to do that, Sibeko Senior taught me everything I know groomed me but you know what they say about a student surpassing its teacher and lets say he never took that well I grew and became my own person things started to get complicated when I ventured into drugs and diamonds and I walked away from Sibeko senior because he had already move to human trafficking and I was not about selling young kids and women.

Only there is no honour amongst criminals people like us don't just walk away blood has to be spilt and Khosi was caught in the

cross fire he said he teaching me a lesson either I come back or lose the one thing I cherished my unborn child.

I am what you call a merciless mercenary killer I am head hunted to take people out it's in me it's what I am. I have earned the respect I get,I doubt Phiwo will love me the same once she learns the list of people I have murdered

I have been watching her cry in her sleep despite the fact that I am here she still feels scared it was a hassle getting her to open her legs I had to stay while Khaya examined her and I had to help the nurses bathe her because she wouldn't let go.I hate what that monster did to her,Khaya said things about ruptured vulva's forceful penetration bruised jaw,blunts object to the head all these things have awaken the old me he messed with the wrong family.Khaya walks in with Ngqobhane the two people I don't want to see.

"I just came to check up on Phiwo" Ngqobhane says while Khaya checks her does her work.

"I don't know what you are playing at but trust me it won't end well" I say looking at Phiwo then back at him.

"I have seen how you look at her you and that butch better stay away" I say referring to Khaya he nods looking at Phiwo he has this love carrying expression on his face.

"Is she going to be okay" he asks sounding sincere the last time he sounded like this was when he apologised for burning Khosi he was distraught broken and turned into this calculating bastard though he touched Khosi that bastard father of his forced him and just like that I lost my best friend.

I walk him out bumping into Phiwo's parents they look worried I can't stomach the pain her mother will feel when she sees her only daughter in that state.

It's been two rough days Khaya had to double her sedation due to the state she was in meaning we couldn't talk to her

Everyone is around waiting for her to wake up I checked on baby bear thrice this morning she has been asking about her mother and telling me how uncle Sizwe was hurting her mommy my child still regards that monster as her uncle joys of being a child.

Phiwo's mother has been crying in her husband's arms making this whole situation harder than it already is if they didn't omit the truth we wound here, I don't think Phiwo will ever be the same I doubt it there is something about pain it changes you and there is something about vengeance it consumes you and all that she will feel.

Khaya walks towards us and the whole family stands.

"Is she awake" her father asks

"Yes but please when you go in don't upset her she asked to see you" Khaya says looking at me.

"I think we should all go in see her then leave" Aphiwe says walking first I follow suit being the last to enter her room her eyes are still swollen everything feels wrong with how she looks right now.

Her mother tries embracing her but she shift Mr Zwane looks at me like I have all the answers.

"Siya where is my baby" She asks there is hope in her eyes I want to hold on to that. I

Move closer and hold her hand.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"She's okay" she realise a sigh of relief still looking at me

"Where were you i was so scared I thought he was going to kill.."her sobs get in the way

"Oh sanalwami" her mother says attempting to hold her.

"Ungangithinti" she says furiously shocking everyone even her face says it all.

"Sunshine what's wrong" her father asks.

"Is it true baba" she asks her tears silently falling her father looks broken but nods I had already told them what drove Sizwe to this.

"Lord no..no.." She says clutches at her abdomen shaking her head her cry is heart wrenching if only I could take away her pain.

"You miscarried twins the day of Smiso's accident" her father says causing her to sob even more

"You knew and you didn't tell me I lost my babies and you said nothing absolutely nothing Sizwe hurt me claiming I killed them but you knew and said nothing" she says wipes her tears "It your fault all of you,you did this to me" she says angrily looking at her parents if she could say more she would but her tears uncontrollably fall hindering her speech and I guess even the physical pain is taking its toll.

"Phiwo please don't say that I know you are hurting but though God we will get through this" her mother says you can see the hurt in her eyes she hasn't been able to hold Phiwo since she woke.

"Awukahle Ma where was your God when I begged for forgiveness,When I was beaten and repeatedly raped for something I didn't know,where was your God when I couldn't

feel anything but he kept on going hurting me" she breaks down she doesn't even want me to hold her.

"Tell me where was your God when you decided to lie to me, no don't cry what happened to me is your fault including you Baba" she says not giving a care if her words hit hard.

"Phiwo" Manqoba calls out his voice coming out in form of a whisper.

"Cha bhuti you don't understand it hurts where was Mama's God when Sizwe pushed Siyamthanda and she hit the wall, when she cried and tried fighting him my baby wasn't supposed to see that she's too young" I can't begin to imagine what Phiwo just said let alone understand it.

"We were trying to protect you" her father says defenceless she laughs mockingly after hearing that.

She looks at everyone in the room slowly as if memorising them for the last time.

"Nawe pho Ma you mourned my babies and denied me the chance to do so" she says putting her hands on her chest.

Phumani" she says calmly.

her father gently pulls her mother out the room.

We are left alone and she has been crying I believe for her twins and for almost losing Siyamthanda. I am surprised she hasn't kicked me out yet seeing she doesn't want anyone beside her.

"I should have known I am terrible person" she says wiping her tears

"Please don't say that your parents lied to you and you didn't know that's that you are not a horrible person" I say assuring her she couldn't have known she wasn't even aware she was pregnant with all the chaos she was going through at the time.

"I want you to make him suffer and kill him for putting my baby through that" she says coldly

She's been sleeping for a while now still shaking in her sleep but at least her was able to close her eyes without having to be injected. Manqoba's name flashes on my screen I shift from her.

"Bafo" he breathes though the phone for a while before saying anything.

"Ma just had a heart attack" he finally says I look at Phiwo how can someone's life be turned so upside down in a space of a few months.

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I wake up with urge to pee luckily Smiso is not around which is good I appreciate having around but he's starting to suffocate me.

I am even afraid to take a mirror and look down there. There is a part of me that feels like I will see this shredded disgustingly torn vagina.

I walk slowly to the bathroom and accidentally find myself looking at the mirror, I see a dirty broken, tainted and hollow me I close the door and strip off the hospital gown getting in the shower the hot water hits my skin and I wish it could wash away the pain cleanse me off his smell and sweat I can still smell him I can still feel him on top of me degrading me in the worst possible kind that's why these men rape us they know it takes away your power it strips you of your self worth and dignity it imprisones you it scares you for life for God sake it's humiliating the little power I thought I had is gone just like that, One punch and I was already begging him to stop, One stroke I was already numb powerless praying to God to take my life. His words still haunt me I turned him into what he is now he loved me and I pined over a faceless man.

This sponge isn't doing me any justice I scub myself till my hands get tired I want to bang my head to the wall so hard I die instantly, My skin is all wrinkled up but that is not compared to

how I feel tears fall profusely I thought I had run out of tears but hey the joke is on me it's like i have been refilled a gazillion times.

I walk out wishing I was lighter that the flippin hot shower did me good but it didn't I want my mother despite what I said I need her to hold me and tell me that everything is going to be okay that it wasn't my fault,I need her to tell me that I am still her baby I am still the Phiwo she gave birth too not Sizwe's punching bag not Sizwe's rape victim I need her to tell me that I am still my father's sunshine my father's sunflower how I wish I curse God so much that I feel whole but still that won't help me.

I wipe my fountain of tears I don't know what hurts the most being raped,the betrayal from my parents or the loss of my babies the mere thought cripples me my heart is in shambles they should have told me I deserved to know that I had two souls me,I put both my hands on my belly and cry so hard this one is for my angels.

My father walks in he looks drained like he had a long night,I love this man so much him being here means a lot I know I said hurtful words yesterday which can never be taken back but can only be plastered with an apology,he opens his arms wide I rest my head on his chest and weep.

"It's okay my sunshine let it all out" he says squeezing me.

"Why did you hurt me why" he sniffles brushing my back

"It's not your fault he is a sick twisted man" he says kissing my forehead if only it was that simple to believe

"Phiwo we will get through this okay but I need you to be strong okay" he says looking straight into my eyes his are teary I nod my head.

"I have something to tell you" he says forcing a smile still holding me.

"Ma had a minor stroke and a heart attack" I pull away screaming God can't forsake me like this not now not when I need her the most.He pulls me close clasping me tight I try fighting him but it's a futile exercise.

"I am sorry baba I didn't mean to say all those things I really didn't mean too" I say in between tears and hiccups

"Phiwo listen to me you didn't do anything Ma was under pressure hence her attack" he says wiping my tears

"I want to see her ngifuna uMawam" he shakes his head

"Ngifuna uMawam I want my mother I need her" I beg him but he is adamant.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"You can't see her not now" he says calmly but the strain in his voice proves it's not looking good.

"Baba please pray ask God to save her for me for all of us" I say holding his hands I need him to pray hard because I can't lose her I prayed for myself and I wasn't answered maybe if my Dad prays for Mama his prayers will be answered they are one in the eyes of the Lord right.

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The medicine khaya gave me is wearing off I open my eyes and Smiso is looking at me creepy if you ask me. he smiles when my eyes meet his, he's got beautiful eyes they may hold some darkness but still when he looks at me they channel love and warmth, he is handsome I won't lie I look at his hands and his knuckles are bruised.

"I am sorry" he says still seated far from me his head is bowed I have a feeling his is apologising for more.

"Smiso" he looks up.

"Do you need me to call the doctor" he asks standing up I am sure my voice sounds weak for him to panic.

"No but I need you to walk away and never look back" I say swallowing hard this is harder than I thought it would be.

"What are you saying Phiwo" he asks with one eye brow raised.

"It's over Smiso I don't want you anything" he looks shocked more than anything but I rather say it first than have him say it.

"You are not making sense it must be the medicine yah that's what it is the medicine" he says moving closer.

"Gxabhashe kuphelile leave" I half shout I can't have him near me if I can still smell Sizwe on me,if I can't stand the way I look or the way I feel what about him won't he find me repulsive.

"Mazwane please don't do this to me don't do this to us" he says begging me I shake my head I love him enough to let him go, I can feel it one of these days I will go crazy the flooding thoughts and the silence creeps me out Sizwe unleashed something in me.if he goes now he won't get to see the bad.

"I am not in love with you anymore" I say biting my lip saying these words is like piercing his heart,I am in so much pain I can't describe it.

"I need you as much as you need me" he says running his hand over his head.

"I don't love you" I shout wiping my tears he needs to hear this.

"Dammit Phiwo" he says trashing the place I shift thinking he might hurt me in the process.

"Mazwane please reconsider I love you" he says flexing his jaws.

"I am damaged beyond repair the love I have now is for my daughter and only her" I say holding my tears.

"Why why are you doing this" he asks

"Because you are a man" I say there is some truth in my sentence but also a web of lies. I want him in my life I need to lean on him but I don't want the warmth of his eyes to be replaced by coldness or his love to be replaced by hate and resentment. My father explained how my womb is scared or damaged I didn't get it all but I won't have kids I sobbed because I couldn't and I still can't understand how God could deal me such heavy cards, how do I tell him that Siyamthanda is the only child he will ever get from me that his soccer team won't come from me that I love him but I hate that he is man that I am afraid he will never look at me the same that a part of me now believes that in each and every man there a beast nesting waiting to be freed.

He looks broken here I am breaking yet another man's heart wounding him for the next women to heal a heart she never broke he walks away and my heart shatters it hurts so much

nothing makes sense no pain is greater than the other yet I feel like one should surpass the other I should be able to tell which hurts me the most right now but my heart and soul feel all of them they are eating away at me. I have a hand over my mouth muffling my cry and here's the thing with muffling your cries a burning lump forms on your throat making it more painful and real.

"Oh Ma please don't leave me" I say out loud hoping the universe shines on me.

I don't know what's worse the fact that she doesn't want me near her or that she believes all the stuff she said, I know she is hurting more than I can imagine that she feels broken but if only she could she herself through my eyes because I see a beautiful strong black woman who went through a horrible ordeal but has risen and survived, I see a daughter and a mother who tried to protect her baby the only person who she cared about even when she was bleeding and close to death was our baby girl now how can I let such a woman go, how do I let her push me away when she needs me the most. Her mother is still not out of the woods yet she is falling apart and there is not much I can do about it the only thing she is holding on too is Siyamthanda it's like every breath she takes is for and only her.

Aphiwe has been pumping that girl with drugs and allowing every scam she could think off have her way with her, That's not how I operate I don't find pleasure in hurting women but Aphiwe is different she doesn't know how to draw the line not that I care what she does to her, that Mpumi girl is practically hooked on drugs she says yes to everything only to get her next fix. Sizes on the other hand torturing him has reached its cause I don't like dragging things along because they eventually come back to bite you.

I walk into the warehouse and Manqoba is beastly punching Sizwe the sight of this man disgusts me he has been begging for his life but what surprises me is that when Phiwo begged and cried he didn't care now that messes me up.

"Bafo dubula lenja I am tired of seeing his face" Manqoba says his hands are dripping blood Sizwe is practically hanging by a thread, I take out a pair of pliers I need to finish what I started his feet are already swollen I decided to cut a few of his toes.

"I think I want to play with him" Mngqobi says taking the pliers from me, Sizwe screams and begs while Mngqobi slowly cuts off his fingers prolonging the pain my mind is not here I should be with Phiwo supporting her it's been a week and nothing makes sense to me, I love that woman one smile and I melt I could bring the world to it's feet just for her she's my Helen my Marilyn and all I want is to be by her side.

A loud screame brings me back from the clouds, Mpumi is on the floor sreaming Aphiwe is at it again this place is bloody chaotic

"Will you bloody stop it" I shout causing the whole place to come to a stand still.

"You cut his penis off" I say to a shaken Mpumi.

"No I can't do it please don't make me" she pleads going down on her knees

"I won't repeat myself cut it off" I shout handing her the knife and watch as she slowly takes it.

"Get the pit bulls in here they can finish the job" Manqoba nods I would rather have dogs eat him alive than to shoot him I don't miss and one bullet would end his life.

"Please don't kill me I never meant to hurt her please I am begging you forgive me Makhathini please when Sibeko told me that Phiwo killed our unborn babies I lost it I swear that man lied to me" he cries pathetic even in his last days he is still a weak man, I clench my jaw that old fool won't leave me alone till I kill him.

I look at Mpumi and her hands are shaking she's already wet with tears I have no more energy in me each step I take I walk away with his screams and manhood if I could I would let him leave but that wouldn't be justice to my bear or Phiwo at least I walk away knowing he died a spineless weakling excuse of a man who begs.

I get home and Siya's toys are lying around we have been spending time together I even watch Sofia the first nowadays I like that Cedric the magician dude he's evil but none of his plans to take over the kingdom ever succeed, Elihle comes running down I don't get why she hasn't cleared up this mess.

"Hey bhuti" she says attempting to give me hug but stops on her tracks.

"Are you hurt what happened" she asks backing away I should have changed the bloodied shirt clearly my mind and heart have detached from my body.

"Elihle" I call out my voice sternly she looks sorry but there's some urge to run her mouth.

"What did you do,did you hurt someone" she asks her voice about to break.

"Elihle I don't answer to you okay now clear this mess before I get angry" I say clearly annoyed Elihle is a child she has no business asking me nonsense.

"I am sorry bhuti" she says sulking that's what these kids are good at sulk when they don't get their way.

I rush to my bedroom to get cleaned up I smell of blood.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">After a long cold shower I try calling Phiwo but she doesn't pick up.I can hear Elihle's loud music all the way to my room that girl is trouble I don't know how Baba manages with her in the house because this one is spoiled.

A soft knock comes through and Sthembi walks in wearing the skimpiest uniform I have ever seen she is standing in for her mother who has been with us for the longest time. I am still in my towel literally exposed.

"Ngyaxolisa bhuti I just came to check up on you" She says walking closer to the bed I am studying her body language.

"Can't you see I don't want to be disturbed" I hiss but she proceeds till she reaches me and puts her hands on my shoulders her hands are soft.

"If you value this job you will get your hands off me uyangizwa" My voice is as cold as that of a murderer no emotion whatsoever.

"But I can make you feel better nje Smiso" she says with her sweet voice I stand up looking into her eyes.

"Lalela I have a women and I love her I don't need you or your services" she looks shocked her eyes get teary.

"Ungangitsheli ngalento yakho ehlanyayo" I tighten my grip on her arm.

"Sthembi don't test me phuma" she hurriedly walks out damn this women if I were the Sizwe type I would have slapped her big mouth, I may be many things but I wouldn't hurt Phiwo.

.

Today is one of those early mornings that brighten up my day, I am taking Ntokozoyami with to work, driving to Phiwo's home always brings joy to my heart I get to see her even if it's just a sleeping her.

I find her whole family having breakfast Manqoba has Siya on his lap they look like they are having the best conversation.

Phiwo looks out of place she has lost some weight only because she eats less and spends most of her time locked up in her room.

"Baba" Siya says running to me.

"Hey baby bear" I say picking her up she is already dressed up.

"Yes look Mama did my hair" she says happily.

I greet everyone who is already up on their feet going about their day. Only Aphiwe stays behind she gives me time alone with Phiwo.

"Maka Ntokozo" she looks up her eyes are dead hollow there's no sign of my Phiwo.

"Makhathini" she says offering me a weak smile.

"How are feeling today" I ask moving closer but she shift gracefully careful not to be obvious.

"I don't know Smiso it hurts and I can't carry on without my mother I need her,I need her so I can know Siya will be taken care off" She says breaking down I move closer till her head is on my chest she cries clutching at me.

"Phiwo please don't say that,don't even think about it" I say holding her tight she cries her sobs get louder with each gasp Siya comes running to the kitchen and starts crying too.

"Baba please don't hurt Mama" she says pulling me off I close my eyes this hurts.

"No daddy is just making mommy feel better okay" Phiwo says wiping her tears I pick her up and kiss her forehead.

"Baba would never hurt you guys okay I love you" she nods resting her small head on my shoulder I use my thumb to wipe her tears Phiwo clings to my hand not letting go. If only I could tell her to take me back assure that I can take care off her make her believe that everything will be okay,Take her pain away and replace it with sunshine.

But it's not that simple she now believes the most horrible things about herself. The once happy Phiwokuhle is replaced by a shadow of hurt,self doubt and hate.

I am a lost soul wondering aimlessly, my soul is journeying though the midst of darkness. I wanted to take over the world but it turned it's back on me. I wanted to grow and blossom into that sunflower my father always speaks of but even the sun turned its back on me, its brightest rays darkened on me. I wanted to be strong like those who came before but I couldn't. I wanted to be what my mother raised and instilled in me but even that was hard to do, she says I come from a generation of strong black women and I should act like it. It's easy for people to point fingers and tell you how you should feel when they haven't even walked a mile in your shoes. I just want to be strong but even the strongest of warriors have their weaknesses and defaults an Achilles heel if you may call it that. I don't know how many times I have tried knocking on the heavens door but even death its self turned it's back on me. I don't know what kind of a cruel joke the universe is playing on me but I would like it stop now. I believe no scrap that I believe nonsense, my life hasn't even reached its peak yet it's heavy and thorny to bear. I wish someone could lend me their strength and ability to forget and move on. I wish my everyday baths could result to the stench of fear fading away. To have his smell turn into sweet roses that way I wouldn't have to bath every hour. I wish he didn't smell of nicotine and whiskey because he ruined it for me, I used to love and crave that

combination from Smiso it smelled better on him, now it has become my worst nightmare nothing but everything triggers it if you know what I mean.

But I must admit my family has been amazing. Baba has played the role my mother would have if she was home and I am grateful. Speaking of which Baba took her to some high profile physiotherapists for some intense physio, which has yielded positive results. The doctor says she will come home soon probably in the coming days, her speech was a bit impaired which frustrated her but everything else is fine now.

Today I am going to my therapy session and Smiso is taking me as always. He took it upon himself to be my designated driver. There are days I wouldn't be able to get out of bed and he was there but still that hasn't changed our relationship status.

I am seated opposite doctor Blake Osmond well he prefers I call him Blake, just to be more friendly and less formal he said it was part of the get well, feel free and feel safe tactic. Smiso is sitting in as usual quietly in the corner.

"I am glad to see you not wearing black today" he says smiling, well I have been feeling empty and the colour black said it all it spoke on my behalf.

"Smiso picked it out for me" I say returning the smile, I am wearing a yellow summery dress with flower prints.

"Today we are tackling the men in your life issue" he says seating up straight. My palms get sweaty I dread these talks because they end up feeling like an attack.

"Do you trust the men in you life Phiwo and do you think all men are the same" he asks penning something down.

"Yes I do trust them and no not all men are the same" I say defensively.

"This is not an attack trust me I am getting somewhere with this" he says smiling showing of his teeth,I won't lie he's easy on the eye yena.

"Then ask what you want and stop going about the bush" I say with some hint of annoyance.

"Why do you trust the men in your life your father to be exact" he says tapping his pen irritating me to the core.

"Because they respect women,they love me and they wouldn't hurt me.My father loves me he wouldn't hurt me" I say on the verge of breaking down.

"Then why won't you allow the person you share a child with close of you strongly believe that not all men are the same" he

says looking at Smiso, who has suddenly become more interested I can tell by the structure of his his body.

"I don't know" I say throwing the half truth covered in a Web of lies.

"Phiwo do you think Mr Xulu would hurt you" I look at Smiso and I am tongue tied I can't answer Blake, a part of me wants to scream no but a tiny voice says he is murderer after all anything is possible.

"I mean Sizwe was your boyfriend turned fiance turned baby daddy then later your abuser he claimed to love you but inflicted pain on you. Do you think Mr Xulu is like Sizwe is that why you won't let him near does this mean you lied about all men not being the same" he asks persistently regardless of my tears and Smiso already up on his feet.

