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Chapter 01

...in losing him I lost my greatest blessing and comfort, for he was always that to me” that is St. Teresa of Avila’s quote but I can make it mine. It’s not like I will make millions in having it pasted in bold colourful letters in my bedroom, or does it needs any kind of referencing some Harvard styling to make my life more difficult. I just have to lay my eyes on it always to remind my self that I am fatherless. My name should have been submitted at Luthuli house as one of surviving unemployed children of comrade Philip Madzivha, the man who died in the struggle, no scratch that my father didn't die on the struggle he was a survivor until a black man, holding unlicensed black pistol decided to empty his pistol on him. Just like that, the happiest day of his life, become his last day.

It was on the 22 MAY 2010, the day that he was going to be inaugurated as Makhado municipality mayor. Busy grinning like a chimpanzee all day, he was a happy man and finally getting recognition for all the hard work he has put in for development of his community.

“Sis, Ndati” a knock come through my door and I hiss in disapproval. I hate staying home. Fuck being unemployed. Fuck everything. Now I have to wear one of my brightest smiles and welcome strangers in my room.

Yes, strangers’ anyone who doesn’t sleep in this room is recognised as a stranger to this room.

“Come in” a tired bored voice announces, and there goes my peaceful me time.

Oh! Hello, where did time fly to? Not long ago I was preparing him lunch box for school now he is here. With his dirty soccer boots hanging on his shoulder, he also looks like his soccer boots or worse just crawl out of a hole.

I don’t have any energy to ask him what he did at school, how was school and all that. I just want to know what happened, why did he came home dirty because I don’t remember his mother buying a washing machine. Mxm, unemployment is a shit and my dad has fought for freedom.

“They said I should write a letter to my father” he announces before jumping to my bed with his dirty uniform, and my soul immediately leave my body and comes back when he bounce back.

“You don’t have a father” I mindlessly remind him the obvious. He should just write a letter to his mother instead. He can’t submit letters to heaven, or maybe there is a post office, that delivers straight to heaven we just don’t know.

“I know that, and the teacher said it’s for marks. So I have to form stories telling him about how grateful I am he taught me something” he said, shrugging his shoulders.

I snap my eyebrows, and stare at him in awe. It’s been ten years since that man passed away, now the son he left only a year old has to write a letter to a man, he only heard from me. Life is not fair.

My mother have long forbidden my father’s talks, her heart haven’t healed and I have heard her countless time sobbing at night. Especially on his birthdays, valentine

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their anniversary and the day he passed on.

“So, what do you need help with” I ask. I know helping him with homework is my duty, because of the obvious reasons, unemployment.

“Tell me what dad used to love doing. Who is Mr Philip Madzivha?” he questions.

I have told him countless times who Mr Philip Madzivha is; the only thing he taught him was calling him “baba” (dad) before he even teethed. But now because is homework I have to repeat again, Jeso.

I clear my throat countless times, pop my fingers. Sadness fills my heart and refreshes the pain in my heart. Where do I start, that man was a jack of all trades.

“Don’t cry sis, he lives in our hearts” Tondani my little brother repeats my line “he lives in our hearts”, I wipe off my tears. I didn’t even realise I was crying.

“Don’t be silly I am not crying” I said flashing my best Colgate smile ever. How do I not cry that man was my comforter and my number one protector of all time?

“Ooh come on. I am not a child” this one should be my five hundred and fifty years old brother if he isn’t a child. He should be older than me then.

“Philip Madzivha, he was our father. A struggle hero, one of the humblest person I have ever known and honest. I think he invested cleanliness is next to godliness line because wow, your dad was a neat freak” I said, with a smile on my face. As I pictured how he would be telling me how being neat have

stories to portray about you, before you even open your mouth.

Although talking about him bring pain in my heart also happy moments finds a shelter in the same wounded heart.

He would always tell me about working hard, and how much it pays. How my effort should match my desire of having something done. Lastly importance of planning, “if you want to achieve something big in this life my angel write is down” he would always tell me. And I used to laugh at his lessons maybe that the reason why I ended up with a degree that is out of system.

Narrating how my father was like wasn't an easy thing to do, the wound is still raw and I am not ready to talk about him. But homework has to be done.

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Everyone is glued on TV, Muvhango is doing it again and this time it has captured everyone's interest. But not me, I am unemployed I will catch a repeat tomorrow. Right now I am busy rehearsing my lines on how I am going to ask my mother this, my father is a closed topic but I want to do this for him, for us maybe we will find healing.

“Mma” my tongue blurt out before I could digest it. Now I have her attention and there is no way I am getting out of this I rather pee on myself.

“Mmmmh” she replies turning to me.

Where is the brown paper bag, I need my breathing sessions in it because wow.

“I...I ...I was planning” I mumble and she gives me a disapproval look.

“Talk to me when you’re ready she turned back her attention to TV” and I know I might never have courage to ask this. So here goes nothing.

“I want us to celebrate my father’s life this year by...” she cuts me short with a very cold and heart breaking answer.

“No” she said.

“But you didn’t give me a chance to hear what I want to say” i half shouted at her, with my emotion getting worked up.

“Don’t raise your voice at me. Don’t make me mad Ndatiso, I will go crazy on you right now. Please don’t” she warn, then clicks her tongue.

“...but it’s not fair mom. I have to celebrate my father’s life. I have questioned on my father’s case. I have questions and I

need answers mom” I said fighting back the bile raising deep from my tummy. I can’t cry when addressing this issue.

“Do I look like I have answers? Do I look like I don’t have questions? Do I look like a detective Ndatiso? Please don’t bore me. If you have nothing better to do go draft some CVs and stop waiting for miracles to happen” my mother’s bites back. Tears flood my face and I chuckle with anger rising rapidly.

“Maybe it’s because you have a father that you don’t understands how it feels like not to have one” I say and stand up.

A shoe lands on my back before I could even reach the door.

“I am your mother, not you’re friend” she screams.

I stand there for a minute before walking out of the house. I need a smoke and real quick before I murder her. I may not be permitted to celebrate my father’s life on the day he passed on, but I can do one thing for him though. That is to fight back.

CHAPTER 02

The sun is already out and about, brightening my room. I can't sleep anymore. I raise my head and hiss in frustration. "Why do I have to wake up so early" I mumble to myself. Yes, its early 10 Oclock is too early for a person who isn't going anywhere. Or have any obligation to fulfil.

In few minutes the bed is already done, morning breath already taken care of so is my face. I smile at myself applying Vaseline on my face, looking at my reflection on the mirror.

I am not like any normal girl; I should be having close to hundred brands of bathing and lotions sets. I should be washing my face using a gentle magic soap, use Portia M toner, Nivea serum, and all other brands deep cleanser and what in god's care skin care routine they all subjected themselves with.

But here I am making myself a Vaseline brand ambassador. I wrap a doek on my head and use it to cover my shoulders as well. Then push my legs to the kitchen, I have to start cleaning this whole damn house.

Today is a spring cleaning day and also my chef Ndati skills need to come out and play. I starts taking out all plates, glass, cups spoons and other utilities that we use once we have guests.

I can't even remember when the last time we had guest in this house was. I dust them with a further dust then wipe them with a dry cloth one by one and by the time I am done, I was already sweating like a like a pig.

It took me precisely 4 hours to get to my father's study room and it's a night mare. Spider webs have artfully crafted and decorates they whole room, making it looks like a jungle, dusts covering the furniture. I swear anacondas have find a home in this place what left is the elephant and its mates to make it a zoo with all the summed up big five in a 4x4 room.

She walks in slowly, forgetting about all the tiredness she have been feeling hunger has long left her. Only curiously sparkles on her face and the urge to go through everything here grow deeper. This is the only room that has things that can make her get closer to her father, but it's a forbidden room.