"Can't you see you are making her cry just stop" Smiso shouts and the room is filled with his voice.

"I am just doing my job Mr Xulu" he says raising his hands in surrender. I think having Smiso sit in was a mistake.

"I want you to do these exercises and think about this deeply, I want you to know what is it that scares you and remember do not paint all men using the Sizwe brush" he says ending our session.

We walk out to the car and the silence freaks me out, he opens the door for me and takes a while before he gets in.

He is wearing black pants and a white tight crisp shirt. I am already undressing him with my eyes that's how much I miss him.

"Are you scared of me" he asks out of the blue.

"Please don't do this" I plead how do I tell him that yes I am afraid you might turn into him, that someone has been sending me videos anonymously of him killing and brutally torturing people and I am scared.

"Phiwokuhle Zwane ngiyafunga ngiyagomela I would never hurt you, hurting you would mean killing my heart if only you knew that not only do you have my heart but my soul too" he says like he's running out of breath.

"Why

why have you walked away because Sizwe took away everything" he wipes my tears planting kisses on my face.

"That's where you are wrong, you are more than what he put you through, strong and beautiful. No woman deserves to go through what you went through but here you are still standing. Mazwane please take me back because I am not going anywhere" he says with so much certainty sincerity.

"I love you please don't cry" he says with a deep chuckle.

"I love you too but I am scared. I wish I wasn't, I wish I was okay, I wish i was enough for you" I say with my lips trembling I want to tell him that I am no longer enough,that I won't even be able to give him children that's how damaged and broken I am.

"Mazwane you are more than enough,Sthandwa sami I wish you could see yourself through my eyes then I promise you wouldn't want to stop taking a peak" he says laughing softly his eyes are teary.

"I don't know" I say breaking down I don't want to string him along,I don't want him to resent me,I don't want to turn him into a monster.

He gets out of the car and comes to my side to join me,I am on top of him with my hands wrapped around his neck while his are on my waist.

"I love you maka Ntokozoyami" he says breaking down painfully, I love it when he calls me that but I never expected him to break down.I can't stand hearing him groan in pain it's like my heart is being shredded.I feel his pain my own tears fall, letting him go has become harder. I feel this strong pull to him, I don't want to walk away from this man.

"Be my sanctuary Smiso, forever mine, forever thine, forever our. I love you so much" I say still holding him tight.

Whoever said love is simple and isn't supposed to hurt lied to us, even the simplest of things are difficult for others, even the truest and most beautiful love does hurt at some point.

He dropped me off a while ago that was after he took me for icecream and some greasy spicy food. Elihle is sleeping over she can't seem to get enough of Siyamthanda and that means less activities and small talks. Because honestly I don't want to end up shouting at my daughter she is the one thing that is constant, her love for me is what gets me through..

A text comes through and it's Ngqobhane, I wear my robe and slippers a day step outside. His car is parked outside the gate he steps outside when he sees me and opens the back seat, ever since the Sizwe saga he has been a friend well sort off.

"Hey" he says flashing me a smile.

"Hey yourself stranger" he scratches his head phela I haven't seen this one in days.

"Work mngani wam I have been busy" he says laughing.

"Mhmm I see mngani" I laugh at how we have developed this "mngani" things as if it's normal he looks at me without

flickering and moves closer going for my lips, it takes a while for me to register what is going on.

I pull away quickly like I have been shocked.

"Wenzani " I push him back slapping the devil out of him.

"He won't let him go till he has nothing including you and your daughter. I can love you I promise I can make you happy" he says breathing heavily.

"Who are talking about" I ask, he goes mum on me.

"Ngqobhane who the hell won't let who go" I ask my voice rising.

"My father he won't let Makhathini walk away just like that" he says sighing heavily. I swallow hard kanti who is this old man.

"This better be first and last time you try this or I swear I will tell Smiso" he shakes his head.

"You can't love him my father won't hesitate killing you and your child to prove a point, and I wouldn't be able to forgive myself" he says sounding remorseful.

"Well I am willing to take that risk" I say thinking of Smiso's promise to protect us.

"You are willing to do that for him, Love him even though you know what he is capable of doing" he asks, his questions sound more like an accusation.

"You are no different nje" I say to my defense.

"You really love him don't you" he says like he just lost an already set losing game.

"Yes and one more thing stay away from me Ngqobhane I don't ever want to see you again" I step out of the car thinking of how he acted like he cared and proved to be a friend kanti no, he was just waiting for the right time to pounce my vulnerability became an opening for him. Damn men, damn this world for giving them all the power.

One can never say they fully know how the heart works nor can they say they know it's path. Sometimes we journey or walk through this thing called life aimlessly, but with the hope of getting some light along the way more like a few shades lighter. I know I have been through a lot but so have many other women and children in South Africa. It's like the whole world is infested with some deadly sick and twisted disease, to hurt and disregard our feelings. After what happened to me I stayed in my bedroom switched the lights off it was just me and the silence, I guess I somehow wanted to get over my fear or being alone. I wondered if I couldn't get past the trauma of what happened, What is it like for children the scares and anger that come after the horrific encounter. There's not a day that I don't cry for this country.

Through everything I have come to realise that I love Smiso we are binded by forces greater than us, Another being a mother I would walk on fire for my baby girl. I love that soul to the moon and back and my family I would do anything to keep them.

I have also realised lies build on lies. You end up losing yourself in them, and I don't want that hence I am telling Smiso everything. Because truth be told even if the answer is staring at you sometimes it's not always the solution either it could break or make. I could chose to continue saying nothing and that

would be my solution, but that basically means I can't tell right from wrong.

I am in the garden seating on the bench watching Baba chase Siya around, She's carefree, innocent and protected from this big bad world. Baba comes and joins still laughing loud, My father is the best bakithi the first man I fell in love with. The one man who has never let me down or failed me. he picks up one sunflower.

"This is for the most prettiest young lady I have ever seen" he says giving me the one stem. if only he knew he just ripped the life out of it.

"Baba you just killed it" he shakes his head with a smile plastered on his face.

"That's why flowers are made my sunshine to be picked and for them to brighten someone's day. They are made to grow and be picked so that they can make way for others to blossom, It's a beautiful cycle it's called nature" he says maintaining his smile.

"So you didn't kill it, you just made way for other flowers" he nods softly laughing.

"Phiwo don't argue with me I know you want to question me" I gasp causing him to laugh more. "This flower has served it

purpose and that is making you smile,I would pick all the flowers in the world just to this smile" he says pulling my cheeks.

"I don't ever want to see you sad not like the past few weeks,Mazwane promise me that we're heading for better days" he says his voice trailing off,I can assure him that I am feeling much better but I can't promise I won't break down when it gets too much.

"I promise Baba" he tightens his hold on me,I know he won't say it but he misses his Zee we all do.

"I love you Mazwane" he says breathing out.

"I love you too Mbuso ka Ziyanda" I say giggling I like teasing him.

"Hey watch it that's my wife" he says tickling

"And she's my beautiful mother" I say looking at him, his face softens an expression of pain passes his face.he might not say it but he misses mama well we all do.

.

Its been a long day and I asked Aphiwe to use her flat,she was hesitant at first but when I mentioned that I want to meet up with Smiso in a more familiar place for me, she couldn't wait to give me her keys tall about selling me off.I am using her

apartment just incase I want to run or lock myself in the bathroom.

I look at myself in the mirror one more time,I am wearing a black long hugging dress,I just want him to be calm when he sees me and besides I prepared my mother's famous samp with oxtail.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">A knock comes through it's him standing tall looking all handsome on me.he looks at me from head to toe he has that silly grin of his.

"Wamuhle Mazwane" he says twirling me around.

"Thank you please come in" I know i sound formal but hey things might heat up soon nje.

We both sit he can't keep his eyes on me, great I hope my looks distract him from what I am about to say.

He pours me wine but I go for the juice and he takes the beer.

I dish up while he cracks jokes i cabt stop blushing this Zulu man is good.We eat well he eats and asks for seconds.

"Manje uzongipha after all this is done" he asks. Me blushing turns into a giggle who says that.

"Ngikupheni" I ask taking a sip at my juice.

"I would say ikhekhe but that sounds childish ngifuna inkomo"
he says winking at me, Lord this man wasn't suppose to male
me laugh this much.

There's something I have to tell and show you but promise you
won't get upset okay" I say with a straight face,Mama always
makes Baba promise when shit hit the fan.

"I promise muntu wam" I take out my phone and shove it
across the table swallowing hard.

He takes it and his beautiful manly laugh seizes,his face changes
and the energy around suddenly feels heavy for me.

"What the hell is this" he asks clenching his jaw.

"You said you wouldn't get upset" he shakes his head seething.

"Talk now where did you get this" he asks rubbing his forehead.

"I don't know but someone kept sending them to me over and
over again" he stands up and smashes the phone.

"And you kept quiet huh what is wrong with you Phiwo ufuna
ukufa" he shouts banging the table.

"I am sorry, I was afraid to tell you" he laughs mockingly.

"Afraid of me is that it Phiwo,do you think I am a monster that I
would hurt you" he shouts right now he is pissed.

"At first yes but not anymore Sthandwa, I even told Ngqobhane that I love you and only you when he kissed me" I put a hand over my mouth after blurting that out.

"You did what" he asks calmly. Moving closer to me.

"I didn't do anything he kissed me out of the blue, I pushed him away I really did" he backs away stumbling to the floor.

"Smiso please talk to me ngyaxolisa" he laughs so loud I feel like an idiot right now.

"What I am supposed to say you kissed him and you were spending time with him" he says sounding so defeated.

"Makhathini ngyaxolisa" I muffle my cry using my hand.

"You hurt me Phiwo and that boyfriend of yours is dead" he says standing up and walks away.

"Smiso ungambulali it was a mistake" I plead running after him, he gives me one deadly look that suggests I stay away. If he walks out now and kills Ngqobhane then he is declaring an unending war.

"I can't have kids" those four simple but heavy words were enough to bring him into a halt. His anger subsided and hurt was all I saw. I wanted to tell him while seating down but when I realised things were messed up,I needed to say something that overpowers his anger and what better thing than to tell your man you won't have kids anymore.

He turned and joined me on the floor,I thanked my ancestors for doing good by me for once in their dead lives.

"Kanjani" that's all he could say as tears steamed down his face.He may come across as tough but trust me when I say he is a softie.

"Khaya ran a few tests and my womb is scarred" I said wailing,it's hard knowing I won't be able to carry a baby in the near future.

"Why didn't you tell me" he asked sounding lost,confused and hurt.

"Because I was afraid you would leave me" I said still in his arms.

"Phiwo I would never do that I lost you once I won't let that happen again" he said looking into my eyes.

"If only I talked sooner, reported him non of this would have happened" As I said this my mind raced back to every event he would kick me like a dog.

"No it's not your fault now and it was never your fault back then" he said wiping my train of tears.

"But I allowed him now I can't give you" I just couldn't carry on, I cried in his arms.

"It's okay I am here and I love you kids or not no pressure" he said holding me tight all I heard was "no pressure" meaning he might want them in the future.

"I love you Smiso" I said digging my fingers on his skin.

"I love you too mabaleka nengane" we both laughed still tangled in each other's arms. it may be fate, chance, destiny or whatever devine power but I am grateful for this stubborn man, who was down with me when I was down.

I wake up to the smell of last night's samp, I get off of the bed put on his shirt and head to the kitchen. I wrap my arms around him biting his bare back, yes people I am a biter.

"Morning to you too" he says turning, I slide in between his legs.

"Morning Sthandwa" he pulls me for a kiss.

"Sies man" he laughs nibbling on my neck.

"And I love you" he says pulling away.

"I love you babakhe" he raises his eye brows and laughs.

"You've never called me babakhe before ngenzeni" he asks making me blush.

"After last night you deserve to be called babakhe,baba ka Ntokozoyami,babazi yam and all these other sexy names" he laughs shaking his head.

"I really do love you Mazwane,more than you know" he says changing tone, I know he loves me but I think I love him more. He pulls me into his arms and everything falls into place.

"You know that we are my forever right" he says looking into my eyes,pouring his soul into mine.

"All I know is you are ruining me for the next person" I say gasping for air. His lips are too close to mine delicately taunting me.

"Trust me there won't be a next person,even in death our souls will be binded.The sun will set the oceans will scream and our souls will fall in love over and over again. Our love will be free, even in death when the sun sets we will become one" he says clashing his lips with mine.I don't know why but I felt each word

even in death I will be his and he will be mine.his words reek of death but still they taste divine.

"I don't want anyone else" he smiles.

"That's because you're tamed by the Smiso charm.My blood runs through your veins just like yours runs in mine" he says taking my hand putting it on his chest,his scar is visible but sexy.

"I love you Nkosinathi xulu" I say tracing my finger on his chest,this right here is a sight for sore eyes.Especially when you are not used to waking up to man.

"Hayi muntu wam.If you won't say Smiso then say baba ka Ntokozo" he says nodding,Men and their egos but I wouldn't have it any other way.

"Can we be normal and not argue,just love and respect,can we enjoy being in love the right way no secrets and no storming out" he nods kissing me I know we might both not be used to such but,I need us to try and learn how to communicate.

"Manje inkonzo is part of being normal right" he asks running his hand to my vagina.

"Well of course" I can't help but giggle you know those butterflies you get,when you're inlove,when the phone rings and his name flashes,when he calls to tell you i am outside all those emotions in one are what I am feeling.

"Ngizokulobola Mazwane" he says spanking me,I get away from his hold running to the bedroom siyodlala inkonzo Manje.

.

Things have been stalker amazing I know it doesn't make sense,but Smiso calls all the time to ask tedious questions. Where I am,who am I with all those questions kubuzwa Kumina.

"Is that him" Mama asks looking at me hugging my phone.

"Yes he was just checking up on us" I say looking at my phone one more time.

"Baby don't be dependent on him too much okay " she says taking off her glasses.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"But Ma we love each other and he has been there for me through it all, I can't imagine not being with him" I say sighing.

"I am not saying don't love him okay, but love him enough not to lose yourself" I shake my head Mama doesn't understand nje." Listen all I am saying is love him enough to be able to move on matter what happens" she says giving me a smile

"Mama did Bab Zwane ever hurt you" she tilts her head and erupts into this loud laugh.

"Intoni if he ever did, you wouldn't be alive non of you would be here.Imela my baby yayazi imela" she says shaking her head.

"Hayi Ma you wouldn't hau" I say matching her level of craziness.

"Tell him to cheat and watch me kill him then myself" I laugh so loud this feels good seeing her beautiful smile and hearing her beautiful laugh.

"I missed you yaz Mama" she pulls me in for a warm hug.

"I am sorry I wasn't there for you when you needed me" she says her voice trailing off.

"It's okay Ma please don't cry,I don't want to see you upset" My own tears fall. I can't bear seeing her hurting.

"We were never supposed to lie and I was supposed to be there for you not only your father,please forgive me my baby" she says in between sobs.

"Ma I forgave now please stop" I say pulling away.

"You don't understand. I am your mother" I cut her off before she gets another attack.

"Ma please don't do this,I swear if you die on me I will never forgive you" she laughs through her tears.

"Hayi don't be dramatic" she says breathing out heaving calming down.

"I love you Dabs" I say imitating Aphiwe

"Thandwa ndim my baby" she says kissing me.

After being pampered by my mother I decide to take Siyamthanda to the park.I need to spend time with her.I take one of the SUV's and head out, someone has been tailing and when I told Smiso about it he brushed me off saying it's for my own good.

We get to the park and the place is peaceful and quiet,we run around for a while seeing my baby bear laugh is love on its own.it brings some peace of mind.

"Mama I want to go play" she says pointing at the swings.

"Not now baby let's seat down first mommy wants to look at you" she giggles wrapping her arms around me.

"I love you nana" she looks at me blinking her big black eyes.

"I love you Mommy and I love Daddy too" she says happily.

"Do you want us to call Daddy" she nods clapping her hands. I take out my phone and call Smiso.

"Babakhe" he smiles oh Lord this man is doing things to me.

"Sthandwa sa..." Siyamthanda cuts him short before he finishes.

"Baba" she pipes in giggling this child.

"Hey baby bear how are you" he asks the smile he has on his face, the love in his eyes.

"Where are you guys" he asks before Siya can answer him.

"We are at the park right mommy" she says showing him the background, yaz I don't like smart kids.

"Okay daddy loves you okay" he says blowing her a kiss.

"I love you too daddy" I take the phone and come face to face with a frowning big baby.

"I know I should have said something, but surely one of your goons told you" he forces a smile.

"Surprisingly no" He says calmly, to avoid him blowing a gasket I say my good bye and focus on my baby.

Right after my phone call the park is suddenly surrounded by bouncers wearing black hey nayimihlola, I thought this only happened in movies. An older man appears he looks familiar

and handsome I think I have seen him before. I hold Siya tight like a lioness protecting its cub.

"I won't hurt you" he says moving closer. My hands are dripping with sweat my heart has probably stopped a few times.

"Who are you" I say looking around.

"Someone who wanted to see you in person skhumbuzo Sibeko" he says extending his hand, I feel my body go cold this can't be the day I die.

"Stay away from us" I hiss like a snake under threat.

"I would never hurt you nor the little one" I almost roll my eyes, this man must be high on something strong.

"Yeah right I know what you did to khosi" I say under my breath, his eyes may be soft but I don't trust him and I can't frighten Siya, but who am I kidding she's already shaking with fear.

"All I have ever done was protect him, that woman was a snake trying to take him down that bastard child wasn't even his" he shouts, I am trying my best to stay calm but I can't. I want to go home I am also confused by what he is saying.

"What you hurt him, now you want to hurt us to get him involved in your shady dealings. I swear if you touch my baby I

will kill you" he shakes his head and tries touching Siya. I move back giving him a deadly stare.

"How can I hurt my own,if there's one thing you should know Mazwane I would never hurt my own" he says backing off, he walks away with some of the men following him, one stays behind and helps me up,what just happen how is Smiso his own.

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I have been racking my brain trying to understand what that old man was saying,but nothing comes to mind.

Maybe he meant his own because he taught him everything he knew or he could be Smiso's, I shake off that thought before I go crazy trying to figure out the impossible.

What puzzles me is that I have seen the man before,I just can't really put my mind to it.

Smiso fetched us from the park and called all on the bodyguards including his right hand man,I didn't even know he had one.

I thought I knew Smiso angry but today I saw another side to him,the inhumane show no mercy side.I watched as he barked orders with Siya in his arms and his gun on the side.At some point I thought he was going to pull it out.

It's just the three of us on this huge bed. Siya is sleeping peacefully after she refused to let go of her father. I somehow feel like I have failed Siyamthanda in so many ways, I can't stop thinking if something more had happened what was I going to do.

Smiso brushes my arm, I look up and he is staring.

"Smiso I want you to do everything is your power to protect our daughter, because I feel like I keep failing her" He shakes his head gently caressing my face.

"What did he say" he asks holding my hand.

"Nothing apparently he wanted to see me in person" he nods pulling me for hug.

"It's time I kill that bastard" he says coldly. his words are deadly but maybe necessary.

"How well do you know him" I ask looking at his face, his eyes sparkle and for a while there's silence between us.

"I hate the man, he killed my child Phiwo. I know him well because I dream about putting a bullet in his skull, I dream of making him suffer and taking everything that belongs to him" he says like it's nothing, like he has not admitted to dreaming of killing him in cold blood.

"Why do you kill" I ask still looking at his beautiful black eyes.

"Because it's who I am" he says flashing a sad smile.the way he says it there's no emotion whatsoever and here I am still loving him.

"Would you kill me if I ever betrayed you" he swallows hard and stays quiet.My heart sinks.

"I know you wouldn't betray me" he says breaking eye contact.

I decide to walk away and go start lunch Since Sthembi is no where to be found. I find Elihle down wearing shorts which Smiso hates.

"You know your brother might kill you right" I say smiling Elihle likes pushing the boundaries,She runs towards me giving me a hug.

"He won't do anything around you" she says sticking her tongue out.

"You are giving me too much credit yaz" she laughs twerking,yeah this right here will get a good hiding.

"Trust me bhuti is afraid of being the big bad monster he is in front of you" she says batting her eyes,if only she knew the side I know.

"Come help me with lunch,I need to cook for that man" she laughs clapping her hands.

"I also have man" she says while chopping some peppers.I am not shocked really Elihle is old enough to date,but her brother might think otherwise.

"Okay I wasn't expecting you to say that,but be careful with these boys okay" she nods happily oh young love.

She tells me more about her boyfriend and how the boy worships the ground she walks on.The mood becomes sour when Smiso joins us,he looks at Elihle from head to toe and clicks his tongue.This man is so dramatic.

"Go change" he says camly looking at me too. He must be joking my dress is not that short.

"But bhuti it's not that short" she says already in a pleading voice

"Elihle" he says roaring all because of a short.she looks at me then back at her brother.

"Go check up Siya and you don't have to change if you don't want" she walks away beaming.

"If you are angry for whatever reason go for a drive or smoke,don't take out your frustrations on the child" I say standing behind him resting my head on his back.

"She's not a child, where have you seen a child drinking ingudu"
I can't help but laugh.

"Then start treating her like the young adult she is, stop sheltering her like this. I think it's best we know what she is doing rather than have her sneak out and making worst mistakes, look at me the first chance I got I drank and you know the rest" He turns and faces me.

"Siya is not a mistake, I am grateful I met you that night" he says pulling me for a deep kiss.

"No shouting Smiso you will die young, so rather take out your frustrations on me" I say with the biggest grin.

"Let's get rid of Elihle and Siya" he says cupping my arse.

"And then what" I ask moving my hands to his crotch, he closes his eyes and smiles.

"Sizobhebhana till dawn and I can eat you up instead" he says biting my lower lip.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I wrap my arms around his neck and indulge on his lips, he picks me up and place me on the kitchen counter.

He undoes his belt and goes down on me pulling my undies with his teeth.

"Smiso don't what if Elihle walks on us" he chuckles and dips his tongue in and licks me.

"You taste great but I need you" he says entering me, I gasp he doesn't break eye contact as he moves inside me.he kisses me first before pounding and going so hard making me grab,scream and call his name in foreign languages, I swear I call on God and curse the same time.

"Hayi phela ngizokuyeka" he says still going in and out,I know he doesn't mean it.we both cum trembling and and catching our breath.he pulls out and I am dripping.

The kitchen smells of sex and burnt food.

"I love you Phiwokuhle Zwane" he says wiping me up using his shirt,helping me down

"I love you too Smisokuhle Nkosinathi Xulu" I say kissing him one last time before he pulls me close into his chest.I am sure Elihle is traumatised.

.

It's been months of bliss and finding myself again learning to love sex and enjoy it without having flashbacks from what happened to me.Blake says having Smiso in my life has

something to do with it,he said I shouldn't be this dependent on him though,because everything I do revolves around him and Siya,he says people who have experienced trauma behave differently

Some tend to find comfort on things and while some focus on Others that way they don't think about what happened to them,they block things out their minds create a safety net for them.they lean on stronger people than them but crash and burn when their support system disappears.

But truth be told these two people give me a reason a live and be happy,so what if I don't want to think about Sizwe all the time.I am happy and I would like to keep it that way.

I wake up to Siya kissing me and poking my eyes as usual.

"Open your eyes Mama"She says trying to open them with her fingers.

"Hayi man ngilele" I say grunting,don't ever wake someone from their sleep it's rude and painful.

"Mommy please open your eyes" she says planting a kiss on my cheek,I open them and Smiso is standing behind her with a tray.I smile my two favourite people in the world made me breakfast.

"Morning Mamakhe" he says going down on his knee. I rub my eyes just to see clearly. Siya joins him and the tray has a black slim vase with sunflowers a Pandora jewellery box and a plate of pancakes topped with berries and syrup.

"Phiwokuhle Maka Ntokozoyami Zwane I know I am not a saint but you bring out the best in me, I don't see a future without you heck I don't know how to do this" his eyes are glistening as he bites his lower lip and looks at Siya. "What I am saying is I love you guys so much, will you marry me" he finally says after I have shed a few tears, this is beautiful I am being asked for my hand by the most important people in my life.

"Yes Mama marry us" my baby says excitedly, he is not a saint, he's a killer I will forever worry about him but I love him.

"Phiwo" he says softly.

"Yes..Yes. .I will marry you" They both help me put on the ring.

"We are getting married" I scream clasping Siya in my arms, I look at my soon to be husband and see life on its own. I mouth an I love you blowing him a kiss.

"I want the real thing" he says waiting for Siya to get some love. I stand up and hug my man.

"Xulu, Ggxabhashe, Donda, Makhathini I love you" I say throwing myself in his arms.

"Uthandwa yimina" he say laughing softly.

I look at my ring again it's beautiful,I need to call my mom and Aphiwe.

We have decide to stay in bed all day long and celebrate the Xulu way,I can't seem to get enough of him.

"You have quite and appetite" he says rolling over.

"That's because you do me good" I say licking my lips.

"You are beautiful Mazwane inside and out" he says sighing.

"What's wrong" I ask with my fingers pulling his beard.

"Nothing Sthandwa Sam how do you feel about polygamy" he asks breathing heavily, I sit up straight and look him.

"I hate it with everything in me,why subject the person you claim to love to such heartache,Why would you want to make the person you claim to love doubt themselves.Why would you subject that person to sharing you" I am getting emotional all of a sudden.

"Why are you asking this" I ask blinking my tears away.

"It's nothing my love I just wanted to hear your views on the matter" he says smiling.

"Ungangigili Smiso because if you do, i swear you will never see me or Siya ever again" he frowns a bit and sits up straight.

"I love you and only you" he says smiling i can't help but smile too, I melt under this man's charm but for his sake he better not be testing my ability to kill.

Sometimes things don't really have to make sense, but that doesn't mean one shouldn't ask when things seem blurry or when you are in doubt. I was taught to stand my ground be firm and never be fazed, I was taught never to settle for less but let's face it, it's not always that simple especially when you are led by your heart. I was taught never to be the yes sir woman, I was taught to ask and voice out my opinions. See the problem with knowing what you want as a woman and being outspoken is that people find it offensive and intimidating more especially men they hate that. Phela bona they were taught that they are supposedly superior and that we should bow down to them, nonsense I tell you. My mother used to say love and respect your man but never be his slave, never be his subordinate but his equal.

I have seen young women of all walks bend over backwards to please the men in their lives, look at me and my past relationship. I just don't want to be that woman that turns a blind eye and be made a fool off.

You must be wondering what has suddenly boiled my thoughts, Smiso and his late night goings.

He has done it again tonight, I am starting to think he is a magician doing abracadabra stuff on me.

I wake up and put on his gown heading to the kitchen,I can't even drink wine the taste gets to me.The house feels cold it's a good thing Elihle took Siya with her.

I feel drowsy but the stubborn me says asilali,I hear him walk in after a while of contemplating if I should abort mission and sleep. I know it's him only he can walk in like this phela this house is a fortress.

I immediately switch the lights on,he doesn't even look fazed.He is dressed in his black suit and coat he may not be 007 but he sure makes the cut.

"Shouldn't you be asleep" he asks taking off his coat.

"Where are coming from Smiso" I ask camly still seated,He frowns looking at me.

"Don't give me that ayibuzwa indoda bull" he chuckles moving closer to me.

"Go to sleep Phiwo" he says sternly.

"It hasn't been that long since you proposed but already uyazola" I say looking at the man who asked me to be his wife.

"I am not cheating on you Mazwane"he says like that makes things okay.if I could scream at him I would but there's no tangible proof and beside,Mama said never fight for a man.

I wake up early and start breakfast, I plate up for him and start eating. Waiting for him to come down, he eventually does wearing only pants, I am drooling but just like yesterday, I can't even touch him. What was he doing yesterday who held his body while I was tossing and turning.

"Morning" he says kissing my cheek.

"Smiso" that's all I manage to say.

"Phiwo don't you believe me when I say I am not cheating on you" he asks trying to hold me.

"Please don't touch me" I say shifting. he raises his hands in surrender and moves away.

"You first asked me about this crap of taking more than one wife and lately you have been acting strange, what is going on Nkosi" he rubs his forehead and walks away.

"Is this how things are going to be

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you walking away when you can't handle the heat" he gradually turns looking at me.

"Can we talk about this later please" he says softly.

"Promise" I ask, he nods with a smile whatever has him bothered can't be good.

"I love you sthandwa sam" he says pecking my lips.

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I spend the rest of my day with Mama and Aphiwe who invited me for lunch. My mind is away it's preoccupied. Ma has been talking non stop since we got here, my

Sour mood is just dampening the day.

"Hayi Dabs" that's all I hear then laughter erupts.

"What do you think about Polygamy" I ask out of the blue, Mama almost chokes.

"Poly what" She ask violently coughing.

"Isthembu Ma" Aphiwe raises her eyebrows.

"It's a tool to strip you off your power and in slave you all in the name of love, Men use that to benefit themselves to have their cake and eat it too. whatever happens don't ever agree to share" she says sternly drinking her water.

"It's Smiso right" Aphiwe asks tilting her head..

"He wanted my opinion on the matter but lately he has been acting strange Ma" I say with tears threatening to come out, Out of all the things I am afraid of being made a fool is one of them.

"Strange how" she asks her facial expression doing the works.

"He comes home late, barely eats doesn't talk to me. I don't know what to do anymore" Mam wipes my tears.

"Come home my baby" she says holding my hand.

"Phiwo what does your heart say" Aphiwe asks facing me.

"I trust him, my love for him is stronger than anything I know" Mama shakes her head see what I meant about the heart, it can lead you astray.

"Phiwokuhle Zwane don't be that women" Mama says still holding my hand, here I have two people one saying follow your heart, while another says walk away I taught to you better than this.

I might be blowing things out of proportion and beside I am still holding on to his promise.

My phone rings and Vusi's name flashes on the screen. I ignore the call but he is persistent. that I eventually pick it up Smiso's right hand man has never called me before he forbade that, no contact with his men.

"Nkosi's been shot please come home" he says causing every muscle in my body to go numb, I knew this was coming, I knew this would happen.

I haven't said anything since we left the restaurant that's because i don't know what to say.I don't even know how to digest the news.Aphiwe offered to drive me home As much as I was livid and distant this morning,I knew something wasn't right but not this not him being shot.but who am I kidding I said yes to a former mercenary this was bound to happen anytime.

Aphiwe keeps glancing my way probably trying to figure me out.Isn't it I crack under pressure,I am too fragile to handle such stuff so they say.

"He's going to be okay" she says focused on the road ahead.

"You don't know that" I say my voice breaking but I don't allow the tears to fall.

"He is a fighter and he wouldn't leave you" she says causing me to laugh,death knows no boundaries it has no friends and like a thief it comes unexpectedly.

"You don't understand,you haven't lost anything Aphiwe but I have and if I lose him then that's it" she shakes her head vigorously,I don't know why because Smiso is my pillar of strength my well of life.

"Don't say that you have Siya and us" she says trying to reason with me,I automatically smile at the mention of Siyamthanda's

name but I wouldn't subject my baby to the pain of having a broken parent.

"You of all people know that he is my heart,I have never seen half a heart beat" her eyes widen I may not be making sense to her but that's how I feel,I even cringe at the thought of losing him.

"Phiwo even half a heart can be moulded and nurtured to love again given the chance" She says her eyes glistening.

If she wasn't driving I would give her a tight hug,she is one of those lean on me I am strong people,but even the strongest of people need to be asked how they are.

We finally reach the house and there are no police nor medics in sight,I am literally holding my breath what if it's too late.

Vusi comes outside to meet us,I can't even bring myself to look at him with fear of meeting his eyes,there is something about the eyes they tell a story.the windows to one's soul.

"He's upstairs sleeping" Vusi says calmly no emotion whatsoever.

"You go I will stay behind" Aphiwe says letting go of my hand,I walk with my heart beating louder than a drum and my palms sweating.

I open the door and find him laying face up with his shoulder supported by a pillow. Tears sting my eyes as I watch closely his chest rising up and down.

I move closer and snuggle against him, tears pour profusely relief washing over me.

"I am sorry Mzwane" he says bringing his free arm over me. I try talking but choke on my tears. I want to tell him I love him that I don't want to lose him but my voice fails me. I want to fight him off and scold him like a child but I can't.

"Musa ukukhala" he says hushing me down.

"Smiso what happened" I ask wiping my tears I am a mess.

"Nothing" he says breathing heavily. I don't have the energy to ask tedious, fruitless questions if he won't answer me then fine.

I cling on to him for dear life, I hate him for putting through this but I love him more for not dying on me.

It's been two days and the tension between us is so thick and toxic. I can't stand him one moment I want to chop his head off and the next I want to make love to him. He is such a toe nail of Satan because he is enjoying every moment of this.

My scrumptious greasy breakfast is disturbed by Vusi walking in like he owns the places. He has beautiful big sunflowers.

"These are for you" he says placing them on the kitchen counter.

"Thank you" I say gushing over the flowers.

"Makhathini bought them" he says but that goes in one ear and comes out the next ear.

"Please sit there's more than enough food" he hasitates but joins me. I look at him properly this man is handsome with his thick brows and small eyes.

"Thank you" he says digging in freely.

"Vusi do you have a girlfriend" I ask with a smile plastered on my face.

"Ungenephi lapho" Smiso's voice says startling me.

"Thank you for the food" Vusi says standing up and walking away.

"Uyabona wenzeni" I say on the verge of tears. he looks dumbfounded.

"Why would you ask Vusi about his personal life" he asks frowning.

"Because I care now move out of my way" I say pushing him aside.

"Phiwo what's is wrong with you" he asks following me.

"Nywats wrong nywats wrong that's all you know stay away from me" I say shutting the door on his face.

I have been walking on egg shells ever since I got shot, There is nothing I haven't done in the name of apologising to her but she is not having it.

She is forever crying I am starting to think things are getting too much for her.

I know me being shot has played a huge role, which is why I can't bring myself to tell her the truth.

I can't break her heart like that, how do I tell her that I am supposed to marry khosi's sister that I never stopped being a hired gun, and all these nights I have been taking lives like I am God.

God knows I tried too many times to tell her but I just couldn't, She's my whole life wrapped in one.

I am staring at her paging through the Cosmopolitan magazine with her legs resting on the couch. She is beautiful her I can't get enough of her.

"Sthandwa sami" she looks up ready to eat me alive.

"Baba ka Ntokozo" she says raising her eye brows, I swallow hard this might backfire.

"I love you" I say honestly, her eyes soften and she smiles.

"I love you too" she says pouting her lips,I lean closer and peck them.

"Promise you won't leave me no matter what" I say crouching next to her.

"I can't make a promise because promise are meant to be broken" she says smiling man this women is beautiful.

"Then tell me you won't leave me" she shakes her head.

"If your love hurts I want to be able to walk away,if your love betrays me then I want to be able to run and never look back but if your love stays true then I would never leave you" she says pulling me closer for a kiss.

"I don't deserve you Mazwane" I say shaking my head.

"Wenzeni Smiso" she asks taking my hands into hers.

I don't know what's wrong with me I haven't been feeling well these past few days, which is strange my moods change like a roller coaster, And I have long given up on trying to get answers out of Smiso, I just told myself if he can't trust me enough to share his secrets then maybe what we are building is not that important, maybe my love and support is not enough for him to let me in.

Lately all he does is just look at me, well that's me putting it lightly he stares and when I ask why, he just brushes me off telling he is admiring my beautiful. I won't lie I am starting to think what Blake said together with my mom is true and that scares the shit out of me.

I don't want to be one of those women that drown in pain and perish because they couldn't handle losing someone, don't get me wrong I am not saying I want to die but death seems to be a far more better option than to watch the person you love walk away. In death you won't feel pain, you won't lose your mind nor will you have what ifs, it is said that one doesn't feel anything when dead even maggots get to eat away at your flesh and you feel nothing because your soul has detached from body. I believe that even the love you once felt perishes and maybe that's what I want to feel right this moment, nothing yes want to feel nothing for this man.

I walk out the shower and find him on the edge of the bed,he is playing Eweni by Sjava this has become my daily bread and I am starting to get used to it,if it's not Sjava then it's Maskandi.

He doesn't even lift up his head you can tell he is in deep thought,I wonder if I am part of his thoughts do I gatecrash or bombard his mind heavily that he has no choice but to think of me and only me.

I drop the towel freely lotioning my body,I wear my short black dress and my favourite black and white Nike sneakers. I tie my afro up and do my make-up.

"I am going out for lunch see when I get back" he looks up and his eyes are blood shot red

"Noba" he asks still in that position.

"Ngishilo nje I am going out to lunch" he grabs me by my hand pulling me to him.

"Manqoba is taking me out to lunch do you have a problem with that" he looks defeated by my answer and let's go of my hand.

"I love you" he says kissing my hand.

"I love you too" he nods,no matter how angry I am I love him and I could never say otherwise.

I drive all the way to Daveyton passing by those women who sell on the side of the road, I get myself umhlabathi (soil) my mouth waters before I even take a bite. I put it in my bag and continue with my drive.

I get to Pule's chesa nyama and find Manqoba already drinking and there's food on the table.

"Hey bhuti" he gives me one tight hug and spins me around.

"Hey sunshine" he says pulling away. We both sit and I immediately start digging in, I start realising these sounds.

"Are you having food orgasm sies Phiwo" he says pulling the plate, I can't believe I have been missing out the meat tastes amazing.

"What it really tastes good" he laughs shaking his head.

"Are you okay my baby ka Ma" he asks wiping his hands. My brother has always known when something is bugging me.

"I don't know Bhuti I really don't know" he moves where where is sitting and comes over to my side.

"What's wrong talk to me" he says cupping my face.

"Smiso bhuti he's hiding something from me" he raises his eye brows but he doesn't look suprised.

"Phiwo you will not cry or stress over a man okay, you have been through enough already" he says sternly.

"What If he wants to leave me but he is afraid to tell me, what if he made a mistake by proposing me" he shakes his head.

"You won't be the first one to be left by a man Phiwo, Mama ukukhuzile ngalododi wakho of using Makhathini as a crutch now look what its doing to you" he says not mincing his words.

"But bhuti I love him nje" I say in my defence.

"Yah mthande but ubuye nganeno, there's more to life than him, trust me when I say even if he leaves you tomorrow you will still wake up hurting but you won't die. I have seen what Sizwe did to you and I don't want you to fight a losing battle by staying with someone who no longer values you. if it happens I don't want you to fight it and remember we will always be here for you. I would deal with him but I respect him too much to mind my own business. I love you ngane ka baba" he says wiping my tears, I needed to hear that.

"I love you too bhutwami" he pulls my cheeks smiling, I take out my stash and take a few bite before he snatches it off my hands.

"Hayi hayi not on my watch" he says stomping on it, I feel my heart break in pieces. Tears fall I don't know where they come

from but hey thar was quicker,he looks shocked and pulls me closer.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Askies hau I will buy you a truckload of that poison thula ke" he says hushing me down.

"I want it now" I say protesting like a child.

"Shuu ungifakela amehlo abantu" he says stifling his laugh.

"Ngizomtshela ubaba" he pulls away gently pushing me off and laughs so loud,I know that sounded childish but he's the one who started hau.

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Elokufa alibiki my mother always uses that phrase and it never gets tired.I tried calling Phiwo so she could get home quickly but she is not answering her bloody phone,I had her followed I know she was with her big brother.

Khosi's family showed up announced and that pissed me off,I can handle business I know my way through negotiations,I can take on any man toe to toe and come out on top. But I can't

handle my love life things get complicated when it comes to love and I am clueless. I love Phiwokuhle and I hate the fact that my father wants me to marry Khosi's sister.

We are all in the lounge Cebile is in between her mother and aunt, my parents are also here I can't believe fate is playing me like this.

"Baba please put a stop to this ngyacela Gxabhashe omuhle" my mother pleads.

"It's out of my hands you know Smiso was supposed to take her when Khosi died" my father says, he is really not a man of many words when Khosi died her family decided to give Cebile to our family so she could take her sister's place and bear me son's, I never agreed to that because I had always known that my heart belonged to another woman. Her family has always been money driven and I suspect that's still the case now.

Phiwo walks with a few plastic bags on hand, her looks happy but her smile fades when she sees everyone.

"Oh sanibona bantu abadala" she says respectfully casting her eyes down.

"Who are you" Cebile asks, I look at her and she shuts her big mouth.

"Hello my baby" Ma says standing up to give her a hug.

"Smiso what's going on" she asks in a panic. I stand up moving closer to her and my mother.

"I tried calling you but I couldn't get aho..." she cuts me short.

"Who are these people Makhathini" she asks looking at these women.

"Yey this is my son in law and this is his wife" Khosi's my mother says with a smirk on her face.

"Ini" she asks blinking.

"Sthandwa I can explain" I say trying to hold her.

"Don't touch me" she says slapping me, upon realising what she just did she covers her mouth using the same hand.

"Phiwo please calm down" Ma says holding her.

"You can't just hit my husband wena" Cebile says already on her feet.

"How could you do this to me huh, how could you baba ka Ntokozo, Ngiphendule" she shouts tears falling while Cebile and her mother find it amusing. I ask them to excuse us but my mother refuses to go.

"I was going to tell you, I promise but I just couldn't find the right time" she keeps pushing me away almost stumbling.

"Why did you propose why did you let me love you knowing someone was promised to you huh" she asks while hitting my chest,I hold her hands but she roughly pulls away.

"Mazwane calm down please" she shakes her head sobbing and takes off her ring.

"Mazwane don't do this to me, Ma talk to her" I say through gritted Teeth.

"You did this your love betrayed me Makhathini" she says holding on to my mother crying painfully,I knew she would hurt but not this much.

She walks away with my mother's help my own mother helping the love of my life walk away from me.

"I love you Phiwo" I say repeatedly and nothing,she says nothing.

"Ma" I call out.

"I love you mtanami so much but I also love Phiwokuhle,you did this to her she's breaking and it's all on you" she says each word slicing me.

I watched her take off her ring and leave, I watched the women I want to spend the rest of my life leave me. If it wasn't for my father I would have kicked out these women faster than a striking lightning.

I made a mistake I know I should have kept my distance from Cebile, but I didn't and her mother has been shoving her down my throat. I am a cultural man and I believe that if you have wronged a family then you do right by them, but I can't hurt Phiwo this madness has to end.

Baba joins me in the patio, he looks worried well so am I. Phiwo's father won't want anything to do with us when he learns of my infidelity and her mother probably hates me right now.

"Baba please forgive me" he pulls me in for a hug something he never does.

"It's not your fault, your mother loves Phiwo like her own daughter and she will do anything to protect her" my eyes widen what is baba trying to say.

"Even from me her own Son" I ask frowning.