Her eyes roam around, while she slowly walks inside. His study room still looks like how it used to. With papers splashed on the desk and his laptop buried underneath the pile of papers. She pushes the papers aside and tries to switch on the laptop.

"Great" she mumbles as it flashes, opening and a grin form on her face.

“It needs passwords” she mumbles to herself biting her pointing finger nail trying to think, what could be her father’s passwords.

“Philip Madzivha” she calls it out while typing. Incorrect passwords appears, she nearly kick the desk in frustration. Two line creases on her forehead.

She breathes out then bites her pointing finger more. Then tries out other password she is thinking of with no luck.

“umkhontowesizwe” she types the laptop, hoping it gains her access. Her father used to love umkhoto we sizwe songs and that links his first love

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politics. The laptop opens and she smiles. And she does little victory jabs, pheew, “that was one hell of a job” she said to herself.

She marks each and every document and emails it to herself before starting to go through them.

Hours flew by fast; she is busy swamped on the pile papers in front of her. She have long closed the laptop, reading each and every line and circling or underlining some of the sentences in the document that where on the table.

“What are you doing” a voice startled her and immediately slips through her fingers, with her eyes popped out. she raise her eyes to the direction where the voice comes from and there stands her fuming mother. The lady has no peace, Mrs Muofhe Madzivha.

“Hey...Ma, I, I am cleaning” she stutters while faking a smile.

“Stop what you’re doing and get out of here. I told you no one should enter here” Mrs Madzivha grunts in between her lips.

“But mma...” –Ndati

“But get out” she screams at her.

“Mma”

“Ndatiso Madzivha, I said get out” she screams louder, tears wetted her face.

There was no other way she have to get out, she is fuming but have to respect her mother’s wish.

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Clearly I haven’t lived enough to know it all in this world. I really didn’t know that well chewed food can choke you. I have been trying to swallow them but these wors refuses to slide down my throat.

The burning stares from Lucifer's agent have been frying my forehead ever since I sat my black ass here. It's a mistake that I regret, and has filled my tummy as well.

"Today we were asked to read our letters for the whole class" Tondani announces trying to lighten the tension in the dining room.

I cast my eyes at him, hoping he will get the shut up message but hey, the guy is ready to spill it all out. So, much for being an 11 years old man.

"What was the letter about" my mother asks with a grin on her face. She knows he nailed whatever the letter was about because we have got the brains. Something my mother is proud of, our father's brains. But prays we take different route from our fathers.

"My dad" my stupid brother cheerfully said. He looks happy much better than how he looked yesterday asking about his father.

"What did you write about him and where did you get the information" she asks frowning and her tone a bit harsh.

"Ndati gave me the information and it wasn't..."my mother cuts him short then addresses me.

"What are you teaching my child Ndatiso? What in god's name are you teaching him. To defy me, because I can see you're

effortlessly doing that. What do you want from me? Hehehe, you want my head, I see. Go boycott for your father to his political friends' houses not here. And stop feeding my son nonsense" she roars and I just heave a sigh.

If I reply back she will say I disrespect her. Already my grandparents and uncles will be here, to discuss my disrespectful ass. Who wants to sends their daughter to an early death, but is it wrong to ask about my father. I believe I am grown to a point where I don't need the "he is in heaven watching over us shit" I want the real deal the whole truth. And in this case is what happened to his case? What was he killed for? When he died I was young and didn't get to deal with his death but now, I have to know. I need to know.

Chapter 03

“I am in need of a job, anything I can do” I sent a text to my friend. Khumbelo Munyai. She come from a rich family and also married to a moneyed family. I now she can make things happen for me. I have to find something to shift my focus on rather than making my mother think I am devil’s agent sent to make her life difficult.

My phone rings and I smile, we hardly speak, because she is a married woman while I don’t remember when was the last time I wrote a man’s name combine with mine. It’s been long since I have climbed fridges put salt inside the fridge, pour washing powder into boiling water trying to cook pap, I have to find myself a man.

“Bitch” I greets, grinning like a chimpanzee.

“Loud mouth” she greets back and I laugh. Yes I am too loud when I am with her. I talk a lot and easily make friends as well, one of the reasons why she is my friend.

“How is that handsome man of yours? I always dream of him” I utter and she laughs out loud “in your dreams baby girl. I will set you in fire and you wouldn’t believe that it’s me” she said and I laugh a bit louder than before.

Trusts married woman in fighting the other woman for their husbands. If it was me I was going to set on fire his cheating black tight ass. I think that the reason why I am single, I don't fight my fellow sisterhood for a man nope, I rather kill him. "Before you set me on fire, I heard that your brother in law is married, before I get the chance to rate his bedroom performance" I announce and did I make her laugh even more. I am sure her husband could be seeing her bare throat right now, uncultured wives.

"Which one...?" she questions. I know she knows which one I am talking about. I can't be talking about the older one, who looks like he love danger and also doesn't smile. I am not ready to sign up for depression. She loves hearing me praising Munyai boys. They're handsome and have their lives intact.

"The mini Lucky Dube" I say holding back my laugh. If I continue to laugh like ratcheted I might as well kiss, my father's house goodbye. It hurts being labelled as a disrespectful child.

"Mini what...?" I know that line killed her, and now I have to explain why he is my mini Lucky Dube.

"He doesn't have dreadlocks on his whole head, so I can't call him half Lucky Dube, he is mini Lucky Dube" I explain.

"Ooh, really. He is married to a most humble and beautiful lady. He is a father now" Khumbelo updates me, like I didn't know. I

know everything I am supposed to know. Only my father's case seems to always hit the dead end because I never really wanted to hurt my mother.

"Yeah...So, what's up" she becomes serious and I know playtime is over. How I wish I was 5 years old, with no care, no responsibility and no serious questions. Even though, they say I was a curious child I am sure I used to ask questions like, "who made sugar" and their answers would be the simplest "sugarcane" and that's all.

"It's my mother" I heave a sigh, tap my fingers on my curve and bite my lower lip.

"What has she done now, or rather what have you done" trust my friend to change everything to blame me.

"She has called a family meeting for me. I know they will be ganging up on me but am I wrong to ask about my father?" I say feeling frustrated as ever

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I just needed to hear from someone if I am wrong or right.

"She is still hurting" married woman defending their fellow married women, you can't separate them.

"Can I have the normal Khumbelo, not the married Khumbelo please" I said and she chuckles.

“Babe, she lost her life partner. She literally saw all her plans crashing right in front of her. She had a one year old son to raise and you as well. She never had time to mourn for her husband and try to make plans without him included on the picture, because she had to step up for both of you. Yes, it’s been ten years since your father died, but you might find that she is still holding onto hopes that aren’t there. She hasn’t had time to process everything hence she forbids your father talks, because that just adds salt to her cancerous wound. Don’t fight her try to understand her” – Khumbelo.

I gulp down at the emptiness, and clear, my throat. I understand that but I also have to deal with it in my own way. Knowing what happened to my father’s case would do me more healing than to just fold my hands and wait for miracles to happen, I can’t wait for jeso khristo to come back then wait for my father’s death puzzle to solve itself.

“That is the reason why I sent you a message that I need a job. I have managed to send myself some documents from my father’s laptop and now what left is to go through them. If I find a job, she wouldn’t think that I still have time to be curious of my father’s case” I announce the real reason behind the message.

“Oh, that’s better. She would be at peace and that is better.” She reason with me.

“So, about the job, will you help me” I question, holding my thumb and hopes for the best. It’s better to be told to send a CV when you know you have got the job.