"You are the cause of her Pain Nkosinathi, you slept with that Cebile girl took her virginity and now you have to man up, couldn't you keep it in your pants" he asks almost angrily, I

move away from him he might just punch me like he did when I told him about Cebile.

"Baba that was a mistake, she never told me she hadn't been touched" he looks and stares making me swallow hard.

"Nkosinathi I am warning you fix this yangizwa fix this" he says sternly then walks back inside the house.

I take out my phone and call Manqoba he is the only one who understands my situation, I mean the guy always has women issues.

"Bafo"

"Ey Bafo things are really bad" I say breathing heavily.

"I know I was with her yesterday and she came home looking like a zombie" he says on the other end.

"Was she crying"

"No she looked more broke than hurt" he says sighing.

"Bafo I tried paying her off but they are dead set on me marrying her" I say suppressing my anger.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Then deal with them the Donda way surely that will scare them" I laugh at how he puts it but I have enough blood on my hands.

"Don't worry Bafo I will fix this"

"If you don't you will lose Phiwo forever,whatever sinking whole she's sinking into she won't come back anytime soon" he says, his tone is warning.

I felt sorry for Khosi's family at first that I was even willing to take Cebile despite the fact that I don't love her,I said to myself I ruined her it's only fair I do as per her family wants.But now they are getting too big for their boots.as cold as it sounds promises are meant to be broken and they have to swallow the bitter truth.

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I somehow did this to myself,in fact I am the one who hurt me, in way I played a role in this whole situation. I loved to hard that I forgot that love can be traitorous.

Betrayal is sweet and tender when served by the hands that hold you,It is sweet when served by the lips that kiss away the pain,but it is deadly when served by the heart that claims to love you.

I cried all night in my mother's arms even though I didn't want her, I just needed my father I wanted him to tell me he would fix everything.

Smiso's mother told me everything, and the fact that her Son kept quiet really hurts I mean he owed me that much the truth.

Mama walks in with a tray of food, the smell makes me sick, I feel the urge to throw up I don't even make it to the bathroom I spill everything on the floor. Mama brush my back and helps me removing my pyjama top.

"I will get you some water" she says walking out I really feel sick, she comes back giving me water she cleans my mess.

"When last did you see your period" she asks settling next to me.

"I don't know I was supposed go but" she nods her head slowly.

"I think you are pregnant Phiwo in fact I know you are pregnant" she says with a smile I can't believe she's smiling.

"No you are mistaken, I can't be pregnant it's not fair" I say whispering I can't be pregnant.

"There's one way to find out ke" she says walking out, she comes back with two pregnancy test boxes.

I pee on each one holding my breath. Everything is just spinning out of control, We wait anxiously a part of me doesn't want to be pregnant.

Mama stands up to check the tests and both show positive.

"Oh my baby ndizakuba ngumakhulu" she says clasping me into her arms. I push her away.

"No Ma there is no child that thing of yours is wrong" I say fighting tears she looks shocked, I refuse to believe I am carrying a child that might not make it. I can't go through another loss I just can't.

I have been postponing the issue regarding my supposed pregnancy. I also have been avoiding hurricane Zee, that woman is on a mission to prove that I am pregnant, as if she doesn't understand my predicament and fears. Smiso's Mother has been understanding throughout this whole ordeal, and my first love Bab Zwane he is the only person I can handle having in my precious space, Mama says the baby is making me love Baba more than her which is not fair in her books. As if anything is fair in this life thing, I was happy not so long ago but look at me now I might be pregnant again oh and out of wedlock.

My bedroom door opens and Mama walks in, She's dressed in her cream white dress looking beautiful a true queen.

"Are you going somewhere Ma" she smiles settling next to me.

"We are going to the doctor" she says with a serious tone, this woman is full of drama so early in the morning.

"I can't I have a session with Blake" my voice coming out defensive, I need to offload and well that's what Blake gets paid for to listen.

"I wasn't asking you Phiwo" her voice now sounds sternly. I pick myself up and start getting ready, I wear my track suits and tie my hair up. Mama is just focused on me that her eyes haven't even blinked.

"Have you told Dad" she tilts her head and laughs softly.

"Hayi mtanami, you will tell your father once you are ready kaloku" her words aren't harsh but I sulk anyway.

"Mama I don't want to be pregnant" I say truthfully, she pulls me into her arms and allows me to stay there.

"Ndikhona nje mna, I won't leave you" she says pulling away her face is riddled with a sad smile.

"I love you Ma" she nods still wearing that sad smile, I know things are going to be hard but I have her.

"I love you too and remember nothing may be constant in this world, but my love is and will always be" she kisses me pulling my cheeks.

The drive to the hospital is quiet, Mama called Smiso's mother to meet us there. I think I want to deal with Khaya, I somehow believe a familiar face might ease things up for me. We finally reach the hospital and the the two ladies are overly excited, I don't blame them though a baby is a gift, it things light into the darkest of lives and brings warmth into the coldest of homes.

That's what my mother is hoping for, that this baby will bring light into my life.

I have been biting my lips waiting for Khaya to confirm my fate, tears are already on the verge of coming out that's how hard this is for me. She walks in looking handsome as ever or is it beautiful, Point is Khaya looks delicious I have this image of her kissing the day lights off me. I must have been staring because she clears her throat and Mama brushes me arm.

"And what do they say" She forces a smile and looks at the two women next to me.

"Khaya athini ama results" I ask in a panic, she can't just stand there and say nothing.

"You are six weeks pregnant" she says her eyes are sparkling, tears trickle from my face when reality kicks in I am really pregnant with a baby.

"But you said I wouldn't have babies anymore" my voice is inaudible.

"God works in mysterious ways Phiwo" Ma says and I almost want to snap, but hold myself I can't run my mouth in front of Smiso's Mother.

"It's still the same thing you can't carry a child full term, because of the intensity of your womb scarring there's a fifty percent chance the baby won't make it past it past this trimester" these words shatter my heart, I can't believe God just played this trick on me who does that.

"You can abort if you want it's your decision" I hear gasp coming from the two ladies, but Khaya is a doctor such things are expected to come out her mouth. "think you should also consider the fifty percent chance of survival, what I mean is think this through, process the news first then decide" she says holding my hand.

26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I can't even scream I don't want to look weak, So I do what I know best wear my big girl panties.

"Can we hear the heart beat" Smiso's mom pleads, I nod at least let me grant them this before I decide.

This woman is holding my hand tightly with tears in her eyes, Ma is praying to the same God that can't give me a break. The mood is just sombre and I am numb completely emotionless my mind has drifted so far, I hear my mama give thanks and kiss my forehead.

"It's a strong one" Khaya says, I blink a few times and the most beautiful sound hits me. Everything disappears and that's all I hear my baby's heartbeat.

I rushed out of that hospital not knowing where to turn too, I ended up in Blake's office crying my eyes out, I was a sobbing mess when I burst into his office.

"Are you ready to talk now" he asks, after I have gulped down half a glass of water.

"Blake I am pregnant" he frowns probably because of the way I look.

"That's is great news, you should be happy" he says with a huge smile.

"Not if I am going to lose my baby" I shake my head so hard.

"Why don't you allow yourself to walk through this journey with hope, give the baby a fighting chance" he says positively well that's his job to be positive and criticise cautiously.

"I had two babies in me and I lost them without knowing, I lost them not because I didn't want them Sizwe robbed me of them. And now he's robbing me again do you get that, I can't feel that pain again I just can't I shouldn't have stayed with him. I killed my babies just as much as he did" Sobs ripple through me, Blake stands up and pulls me into his arms.

"Phiwo the first step is forgiving yourself for staying in that abusive relationship. Forgive Sizwe for what he did don't allow your anger and fear to rob you of such an amazing experience" he says sounding more emphatic.

"Tell me what to do" I pull away looking into his eyes for answers.

"I can't tell you what to do, but there's one thing you shouldn't allow, fear to cripple you and anger to control you. Phiwo you have come too far too succumb now" he says blinking his tears away, I have come a long way with this man.

"I will see you on our next appointment a scheduled one" he gives me a smile but still I have that void inside me. He offers to drive me home but I ask him to drop me off at the nearest coffee shop.

It raining cats and dogs by the time we get there, I used to believe that rain washes away our sins and brings blessings, but then again that was the old me. No amount of rain can turn tears into joy, nor can it wash away guilt.

The smell of coffee beans keeps me calm. I have the biggest slice of chocolate cake in front of me, and still the pleasure of its moist doesn't make me feel whole.

"Penny for your thoughts" I look up and the park man is standing before me, my day keeps getting better and better.

"Is it my d-day" I ask laughing, you know when you're hurting anything happens.

"What's wrong Mazwane" he sounds sincere and his eyes hold so much warmth.

"Why do care so much" he smiles, you know what they say about black not cracking.

"Tell me what you want and I will make it happen" he says in a more chilling tone.

"No money in the world can fix this" my lips tremble together with my hands,I almost drop the coffee mug in my hand.

Mr Sibeko holds my hand taking the cup and putting it down.I look at this man who has opened his arms and allowed me to cry on his chest ruining his perfect suit. I want to tell him to eliminate Cebile for good just like he did with Khosi.But that would be vicious of me,I can't blame her for wanting Makhathini but I blame him for hurting me.

I pull away not because I want to,but because of the sudden aura change in the room.My eyes dart to the side and land on Smiso.

I watch him charge towards our, well my table because this man just invited himself. he pulls me by my arm giving Mr Sibeko, who was ready to pounce on him a deadly eye. I can't believe Smiso is acting like a jealous school boy in front of people. "Mind your own business old man" he says through gritted teeth he looks livid scarring the life out of me. Mr Sibeko raises his hands in a form of surrender backing away. I don't even fight Smiso that would just attract more eyes our way. I am one of those people who hate drawing attention to themselves. I don't get why he can't be civil, this is one of those "I can explain" situation given the chance to talk of course. He pulls me by my arm leading me outside, I wanted his touch but not in this form. It's still raining but that doesn't bother him because he shakes me up. I don't get why he would do this he knows my sentiments when it comes to rain. Luckily there's no thunder or lightning in sight.

"Ngifuna uwasheke lobufebe obukuphetha" he says angrily, I can't even keep my eyes open because of the rain. I let it be and become one with rain, as it pours on me freely. If only I was like a seed that would grow after being watered. Then I would gladly appreciate standing here.

"I can't believe you,one fight with me and you find comfort in another man an older at that" he shouts,I don't understand why some people think everything is about them.

"Not everything is about you Nkosinathi,You just can't shout at me" I say my voice matching his.

"I said I was sorry. I apologised nje sthandwa sam what more can I do" he asks moving closer to me.

"You don't get to comfort me,you are the cause of my pain" he backs away. he better not touch me,not after he stood there and watched me get drenched.

"Phiwo I love you,please don't do this to us.I can't live without you please don't make me do it" he says breaking down painful,I really want to hold him tight and take away whatever pain he is feeling.

"Your love is not enough" I say,these words sound foreign yet they come from my mouth.Hard to admit but it's the truth.

"I need to find myself,I need to be at peace.I need to find me without you" he shakes his head biting his lower lip.

"You can still do that with me by your side,I promise I will fix things" he says moving closer once more,I am tired and cold I can't even feel my toes.I wonder if the rain will affect my baby or not, he gently pulls me into his arms leading me to his car.Turns on the heater and drives off,I turn my focus outside

the window you would swear it wasn't raining just now. The sun breaks through the clouds shining bright, and there's a rainbow.

"Uthingo lwenkosazane" he says also peaking, I remember seeing the rainbow the morning I did the walk of shame. And the day Siya was born.

Maybe there's some significance to this whole day, that even in the darkest of situations there is light at the end of the tunnel.

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We drive quietly, I am puzzled as to how I even agreed to go with him, he drives all the way to his house. It's only when he kills the engine that I realise we are park outside, he comes to my side and lifts me up. I rest my head on his chest, this used to be home I would sleep here and everything would make sense, don't get me wrong it still does but it hurts. I hold him tight like I will never have another chance.

The door opens and Cecile appears, I lift my head looking at Smiso who has his jaw clenched. "I will explain later" he says looking at me then walks past her. The energy to ask questions has left me, all I need is food and a warm bath. He takes me to his bedroom. Runs me a bath and comes back to help me out of my clothes, we both end up in the tub.

"I am sorry Phiwo" he says kissing the top part of my head. That's the problem with people believing that sorry fixes everything, well it doesn't it only serves as a temporary tool to soothe the pain. Only to have that tool hammer you once again.

"Stop apologising and fix things, I am angry because you lied and kept the truth to yourself, I am angry you made me a fool. I am angry because I want to get away from you but everything in me keeps pulling me to you. I am angry because I love you so much that it hurts being away from you" I am in tears and he has his arms wrapped around me. "I want you to let me go, and if this is meant to be then we will find our way" he doesn't say anything but I can hear him chocking. "All I ever wanted was the truth and nothing more"

"I am far from perfect, but trust me when I say I love you more than anything. The night I got shot I was hired to take someone out but things went south" I feel my heart race, I try moving but he tightens his hold. "All those late night I wasn't cheating on you, I ..I ." He can't even say it I stayed with him because I thought he left his old life behind. "I was out on business and I didn't want tell you because, I didn't want you to look at me as a monster" he finally says, I don't want my children growing up knowing that their father is a killer.

0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"You need to choose us or your side business" I say getting out the tub, Smiso

has all the money in the world it's time he got his priorities right. He follows behind, I try putting on his t-shirt but he stops me.

"I just want us to cuddle, I won't do anything just to hold you " I nod hoping he doesn't spot anything amiss. He gets in also naked, the heat in this bed is too much for me, my hand keeps landing on his erected shaft. If it was any other day I would be on top riding him like my life depended on it. I love how my body reacts to his touch and how I still get all nervous around him. I want him to slide in so bad and make me forget even if it's just for a little while, but the man is dead set on holding me tight.

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I wake up because of my grumbling stomach, I try entangling myself from Smiso but wake him up in the process.

"What's wrong" he rubs his eyes, just like Siya does.

"Nothing I just need food" he looks surprised, probably because of the odd hours.

"I can make you something" he says standing up, Lord take me now this man is a beast.

"I want Manny's mac and cheese with bacon and their ribs" his eyes widen. But he gets dressed none the less.

"Anything else" he asks taking his keys.

"Pass by McDonald and please get a Mcflurry" he looks skeptical but nods,he moves closer leaning for a kiss on the cheek. I walk him out wearing his robe only because I want water.

Cebile joins me in the kitchen,I had totaly forgotten she's here,she's really beautiful that I have to give her.

"I have heard about you Jozi girls and the lack of respect,you are even wearing his gown" she says loudly,her voice annoys me.

"Didn't they teach you how to greet where you come from" she looks taken aback but quickly gets back in character.

"Lalela ke nonkroyi that is my soon to be husband,take your fat ass out of this house" she says clicking her tongue.

"Listen I don't want to fight with you,so please save your low class insults for someone else" I stand up and attempt to walk away only to fall.

"Yah yilokuthanda amadoda abantu" she says laughing,I try standing up but the pain shoots again it's not severe but I don't want to risk it.

"Please call Smiso" she folds her arms tapping her foot.

"Cebile call Smiso now" it's only now when i scream and she moves panicking.

"He's not answering" she says in a panicked voice,fear creeps in I start sweating all over.khaya's words repeatedly play in my mind fifty percent,I hold my belly and cry. It's too soon I still have to tell Smiso about the baby.

"Can you drive" I ask. She has her hands over her head shaking it,great she can't drive. "Okay get my phone please" poor girl rushes to Smiso's bedroom.

The door opens and by God's grace,Smiso walks in the cry baby in me unleashes.

"I am so sorry" I rumble. He rushes to me dumbfounded and caresses my cheek.

"Baby what's wrong,why are you on the floor" he asks looking around.

"I need to see a doctor" my words are inuadible but he nods carefully lifting me up.

The drive to the hospital is hurried, Smiso is swearing and shouting at other drivers. I don't know how many red lights he has passed with no care. I stopped crying the moment I heard the car screeching, now I fear for my life.

"Smiso you are going to kill us, please slow down" he completely ignores me and presses hard.

"Kubuhlungu kuphi" he asks. That's the only question he has been asking since we left the house, and I can't seem to tell him the exact truth.

"Talk to me Phiwo" he pleads, luckily we arrive at the hospital and that saves me. He comes to my side and carefully lifts me up.

Barking orders as usual, I am quickly attended to with Khaya being paged. The nurses walk Smiso out protesting and all.

"Khaya what's wrong with my baby" I ask holding my breath with fear of breaking down. She looks at me then at the machine.

"I told you about the chances concerning the baby, But luckily everything is okay for now" she says looking back at me, I wish she could just shut her mouth and keep her learned opinion to herself. "You only experienced spotting which is common in such cases" she says then clears her throat. "You

still want to keep it even after what just happened" I think she sees the shock on my face because her eyes start moving around.

"Phuma" I calmly say, I can't believe she wants me to kill my baby.

"Phiwo I didn't mean it that way, I am just looking out for you" I cut her short raising my hand up.

"I said I get out" she nods walking out.

It's been two days and I am tied up to tubes and what not, everything in here is beeping. I was told to keep calm and breathe, but how can I do all that when I do not know if my baby is going to be okay. I haven't told Smiso anything I don't want to get his hopes up. It may sound selfish but I don't want to jinx things, call me superstitious or not it doesn't matter. A part of me believes that if a lot of people know then the odds will definitely be against my baby. People have all sorts of bad energy and harmful wishes.

Baba moved me to another hospital, he was hurt that I didn't tell him about the pregnancy, but I was caught up in my own thoughts and mess that nothing mattered. I even considered termination because Khaya thinks "medically" that makes sense.

Baba made sure that things are kept on the low, even Smiso has been kept in the dark and this is his baby.

Doctor Khan walks in followed by my Dad.

"Hey sunshine" he kisses my forehead then holds my hand.

"Baba why am I still here" I ask, I really miss my baby bear so much.

"I was just keeping you for observations, Your high blood pressure was high. We had to monitor your heart rate and that of the baby" Doctor Khan says smiling freely.

"Will my baby make it" I ask swallowing hard.

"Anything is possible. You need to be monitored regularly though, stay away from stressful things and don't overthink. It will be a bumpy road with a lot of complications for you and the baby" he says. his voice sounds sympathetic. Baba tightens his grip on my hand, this is his way of assuring me that everything is going to okay. Doctor Khan leaves after giving me a list of things I have to do when I leave this place. I am now left with Baba who sits next to me.

"I love you Zinyo bulala" he says blinking away tears.

"I love you too grandpa bear" he stops smiling and that worries me.

"Phiwo when are you going to tell the poor boy about this baby" I try moving but it's proving to be difficult.

"Baba how do I tell him that we might lose this child,I would understand if it was caused by something else but it's was caused by a man" he breaks down before I do.

"Baba please don't cry, i don't hate all men,I hate only one and he is dead" I don't like seeing him hurt,it's never a great feeling to see someone you love hurting.

"Phiwo don't be selfish,tell the boy and let him deal with this on his own term. Don't deny him the chance to be by your side" what Baba is saying makes sense I can't hide a whole pregnancy forever and that would cause a rift between us.

"Baba what have done to deserve this,I given on up hope and God nothing makes sense" he shakes his head using his thumb to wipe my tears.

"Even the friendliest and most kindest of people are dealt their own heartache. If not you then who" he asks.

"But I don't want it to be me" it sounds selfish,but I need a break I need someone else to feel this pain other than me.

"Medicine has evolved and technology has improved this baby will make it okay,I pay Khan a lot of money to take care of you and the little champ" he pauses and brushes back my hair. "I

am your father and I know best tell Donda the truth" we both look up at the sound of someone clearing their throat.

Smiso is leaning against the door his hand on his pockets,he's wearing dark blue fitting jeans and a white t-shirt.

"Sawbona Baba" he addresses my father respectfully and looks and me."I didn't know you had any visitors,I will come back" he attempts walking but Baba stops him.

"It's okay ndodana,I was already leaving" he can't really hug me because of these things,so he kisses my forehead instead.

"I love you mtanami" he whispers.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"I love you too Baba" I whisper back not wanting to let go of his hand.

If only I wasn't tied up or tired I would be all over this man,his black eyes are penetrating my soul breathing life into me. It feels like I am sinking into an ocean of his love. I feel like a stolen book subjected to his eyes only,traced by his fingers because of its delicacy. A stolen book read by him and only him,stolen but protected at all cost a book he can't afford to give back or lose because he won't find another one like it.He moves closer to me,he doesn't look like the Smiso I know and that worries me something I shouldn't be doing.

"Hey"

"Hey how are feeling" he asks not even sure what he's asking,he hesitates holding me and decides against it.

"I am okay,I am getting out tomorrow" he smiles holding my hand.

"Siya misses you,she can't understand why you constantly have to come here" that breaks my heart,I know Smiso can't answer all these questions all by himself. "Enough about us what did the doctor say,what's wrong" he looks ready to break.

"Nothing is wrong,I am pregnant" he nods cautioning me to go on but I can't.

"Did we lose the baby" he softly asks clenching his jaw and tightening his hold on me.

"No..no he's still alive but the doctors say he might not make it,Smiso we might lose our baby" he shakes his head and holds me close.

"Why didn't you tell me" the question I have been dreading.

"I am sorry" his eyes are teary,I tell him everything carefully studying his face.I have seen different emotions take over him and rightfully so.he holds both my hands and asks me to close my eyes.Smiso doesn't really believe he once said to me "pray to your God" I am puzzled but touched by his gesture.

"I know I am not worthy of your love nor forgiveness, but I humble myself and ask that you protect my son and his mother. I have sinned but let not my sins fall upon my children, heavenly father I am just a man and you are greater hear my prayer Amen" he opens his eyes coming in contact with mine. his black eyes are more beautiful when glazed with tears.

"I am going to be a father" he softly laughs and pauses like everything is sinking in. "You are giving me a son Phiwo, my own son. Everything is going to okay" he kisses me, I can't believe I just made this old baby cry again.

"We are not going to lose this baby okay" he says sternly if only it was that simple.

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It's been a day since I got back from the hospital, the news haven't sunk that well to Smiso. He is finding it difficult to accept doctors opinions.

I am driving to his parents house, I just want to see my baby. I know driving is banned but everyone is busy, and I couldn't call an uber it feels impersonal seeing that I am fetching Siyamthanda. I drive in and there's another car driving out, the windows are opened and I swear I see Skhumbuzo. I blink a few times and the car is long gone.

This house is beautiful,I kill the engine and walk inside finding his father,Eihle and Siya.

"Mommy" she drops everything and runs to me,I lift her up squeezing her tight.

"Hey baby bear" I say kissing her all over.

"Mama I missed you" she says with her hands wrapped around my neck.

"I missed you too" he tilts her head and giggles.

"How much" she asks folding her arms.

"This much" I say, stretching my arms wide, she throws herself in my arms giggling.

"Makoti" Bab Xulu says with a broad smile,I don't know if I respect or fear the man,I am yet to decide.

"Yebo Baba" he gives me a hug and pulls away.

"Baba i came to fetch Siya,I hope you don't mind" he shakes his head.

"Not at all Makoti,I will tell Mangubo you passed by" he politely says, I nod as Siya says her goodbyes and clears her stuff.I plan on spoiling my baby,whatever she wants she's getting.

I play some freshly ground songs, while Siya chats my ear away, this I did not miss at all.

"Bear slow down" her eyes are too big for my liking, this happens when she's excited about something.

"Mama you have to see the baby" she's says once again.

"What baby" I ask frowning.

"The baby at Gogo and Mkhulu's house, I played with it" she says clapping her hands together I didn't see a baby nje, Siya can be dramatic like her grandmother she probably means one of those human lookalike dolls.

If there was ever a time where I doubted God then ngiyaxolisa. I remember that butch telling me Phiwokuhle would never be able to carry a child due the severe damage of tissue. I don't know, but I saw something sinister in her eyes, relief and satisfaction as opposed to pain on behalf of her friend. While she silently rejoiced in our misery, I was in pain, gutted my heart broke on my behalf. I have always wanted to more kids and knowing Phiwokuhle wouldn't be able to fulfil that tore me. A very selfish part of me was glad that Cebile's family brought her, then she could be the perfect candidate to bear me kids. No love needed she would get all she ever wanted and I would children. But upon seeing Phiwo cry because of me, I knew I was the devil for even considering Cebile as more than just a money hungry pest. Sometimes things are not mapped out, that's how life works we navigate through it with hopes of getting it right the first time, or is it the second.

I uncuff Sthembi, each hand was cuffed to her ankle, her wrists are bruised but she doesn't look bothered.

"That was epic" she says seductively locking her lips, her sways her hips towards me. She has a beautiful body, less dramatic but she's not for me. A temporary hard, rough fuck yes. Her attempts to have me fuck her finally paid off, Not that I am proud I want to do all these things with Phiwo, I want to

explore her body in ways she never imagined. I am just afraid she might have a set back, that my hunger might trigger the past painful events she went through. I can't lose her not now when she's carrying our Son, I still can't wrap my brain around the fact that she's carrying a whole baby. Her hands land on my chest, I gently push her away.

"I don't like repeating myself" I say.

"I know but Nkosi please give me a chance" I knew this would end badly, you give someone a taste of your mine shaft and they want the whole gold.

"Sthembi don't make me a bad person, I told you the rules, either you abide by the or move on your choice" I say calmly as I can.

"Ngyaxolisa Makhathini" she says casting her eyes to the floor, I cup her chin making her face me. Only Phiwo can call my clan names and they would sound like music to my ears.

"I love Mazwane and that will never change" her eyes get teary but it's the truth.

"Nkosi I love you too, I can give you so much more" She wipes her trickling tears. "Make me your second wife, I promise I will respect Phiwo" I pull her into my chest, till she calms down, Sthembi is not a bad person but her feelings for me are misguided.

"Sthembi" I call out sternly tightening my grip on her waist. "I don't ever want to hear you mention Mazwane ever uyangizwa, or this second wife nonsense" she flinches nodding her head. I move away from her before she cries even more. Luckily my phone rings, a smile creeps up on my face.

"Sthandwa sam"

"When are you coming back, I miss you" she says.

"I am on my way muntu wam, is everything okay" I ask, looking at Sthembi getting dressed.

"Something feels off nje, but relax it's not the baby" she says sighing.

"Khuluma nami Mama" I say.

"I don't know, Smiso are you with someone" she asks hesitantly.

"Of course not muntu wam" I say, feeling like the biggest scum to walk earth. I told her I was working late and that I would spend the night at the other house.

"Okay hurry home" she says softly.

"I love you Phiwo"

"I love you" she says giggling on the other end.

"If you love her so much then why are you cheating on her" Sthembi asks.

"I don't owe you an explanation" I hiss.

"Fine but she's a good woman and she doesn't deserve this"
she says walking away.

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I still can't shake off this feeling that Smiso wasn't alone all night, I was restless I couldn't sleep so I called Aphiwe, we haven't spent time in such a long a time, I missed her crazy arse.

"Heshe mbemu" she says waltzing in.

"Heshe nsizwa" we both laugh, I mean we just imitated my very stubborn uncle.

"It's too early to be looking like this" she gives me the "don't start look"

"I have an early breakfast appointment" she says grinning.

"And what's for breakfast" I ask matching her stupid grin.

"Me of course" she laughs afterwards.

"I thought you didn't have a man nje" I ask shocked.

"I don't he's just a dick appointment, a huge juicy one" she says smiling.

26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"That's too much information, aren't you afraid of being attached and falling for him" she sits up straight looking at me.

"I have already done those things but subtle and besides, I made the rules so I can't just break them" she sighs heavily

"Then walk away" she tilts her head.

"Hayi khandiyeke Phiwo, soze andenze I permanent employee, nami soze ndiythethe leyofuna I position" she says and I know this is it, no more bringing it up.

"Okay then go enjoy your breakfast" she stands up and I pull her for hug.

"I needed that thank you" she says pulling away.

"Go get laid girl and enjoy for the both us" I says spanking her.

It's still early and I am left all alone in this huge house, I appreciate the fact that Smiso has to work and support his family. I love that man but there was a time I considered leaving him, not because I don't love him because I need to be me without him, but I also can't deny him the chance to be a father, for us to walk this journey together. I am grateful that I get to have him in my life, with Siya things were different I wasn't alone but I was alone, if you know what I mean. And now I have this wonderful man in my life.

I take a quick shower and wear his t-shirt, it smells of him. I keep pulling it to my nose smelling the inside. I make my way to the lounge and play "Wallflower - Jordan Rakei ft Kaya Thomas"

It has a nice feel to it, I get lost in the lyrics with my eyes closed. It's different to what I usually listen to but it has me moving around freely like the wind. I am barefoot and somehow I wish Smiso was here to hold me while this song plays in the background.

I start making breakfast though I feel like nothing, I want spicy pig trotters. I take my phone and call Smiso.

"Baby" he sounds funny but I ignore that.

"Baby can you please get me trotters from Makhumalo's stall" I say.

"Hayi baby that place is unhygienic" he says.

"That's not true, you eat there nje nawe" he laughs boldly.

"I am a man and you are pregnant, think about the baby" he says still laughing.

"Would you rather I go myself" I ask.

"What, hell no listen I will get your feet what what, you stay put I love you" I knew he would agree to me driving all the way to Makhumalo's. "I love you too"

I have been waiting for Smiso to come home with my food, and it feels like forever.

I hear the door and run towards him. He looks so fine and fresh "wait he looks fresh" I say to myself usually he doesn't shower when he spends the night at his other place, he prefers showering with me.

"Sawbona" he says smiling, I can't even move where I am this man just hypothesized me. He moves closer and the smell of trotters hits me so good my mouth waters.

"Me or the food" he asks.

"Both" I say, he's standing right in front of me. He goes down on his knees pulls the t-shirt and kisses my belly.

"I missed you guys" he says going down to my vagina, I gasp for air waiting in anticipation.

"I thought you said food" he murmurs toying me with his tongue. He lifts me up, my legs are wrapped around his waist.

"Forget the food girl, we are getting it" I say to myself.

"Uyasinda nawe" he says complaining. Still leading me to the bedroom. "This t-shirt suits you better than me" he says taking it off, I am left bare as he worships my body with every single touch, he leaves a memory. I help him out of his clothes my clit throbbing. He goes down on me his tongue taking me to heaven and back.

"I love you" he says coming up to kiss me,I can taste myself on him.

"I love you too" he kisses me deeply,I have said this before,this man's eyes are more beautiful when teary.

He lifts my one leg up and thrusts in slowly,till he is fully in. "Are you okay" he asks,his voice sounding hoarse.I nod not wanting to speak,my voice might betray me and reveal the hunger I feel and have.he starts moving making slow love to me,I cling on to him not breaking eye contact,I don't want this moment to end.I feel all this tension build up that beautiful sweet moment,I come dripping and shaking,I even think I got a foot cramp.he pulls out with a smirk on his face.

"I want you to be fed yezwa Mama" he says turning me and putting a pillow under me.

"I will be gentle okay" he says entering me slowly my back is arched giving him excess,the pillow is proving useful,I moan pulling the covers,this man truly knows how to dish it.his strokes are precise and gentle,he groans loudly tensing up as we both come. "I love you" he says burying himself.

"I love you too,suka ke" I say.he pulls out and gets off me.

"Usutha kabi yaz" he says playfully.

It's been a few weeks and things just don't feel right, and things are steadily going well my champ is growing. We are now three months. Things between Phiwo and I are a bit shaky. She hasn't been the same since that morning I made love to her, I would say it's her hormones playing tricks on her but surprisingly she's calm. I found her playing with herself one morning, she was embarrassed I offered to please her but she politely refused. I am grateful she's still wearing my ring, I plan on sending my family to pay lobola the coming weekend. Sthembi has become a distant memory well what we shared that night was just that one night, I thought I could do make her a temporary fuck, but I couldn't that morning I got home I realised I have gold in the mother of my kids.

I come back from my jog and find my princess on the kitchen counter. She's beautiful like her mother and pretty smart. My daughter has brains surpassing that of adults, I don't know how that happened. But she takes after her parents.

"Daddy" she says happily, there's no joy greater than seeing these two beautiful souls.

"Hello baby bear" I say gently pulling her cheeks.

"Why didn't you wake me up" she asks sulking, all this while Phiwo is busy with some cake batter.

"I am sorry bear, what are you guys doing" she looks at her mother, who faintly smiles.

"Mommy is baking for us, right mama" she says. Phiwo nods and walks to the sink to wash her hands.

"Is there anything I can help you with" I ask.

"No, just go take a shower and wash away that stench off you even though I doubt it will come off" she says.

"It's just sweat Sthandwa" she nods still facing the sink.

"Baba go bath, I don't want mommy to cry" she says squinting her small eyes.

"Mommy crying" I ask, I haven't seen her cry in such a long time.

"Siya is being dramatic, I was watching a movie " she says forcing a smile, I move closer and wrap my hands around her bump.

"Ngenzeni Mazwane" I whisper in her ear. she moves my hands attempting to walk away but I hold her hand.

"Siya please go to aunt Elihle's room, I need to talk to mommy" I help her down, she runs off and comes back again.

"I love you daddy" she says hugging my legs, I go down to her level and give her a hug.

"Daddy loves you too bear" she walks away blowing kisses. I turn and look at Phiwo.

"Can we talk later please, I am tired and my feet are killing me" she says, even her voice sounds exhausted.

"I just want to know what's wrong, have I done something wrong, because you have been pushing me away lately" she rolls her eyes and smiles.

"Not everything is about you Xulu, I have a baby to think of and protect so excuse me if I am not the Phiwo you know" I nod. There's nothing more I can say after this, clearly I am the problem here.

I rush to our bedroom and take a shower, I miss her so much, her bubbly warm self, not this closed off person pretending to be strong. I close the shower door but unfortunately it comes crashing down. I move away but my hand gets cut.

Phiwo comes rushing in.

"Yini" she screams upon seeing so much blood.

"I think the door had a crack" her eyes are wet with tears, I move closer to her and hold her. I have been through worse this small cut is nothing compared to having a bullet stuck in your chest. A knife stuck in you missing vital organs. This is nothing compared to waking up in the middle of the night

because I had a dream of her leaving me. She goes for the medical kit and cleans me up. She's gentle her hands are soft and for a second her eyes radiate love and warmth even if you tried you wouldn't miss it.

"Everything is going to be okay" she says. Putting her hand on my jaw, she kisses my lips our foreheads remain touching, my heart aches more than it should, her silence speaks volumes and there's no amount of talking in the world that's is going to change that.

My phone rings disturbing our moment, I ask Phiwo to answer it for me but she refuses. I look at the screen and it's my father.

"Baba"

"Philile wants to see you" he says.

"What's wrong" I ask.

"It's urgent just come home" he says.

"I hear you baba" I look at Phiwo and there's some sense of relief on her face.

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I am looking at my Aunt

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this women is beautiful in fact the people in my father's family are blessed with good genes. She walks over and pulls me in for a hug.

"Walk with me" she says,I look at my mother who doesn't even want to look at me.

"Aunty I think I need your help" I finally say,she smiles taking my hand into hers.

"What's the use,she already knows" she says letting go.

"What do you mean she already knows" I ask swallowing hard.

"Makoti knows about your filthy doings" she says. "You tainted your bond,which is more emotional than physical,your souls are tied for eternity and you know this but still you betrayed her love" she says still wearing a smile on her face.

"Aunty I will fix this" I say. "I will do anything welcome any punishment from her" she shakes her head.

"Becareful what you wish for,not every crime or wrong doing,fits the given punishment,but don't worry everything is going to be okay" she says patting my shoulder. She walks away leaving me with my thoughts,I wronged my wife and she hasn't been herself because of me.

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It's a Sunday today,I don't know how to feel well I feel numb,and the rest is just confusion.I prayed to God to make me forget,I asked him to make this go away but it's still here,Ngiyasindwa and it's all because of the man I love,yes I still love him more than anything in this world.it feels like yesterday that I could feel something was wrong,as he made love to me.I could feel every bone in me shake,I could feel my soul getting restless my inside turned,I felt my soul fade,he ripped a part of me and gave it to her. I knew loving him was a bad idea but I didn't think it would be toxic.it would have been better if he broke my heart and my soul was still whole.Mama warned me but I didn't listen,Mama saw this coming and I turned a blind eye.

I wipe my tears looking at a photo frame just the three of us.When his phone rang I was hoping it would be his side chick,so my anger would be fuelled and justified but it was just Bab Xulu.

I decided we should all go to church,and luckily he didn't ask me why.he has been quiet observing me since he got back from his parents house.I fix myself up and plate our food,we left Siyamthanda at my parents house. He looks more relaxed it could be the fact that we are alone.

"It's your favourite" that's the only thing I can say right now.

"Thank you mamakhe" he says, this man is handsome it's truly a sin, and a sin is what he committed to our love.

"Phiwokuhle there's something I need to say" I shake my head.

"No don't say anything just eat your food" he nods, but you can tell he wants to talk. he takes a spoonful and the spoon drops.

"I am sorry" I say, he looks at me gasping.

"Phiwo what did you do" he asks blinking a few times, I poured a few eye drops in his scotch.

"Hang in there baby" I brush my baby bump and call Aphiwe to come in.

She helps me drag him all the way to the lounge. he's is heavy but the means justify the end. we finally get him on the couch. sweating and all I even think I pulled a muscle.

"Phiwo suyenza lento, what are planning on doing to him" she asks pointing at Smiso.

"Strip him of his dignity that's all" I force a smile and she laughs.

"Send me some pictures" she says winking at me. I walk her out and come back. I get my 5litre petrol and matchbox. He is still conscious and maybe that's a good thing, he will get to feel the pain he caused me.

"I told you I was broken,I told you I was beyond repair"I shout my tears falling profusely. "Why did you stay,you could have walked away and that would have been better.you hurt me Makhathini,ngyakuzonda" I wipe my tears and settle down next to him, I feel defeated hopeless.I pull him to my chest,rocking the both of us back and forth like I would when hushing Siya.

"I am breaking this bond,I can't go on like this,you have turned my love into hate and revenge" he tries holding me but his hands keep slipping.

"I understand" he manages to say,a loud sob escapes my mouth after hearing that,why couldn't he be faithful and honest I trusted him and he broke us,smearing our love.I pick myself up crying as I am and pour some petrol around the house.I kiss him one last time.

"I prayed for you,I prayed for your soul and body.Ngyakuthanda Donda" my hands are trembling together with my lips,I don't want to think about my love for him,it might overpower my hurt.

I walk out of the house dropping a lit match.

There's something about the power of love and betrayal.love is sweet and beautiful till it betrays you, and it turns into betrayal bitter sore vengeful betrayal.the thing with betrayal is that it offers you two things. Moving on and becoming the bigger

better person or seek revenge with hopes of feeling better. We meet people by chance and it is by destiny and choice that they stay. I chose death while walking amongst the living.

I drive out, the drive feels long and dragged, I pull over on the side of the road, I can't breathe my chest feels tight. I am gasping for air while tears trickle wetting my already wet cheeks.

Ziyanda Zwane (Zee)

I have seen and heard worse things, but not once did I ever dream that my baby would do such. Phiwo has always been loving and caring, yes she has an unruly tongue but she's not a killer not that they walk around with tags, I blame myself for failing her as a mother, I blame that vicious animal Sizwe for hurting my baby girl. I blame Smiso oh that poor boy for loving her and breaking her heart. I don't know what went down between the two of them, they seemed okay so in love I don't know what drove her to this.

The last time she shook like this in her sleep, was after Sizwe did all those terrible things to her, she had nightmares for days but seeing Blake helped her till she stopped.

I tried holding her and nothing worked, I tried talking to her and still nothing helped, she was hysterical kept mumbling to herself like a crazy person. Even my hugs were in vein. We had to call doctor Khan to calm her down.

Mbuso walks in, he has been putting out fires left right and center. I throw myself in his arms.

"Have you had any sleep" he asks holding me tight. How can I sleep when my daughter is like this.

"Njani Mbuso, where did we go wrong" he sighs heavily. "Zwane she didn't mean to do it, that's not how our baby is, she would never hurt anyone" he breathes heavily again, Mbuso is a man of honour but I know he loves his family.

"I know mamakhe, I know" he says.

"What are we going to do" I ask.

"Everything in our power to make this go away" he says, I know he means every word. he pulls away and settles next to Phiwo.

"Where did we go wrong, you were coming along so fine. how could you do something so horrible Mazwane" he says shaking his head. I can't lose my daughter no matter what happens. She opens her eyes lazily, hope rushes to my heart but fades as soon as she wails. her father attempts to hold her but she shrieks. I put a hand over my mouth, this hurts more than I thought.

"Baba ngyaxolisa, I didn't mean to do it" she looks at me.

"Mama" I rush to her side, she holds me so tight my rib cage hurts.

"It's okay my baby, daddy is going to fix" I say wiping her falling tears.

Aphiwe bursts in the room, she looks flushed and angry.

"How could you be so selfish huh, how could you burn him. the father of your kids" she sounds defeated.

"Aphiwe" I say, but Mbuso raises his hand.

"Let her speak" he says calmly.

"You made me an accomplice, I could be arrested all because you couldn't walk away, did you think about Siya and your unborn son. What about his parents and siblings. I thought you loved him" she says wiping her tears.

"They will lock you up and throw away the key, just to make an example out of you. dammit Phiwokuhle" she storms out after saying that, Mbuso gave me the low down on things. they will argue that she had criminal capacity, she calculated the risk and had intention.

"Baba take me to the police, I need to hand myself in. I need to pay for what I did" she begs.

"Hey" he says softly, she shakes her head, her hiccups are really bad. "Listen to me sunshine, just get some rest we will talk when you get up okay" he kisses her forehead and tucks her in. Seems like the medicine hadn't worn off completely, because with her father's touch and soft words she falls right back to sleep.

She looks so peaceful when she's asleep, I don't understand how such a beautiful being could turn and be, I can't even bring myself to say the word. I have heard of snapped couples, could it be she just snapped and said enough is enough.

"Mbuso I am worried about her, she hasn't asked about the poor boy" I say looking at my husband.

"She's tired and confused Mamakhe please let her be" he says.

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Langa Xulu

Papers have been running the story on Nkosi being found in a burning house. Nonhlanhla had to be knocked out, she didn't take the news so well. But who would accept such a thing, I have a feeling Philile knew about this, my sister wasn't even fazed when we heard the news.

I look at my beautiful wife sleeping, Elihle is by her side. I have been waiting for Nhlosehle but he hasn't arrived yet.

"Lihle look after you mother okay" she nods.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Baba did she really do it" she asks, getting teary. My daughter loves Phiwokuhle, what am I saying she is loved by everyone. What she did has shocked everyone and has broken many hearts.

"Just take care of your mother" I give her a hug and kiss my wife walking out.