Welcome to South Africa where connections matters more than qualifications and work experiences. Just know the right people and they will pave a path for you. Mingle...I repeat mingle with both people from the high class and lower class, if you know you don’t have randelas stashed somewhere waiting for washing hands.

“First promise me, you will behave, because if you don’t they will expect me to call you out” I know she would come through for me.

“I promise” I replied, before I squirrel in happiness. At least it would be one step forward.

“I will see what I can do” she gives me hope. Actually she gave me the whole job. I will have to stop with this thread of a student card holder and license holder to a whole salary slip holder, the whole tax payer.

“I can’t wait to take you out for lunch and recite the rich people’s line” I say in between my laughs. “Which line” my rich and very well connected friend is clueless. Maybe is before she have been rich even before she could know khumbelo was her name.

“Don’t worry, I got the bill covered” I tell her and she laughs a little. I heard her talking to someone on the phone; I think it’s her husband sulking because she has been on the phone for a decade now.

“Babe, it’s late. We will talk neh. I will surely come back with positive feedback” she tells me before she makes a kissing sound and I laugh. She is till the same crazy and lively khumbelo.

“Okay. Go and get laid, and don’t make babies, bye” I said and immediately drops the call before she tells me “I a married woman” line.

I sit comfortably on my bed, with my laptop and my diary on my lap. Pen tucked on my ear and headset plug in, Venrap (Venda rap) on blast and I activate my detective ass. Why did I study human resource?

Chapter 04

“Don’t just stare at us. Your stares don’t scare us” my uncles said, accompanied by a click of his tongue.

Yes, it’s Saturday and yes they are here for me...family meeting. No one is interested in roasted full chicken I was wakening up at dawn to start preparing. They just want to know how the devil work in manifested through their granddaughter has subjected to their child.

I look down and keep stomping my foot biting my inner lip. I don’t know what to say. I don’t want to disrespect them.

“So, you don’t answer when we talk to you but you have energy to stress my sister” he continues and I shake my head.

“Give me time, to narrate my side of story”

“What side, you want to say, my sister is laying” I move my eye to my mother, before answering. She is just staring at me, her eyes masked with tears but she aren’t letting them stream down her cheeks.

“I want to know what happened to my father’s case.” I announce “I want to know who pulled the trigger. I want to know why he had to die. I want to know why so many bullets. Why him...”

Tears streams down my face and I don't even make an attempt to wipe them. Every time I talk about my father's death, my heart shatters into pieces once again. It's a raw wound and still unbelievable. Maybe it's because I didn't get the chance to heal as a child. I felt his absence, I needed him and he wasn't there. Why?

"Ooh nwana wa muofhe wee" my grandmother say, with both her hands cupping her face.

"But that doesn't mean you should disrespect your mother" my uncles still protests after some moment of silence.

"I didn't disrespect her, she is just sensitive" I mumbled the last part.

"You see...ni khou zwivho. This is the kind of attitude I have to put up with daily. She even tells me that I won't understand because I still have a father" my mother gladly chirps in and I keep quiet.

I have a lot to say, but I have promised myself that won't be doing any bickering with her any further. So, my lips are sealed.

"She should be drafting her CV, dropping them off and emailing CVs for internships or job but nope. Not her, busy wanting to do what Philip did. This child is following directly on Philip's footsteps and she sees it alright" she wails when saying it this time around.

“But I am not...I didn’t do anything and...”

Taking a deep breathe, hold her fingers and count to ten trying to get hold of herself.

“I have found a job” I let undigested words rumbles out of my lips. It’s done, I have a job without an employer or a pay slip

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signed contract.i hope khumbeko come through for me.

“Ndi zwavhudi hezwo muduhulu” my grandfather congratulates while shaking his head. He is more of a quiet man, who doesn’t associate himself with squabbles.

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Since it’s been a week my investigation started, all I have found is a transaction between my father and this person I don’t know L.D Maswingulo.

I don’t know what payments where for and there are few confidential documents that a guarded by passwords. I don’t know what passwords are for what. But I have a gut feeling that those documents have information that might shine some light at this case.

After going through my diary checking what I have so far the next move is to Google further about his case. He was a councillor and a mayor to be, so his case has made few headlines and I am sure I might find something that will help. Even a name can take me far.

It's already after 10 in the evening. And I am thirsty. I get off my bed and stroll to the kitchen for my water bottle the night is still young and I am going to need the whole tank of water I want to stay up almost throughout the whole night.

I am on my leggings and lose ANC t-shirt that has my father's face on it. They have named one of their branches Philip Madzivha branch just like Dzivhuluwani Muregu branch and many others they name in honour of their patriots.

I switch on the passage light and head to the kitchen busy yawning, pulling my feet. I hardly lift my feet when walking I just pull them.

Hands lands on mouth, before I could register there is someone here. He pulls me closer to him and takes my scent in, I already know who it is, my uncle.

"Stop what you're doing" he whispers in my earlobe and I close my eyes. I won't even scream, I am not going to do that, I will just keep quiet I know he can't...can't...can he rape me? Nope, he won't. He is my uncle after all.

“I am going to take off my hands off your mouth. One scream, just one, you will see the other damn side of me you don’t even wish to know”

I nod countless times.

“What have you find, yet” he questions, I close my eyes and contemplating on telling him or not, but if he want to know why this way.

“Stop with your nonsense before someone gets hurt...you or that innocent sweet thing Todani” he then let go of me and I felt my knees getting weak.

He is long gone...long out of sight when Tondani’s voice startled me.

“Ndati, are you okay” I smile while holding a chair and immediately wiping my tears.

I nod “yeah”

Tondani smile then shakes his head. “You’re sleepless?” he questions and before I could answer “I will sleep with you, sit down. A glass of milk will help you” he strides further to the kitchen and I sadly smile, with my head pounding with questions

Chapter 05

NDATISO MADZIVHA

To say that I am not shaken, I will be lying. I am afraid but the gut feeling keeps telling me to continue but I will have to be discreet about it.

Today I wake up early, the reason why I wake up early today is to make breakfast for everyone.

My mother walks into the kitchen, then frown when her eyes lands on me.

“Mma” I call out for her.

“Mmh” she folds her arms and stares at me leaning of the wall with her legs cross. Drama, madam Muofhe is very much dramatic.

“I am sorry” I say fumbling with the dishcloth in my hands. “I am sorry for being disrespectful. I am sorry for keep on pressing the issues about my father. I am sorry for hurting you” I recite my apology speech.

I have been thinking about it since dawn. I can't stop but keep playing my uncle's voice again and again in my head, and my

tummy always turns when that harsh and threatening tone play in my head.

“What changed your mind” she question. I can’t tell her what her brother did or said but I have to lie.

“I realised that it aren’t doing any good to our relationship. You’re the only parent I am left with and I wouldn’t want to lose you over things like these, useless arguments.” I utter, it’s partly true, I don’t want to lose and she is the only parent left.

“Okay, if you say so.” She shrugs then walks inside the kitchen. “What are we preparing here” she asks with a smile plastered on her face and I smile too.

“I have prepared soft porridge for you and your son because I know you love it too much. And I am preparing the real breakfast for us, thee adults” I crack into laughter and her face breaks into a real happy face.

“Adult who? In whose house? I want adults’ food too” she says taking a beacon from one of the plates.

“Eew ma, that your plate.” My face has long form into a disgusted face and she laughs.

“What?” she shrug her shoulders before she continues taking another piece again.

“Really, you haven’t washed your hands and morning breathe” I remind her and she laughs.

“What do you take me for Ndati. I have already taken care of that. What’s left is for me to change into my church clothes and I am ready to go to church”

My uncle walks in the kitchen, holding my brother’s hand. My body immediately tensed up. My breath shortening, I have to immediately do the breath in and out. Yoh, where is the damn brown paper bag when I need it.