I call Skhumbuzo telling him to meet me at Mbuso's house.

I arrive the same time as Skhumbuzo, we make our way inside the house. Mbuso appears welcoming us, we handshake and settle down.

"We have to make a decision" Skhumbuzo says.

"Bafo what decision is that when all eyes are on us" I say looking at him gulping down his whiskey.

"All I know is that my daughter will not be going to prison" Mbuso says sternly.

"And we can't afford to have her lose the child, I doubt Makhathini would allow his wife to be arrested" Skhumbuzo says.

"Then we move her, make it will look like she was never here when the fire started" We all nod in agreement to Mbuso's suggestion.

"Did anyone see her leave the house" Skhumbuzo asks, he tends to forget that I know him and his schemes.

"Skhumbuzo I hope you are not planning on killing anyone" he laughs and clears his throat.

"Khululeka Mtakababa I was just asking" he says.

"If only those nosey neighbours didn't call the police, this is quite a high profile case. I can't imagine her being charged with arson, attempt murder and malicious damage to property" Mbuso says gulping a third glass. "How is he holding up" he asks.

"The doctors don't know when he will wake up, his left arm is badly burnt all the way to his chest and he was exposed to smoke and flames. My son will never be the same" I finally admit the sad truth, Nkosinathi is a proud young man and when he wakes up and sees the extent the fire did, I don't know the extent of his wrath or outlet.

"I am sorry bo Gxabhashe for what my daughter did" Mbuso says. the pain of bring a parent no matter how much your child can wrong you, you always forgive and find the good in them.

"And what about me" Skhumbuzo asks, we look at him laugh, I am sure if Siyamthanda was around she would be scared such deep bold voices in one room.

"Thank you Maziya" Mbuso says with a smirk on his face.

We decide that Phiwo should move, till the dust settles and her emotions are in check. I know I should be wanting justice for my Son but this is the mother of his kids, Carrying his son and we don't want her losing the baby.

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Phiwokuhle Zwane

I know I have lost all rights to say I love Smiso, I know my love for him is not worthy anymore. I know I betrayed our love myself, I have hurt him in the most possible way ever, I tried to kill him. I tried walking dead amongst the living by killing a part of me. After everything that man has done for me I tried to wipe him off the earth's surface. I will never forgive myself for hurting him, the pain of burning someone alive Lord what possessed me to have such evil intentions. Yes he cheated and broke my heart but I did far more worse, he's the father of my kids. What is life without him. In all the time I have met Smiso, his eyes only had love, warmth and a sense of security. That man did nothing but love me with all my faults and imperfections. When I was down he was there for, he picked me up when I was at my lowest, when my heart bled only he could hold me and all would seem right. I guess when I found out about his cheating something broke, I felt taken back to the time Sizwe made me a fool, he cheated on me and made it seem like it was my fault. He abused me physically and emotionally then turned around and blamed it on me. He blamed all those things on me. He raped me and blamed it on me, he said I made him do it. I guess what I am trying to say is, I didn't want history repeating itself. I didn't want the loving

man I know turning into a monster,if he could cheat then he could hurt me,he could hurt us. In my messed up mind i was averting more pain that was to come,I was trying to protect myself instead of just walking away. It was all in my messed up mind and I believed it. I will never forgive myself for trying to take Smiso away from his kids.I look at the clothes Baba took out for me,plain black track suits I wear them after taking the hot bath he ran for me.he comes in after a while.

"How are you feeling now" he asks looking at me as if studying me.

"I don't know" I say truthfully.

"Everything is going to be okay,trust me" he says taking my hand.

"Are you taking me to prison" I ask,phela baba is a law abiding citizen.

"What,I would never do that" he says faintly smiling at me.he hugs me tightly breathing heavily,I hate that I hurt my parents and more especially Smiso' mother.We both walk out,he leads me to the lounge and my eyes meet Mr Sibeko and Xulu in one room.I guess I wasn't crazy when I saw him drive out the day I fetched Siya.They both stand up when they become aware of my presence.fear creeps but baba assures me that everything is going to be okay.

"Is she ready" bab Xulu asks,I thought I wasn't being taken to prison nje.

"It's okay we are taking you to a safe place, far away from here" baba says making me face him.

"Where is Ma and Siya" he shakes his head.

"They are not coming,you need to get help okay,you need to take care of you and the baby" he says,his voice has traces of hurt.

"Baba no I didn't mean to do it,please don't punish me like this" they all look at me with eyes full of pity.

"I am sorry but it's the only way,I will bring Siya once you are okay and the doctor says you are fine" he says.

"But I need to say goodbye,I can't live without my baby she's my everything" sobs come out painfully,I can't leave Siya I just can't.Bab' Sibeko offers me water and surprisingly I get calmer.

"We should go before everyone comes home" I can hear my father's voice but from a distance.

Makhathini

There were days I used to say love hurts, that's because everyone made it seem like that. But here's the thing love is nothing but kind and understanding, I know this now because I have experience love long before I knew it. I woke up after two weeks of being in an induced coma and being in and out of surgery for skin grafting my body couldn't take but that's a story for another day though. I thought the police would harass me with questions, but I later found out the whole thing has gone away, I also thought I would wake up a different man full of hate and rage, that I would hate Phiwo with everything in me, but the love I have for her is beyond me. I still love her like I did the very first moment I layed my eyes on her, sure I thought it was alcohol but destiny proved me wrong over and over again. She literally showed me flames, there's is nothing like a women scorned.

This nurse is busy changing my bandage, I remember the first few days I came about and realised how bad I was. I wanted to puke not mention the pain I felt. Having a cloth stuck on you and it being pulled off is no child's play. Trust me I know.

"Be careful" Nkosenhle shouts, he has been shouting like this since he came back.

"Donda calm down" I hiss not only directed at him, but also the nurse this things hurts.

"How when this useless nurse is hurting you and that crazy fiancée of yours tried to kill you" he has pacing up and down, if I could I would throw something at him just to shut him up.

"Guard your tongue Nkosi" I say sternly, my brother tends to forget that I am older than him.

"But bafo things could have been worse" he has more calmer. "I don't think I like her anymore" he says with a sigh.

"She's not yours to like so I really don't care, I need you to find her for me" he looks up and quickly moves his eyes around.

"Baba refuses to help me, he thinks it's a bad idea" "I am afraid I agree with Gxabhashe" he says comfortably resting on the chair.

"Well I didn't ask for your opinion, I trust you Donda please find her for me" he huffs and murmurs before nodding his head, I knew I could count on him.

"I never knew loving someone could be this messed up, you guys were happy I mean she loved you or so claimed" he says, I hate that he has so much anger directed toward Phiwo.

"You wouldn't understand,I know you are angry.But when you truly love someone then you look past their flaws and imperfections.You love them even when they are at their lowest. I love Phiwokuhle and I don't expect you or the whole family to understand. She tried to kill me not you,she's was not in the right state of mind. She's been through hell and I cheated on her breaking her heart" I clear my throat because I feel hot and emotional. "She's the mother of my kids and I understand her and her pain more than you will ever know" he narrows his eyes looking at me.

"Love isn't supposed to hurt and what she did is crazy" he says,clearly he is adamant on making me see his point..

"Bafo love doesn't hurt,we make it hurt by hurting the ones we love.We are driven by infatuation disguised as love,we feed each other lies and lack communication then loves hurts" he looks at me tilting his head.

"What has she done to you" he ask.

"She loved me" I say,it's hard saying loved because I no longer know what she feels for me.

"I hear you and don't worry,I will find her" I know he is hesitant in all of this,I mean if some crazy women tried to burn my lil Bro. I wouldn't let it go either.

"Tell Ma I love her" he frowns just a bit.

"I thought she would be coming here to see you after her church service" he says.

"I don't feel like visitors today" he smiles.

"And what about bear" he asks in a low tone.

"Umthetho wakho awuzwa wena" I ask Nkosi can be a pain sometimes. I need time to think and find ways to fix things between Mazwane and I.

It's been exactly two months and my wound has been healing nicely, I haven't had time to think of anything else than my baby bear. She lives with me now, I figured since one parent is missing in action I need to step up. I am thinking of putting a tattoo that will cover my whole arm all the way to my chest, I can't have my daughter always ask what happened, I don't want her thinking her mother is a bad person. On that note her pregnancy is going well so far, I have been keeping tabs on her Nkosenhle came though. I have been taking pictures of her from a distance and she's beautiful and she looks happy I think. I wish I was next to her but I also understand that she needs to heal.

"Daddy my shoes" she screams from her bedroom. I walk to her bedroom and she's on the floor with both her shoes on. I join her on the floor.

"What's wrong" her nose is scrunch up and puffs.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Something is wrong" she says pointing to her feet, she has the shoes on correctly but laces are tangled up.

"I don't see anything wrong" I tease, she starts sniffing.

"I can't tie my shoes" she says tears welling up in her eyes.

"Okay let daddy help you" I fix them up tying them the right way.

"Thank you daddy" she says giving me a hug.

"Are we going to work today" I shake my head.

"Daddy is going to work and you bear are going to grandpa bears place" her face lights up, she stands up and packs her things.

"Will I see mommy today" she asks, my heart sinks how do I tell her no. This thing of Phiwo being gone is messing up my bear.

"Not today princess but aunt Aphiwe will be there" tears fall as she sniffs.

"I think mommy doesn't love us anymore" I pick up, she rests her head on my chest.

"Mommy loves us okay, she will be back soon I promise" she doesn't say anything but cries, I think it's time Phiwo came

home. We have hurt Siya way too much, subjected her to way too many hospital trips.

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Phiwokuhle

It's been two or three horrible months in this beautiful place, all I have been getting are photos of Siyamthanda. I appreciate my father and his squad for protecting me, yes that's what I call them now squad. I haven't even seen my own mother which hurts. When I first got here I realised I was drugged. I woke up screaming my baby bears name and she wasn't here. Things must be hard for her, I know she misses me just like I miss her. I pray every day that she doesn't think I no longer love her, that I left her all alone.

I really don't know this place but it's a holiday family home, it is beautiful and full of flowers. I am the only person living here and the employees. It's highly secured and private, I don't have any contact with the other side, but I know Smiso is out of the hospital and he's alive.

I still love the man more than anything, I miss him so much. Our baby is doing fine and growing, I always document everyday in this house.

Blake together with doctor Khan have been doing an exceptional job. when it comes to my physical and mental health.I found out a lot of things,like the fact that I was still hurting from what Sizwe did to me that I finally snapped.I punished Smiso for Sizwe's doings,Blake says my mind has been a ticking time bomb,waiting for something bad to happen so I could protect myself. He says I shouldn't blame myself but how when I almost took someone's life. Things are calmer though I feel at peace,I have been doing exercises that help me cope and meditation. I know I can't control the past, but I can work on building a more stable and beautiful future.

"Sisi this came for you" Mam Sophie says giving me a package.

"Thank you Ma" she smiles and sits down.

"How are you feeling today Sisi" she asks brushing my back.I cried for the first month I got here and she was here with me all the way.

"I miss home Ma,I miss my daughter and my hus.." I smile upon realising what I was about to say.

"Don't worry Sisi everything is going to be okay" she says wrapping her arms around me.

I look at the package,and I know it comes from Dad. He is the only one who sends me packages and gifts.

It's a phone and a note on the box.

"Switch it on" the note says finally I get to call Mama and hear my baby's voice.

The screen saver is Siya and Smiso. I look at it over and over again. I run my finger across the screen touching her face. A beeping sound disturbs my moment, it's a message.

"We miss you Mazwane" it says, my heart beats faster than it should. How did he find me. I look around and there's no one in sight. My hands start sweating I really want to reply but fear has me by the balls.

It rings and "Makhathini" appears on the screen, tears come gushing down it rings till it stops.

"Bamba ucingo Phiwo please" the text says. I can't not after what I did to him.

"There are video and pictures of Ntokozoyami, I hope you love them" it reads, I scroll through the pictures and my baby pops up. Today I sleep a happy mother all because of Makhathini.

Makhathini

It's true when they say never judge a person until you have walked a mile in their shoes, or at least tried to. I doubt some would survive this walk, I have always looked at my parents and wondered what has kept them going. And my mother would say "Love, respect, commitment, communication, patience and God" those things kept them going. I want to be the man my father is, I don't want to ever disappoint my family. Living with Siya has taught me a lot of things, firstly no liquids before bed time or else she wakes me up in the middle of the night because she wants to pee. I sing along to every Disney princess dvd she has. I have been working from home just to be with her more, I am also glad Elihle moved in just to help around when I am not home.

They come back carrying plastics and a black paper bag.

"What's that" I ask looking at Elihle.

"Toiletries bhuti" she says looking at Siya.

"Baba why didn't you come with us, Malume bought me ice cream" she says wrapping her tiny hands around my neck. I feel my blood boil Elihle will get it today. I walk closer to where she's

standing, and inspect the plastic. I find junk food and the paper bag she's holding.

"Give" she shakes her head, I put Siya down and ask again.

"I didn't ask for it, I swear" she says.

I open the paper bag, it's has an iPhone grey in colour.

"Siya close your ears" she giggles and puts one hand on either side

"First it was your Ngudu stunts now a phone, what next a baby" I ask. Elihle is too young to be dating ngeke.

"Please don't tell on me" she pleads.

"If I ever find out that you are dating, I will kill that boyfriend of yours and no one will ever find him" she looks scarred enough to stop this dating crap.

"I swear he's just a friend bhuti" she says.

"I don't care, maybe I should tell Baba about this" her eyes suddenly get glossy.

"Baba will kill me and I won't forgive you" she pleads with her hands together.

"Then stay away from the poor boy" She nods, I turn my focus on Siya who is smiling.

"Open your ears bear" she does that and laughs looking up to me.

"Did you hear anything" I ask going to her level.

"No daddy" she says and giggles after

I know people find it hard to understand, how a person who used to kill for a hobby ever love but it's true. I love my family and then there's a special place in my heart reserved for my love and our kids. I would die for them and I would kill for them.

"Bafo you look deep in thought nje" Vusi says snapping his fingers, he arrived after my talk with Elihle and Siya.

"I was just thinking about MakaSiya and what she's doing today" he nods Vusi has been with me through all my shady things.

"I understand you Makhathini" he says rubbing his forehead.

"Girlfriend problem" I ask.

"Eish remember that girl I told you about, the one I was giving it too occasionally" I can't help but laugh.

"What about her" he shakes his head.

"It's Aphiwe" he says getting himself a drink. "Ngyamfuna Bafo but I can't help but wonder if she has crazy burning genes too" he says with a sigh, now I have heard it all.

"Makhathini this is serious" I look at him and laugh all over again.

"I don't know about burning people but she's hardcore and crazy" I say honestly, Aphiwe is not just any ordinary women.

"Umangisha ngiyasha" I know what he means but I need to hear him say it.

"Meaning" I ask.

"I love her bafo and she's going to be mine" he says with a smirk, I stand up and give him a handshake he's one brave man. I know Vusi and he's a womaniser, Aphiwe will chop his ass up should he misbehave.

I walk Vusi out and come back to find Siya in front of the tv with a comb in her hand, I breathe just for a moment and walk towards her.

"And then" I ask pointing at the comb.

"Daddy please do my hair" she says pulling to the couch. She's got long beautiful hair like her mother.

"Siya your hair is fine" I point out the obvious. I did her hair early in the morning.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"I want two more ponytails" what this kid though.

"Fine" she happily sits down, I start doing her hair, doing four ponytails and plait them. Good we now have four natural braids.

"I look like mommy" she says looking at herself in the mirror. she turns and throws herself in my arms.

"I love you Bear" she wiggles out of my hold. And runs saying she wants to show her aunt.

Early mornings are the worst, today I have a meeting and Elihle is going to school, I can't really call my parents to Phiwo's those people are busy. And I have a feeling Aphiwe is with Vusi. Taking a bath then having to help Siya is too much, I salute women shame for doing this everyday in fact for being mother's and much more.

"Baba" she shouts, I walk out of my closet and she's standing there doing nothing.

"Why aren't you dressed" she has her arms folded.

"My socks Baba" she says in her angelic voice,I really can't shout now it's my fault. I help her get dressed then put on my shoes.

She's wearing black pants with a white collar t-shirt and white sneakers.I am wearing a black formal fitting pants with a white shirt.I snap a few pictures and send them to Phiwo

"Going to work we miss you" I say pressing send.

"You two look adorable" she replies

I decide not to probe any further,our chats are just that me missing her,and her keeping things subtle.

We eat some porridge before going to work.

I arrive late for my meeting with Josh,I pass by Pamela and ask her to look after Siyamthanda for me.

The meeting commences between Josh and I,till Siya barges in walking slowly to me.

"Excuse me Josh" I say.

"It's okay Nkosi" he says politely.

Siya comes around to my side,pulls me to her level.

"Daddy I need to go" she whispers looking at Josh who is stifling a laugh.

"But my meeting is not over" I say.she pulls me close again.

"I need to pee" she says softly,I jump up picking her up.

"It's okay I will be waiting" Josh says smiling.

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Phiwokuhle

I miss my family more than anything,in fact I am sick of this place.Baba and his squad came to check up on me,I told them about the phone which wasn't much of a surprise.Apparently they knew he would find me it was just a matter of time.

Blake said it's a matter of time before I go home,he says I am better and my state of mind is more clear.

I think he has become more of a friend than a shrink.

My baby is growing and it's quite amazing how one kick could make you cry instantly, A week ago Makhathini sent me picture of him and Siya going to work. I am greatful that after everything I have done he still sees me fit to be part of our daughter's life.

I regret what I did,because my behaviour has made me lose time with my baby girl,I feel guilty that I am bonding with my Son while my daughter is far from me.

Mam Sophie has gone out to get a few essentials,that women has been a god sent.

I walk around in the house aimlessly,I know every conner of this house,but it's not home.

I decide to take a swim,it's relaxing and a good exercise.I miss Smiso and his back rubs.I close my eyes imagining him making love to me but flashes of me pouring him with petrol come up.

"Dammit" I curse,getting out of the pool.

Blake said I need to see Smiso,Seeing him will help my healing process.

I walk back into the house and just then,the door bell rings.it must be Mam Sophie,I take a towel wiping myself up all the way to the door.

I open up and almost pee on myself there he is standing tall and handsome,he's wearing brown fitting pants and a white shirt,brown man's shoes with a tint of black. His shirt is not not buttoned all the way, he really looks good I can tell he has been working out. "Smiso" I manage to say.

"Mazwane" he says.

Phiwokuhle

We have been standing here for at least more than ten minutes, my tears streaming like the mighty Zambezi river. It feels like time has come to a stand still and only him and I exist, I wish I knew what to say but I am tongue tied. He is also just standing there saying nothing his tears are freely flowing. Am I even allowed to hug him or is that not permitted. He looks so good that crying shouldn't be part of his demeanour. I can't believe he's standing right in front of me, that he survived I suddenly want to run, but imagine a pregnant penguin lookalike women running, that could never be me and beside I am drained from my water exercise. By God's grace Mam' Sophie appears behind him.

"Hawu nama emnyango nje ngane zami" she says softly. I thank my ancestors and the most high for her arrival.

"It's my fault ma, I just came announced please let me help" he says subtly wiping his tears, then helping her with the plastics. I close the door once we all inside and wipe my own tears.

"Please get dressed sisi, you being cold and naked is not good for the baby" she says looking at my half nakedness. She turns

her focus to Makhathini, I feel the need to explain who the handsome stranger is.

"Oh Ma this is my hus.... I mean this is Siyamthanda's father" she smiles looking at Smiso.

"Nice to meet you ndodana" Smiso extends his hand but she goes for a hug.

"Kubonga mina ma" he says returning the hug. I don't know if I should walk now or wait till he has settled.

"Don't worry I will take care of him" she says already heating up the kettle. I walk to my bedroom and take a long shower, With so much going through my mind, Why is he here, what am I supposed to say to him. I still love him more than anything but I am scared, I didn't think he would come to my hide out place. I finish up and wear my grey tracksuits and walk back to the kitchen.

I find them in deep laughter, I don't want to intrude and besides what can I possibly say to the man. I slowly walk back doing the walk of shame.

"Habe nanyi imihlola come and join us" Mam' Sophie says, waving her hand. I look back and they are both staring, I can't keep it locked my lips start trembling and tears follow. I pull on my lower lip biting on it, this should help me cry less but instead I shake more and cry louder. He's besides me in

seconds,he hesitates for a while I can see the hurt in his eyes. But he eventually pulls me into his chest.I hold him tight sobbing in his arms.

"I am so sorry,Makhathini I am truly sorry ngyaxolisa" I wish things were that simple,saying sorry in as many languages as you can then be forgiven.

"I will give you some privacy" Mam Sophie says walking in the direction of her room.

"Please forgive me" I say my voice breaking through a loud sob,he continues brushing my back calming me down.

"Mazwane please calm down bandla" he says pulling away,just when I think I have run out of tears they come flooding down when I see tears in his eyes.

"Smiso I am sorry,you have to believe me" he holds me letting me cry till I can't anymore. He pulls me to the lounge and wipes my tears,if it was the good times he would lick them that's how crazy he is.

We sit in awkward silence,I don't have any words to make him understand how sorry I am.

"You have always been a softie" he says probably trying to break the silence.

"I guess so,remember when I told you ungangilimazi kakhulu I am sensitive" he laughs and my stomach turns,I still get butterflies by just being with the man.

"And you were drunk at the time" he says like he's thinking, I remember sobering up when he entered me,I remember a lot of things from that night. Two strangers who had just met but it felt like we had known each other for a long time. We drift back to a more comfortable space of silence,till Mam Sophie calls my name.

"Can I help you with anything Ma" she smiles shaking her head.

"Aw sisi he's handsome"she says happily dishing up.

"Thank you Ma" I say.

"And stop crying it's not good for the little one,you should be happy that he's here" she says. If only she knew the damage i have done to our relationship. "Now go and give him water to wash his hands" she says giving a small basin,I make my way to him he washes his hands and wipes them up.

I come back with a tray that has two plates one with rice and lamb stew. Mine has a fist fill of pap and lots of meat.

"Ma said goodnight" I say digging in.

"Okay" that's all he says,I watch him take small bites on his plate which is strange because usually his plate would be half full.

"Is everything okay" I ask..

"Yes everything is fine" we both eat,I finish up first and eye his plate.

"I won't finish the plate please help" he says,I join him and we tackle his plate together.after all that he helps me with the dishes he hasn't said anything since the plate thing. He hasn't even asked about our baby little rascal hasn't even kicked today,he only moved once in the morning nje.

"I think I should go to bed now" he nods walking me to my room. Things are not really tense but I don't want to force them.

I slip into my silk pyjama shorts switch off the lights and and get into my bed.

It's still early I know but I just couldn't,I mean I am hypocrite we are under one room and I can't even talk about the fire,a lousy sorry is all I could compose.

I hear the door open and close,then him getting inside the bed. He cuddles up against me.

"I can't sleep" he says.

"I know the feeling" I say, he sighs and puts his hand on my belly. This little rascal starts kicking like crazy and this thing hurts.

"Can you feel that" I know it's a stupid question.

"Those are serious moves, how are things with the baby okay" he asks still brushing my belly.

"Everything is fine, I have an appointment tomorrow with doctor Khan" he goes quiet.

"How's Siya, I really miss her I didn't mean to leave our baby. I just wasn't okay and after what I did to you trying to kill you like that. I am sorry and I hope you find it your heart to forgive me, I am better now. Everything I did was because I hadn't healed from what that monster put me through. I took out all my hatred and hurt on you, I made you pay for his sins, I will never forgive myself for what I did. I hate me for trying to take you away from your family and kids." he's still quiet. "Please say something"

"I don't hate Sthandwa Sam and I understand, though I may never get why you went about things the way you did. But I could never hate you, I thought I would hate you and want to take the kids away from you" he says softly laughing.

"I am sorry for sleeping with Sthembi, it was a once in a while thing not that it makes it okay. I failed to love you and remain faithful

ngyaxolisa. Mazwane I forgave you long before you lit that matchstix" I don't know how he could just forgive me like that.

"Why" I ask.

"Because I love you" he says.I know we haven't really ironed out things but this is a start. His phone rings and he switches on the lights, he puts the call on speaker.

"Elihle is something wrong" he asks.

"Bhuti your daughter doesn't want to sleep before she talks to you" she says,I guess Elihle is babysitting.

"Please give her the phone" we hear some shuffling then her voice breaks through.

"Daddy" she says sweetly.

"Why aren't you sleeping" he asks.

"Baba ubuya nin" she asks,I know my daughter is good with deflecting.

"Siya" he says trying to be stern.

"Daddy have you taken your sweets" she asks in her angelic voice,I see a smile on Smiso's face.

"I completely forgot Bear" he says laughing for some reason I feel left out.

"You know why daddy forgot to take his sweets" he asks.

"Because daddy is getting old like both my mkhulu's" she says laughing,I wonder what sweets are they on about.

"No because daddy is with mommy right now" she screams so much my heart melts.

"Mommy" I close my eyes and wipe my tears damn these hormones.

"Hey baby bear" she goes quiet and Elihle is on the phone once again.

"Sisi is that really you"

"Yes it's me,where Siya" I ask.

"She just ran out but I can fetch her"

"It's okay she's probably overwhelmed and upset,please kiss her goodnight for me"

"Okay sisi" she says ending the call.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"She hates me" I say,looking at Smiso.

"She would never hate you,she just needs to see you and feel loved by you that's all" he says putting his arm over me. Damn me burning him must have made him do some serious

introspection. I also want to know about the sweets but I choose to mind my own.

.

I wake up to an empty side of the bed, the curtains are open and some air is coming in, I walk to the bathroom do my business and take a quick shower. I wear black jeggings a yellow hoody and slippers.

"Good morning" I say reaching for the chair.

"Morning" they simultaneously say. I look at the table and there's more healthy stuff than greasy tasty one.

"Undodana made us this healthy breakfast" I lazily smile, I have eaten way too much fruit and muesli to last me a lifetime ngikahle with that type of food. I eat just not wanting to be rude.

"I could make you something else" he offers.

"That would be great, can you please make me pancakes with plenty bacon and syrup" he smiles standing up. I can't wait to tear those pancakes apart.

He finishes faster than I thought, he places the plate before me and for the first time I see the outcome of my actions. He's wearing a long sleeve t-shirt but has pulled it up almost all the way his elbow. I stare probably longer than I should.

"Please eat" he says pulling his sleeve down, I oblige and eat though my heart is no longer here.

"Ndodana what happened to your arm" Mam Sophie asks, she was never really told the reason I came here.

"I tried to kill him by burning him alive" I jump in saving him from having to explain.

She looks shocked I know it's sounds evil.

"I am sorry I didn't know" she says not moving her eyes from Smiso. "And you have forgiven her" she say more of a statement than a question..

"I was never angry Ma" he say politely.

"I can tell, your eyes speak for themselves" she says smiling.

"You two finish up doctor Khan will be here any moment now" she says already standing up.

I eat with Smiso watching me and holding my one hand.

We both finish up and go sit in the lounge, till Khan arrives.

I know the drill I have done this countless times before but it's a first for Smiso.

I remove my top and lie on the bed, he puts the cold goeey jell.

"I see your husband is here" he says happy as always.

"He arrived yesterday" I say.

"Well let's see what this little fellow is up too" he says running the machine on me.

"Okay lovely people this is your baby healthy and alive" he says pointing at the screen,we hear the heartbeat.

"Are you sure everything is okay" Smiso asks.

"Yes I am,she is coming along great soon you will have a bouncing baby" he says wiping it off.

"Till we meet next time" he says packing up,Smiso walks him out and I head for the couch and remote.

He comes back and takes my feet into his hands,he starts massaging them.

I moan louder than I should,his hands are doing me good. I open my eyes and he's staring closely,he moves closer and carresses my cheeks running his finger all the way to my lips parting them.I slowly suck on his thumb yeses the thirsty mommy in me is slowly waking up.

He moves closer and parts my lips using his and slowy kisses me.he pulls away and smiles. "We miss you" he says moving his eyes to his bulging trouser.I blush looking away it's been months since I have been intimate. He lifts me up and walks to my bedroom,he undresses me and leaves only my undies he cups my breast and gently sucks on them.he comes up to my face and kisses me allover again. I slowly remove his t-shirt,he

closes his eyes and breathes heavily. His chest is burnt it goes up all the way to his neck line and curves going to his arm,I gasp because of shock.

"I am planning on getting a tattoo" he says,I know Smiso and he's not really a tattoo person. I kiss him from his naval to chest he tries to stop me but i soldier on.

"I love you Makhathini" I proceed to kiss where he's burnt.

We are both naked on the bed,he goes down on me and takes me to heaven. His tongues plays with my clit,his fingers rub on it while his tongue dips in and out of my vigena.I come all over his face it's a river down there,he inserts his finger inside me and another he moves them.I moan meeting him half way,he pulls them out.

"No..No. .no" he chuckles and all of me wants him.He plays with himself and rubs the tip of his penis on my entrance,I keep pushing myself towards him.he eventually pushes himself inside me,I wince just a little he groans in pleasure but pulls out. This man is playing with fire I see,he keeps pulling in and out till he thrust in fully.he stays in me and moves slowly making love to me,he's strokes are slow and precise.I know he's thinking about the baby hence this sweet amazing beautiful moment.

I hold him tight my fingers digging into his arms, his body goes stiff we both come.

He stays inside me still twitching and groaning.

"I love you Smiso" he pulls out and collapses next to me, I catch my breath laying on his chest.

"I love you Phiwokuhle" he says kissing my forehead.

"Ngikufuna ngemuva" he says gently prompting me to turn, he lifts my leg and pushes himself in, you know that feeling that travels through your whole body, when the man you love touches you like no other and makes sweet love to you. It makes you want to stand on top of the mountain and scream, go back to get more and come back to scream again.

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Makhathini

This has been one amazing day I didn't plan on making love to her, yes I missed her but I just wanted to see and hold her. I missed her scent and beautiful eyes. I lift her head up getting out of the bed, we made love and the rain started pouring heavily. I am glad it did because my women can scream, I was

even afraid Mam Sophie would hear her calling my name, calling out God and saying fuck in one sentence.

I walk to the sliding door, the sun is slowly coming through the clouds. I open one side and the cold breezy air comes in, my aim is to wake her up so we can see the sun and rainbow together. She opens her eyes and yawns looking up, she's naked so I dress her up in my t-shirt.

"I am hungry" she says kissing me.

"Come and see" I pull her to the outside, she smiles when she sees the rainbow.

"Uthingolwenkosazane" she says, her eyes beaming with joy. I wrap my arms around her waist, the baby starts moving.

"We should name our baby Thingo" I say burying myself in her neck.

"Are you serious, the doctor said it's a boy nje" she says.

"If it's a girl then we won't change it, but if it's a boy then we can name him Thingoluhle or Thingolwethu" she laughs softly, I know we could never claim the rainbow but he will be our rainbow.

"I love them Smiso" she says turning to kiss me.

"Why" she asks.

"Why what" I ask with a frown.

"Why the rainbow out of all things" she asks smiling.

"Because the first night I saw you,the rainbow also appeared,the day Siya was born it was also there and remember our outside restaurant rain fight,it was also there. Not everyone gets to see it,its rare and beautiful,and it's a once in a lifetime opportunity for two people who love each other to see it together so many times.Even in the rainiest of days the sun will come and the most beautiful of things will happen. I love you Phiwokuhle Zwane" I wipe her tears and kiss her lips.

"I love you too Nkosinathi Smisokuhle Xulu" She says still looking into my eyes,if there's ever one thing I did right in this life thing,Is loving this women and making her the mother of my kids.

"Let's change clothes so we can go and eat" she nods pulling me by my hand.

We wall to the kitchen finding Mam Sophie watching TV.

"I should buy ear plugs what do you guys think" she asks laughing.

"Hawu Ma"Phiwo says blushing,I move to the kitchen and get a glass of water.

"Are those pills" she asks startling me.

"No.." she frowns. "I mean yes headache pill sthandwa sam" I say.

"Can you please give me some" Mam Sophie says.

"That was the last two Ma" I say,my eyes fixed on Phiwokuhle.

Phiwokuhle

If this is destiny at its best then I am happy. I am happy it has chosen this man to be my everything. We have spent a week caged up in here in house and I have gained more weight. Smiso joined me on my sessions with Blake, only this time he contributed to the conversation. My good doctor said he would refer him to a very good friend of his.

I appreciate everything he has done for me, we are connected now more than ever that fear creeps in. I can't imagine life without him, yes you heard right the same man I tried to remove yes that one. I can't live without him. I have realised that love goes way deeper than just saying "I love you". There are too many important aspects in it including "I am sorry and I forgive you" those were words my mother once said to me, and I will forever be grateful.

I think Smiso is drained he may not say it, but I know him he looks worn out. I know I am not making sense he is happy but tired and I don't know why. I find him sleeping on the couch with his laptop still on, he must have fallen asleep. I clear his things up and gently shake him.

"Baby" he opens his eyes, and all I see are his pale eyes.

"Hey" he says closing them again.

"Smiso vuka" he slightly opens them up and smiles.

"How far are long are we" he asks out of the blue.

"37 weeks" I say proudly, I have come a long way securing this precious cargo.

"No sthandwa sam stick to months please" he says laughing.

"Okay we are officially 7months pregnant" he sits up straight and brushes my stomach.

"Daddy will be right here to see you arrive, I can't wait to see Thingo" he says kissing my belly, he sounds and looks emotional.

"Baby are okay" he nods kissing my cheek, he goes back to his slumber and here I was thinking he would want sex. I snuggled up close to him, that's all I want right now him holding me and not letting go. I suddenly feel this heavy aura weighing heavily on me, I am not strong enough not to cry so I let the tears fall. I also feel nervous for some reason. This feeling overwhelms me that with each tear sobs form.

"Phiwokuhle what's wrong is it the baby" he asks hurriedly. I shake my head countless times.

"Okay then what's wrong" he asks in a panicked voice.

"My heart is heavy Smiso" I say crying even more.Mam Sophie comes running.

"What's wrong ndodana" she asks coming closer.

"She gets like this when she feels something" he says calmly.he is still holding me tight not letting go.

"I will get her some water" she says sprinting to the kitchen.

"Calm down and breathe" he says breathing with me,I eventually come down after what seems like forever.

"Everything is going to fine,I love you forever mine,forever thine,forever ours remember" he says that with so much love,I cling on to him for dear life.

"Remember phiwo" he says slightly shaking me.

"I remember" I say sniffing,he kisses the top part my head and let's go.

"I am going back home today,Siya needs at least one of us home and I need to catch up on work" he say avoiding eye contact.

"We could just bring Siya here or better yet let me come with you" I insist on the latter but he shakes his head.

"You know that's impossible,you're only coming home next month,that way you can give birth at home" he says calmly.

"But I don't want you to go" he smiles lifting me.

"How about I make you feel better before I go" he says kissing me, I want to insist on coming with him but firstly I need to get some sugar.

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He wasn't lying when he said he's leaving, he gave it me in all the corners of this house we practically christened the house. Mam Sophie decided to leave us alone her exact words were "Ngiyabona senifuna ukuhlohloza amachips" she took her bag and left, thank heaven she came back after we were long done.

I miss him already, I even took one of his t-shirt which I am wearing today.

Mam Sophie has been busy since early morning the squad is on its way here, I really don't feel like company.

"Are you okay sisi" she asks taking a sip of her coffee, how I miss the taste of coffee beans dancing on my tongue.

"I just miss Smiso ma that's all" she nods taking another sip.

"He is good boy and he loves you" she says with a smile. "I saw the way he looked at you, love is a beautiful thing" she says.

"When is baba getting here" I ask.

"Any moment now I hope he brings his friends phela I cooked" she says beaming, I hope she's not eyeing one of these men. two of them are married and the other is just not suitable for my Mam Sophie.

"Uphekeni ntombi" I ask rubbing my hands together.

"It's for our guests behave" she says pointing a finger at me. I know there's Usu (tripe) in one of the pots, some lamb stew and dumplings. All of that for those people life is not fair shame.

We hear laughter and I just know my granpa is here. They appear wearing shorts and golf t-shirts mxm what happened to being old.

"Baba" I run to him almost knocking him out.

"I see I was missed" he says balancing himself.

"Of course I missed you baba" my voice is overly excited

I just miss home and seeing him lessens the longing.

I pull away and greet Mr Sibeko and Bab Xulu. They settle down and Mam Sophie offers them food and drinks.

I can see they intend on finishing all this food as if their wives don't cook.

I walk out to the pool after catching up with the squad, they seem like old friends but I would dare ask my father.

I sit on the side of the pool with my feet dangling inside. Skhumbuzo joins me well I now call him Bab Sibeko.

"I don't think that's good for the baby" he says joining me.

"I know" I say not even sure.

"Nice t-shirt you have there" he says.

"Smiso was here" I say pulling it over to my nose sniffing the inside. "You miss him" he asks. I nod my head freely.

"Can I ask you a question" he nods.

"How are you related to my family and the Xulu's" he frowns but quickly smiles nonetheless

"Do you really want to know who I am" he asks with a different tone more chilling.

"I wouldn't ask if I didn't want the truth" I say my voice taking a sudden sharp tone. "It's best you don't know" he says.

"I think so too" I look at him, as a flash of sadness passes through his face.

"But should you ever need anything let me know, I will always be around" he says walking away.

I don't know what's the story with this man, and I probably never will. But he has proven to be one of those in the shadow angels, looking over you and ready to protect you.

Makhathini

It's been two days to be exact and I miss her terribly, there's a difference between seeing a person and calling them, the week I spent with Phiwo was amazing. I got to make love to her over and over again. We spoke and for the longest time in our relationship I was at peace because my woman was happy. You can tell by looking at her that so much has changed. That she's more stronger than before. I think being away really did her good.

Ulwandle by Dumi Mkokstard is playing while Siya says her endless hallelujahs, making me laugh till tears come out. Ever since I got discharged from the hospital, I came back a different man.

"Daddy church was nice today" she says clapping her hands.

"I know bear" I say keeping my eyes on the road.

"Are you crying baba" she asks.

"Daddy is just laughing that's all" she nods then starts laughing.

"And why are you laughing" I ask.

"Because you are laughing and I don't want you to laugh alone" she says sweetly, I must be one lucky man to have such an amazing extraordinary baby girl. "I love you princess"

"And I love too daddy oh and mommy,I love my mommy so much" she says happily.

I drive home listening to the radio,because my human one has decided to fall asleep,but I don't blame her being hyper like that requires energy.

I drive in and the first car I see is Nkosenhle's. He comes out of the house as soon as I get out of my car.

"Bafo" I say.he doesn't say anything but looks at me instead.

"Nkosenhle awunamadlebe yini" I ask.

"Sawbona bafo" he says sulking.

"I am fine just tired" I say attempting to take Siya.

"It's okay I will take her" he says picking her up.he leads the way inside.

"You know you shouldn't be driving" he says.

"Get Siya to her room first then come get your ass whooped for disrespecting me" I say clicking my tongue.

He comes back and joins me on the couch,all I want to do is watch soccer and drink some beer. I don't feel like being lectured I head enough from the pastor today.

"How are you feeling" he asks handing me a cold one.

"Like crap as always" I say gulping down half of this beer.

"What are you going to do, I mean why aren't you taking a different faster option" he asks.

"Because I am a changed man, I want this process to be fair and above board" I say my eyes fixated on the TV.

"Why are you being selfish" he asks angrily.

"There's a difference between being selfish and letting fate play out" I say looking at him.

"I hate you" he says storming out. I have always known that he's soft, I take out my phone and type a text to Phiwo.

"Hey I was just checking up on you and Thingy, I love you guys so much. I can't wait to see you home next to me" I press send.

"I love you too Smiso so much" she replies.

"I have left everything behind, all because of you. I remember when you asked if I would leave it all and my answer is yes" she replies with heart emojis and a long "thank you Makhathini" text.

Makhathini

I feel like things are spinning out of control, that I am losing touch with reality so fast I can't keep up. I feel like life is being unfair, but you know what they say about old life making way for new life.

I wish things were as simple as Nkosenhle puti them. But here's the thing I made a promise if Phiwo's God pulled me out of that deep sleep, then I would change for her and our kids. The mighty man above indeed kept his end of the deal. I wish I could hold on till my Son arrives, but my body is slowly failing me.

My heart has reached its expiry date, I had been running out of breath and having a cold. Well that's what I thought till I collapsed in one of my gym sessions. I was rushed to the hospital and I found out about my chronic heart failure, I had to have Coronary Artery Bypass, luckily doctors of today know how to be discreet with the knife. I really wanted to tell Phiwo what's going on but the happy coward in me just couldn't.

My family has been through a lot and this will break them, the doctor said that's why I was in and out of a coma and it turns out I need a transplant. Because before the fire commenced I suffered a severe heart attack that being the last straw. Now

how do I tell the mother of my kids that I am dying and it's partly her fault. And I know I could easily get a heart on the black market but that requires someone's life to be taken, and it's not that easy I have to have a match my body has to accept it and not rejected it.

I am on a donor's list and for once I am playing by the rules, I have learnt that there are less fortunate people who need this more than I do, young kids who still have so much to do and I will not stand in their way.

I just have to hold on till Phiwo gives birth, I know I can do it. I need to name my son.

I wake up to some noise and Siya is not next to me, I quickly get off of the bed go to the bathroom do my business and changed clothes.

The kitchen is packed my family is her making breakfast in my kitchen. I slow walk towards my father who has Siya on his lap. he stands up putting her down.

"Mfana wam" he says pulling me for a hug.

"Baba how are you" he really looks good.

"I am fine ndodana" he says pulling away. I give my mother a kiss and a brief hug.

"Morning baba" Siya says not looking at me,her focus is on my dad.

"Morning Bear" I say.

"Are we going to work today" she asks.

"Not today princess" I say.

"Okay" she says after a while.she whispers something to my father who frowns.

They continue whispering till he puts her down and looks at me.She runs off I don't know where but comes back,she goes straight to my father and hands him my pills.

"Take a walk with me" he says walking ahead of me.I follow him to the terrace my pen child is a traitor.

"Baba I was going to tell you" I say.

"How bad is it" he asks.

"I need transplant soon" he rubs his forehead.

"We need to get you a donor as soon as tomorrow,I will speak to my contact" he says taking out his phone.

"Baba please don't" I say explaining my reasons and decision.

"I will not let you die,I don't care what you say " he says sternly.

"What if it's not a match and I have to find another one" I ask,he doesn't even look fazed.

"Well then we will get you another donor Nkosinathi" he shouts.

"Baba calm down we will talk about this some other time" I say.

"Some other time yokunuka tomorrow we are meeting up with my contact,and that's it Nkosinathi don't test my patience" he says walking away,Siya runs past him and joins me.

"Daddy" I give a disapproving look.