“Are you okay sis” my mother questions. Oh damn did I pull the stunt like that. Now he will kill me.

I immediately nod “yeah...yeah, I am good” I said, without realising the sweat dripping down my face and my hand resting on my chest.

My mom’s eyes land son my chest and she is really worried. Then it hits me, my hands.

“I...I, I, I just need some fresh air” I announces. “Can you please finish this up for me” I ask. She nods and my eyes lands on my uncle who winked at me and I nearly faint.

“Tondani, let’s go” I can’t leave him trapped in Satan claws never.

“But sis, we were having

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man talks with uncle.” He complains but the begging look I am giving him doesn’t allow him to have the ‘the man talk’ they are talking about.

****KHUMBELO MUNYAI****

Life is unpredictable and sometimes we get to be pushed to what seems to be a lion’s den only to get saved by the same lion. I feel like Daniel in the bible. Maybe I am his sister in a spiritual realm.

Growing up, I was labelled as a snob. Barbie, princess and all lousy names that fits the caller. But I didn’t let that get to me. My grades where always high and well not because I was a genius but because I wanted to prove to my father that I am capable of being something great.

Being born into a family of six children is not easy; there is always competition lingering around and especially from a polygamous background. I have to fight and strive for anything in my life; nothing was handed down to me. And that is the reason why I never wanted to join any family business. I wanted to be my own person, chasing my own dreams, not the family dreams.

I was only few months away from what seems to what was going to be my break through...my fresh start and a glimpse of what freedom looks like, when my dad calls for a family meeting.

“Khumbelo, you’re going to be among the girls that, that Munyai son is going to choose from” he announces and I nearly cut myself with a knife, the reason why even up to date I hate eating using a knife. The fork and knife shit isn’t my thing.

That day I felt my world standing still and everything in my life becoming lifeless. I am not really good with words, so I smile and nod my head. I knew better than going against his words. I know it’s all about building the business relationship. Love...loves and soul mate things didn’t mean shit in his vocabulary.

I waked up in the morning feeling down, but because art makes me smile and happy. I had to beautify myself. Make up, should be every girl’s favourite not because being natural aren’t it but because drawing those lines and painting yourself bring much more satisfaction.

That day when we reach the Munyai compound I nearly faint. It felt like I was stepping into my worst night mare and when khumbudzo’s face shows that he wasn’t happy. He didn’t want to be here but his mother was so adamant about the whole thing.

When he chooses me. Then we talk. I told him about my dreams and fears and all that. That man surprised me. He choose me to allow me to go to school as his wife, he choose to let us fall in love first. Like even though we were married we started dating and he never forced me to do anything. The respect he gave me forced me to respect him as well and the communication we built makes everything a lot easier.

He helped me build my world in a new way. From my low self-esteem to my thriving career. Today I am a doctor and I paint at times. Especially going through emotional draining situation, I paint a lot or watch my husband dancing his life away.

“Babe, why did you leave in alone” he wraps me with his arms from behind, planting soft kisses on my neck and I smile.

“You will make me burn your breakfast” I say, giggling form all the tingles sensation speeding down my spine and butterflies filling my stomach.

“Then, I will have you as my breakfast” he says squeezing my breast.

“But babe...mmmh”

“Shhh” he keeps me quiet. I know he have a meeting soon and I also have to be at work in few hours.

“We will be late” I remind him, and then he stop kissing me.

“Did you have to remind me? You’re such a bore” he sulks and I laugh.

“But it’s true”

“Anyway tell your friend that tomorrow 8 Oclock in the morning she should be at Maswingulo Construction Company, with her CV and certified document” he announces already taking a bottle of water from the fridge,

“Thank thank thank you” I say jumping up and down, I am so much happy.

Ndatiso is the only person who has been with me through it all. And I know at times I survived because of her. Beside the sisters in law...Shandu and Muvhuso, I know Ndatiso can stop her whole world just for me and I can gladly do the same. I immediately type the message, letting her know of the good news; I will call her when I have time.

Chapter 06

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

I know I am not going for an interview but I am sweating. The brown envelop that carrying my CV; already have my finger print on it. I keep on shuffling my jacket, trying to fan myself with it.

There is no dress to kill in formal wear; you already know how to kill the look by just wearing that knee lengths black skirt, white shirt and a black blazer but today for the sake of the day I have three quota heels on my feet. Finish off the look with my wrist watch that it has been a decade since it stopped moving at 15:45. The time I heard of my father's death.

"Yoh, taxis are taking long" I say to myself. Oh Jeso, I can't be late on my first day.

"First impression always matter" that would always be my mother's words; they form part of the lecture I got in the morning.

The day khumbelo sent me a sms I was so happy and I couldn't wait to share the news with everyone, including the wrinkle old Satan's descendant uncle of mine. Even though he kept winking

at me and giving me those murderous looks, I didn't care. I was at the verge of showing him my middle finger but, I can't mix Satan and good news.

"Where are you going sis" a husky deep voice vibrated from the black sport car in front of me. I don't know any car name except of the fucken car, which I still don't know if the moulder named it that. But it's black, shinning black.

"Damn" I mumble to myself in awe, I am not familiar with this kind, but I know the bmw sign, so it's a bmw. I don't know which bmw but it is.

"Do you want lift?" he inquire with a smile on his face showing off the star on his perfect white set of teeth and I start to feel like I haven't brushed mine.

From where I am standing I can see, his face perfectly so his shaved head, shining, in a good way. His face is well structured and...oh dammit the lift.

"I would like that sir" I flash my innocent smile but accompanied by shyness, I can tell he saw I was checking him out.

It should be a boast to him, I mean a beautiful lady like me checking him out. Duh...I should just get off my high horse and face reality, I aren't close to his types list so the lift it is.

"Where are you going?"

“To work. First day...first day and there are no taxis” I reply, taking a back seat and he waits until I sit comfortably.

“At town?”

“Yeah...yes, at the construction company there” I reply

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then starts to fiddle with my phone to avoid undressing him. The white golf t-shirt holds his arms tightly, it's no secret his best friend is a gym, lifting those heavy steels. His on hand is tattooed all of it and wish to run my hand on it.

On the tattoo, I haven't touched one and I do wish to have one. Just that if you still staying with bread winners and house owners who thinks that tattoos are symbol of the descendants of Satan and piercing as well, you don't do as you please with your body.

I like piercing and tattoos, if my mother was white I could be having countless tattoos and the first piercing I was going to get was that one pierced at the gums, in between two front teeth, smiley piercing. The tattoo here damn... I like your tattoo.

“It's one of my favourite” he says.

Damn did I just blurt that out? Damn talking to myself, I think out loud. What an embarrassment.

“So...I didn’t get your name” he says checking me out with his rear view mirror and I smile.

Should I give me some cheeky filthy attitude answer or... nope, he is a Good Samaritan. He gave me a lift. To make my first impression is good impression and shows how serious I needed the job.

“I am Ndatiso”

“Nice name, I am Lawrence”

I just nod because I have nothing to say further, I might end up saying things that I am not supposed to say to strangers.

“I am heading to Maswingulo construction and which construction company are you going to”

I wanted to squeal in happiness; I won’t have to walk long asking people if they know where Maswingulo Construction Company is located at, “I am going there too”.

Okay good, he replies before he starts playing some Tsonga music. I can’t hear what the song is all about, but he is singing along when his favourite lines play. The only word I know in Tsonga is “n’wana-kahina” I don’t even know what it means.

The ride to where we were going didn’t take long. I am now sitting with this lady. She is big and her fashion sense making me feels like I am in rags. She keeps flashing; her smile at me

while talking, and asking me if I follow but “Lawrence” my mind keeps screaming his name. I want to get to know him. I have to get the lift again.

“Ndatiso” the HR manager calls my name, immediately I snap out of it.

“Yes, I would do it” I try to cover for my shameful mind, thinking of a person I hardly know over the job that my ticket to adulthood.

“Okay, then we are good. On Tuesdays and Fridays we come stark naked at work” she says taking one of the file to her million files that are in front of her. Handing it to me.

My eyes are already rolling on the floor with flies filling my mouth in shock, “naked” I want her to say she is bluffing but then she sent me to Mr Lawrence Maswingulo’s office, to make copies.

CHAPTER 07

****L.D MASWINGULO****

Looking at her fiddling with her phone caught my attention, an interest of attraction rose and I find myself glancing at her. I couldn't hold my stare very well because I was behind the wheels but I am so much taken by her. Finding her eyes on me was my recompensation of always trying to look good.

“Why are you smiling like that”, my PA questions while on my heels.

“I am a happy man” I reply, placing my laptop bag on top of the table. I turn to look at him with my hands resting on my hips and he laughs throwing his head back.

My PA is forever happy and I wonder if he ever has problems like the rest of us. He just brings positive and good vibes at work and work well with my rude self at times.

“The new girl...” I utter, with my eyes set on him.

“What about her?” he questioned and I smile.

“When was the interview conducted, I didn't know about us looking for new people. What post is she in for?”

“Because that’s HR’s job not yours Maswingulo”

“But...”

“But you have a meeting in 30 minutes. How about you read the notes I have sent for you. It’s a big contract and we have to bag this one” the self-appointed CEO of my company reminds me.

Before I could chase him out of my office, a soft knock come through and I tell the person to come in, and tada...she enters holding a file for her dear life and looking like she doesn’t want to be here. Maybe a bit afraid, sort of.

“Hi. Hi, morning” she says in her scratchy voice.

Wide smile plastered on my face and my brains screams “innocent and what I want”.

“Hello sweaty, let me leave you to it” my pa says and storms out giving me side looks but who cares, there is a mama here waiting to be taken home by me and ready to make my house a home.

“Mrs Madia, asked me to come and do copies here and this file with you, sir” she says looking down and I smile. Catch walk to her and touch her chin

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raising her face to look at me. My heart beating fast and plums bit sweaty.

A moment pass with gazing at each other and I swear I saw my whole world drawn on her eyes.

“Go to my PA, he will help you out”

That is not what I wanted to say, I wanted to ask her if I can kiss her. Let her moisture lips grace my dry lips with some lotions. But WORK...PROFESSIONALISM, INTEGRITY.

“Oh...okay” she nods. Both of us don’t move and I note her scent to always know her.

“Yeah...outside the office” she says, pointing at the door then turns to the door.

“Ndza ku rhandza” I mumble and she turns and smiles then walk out. (I love you)

Phew, what was that all about, I probably scared her on her first day, but. It’s already done.

I stride to my desk, pull the chair and relax. Take out my personal phone and type to my best friend Mbengeni (mbengi in short) Munyai.

Me: I met my wife today.

I send the message. Wait for few minutes and he doesn't reply back.

Me: do you believe in love at first sight. Now I know what you feel like when you're with sis Shandu. I am in love bra, and she doesn't even know or maybe she knows but yeah I am in love.

I send the message again. Put my phone is silent then focus on the notes sent by my PA, we have meeting with people who are planning to build a shopping complex in Tshakhuma and it's a huge thing that they considered local business to benefit from this opportunity.

I am Lawrence Drondro Maswingulo. I am the only child my mother could bear and after that it was amen. Both my parents are late. Career wise, I am the sole owner of Maswingulo construction; I have been into military before. My father trained on how to assassinate people but...that the story for the other day. Relationship wise, I am single and but not searching as I have found an apple of my eyes, the well befitting nkatanga.

(Drondro means a pool of knowledge)

Chapter 08

**** NDATISO MADZIVHA****

She is sitting with her bestie, khumbelo having a late lunch catch up. They weren't all out, the attire, the restaurant. This is how their sisterly meetings always be, fun and fruitful.

"It's been a month since you hold a pay slip" khumbelo squeals in excitement. She is truly happy for me.

"And I am a bread winner also" I replies, feeling myself.

"Mmmh, zwi a difha u vha inwi musi"

"It's too good babe"

"So any...you know, the smell, the ring, the wedding, the husband"

I bite my lower lip and blushes. It's been a month; a whole 30 days of receiving beautiful bouquet of roses or just one rose with notes every day.

Mrs Madia keeps giving me a side eye, and try not to poke her nose in my business, but my business is so hard to ignore, I sometimes finds her smelling them or fiddling for a note. But Lawrence doesn't even leave a clue on who the roses comes

from. So, I allowed Mrs Madia to call him secret admire. It's crazy that he would court me in that way but any guy has his own approach.

"Mmmh, so who is he?" curiosity sparkles on her eyes and I nearly choked with laughter. This girl love news people yoh, hayi mani.

"I love him and I think he love me too. No, not think. I know so" I cup my face and bat my eyelashes couple of times, with a smile plastered on my face. Hoka, wait did I say love. Yeah right. I like confusing myself.

"Mmh, love neh" her eyes pop out with her eyebrows raised and I blush more.

Phew, I should have been warned, "no. not love love. But like you" I correct the statement and she laughs harder.

"Okay, who is the guy that swept my friend off the floor? Ha be, you're hard to impress, you."

"Stop playing like that, I am not. Just that I couldn't find my type. They were all kids" I pout

"Yeah right" she takes her drink, down it her throat then shrug.

"The CEO" I blurt out.

"You mean. Thee CEO. Ndatiso get out of here" if I once said her eyes popped out then right at this moment they are rolling

on the floor. The shock on her face amazes me. What did she take me for, Am I not beautiful enough to be loved by the CEO?

“Yeah

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Lawrence Maswingulo”

“You mean Lawrence Drondro Maswingulo” she questions and I roll my eyes du, I don’t know anything about Dlonadro guy but Lawrence, yeah, I know.

“Drondro, who’s that?” I question and she laughs.

We continues to talk about anything anmd everything but the highlight of everything was maswingulo.

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Dinner have already been served, its only me, mom and Tondani. The others have gone back to their home and now home feels like home.

We are all focused on the television but I keep on strolling on my phone jumping from social media to social media and not forget Google. His profile is quite impressive and makes me want to never talk about my degree and not really qualified detective. I mean I only researched for few weeks then hit the

stumbling block. Because I can't break down encryption of the L.D Maswingulo guy.

"Maswingulo" I mumble to myself. "Drondro"...

"Lawrence" ... "my father"

"It doesn't make sense" I mumble to myself, and my mother looks at me.

"What doesn't make sense?" she question.

"I mean, like I have you ever tried to makes sense of two things that doesn't add up and it made no sense?" I blurt it out not listening to what I am saying.

She looks at me and worry hover her face. Tondani lowers the TV volume and turns to look at me.

"Are you also dating? Mjolo doesn't make sense it never add up" Tondani brings in his 11 years expertise and his loud mouth earned him a stern stare.

"No...not like dating, dating but ma, I know these things. I am an adult" he mumbles the adult word and I nearly laughed out loud.

Adult who? In whose house. He knows how to take the spot light out of me, because nothing is processed properly now. My brains have stop function and I might upset my mother if I bring my father's topic.

My mother and brother keep arguing about the adult dating topic Todani brought while I continue to scroll down his timeline.

My phone beeps showing a message from unknown number and doesn't take me long to know who it comes from.

~good night babe, sleep tight~ the message said and I smile, widely forgetting the company. Was i confused not so long ago? Nah, not me. I just like playing with my brains. One sms from him and I am already typing back unknown words to my fingers.