"Baba Ntokozoyami" she says holding my hand,I ignore her for a few good seconds.

"What did you tell your grandfather" I ask looking down on her,she peeps being me then looks up.

"I showed mkhulu your pills" she says looking down.hawu she now calls me pills this child.

"Why did you do that" I ask,damn this is hard she looks ready to cry.

"Because Mkhulu also has them,I am sorry daddy" she says sweetly.I would be a monster if I didn't pick her up.

"It's okay just don't do it again" I say picking her up,she puts he arms around my neck hugging me.I eventually put her down

because she wants me to chase her around.I love this little person with everything in me,I look up and my father is watching us carefully from a distance. I am willing to listen to my father for the sake of my kids.

"Baba" I hear Siya's voice fading away as I close my eyes.

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Langa Xulu

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I watched my Son collapse while chasing my granddaughter. There's nothing more painful than a parent having to bury their child. I refuse to watch my son go six feet under. I hate that he didn't trust me enough to let me know,I angry that he he is even considering dying because he is changed. I don't care what promise he made to whom but no son of mine is dying.

My wife has been crying her eyes out,this women has been through a lot. First our son was burned and he slipped into a coma,now I know why that happened. She doesn't understand why this is happening to us.

"Langa my son is dying" she says resting her head on my shoulder.

"He's not going to die, stop saying that" I say.

"Then why is he lying on that bed with all those things plugged to him" she asks wiping her tears.

"They are just monitoring his heart that's all" I say trying to assure her.

"Do something Gxabhashe save him" she says looking up, I know Nonhlanhla loves Nkosinathi more than anything in fact, there was a time I thought she loved him more than the other two.

"I have already made a few calls" I say.

"We shouldn't mention his heart attack to Phiwo" she says softly.

"No she has to know that her actions have consequences, we can't keep protecting her as if she's a child" she holds my hand calming me down.

"Langa this is bigger than us, please don't upset Phiwo just think about your grandson" she says brushing my hand.

"She must be on her way here, I spoke to her parents and they will drive her here" I say, ignoring her plea not to tell Phiwo what happened.

I know we are all guilty of protecting her, but I have also learned that secrets destroy. Especially when it comes to those

two they hide things thinking they are protecting each other. My guess is that Nkosinathi hasn't told Phiwokuhle about all of this, being a parent requires strength from above a tell you.

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Phiwokuhle

I got a call that I must pack all my clothes, Manqoba would be fetching me. I did as I was told and my brother came to pick me up since I can't fly that was early yesterday.

Baba is driving he may be taking the short cut but I know we are headed for the hospital. Unlike some people Aphiwe had the decency to tell me what's going on, I feel like screaming my lungs out. Go down on my knees pray till they bleed asking for forgiveness. I have come across people who have their share of problems, but mine seem to be piling up each month.

I wipe my tears playing with my ring, I wish we could write our own destiny who know then maybe there would be less heartaches. I plan on marrying this man no matter what come hell or high.

"I want you to be strong okay" Baba says holding my hand. We walk to Smiso's parent, his mother is clinging tightly his father.

Things must be pretty bad phela Smiso's mother is one strong lady.

She stand up when she sees me,we share a brief hug my stomach is just in the way.A tall handsome man approaches us,I figure it's the doctor.

"How is he" Bab Xulu asks in a low tone.

"He's stable and like I said sir,you son suffered a serve heart attack meaning our attempts to changes valves will not be of use.he needs a new heart soon,we thought the the bypass would help but he's been getting tired easily and that limits him from doing his ordinary day things" I gasp almost losing balance,baba holds me steadily.

"Then get him a heart" I say.

"I am afraid it's not that simple,we have other patients who need this and they have been waiting for a long time" he says.

"But he's slowly dying please" I say my voice breaking.

"Mam he's not the only one" he says in a low tone.

"Can I see him" he nods leading the way.I walk inside his ward.he looks peaceful but different. I grab a chair next to him holding his hand.

"Hey,I came soon as I heard.I am not angry just disappointed why didn't you tell me.Smiso you can't give up,you can't leave

us not now. You still need to get that tattoo" I wipe my tears sniffing. "You need to see Thingo,Smiso don't be selfish I can't raise these kids on my own. I will find you a donor you will not die because you want to be an honorable man. I know you have changed,I have seen it which is why I won't let you die. I love you so much" I rest my the side of the bed.

"So me dying on my own hurts,but when you tried to kill me it didn't hurt imihlola yakho" he says cracking a strained laugh.

"Don't play like that" I say standing up to kiss him. He opens his eyes and closes then again,he breathes in and out slowly.

"How are you" he asks running out of breath.

"Just sleep okay,I will be here when you wake" he slowly nods.I keep brushing his hand and thinking of all the good times.

I take out my phone and call Mr Sibeko.

"Hello"

"Phiwokuhle" he says on the other end.

"I need to see you,baba I think I need your help" I say making sure my voice sounds audible enough.

"You can come to my house,I will wait for you" I end the call,I am really doing this asking help from the man Smiso hates.

Skhumbuzo Sibeko

Most people believe that I am this big bad person, they think nothing of me but a shark a shrewd business man. I wouldn't have it any other way through. I have had to work hard to be where I am, I have had to do things I am entirely against. I was once a man who had strong values couldn't be corrupted, but life happened and I had to take the punches rolling. I believe that respect is earned, look at me I have earned respect in this world but the rest I instilled fear. Respect can only take you so far and be given up to a certain point. Would I have it any other way? No I wouldn't. I like the fact that there are people who fear even the mention of my name, I like that I send the fear of God into them. But things haven't been always been easy, my wife passed away years ago. I was left with Ngqobhane my son, I love him more than anything but what father wouldn't. He may be hot headed like me but his heart has always been in a good place. My wife was beautiful inside and out but she wasn't always my first love. But I will forever be grateful for the love she gave me, she nursed a heart she never broke, gave me son and made my house a home. I see all of her in Ngqobhane everyday but the again I still see the woman I love, go on with her life and I am happy for her.

I come back from my study,I had to answer Phiwokuhle's call.
That girl is one smart young lady Smiso is lucky to have her.

"Business call" Langa asks.

"Something like that" I say settling down.

"Skhumbuzo I need your help" he says,keeping eye contact.

"What's wrong bafo" I ask,Langelihle knows there's nothing I
would do for him.

"Nkosinathi is in the hospital,it's not looking good,he needs a
heart urgently" he says sighing heavily,I almost drop the glass I
have in my hand.

"How,what happened" I ask fairly hurting.

"It's heart failure and they have tried all the tricks in the book
but nothing,and the fact that he suffered a heart attack right
before the fire made things worse" he says breaking down.

"Skhumbuzo we can't lose him,Nonhlanhla would die I am
afraid I will both my wife and son" I move closer and place my
hand on his shoulder.

"What do you need me to do" I ask.

"Help me find him a heart" he says wiping his tears.

"Consider that done" I say nodding.

"Thank you" he goes quiet like his thinking of something. "I think now is the right time for the truth to come out" he says looking at me.

"That might just make things worse,let's wait for now" I say.

"Izobonana Xulu omkhulu" he says walking out. I know he taking strain but so am I,no parent deserves to bury their child.

I lean back on the couch thinking about my life,I don't regret anything but I wish I had done better in some aspects of my life.

I lean back on the one seater couch. Ngqobhane comes in with some girl. That's all he knows bringing in girls all the time.

He goes up probably to his room then comes back.

"Baba" he says pouring himself a glass of my whisky.

"We need to talk" he raises his eye brows and shakes his head.

"Baba it's not another lecture" he says playfully.

"Will you just listen for once in your life" I say sternly.

"Ngyaxolisa baba" he says being attentive.

"You know I love you and I want the best for you. When your mother died you became my source of strength. You are old now and there's nothing I can do,I have guided you the best way I know how. Ngqobhane you have made me proud for the

young man you have turned out to be. I love you Ndodana. He nods wiping his tears.

"Baba what's going on" he says.

"Nothing but life has way of reminding us that we are all mortal beings" I say flashing him a smile.

"I love you old man as hardcore as you are" he says giving me hug.

"Smiso is in the hospital" I say.

"What's wrong with him" he asks in a panicked voice.

"I don't know yet" I lie just this once.

"Baba I have to go see him,he needs me right" he says with so much uncertainty in his voice.

"It's okay he's still your friend" I say,he stands up takes his keys and rushes out.

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A few hours later the girl he was with walks down looking all shy.I had totally forgotten about her,she slowly walks towards me her are on her feet poor child.

"Your boyfriend had to attend important issues" he nods still standing where she is.

"I am sorry sir but I need to go home but I don't have taxi fare" she says innocently, that's the problem with these young girls thinking everything is free. A free ride few drinks and she's sold. I reach out for my wallet taking out a few 100 notes.

"Take a taxi home" she takes the money says thank you and walks out.

An unknown number appears on my screen. The only unregistered numbers that call me are business related.

"Hello" the caller says nothing, I can't hear them breathing though.

"You shouldn't call people if you don't know what to say" I say getting pissed.

"Baba" Smiso's voice says on the other end, I never thought this day would come the boy hates my guts.

"Makhathini is that you" I ask.

"I just called to say thank you for everything you've ever done for me, I know about Khosi and that the child was never mine. I am sorry things never ended well between us but you were once a father to me and for that ngyabonga Maziya" he says, I am not good with emotions but I know he means all of this.

"I should be thanking you for never turning your back on Ngqobhane" I say,he ends the call after I have said my peace. I guess death has a way of making you see the good in the bad.

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Phiwokuhle

I drive all the way to Mr sibeko's house, I don't know what I am doing or what I am thinking. All I know is that I love that man,I won't let him die not when I am due in no time. I never thought I could love another human being so much,other than my kids. I thought I would be able to breathe without him but for the last two days things have been hard. I don't want to mention the few months I was away from from him. There were days I thought I would go crazy because I was far from him. I know I messed when I tried to kill him,I heard what the doctor said about the fire playing a huge role in his hospitalisation.

I am brought back from my clustered thoughts by the heavy security around the house.I drive in and the moment I get out of the car, the man of the house walks out.

We share a brief hug,I have gotten used to seeing the man. And he hasn't been that bad at all, with all the stories I have heard he is the perfect person to help us.

He offers me something to drink as soon as we settle down.

"Water please" I say, though i almost refused phela this man once drugged me.

"What can I do for you" he asks.

"I need your help" I say explaining my whole situation to him,he keeps nodding without interruption.

"So you want me to steal a heart that is meant for someone else and give it to Smiso. And if I can't you want me to kill someone just like that" he asks mockingly.

"I know it sounds crazy but yes" I say swallowing hard.

"Why would I do that" he asks.

"Because for some odd reason you care,I wouldn't have come here if I didn't think you could help. I will do anything to repay you" he looks taken aback by my statement. "He is father and a son,I am expecting his child so please help me save him" I wipe my tears hurriedly,I don't want this man thinking I am weak.

"Tell me after everything you he has put through,why haven't you left him" he asks camly,I think this is going smoother than I thought.

"Because I love him more than anything,he doesn't want to take any heart because he has changed for me. I love him because he's not just any ordinary man,you once said you would never hurt your own. Now I am begging you to help your own" he's still looking at me,I can't tell if his going to help or not.

"Fine" just like that he says fine.

"What do you want in return" I ask not sure what I am asking him.

"To love my son and stand by him" I suddenly get hot flushes and stomach pains, I blink a few times not sure what he means by son.

"I think I need to go to the hospital"

45

Phiwokuhle

I am rushed to the hospital by Mr Sibeko himself, We get to the reception doctor Khan and his team are already on standby.

This can't be happening I can't be having this baby now.

"Just breathe" he says next to me, he's holding my hand as they wheel me to my ward. It's suddenly mayhem Smiso is standing before me together with Ngqobhane, now I am really confused they look alike but Smiso is frail I don't get why he got out of bed.

"Mr Xulu you need to go back to bed" the nurses plead with him.

"This is my wife" he shouts, Ngqobhane is supporting him on the side.

"I am here just as I promised" he says brushing my hair. I am told to breathe in and out timing my contractions.

"We need to prepare her for a cesarean" doctor Khan shouts.

"No.no. I can't have him now it's too soon" I see my mother walk in, I did say things are a mess.

"Mama tell them I can't give birth now" I cry looking at all these people.

"It's okay my baby doctor Khan knows what he's doing" she says softly, I can't help but cry what if something goes wrong.

"Smiso ngyasaba" he kisses my forehead and squeezes my hand.

"I will be right here waiting for you just remember to fight okay" he says coming to kiss my lips.

I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy Thingoluhle Xulu, the nurses took him he's small but doctor Khan says it's because he's premature. Siya has a brother now my baby is going to be happy. Mr Sibeko walks in followed by bab Xulu.

"We just saw Thingo usebenzile makoti" they both say.

"Ngyabonga baba, how's Smiso" I ask.

"He's fine just tired in fact he should be here any time soon" his father says.

"I am sorry that I caused you early labour" his other father says, see I am confused mina.

"It's okay baba it was a complicated pregnancy so this was already on the table" I say trying to ease things.

"I think we should leave before he gets here" they both say walking out. I don't know how they were able to keep up with this secret for so long.

Smiso walks in followed by a nurse he refused to be wheeled such a proud stubborn man.he smiles walking towards my bed he joins me laying next to me.

My whole body hurts and the pain med are wearing off.

"Mazwane" he says careful putting his hand on my stomach.

"Makhathini" I say with a smile.

"Thank you for not giving up" he says kissing my hand.I say nothing because I am out of words if we both die then what will become of our kids. "Why did you get out of bed" I ask.

"Because I made a promise" he says in a low tone.

"I love you Smiso" he laughs,I haven't heard him laugh in such a long time.

"I love you Phiwo" I move my head and kiss him.

"Ungavukelwa please" he says playfully

"Marry me as soon as we leave this place,make me the happiest man dead or alive and be mine forever. Thank you for choosing me and being the mother of my kids I love you Mazwane" he says kissing my forehead. If only he knew my heart chose him way before I could say yes.

"Yes I will,I will marry you as soon as we leave this place" I say resting my head on his chest.

Langa Xulu.

I can never be half the man my brother was even if I tried too. I could never give as much as he has given me, I remember wanting to die when I found out I had fallen in love with the woman my brother loved more than anything and anyone, the woman whose heart he broke. I remember wanting to give up but I couldn't, I had already fallen too hard for this woman. I wanted to be the bigger person and walk away but I had already made promises. I couldn't leave the eyes that looked at me like I am the only man alive. Deep down I knew I shared her heart but I was okay with it, because even though she was torn she never showed it. She loved me with all her bits and pieces, I guess it's true when they say in each relationship one loves more than the other. And I was the one that loved more than the other, I guess she's always hoped that things would change and I would be my brother but that hope has disappeared. Most people know or should I say knew him as Maziya his mother's surname, but his real name is Skhumbuzo Langalokuphila Xulu my father's first born. He taught me everything I know, loved me more than my own father. People may think he was cruel and power driven, but I say he was a family man over everything. I say he was my brother, father and best friend in one. He sacrificed his happiness for me, gave me a family and the love of my life. Lala ngoxolo Xulu, Gxabhashe, Donda,

Makhathini till we meet again I say to my self.

Is he really gone" she asks with teary eyes.

"Yes" she bolts into this loud cry that breaks my heart.

"Why didn't he say goodbye,how could Skhu leave us like that" she asks.

"I really don't know sthandwa sam" I say comforting her.

"He's gone and he's never coming back" she says crying painfully.I guess it's slowly sinking in. "I know you loved him" I am sorry Gxabhashe,she says comforting me instead. See why I fell in love with this woman,she has just picked herself up forgot her pain. I know she's trying to be strong but even I can't be that strong it hurts my brother is gone. I will never forgive myself,couldn't he love me any less.

Makhathini

It's been two whole weeks of me being in the hospital,I have bounced back probably healthier too or maybe it's because of my new heart. I was surprised when I got prep for theatre,things went great and I guess my father came through on this one.Things have been tense though,people around me have been acting all gloomy. My parents can't even look at me in the eye, I think the only person who cares right now is phiwokuhle. She gave birth to a baby boy Thingoluhle Xulu,I was the happiest man on the planet I was happy I got to see

him,as tiny as he was I got to see my son come to earth and I was still breathing and standing. I know it sounds silly but I prayed for the soul whose heart I received. I will remain grateful for the gift of life I received.

Phiwo walks in or should I say she's wheeled in by a nurse,her skin is glowing but her eyes are puffy which is odd because everything is fine. I guess today we're not seeing Thingo usually we meet by babies ward and check up on him. She smiles when our eyes meet,I must say I am one lucky bastard to have won her heart or maybe destiny was already set way before we met. Maybe it was written in the stars before we were born. I love her so much that life without her would be meaningless. I don't want to dwell on why I love her,because I personally believe that when one is able to pin point why they love someone then something is not meant to be. I believe there are things that only you and your heart should know of,like that unexplainable reason why you love someone.

"Hey my love" she smiles stands up and gives me a kiss.

"Hey how are you feeling today" she asks.

"I am much better and how are you feeling" I ask,because she couldn't have a natural birth due to complications. She gave birth through a cesarean and the doctors said more damage was done to her womb. I don't think I want her having another baby,we were lucky that we didn't lose both her and Thingo.

"I am okay I just can't wait to go home" she says avoiding eye contact.

"Phiwo what's wrong" if there's one thing I know about this woman her eyes never lie. She takes out a black envelope on the side the only person who does custom made envelopes is Maziya. I called him a few weeks back and I guess that was my way apologising and saying thank you.

"I have had this letter for about two weeks and a few days now. I have been waiting for you to get stronger so I could give it to you, promise me that whatever is written in there you will accept it and move on" she says putting the envelope in my hand, but doesn't let go.

"I am so sorry sthandwa sam" she says wiping her tears.

Phiwokuhle

I watch him slowly open the envelope, his hands are shaking. I wanted to tell him so many times but I couldn't, we decided to wait till he was strong enough and that day has come. I know he can take the news, I just don't know how bad it will affect him. Ngqobhane is beyond torn but he has found comfort in knowing that he has a family. I am glad bab Xulu has manned up and vowed to be a father to him.

"Why won't this damn thing open up" he asks frustrated. I offer to open it and hand it back to him.

"No you read it" he says sounding irritated. I take the letter and clear my throat, I already know what's inside I will be reading it for the first time now. I just hope I can read it without shedding tears this time. Dear Smisokuhle.

"I know this comes as a shock, I am not really good with words or expressing myself but I had to try I had to make you understand. I knew that one day the truth would come out but I never knew it would come out with me gone. I am penning these words on this useless paper with tears in my eyes. We were never honest with you in the first place, My name is Langalokuphila Xulu a name given to me by my useless father, that spineless man broke my mother's heart and left her behind to start another family. I tried by all means not to follow into his footsteps but life had other plans for me. I wasn't always this cruel you know, I was young ambitious I had dreams. I met your mother Nonhlanhla on my way to work, I swear I had never seen such beauty in one person. I made it my life mission to have her and make her happy. We were young and in love, I was planning to marry her and build a home with her. But life happened, I was an accountant back then. My dreams and the life I knew perished when I was arrested for a white collar crime I never even committed. But your mother's love kept me going till I didn't anymore, I got sentenced to 8 years in prison and that's when we found out your mother was carrying you. I worked hard on the inside did favours just for you guys to

survive,I messed up when I killed someone and more years were added to my sentence. Right there and then I knew I had to let go of your mother but I still did right by you guys. Your mother never begged for anything she was well taken care off. Time came and I got releasie from jail things had already changed, Nonhlanhla had already moved on with my own brother. I don't blame her though she never knew,I saw how Langa looked at her and I knew I could never take that away from him. I loved and still love your mother,but I loved my brother more and I chose to walk away. You are the product of mine and Nonhlanhla's love. My brother raised you well and I am proud to call you my son. I was always there in the shadows protecting you even when you didn't know. Phiwokuhle asked for my help and I knew this was the time to step up,I could have done it the other way round. But I am tired and i miss my wife everyday,this is me being a father to you on my last days by giving you my heart. I gave you the name Smisokuhle ask your mother why. Life was never kind too our love,I hope it treats you better than it did us. I love you ndodana so much.

All I ask is that you take care of your brother be there for him,he may not understand my reasons now but one day he will. I tried my best to cause a wedge between you too but I failed, the moment I saw phiwokuhle I knew and I didn't want history repeating itself. Find it in our heart to forgive,accept and move on,don't think about what could have been embrace

this journey. Fate deals us different cards and i guess this is my mine. But death so soon isn't part of yours, you are both my son's through and through and I love you"

I finish reading the letter with a broken heart,I wish I took time to know him better. Smiso is clearly torn he's not himself he has just thrown almost everything against the wall. I don't know how to comfort him my words can never make him feel better,matching his tears can never make his pain go away.

"I am so sorry" I say trying to calm him down,he pushes me off him right now he's angry and he might hurt himself.

"He was my father"he says sinking to the floor,I rush to his side and gently pull him into my arms.

"He loved you that's all that matters,just focus on that and nothing more" he groans in pain hurting me.

"I hate them all" he says breaking down.

"Smiso please you have to be strong for Ngqobhane he needs you"I say still holding him tight I pull away and kiss his lips.

"I promise you will get through this,I love you Makhathini"

Love is indeed the greatest gift ever given to us, I know his father loved him and all his sacrifices were not in vain.

Pain is pain no matter how it comes it can never be greater than the other. We happen to meet people by chance and it is by destiny that they stay.

.....**The End**.....

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