Me: goodnight to you too babe, dream about me.

Ooh, wala, I did it. Damn girl you're so loose. I mumble to myself and I thank my lucky star because none of this people heard me. Or I could be in class right now, rewriting my matric.

Him: did you just call me babe, I am calling right now.

Why am I smiling? Do I go outside to answer the call or to my room. Since when do I excuse myself when I answer my phone? Damn lord Jesus, what have I done?

I dart my eyed from my mother to my brother. My loud ringtone disrupt the whole argument and now they are looking at me. I hold my phone close to my heart. My heart pounding out of its cage, and my hands sweaty.

Lord why don't I faint right now.

"Are you going to answer it?" my mother questions and I nervously smile. I move my eyes from her to my phone then her again.

"The phone" she says with an annoyed tone.

"Yes, the phone. Ringing. Oh god yes. Answering it" words rushed out of my lips. Damn, where is the brown paper bag when I want it.

I press, answer, and stand up ready to practice my caster Semenya skills. Before I could make it out the door.

"Hey, since when do you answer your phone outside? Come back here" my mother said.

Why did Lawrence call at this time again?

Chapter 9

****L.D MASWINGULO****

Her calling me babe got my organs into dancing; I couldn't resist the urge of hearing her soft melodic voice. 'Babe' makes a loud noise ringing in my head. She called me babe, me, babe.

It's already morning and I am waiting for her, we are having breakfast date at wimpy and she is 10 minutes late.

I kept rubbing my hands, I am nervous. I don't know if this thing will work out but...I want to give it a try... not just a try, my all, my everything, my heart, blood and I know it will work.

I don't know if I should place order for myself only or for her also. I don't know what she eats and what she doesn't eat. Damn, yoh, what am I doing.

I blew out some air and sit back trying to relax. Do I call her or do I just wait. What if she forgot? What if she didn't mean it? What if she agreed just to get me off her back? She can't do that to me, can she?

With this questions ringing in my head, making me feel breathless. Her scent hit my nostrils and my eye involuntarily moves to the door.

She is here, she honoured my request, I say to myself.

I look at her swinging her hips towards me, and I couldn't help but let my face breaks into a smile. I push my chair back, stand up and wait for her, moving swiftly towards me.

Yellow compliments her dark toned flawless skin very well and it got me salivating. A nervous smile on her face, with a push back hair style adds to her beauty.

"Morning" she greets

"How about morning babe" I playfully replies and she smile.

"Mmmh, so you're my babe" she raises her eyebrows and I smile.

I take two strides to her side. Push the chair back to help her sit comfortably.

We sit in a comfortable silence

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but kept stealing glances. We keep stealing glances until she caught my eyes onto her and I couldn't shy away. I just bit my lower lip and smiles.

"What?" she supresses a smile on her face.

“Xiluva” my mouth says what my brain wasn’t thinking of, I wanted to compliment her, tell her she is beautiful. But a flower is beautiful though.

Her eyebrow gathers together and she gave me a confused look and I smile further.

“I have a house” I say, placing down the menu booklet we have been going through on the table.

She is now too confused, “ooh, okay” she says slowly placing her menu down as well, giving her all attention now.

“It’s cold, and doesn’t feel like a home” she lifts her marble eyes to my face more confused. And I chuckle before stretching my hands to meet hers that are resting on the table.

“Can you make my house a home” a frown forms on her face until it breaks into a smile. Then she nods, I want to scream ‘she said yes people’ but I control myself. I gave a light squeeze on her hand.

“Can you say it please” my tone is more begging than I intend it to sound like.

She nods again, “yeah...yes, I can make your house a home” she replies and I stare at her for a minute.

“Thank you” it comes out as a whisper. “Can I moisten my lips, with your lips?”

Her face looks down. Shying away from me and I chuckle, feeling proud that she is mine.

I will protect her until her last breath; I just hope my love doesn't scare her away.

I let go of her one hand, moves the free hand to her face and hold her chin up. "Look at me please" I mutter.

She bats her eyelashes few times before we could hold our gaze onto each other. I gulp at nothingness and lick my lip and she gulps too.

"Can we seal it with a kiss" my voice have deepen a bit, my heart beating fast, but I can see hers galloping.

She clears her throat and opens her mouth and nothing comes out.

"Are you ready to order" the waitress says breaking our moment. I have long forgotten that we are in a public space, all I see it's her.

Ndati clears her throat and fumble with the menu booklet in front of her and I nearly bite off the waitress's head. How can she interrupt a moment like that?

She is just a kiss blocker; I would have tested Ndati's saliva by now.

“Mmmh, two special breakfasts and an orange juice...” I look at Ndati; she is focusing on her menu.

“Babe what would you like to drink” I utter, with my eyes still on her.

“Mmmh, two special breakfasts and an orange juice...babe what would you...” she says with her eyes on the menu, I want to laugh but...she is my woman.

She clears her throat and innocently smiles when she realizes what she have been saying... “Mmmh I would like black coffee please” she flashes her Colgate smile.

Chapter 10

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

Honey taste sweet, but love tastes sweeter.

She is floating on the air, leaving in the bubble of love. Even her mother has started giving her suspicious looks, but she is keeping her mouth shut.

It's Friday night and she is on the phone call, lying on her back with her legs up against the wall. Her giggles make a soft melody filling her room, cheeks hurts from all the blushing she has been doing since an hour ago when she received the call.

"Five boys and one girl" Lawrence deep voice echoes from the phone speakers and I imagine how his eye would always sparkle with happiness and love when he talks about having kids.

"Six kids from where" I ask with a smile breaking further my face, I couldn't help it. But I don't know why I am smiling, this man is talking about rearranging my body six times, breaking my private organ six times, and that will never be me.

"From us, what do you think?"

“I think you’re crazy Mr, get that idea out of your head” I reply, busy drawing patterns on my legs.

“Crazy in love with you” he replies and that answer did things to me that can’t be undone. My heart dances.

“So what are your plans for tomorrow?”

“I am planning on going to my father’s grave. The 22 is on the middle of the week and I can’t go there because of work” I tell him.

Maybe I should include him on search for my father’s killer’s investigations. He has connections and that will help me a lot. It will make things much easier.

“Ooh, okay. Who are you going there with?”

“My brother, my mother doesn’t like it when we talk of our father. I guess after 10 years the wound is still row like in all of us.” I mindlessly pour out my heart to him.

“I can join you guys, if you have to problem with it”

My eyes pop out in surprise, he would do that for me...me “you would do that for me?” I say, wanting to be sure. Only person who I know can do anything for me is khumbelo and this Saturday she said she will be busy. There is birthday braai for one of the family friends, so she has to be with her husband.

“I would do anything for you my love. Anything.” he said.

We talked for few more moments then we drop a call. And I breathe out before I hear my mother's voice.

When did I say come in, privacy? Actually it doesn't exist on her vocabulary. I should spell it out for her and write its oxford meaning and also synonym. This is my room and my private space.

"You should wipe you're dust off my paint" she said as she settle on the chair that is beside the bed.

Did she hear me gossiping about her with my boyfriend? Did I badmouth her, yoh! I don't trust myself that much. I have a loose mouth sometimes.

She places a yellow packet of banana...banana condoms on the bed and I nearly faint.

"And now" I question looking at her in awe.

"Ni songo ri and now Ndatiso, a thi inwi you're now dating, so take it. I hope you know the ABC rule"

The ABC what? What does it have to do with dating? my mother have long date maybe that time the ABC rule was important in the relationship, what I know is that ABC is alphabet.

"What were they teaching you at university, A stands for abstain, b stands for be faithful

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and c stands for condomise”

Why don't this floor crack open and swallow me, sex talk at the age of 23, with my mother is so uncomfortable. Does she know about other sex positions besides looking like a marinated full chicken waiting to be roasted? No mani Ndatiso this is your mother. I just had to reprimand myself.

“Don't look at me like that; I know you have a boyfriend. Bring her home with you. I want to have this talk with him here. I know you think your adults but still. If you're going to have sex then I will sex educate you and the boy you're dating. Actually how old is the boy you're dating”

Oh hands down. Boy...boy, she mean Maswingulo, I don't know how old he is, it's embarrassing yes I know but I can see he is on his early 30s I am not sure but my mother want to sex educate him. She really loves embarrassing me.

“Mma, he is not a boy. You can sex educate me then” right now I am sacrificing my sanity. I will even call khumbelo to join in this sex education talk. Even though she is married, Lawrence won't be coming here for such talks ever.

“Is he older than me, or at my age? Ndatiso are you dating an older man” she question with her voice laced with shook.

I burry my face in my hands feeling frustrated. No. no I am not dating older man.

“So he is a boy. Come back with him here tomorrow when you return from the cemetery”

Was she listening to my conversation? Oh! Lord takes me now.

I just nod, and continue to avoid looking at the packet of condoms in front of me. We sit in comfortable silence until she chuckles breaking the silence.

“I am sorry, Ndati” she utters and I feel relieved. She is sorry there won't be any sex talks. God did come through for me.

“It's okay mom” I shrug my shoulders.

She shakes her head “I have registered for therapy, ever since your father death I haven't been able cope. I felt my world crashing down on my shoulder, and I wasn't strong enough...” she utters rubbing her hands together.

“It's okay mom” I said, I guess she is sorry for my father not sex education. I never though in million years she would sit me down and talk about him.

“Philip...Philip was my world. My world begins and ends with him. So was my dreams and hope. Everything becomes blur the moment I try to picture life without him...” she pauses and exhales before she continues. “I wish he got sick before he

leaves us, maybe I could have tried to imagine life without him. Try to prepare myself for worst but...someone out there decided to make me a widow. Snatch my husband away from me, my first and last love, I couldn't cope...and that made me a bitter person. I couldn't tell my own son about his father but..." tears prickle down both our cheeks and memory takes me down this day years back, the last day he spent fully on this earth. That day, he kept telling us about love, respect and unity. Determination and hard work, and that she is the living proof of that...but it claimed his life instead.

"Can you believe I still write letters for him till this day? I have a box, I store them there. You can read the letters if you want then come join me with therapy. Then if you are still interest on knowing who is your father's killer and what happened to him I will let you do what you have to do"

Before I could answer that, my door opens and Tondani walks in with an ice cream container and three spoons.

"So you also use condoms. How is it" Tondani says looking at the banana flavoured condoms on my bed.

My mother loves embarrassing me but I love my brother his mouth sells him out all the time.

"How is what?" my mother question with her eyebrows snapped together.

“Sex, wrapped in a rubber”

I clap my hands once, this one never cease to amaze me. Sex wrapped in a rubber.

“Are you having sex Tondani?” I question, he is young to be having sex but his expertise in the sex and dating department surpass me.

“Who is not? Anyway good people I brought cinema to you. It’s a movie night” he said like he never just dropped a bomb on us.

My mother’s mouth hung open; this condom should have been given to him and also be taught the SABC rule.

Chapter 11

****NDATISO MASWINGULO****

I kept glancing at him, nerves skyrocketing. He has honoured my mother's request but he doesn't know why she wants to see him, I couldn't bring myself it...to tell him.

"Are you okay" he questions and I nod.

Nope I am not okay; I don't want you to meet my mother. I am not ready to have any sex talks with you and my mother, but how do I tell him that.

"Lawrence, you and Ndati" that's my annoying loud mouth brother. He always knows how to poke his nose into my business.

"Yes" Lawrence replied focusing on the road, we are on our way back to home from the cemetery; nothing much happened there, besides pouring out our heavily wounded hearts and then tells him to rest in peace.

"You guys are in a relationship" it's a statement not a question but Lawrence being Lawrence and I have seen that he has taken an interest into my brother he is gladly dishing out answers.

“Yes, I am going to wife her, very soon” his hands holds mine and move it to the hand break.

My heart melts for a moment.

“Is that a tattoo peeking out?”

Genius Tondi (Tondani) asks, yeah my mother is going to have a field day with the devil’s agent today, I thought to myself.

“I can’t wait to see my mother’s face when she sees your tattoo, are you sure you want meet her with a tattoo...but don’t worry I know how to neutralise her. Bribe me with a packet of chips”-Tondani.

Ooh god, swallow me whole. Why did I have to have a brother like this one, what have I done?

“Tondani” I warn him, he just shrug.

“Where can I get them for you” Lawrence asks looking at him through the review mirror, with a smirk on his face.

“Give me a tiger sivhara. I know where I would get them myself” he smiles feeling proud. (Sivhara=brother in law).

“Fifty...fifty rand that a daylight robbery Tondani” I bark at him and he smiles feeling much more proud about himself. He has to forget it Lawrence is not going to pay him any money. My mother can call him devil’s agent all she likes, he is my devil. No

man of mine is going to be robbed like this in my presence never.

“Or you want me to tell him that yesterday I found a banana flavoured condoms on your bed. He seems like a rich guy, he can’t be using government condoms to pervert his sperms from fertilizing your egg”

Can I get out of this car; I will walk home. How old is Tondani again. Whose brother is he?

The man next to me is not saying anything rather than looking at me, then focus back to on the road. I don’t know how he feels about what Tondani have just said; we haven’t touched the sex topic. Does he think I am getting it from somewhere else? He can’t think like that right, can he?

“My mother is the one who brought them to me.” I explain then he turns to look at me.

“Which corner do I take?” he questions not acknowledging my explaining and my heart breaks a little. I didn’t do anything, but why do I feel guilty.

“Go straight second house on your left.” Tondani chirps in. I keep my mouth shut.

He parks the car, takes out his wallets and takes out a hundred rand note and hand it to my devilish brother. Who gladly takes

it and obvious gives him reasons why he cannot give back the change.

It is now him and me inside the car.

“It’s my birthday today...after meeting with your mother would you like to go celebrate it with and few friends”

His birth what, today...I didn’t even know. Am I a bad girlfriend, totally the worst girlfriend?

“Why don’t I know about it” I ask, folding my arms making my dramatic move.

I don’t even have a present let alone have goggled few suggestions of birthday’s messages for a boyfriend

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but do vbona phanda.

“Because you didn’t ask xiluva xa mina” he smiles and I nervously smiles back.

“What does that mini?” I inquire, I have to teach myself Tsonga because wow. He makes it sound much more interesting.

“Let’s go meet my mother in law” he flashes his teeth and I nearly told him he is about to enter in most uncomfortable teaching he has ever attended in his whole life.

The lounge curtain is slightly opened and you can see my mother standing there looking at us. He let go of my hand making a way for me to lead him inside the house.

I hold onto the lock, practicing my breathing pattern before I go faint inside. Where is Tondani when I need him? Ha be we bribed him with a madiba blue note.

“Babe” Lawrence calls out my name and I push the door open pushing my wobbly legs into the living room.

We are now settling at the kitchen. We have a long dinner table there. The food smelling nice, I wish I have the drumstick on my plate right now. I would have shy away from this topic by focusing on the food.

Lawrence keeps stilling glances at me.

“What do you think this is about?” Lawrence asks and I shrug my shoulders. How do I tell him? Maybe I should ask him his age first before telling him.

“How old are you” I questions. His eyes come all out, and he nervously chuckle.

“I am 23 years old and you” I say hoping he will be ready to share his age.

“I know how old you are” he utters then pops his long fingers biting his lower lip.

Why did he have to do that, bite his lip he looks sexier.

“I am sorry to keep you waiting kids, but...”

“What the hell mom” I says looking the thing she is holding...oh god how do I call it. I will call it a dildo because that the thing they use at clinic when they are showing off man genital part.

“What do you think I will bring. We are talking about everything. From how to wear a condom, to STIs and all other questions you might have. It’s just that I couldn’t find the one showing a vagina I could have come with it, show you how to insert women’s condom, and not wait for him always to wear his. You have to protect yourself also.” She says, placing it on the table.

I place my hand on my mouth and just stare at her. It would have been better with her only telling us now she will be demonstrating the whole thing. I need water. Damn right now I wish we were outside I would have locked myself inside my room but we are at the kitchen, where the water is found.

Lawrence is looking rather much calm and amused about all this. He is focusing most on my mother than the thing she has just placed on top of the table.

“So my boy, did she tell you why we are here” my mother asks. I am mute this time.

He shakes his head then move his eyes from my mother to me
“No...no she didn't tell me anything beside that you wanted to meet me” he truthfully utters, with a smirk on his face.

“Ndati, don't keep the poor child waiting tell him why I said you should bring him here” she says with her eyes on me.

I clear my throat with nothing to say. No words at all. How do I do this? Where is Tondani? We paid him R100, 00 right, for him to help us out.

“We are waiting” my mother says. I look at her, and that thing she placed on the table then my hands that are on my lap under the table.

“Se...sex” I sigh then starts again “sex education. We are here for sex education” I try to control my voice not to come out sounding weird but what did it do, it come out like I wanted to cry.

“Yes, now go and take those condoms I gave it to you yesterday” she says.

I look at Lawrence he shrug his shoulders, I can see he is enjoying seeing me like this, he just doesn't want to laugh out loud. He is trying not to laugh out hard and loud.

Other parents embarrass their kids by calling them with their nick names, showing old pictures of you and also telling about your silly stories when you were young not this...this is killing

your own child. Throwing her in the Maswingulo's lion den, while its broad day light.

"I said go and take the condoms Ndatiso" she says and I reluctantly stands up. "This is how she behaves. She like embarrassing me in front of the guest, acting like I didn't teach her manners" I heard her telling Lawrence who just chuckled in return.

Chapter 12

****L.G MASWINGULO****

In his whole existence he has never dreamed of a day like this ever. This day marks as one of the unexpected days of his life and it took the medal. It surely goes straight down the books of history. It's uncomfortable and revealing too much but also entertaining.

The one thing that seems to be troubling him is the name he saw carved on the tombstone, MADZIVHA PHILIP DIED ON: 22-05-2010.

That name, that date, has an effect on his life. It was on that date just after 1pm that he was forced to take a drastic decision and a life was claimed. Or let's just say things happened and it ended bad, and till today he still wonder if what happened didn't happen how life could have been like.

A feeling of guilt eats him up like a cancerous wound when the little brother Tondani opens his mouth, talking to his dad. He knows when he feels something its real; his gut feeling has never lied to him. What the feeling told him made him feel like he is monster, deadly and venomous person. He took a way the

man who was the arch of their happiness and to the little boy he took a father figure. Then fell in love with the daughter.

That is the reason why he then optioned to excuse himself, go lock in him inside his car and let his conscious eats him, while they pour out their love their lovely father.

But one thing he knows for sure is, love. What he had for Ndati is true but looking at her, hearing her talk about her father would be a sin he would commit again and again, it's his cross to bear after all.

He can't help but also prays that he is just another man, with the same name and surname, died on the same dates and same year with his maswingulo.

He has been sitting quietly waiting for Ndati to come back with a packet of condoms, but she isn't here. It's been a minute since she has been gone.

"I don't know what is taking her so long" Mrs Madzivha says looking around. It's bad she can't see the passage when inside the kitchen.

"Have you ever had sex?" she questioned me, and I look down. She isn't my age mates; she is my future mother in law. How do I answer such question?

"And you love working for the devil" she blurt that out with her eyes fixed on my arm, where my tattoo is peaking at.

“Sorry” frown lines forms on my forehead and confusion wears on my face.

“Who raised you?” she questions.

“My mother” I replied, she can’t questioned the way my parents raised me right, she has no right. Every parent raised their kids accordingly to how the see it fit. There is no manual that comes with a baby after birth to teach parents on how to raised their kids, kids themselves chooses what they think is best for themselves, even though it doesn’t conform with standards they were taught by parents, those are just guidelines.

She shakes her head, “a tattoo is a devil’s doing” she utters; one would tell how much she hate tattoos.

“Leswi I vupengo struu” I mumble to myself before Ndati walks back with a condoms. (This is ridiculous)

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

Sweat runs down my back

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the dress I am wearing hung tight to my back because of the wet cotton. I sigh in frustration, brushing my head.

This better be the dream that I would wake up from and find out this whole thing isn't happening. What an embarrassment.

I ran my hands on my face, and sigh. Where are the condoms? Maybe I can lock myself inside my room and Lawrence will see how he gets himself out of this one.

I push my wobbly legs to the side drawer beside my bed, pull it out then fishes for that packet of condoms and I found them. Maybe I can hide them go back and say I didn't find them.

Maybe I should send Lawrence a message asking him to tell my mother he have an emergency. Then he runs away from all this madness. Yes that sounds like a great idea. Let me do it.

I search of my phone inside my pockets then I remember giving it to Tondani when we were at the cemetery. My dad should been resting in peace and not caring about helping us out.

Other ancestors are busy taking their loved ones out of shady situation but mine fails just to take me out of awkward situations.

I take the packet and stroll back to the kitchen. The piece of cloth under my armpits is also wet. This is embarrassing...this day should just be announced as Ndatiso's embarrassment day.

It seems like they were having an awkward conversation and that smile I left plastered on their faces seems to have just vanished on the thin wrinkle lines on their faces.

I know I don't want this sex education but my boyfriend can't have spoiled blood with my mother.

Before we continue with this sex education, we are solving that bad blood first.

I throw the packet on the table next to the dildo thing, then place my hands on my hips and look ready to attack, that how my mother stands when she is coming all out to get you.

"So...what up. When I left you were happy, acting all best friends and now what changed? Why do you look like you have just chewed an aloe" I know they say chew an onion but that nothing taste compared to an aloe, other says it's a medicine but I don't think that one doctors allows for raw consumption.

"I have told you million times Ndatiso how much I hate tattoos. How much i will never entertain the devil's ministry and I will never compromise anything for that. But because you know I will make you homeless if you do one then you go and seek for a boyfriend who has one. Any way does he even fit to be a boyfriend this one...he looks old" she utters, with judgement leaking out of her eyes.

Lawrence has his arms folded across his chest sitting back, moving his eyes from my mother to me. It is like he is waiting for my respond, for me to talk to my mother on his behalf because she is my mom right...my mother, let's put this right she is Ndatiso's mother.

I let my fingers runs through each other, gathering my respond. Actually I have to search for the verse in a new testament that says a tattoo is a taboo. Even if it is, it's not her who will burn in hell but him.

"Mma, a tattoo has nothing to do will where our souls will go when we die. And they don't mean one is promoting the devil's work by doing a tattoo. A tattoo has meaning and other are of important dates." I say.

"What is the meaning of the lion's claws on his arm" she is asking me, not him. This is very much uncomfortable more than the sex education.

Maybe I should just tear open this packet of condoms, take one out then ask her to show me how to wear it because this is worse than touching this dildo thing.

"Mma, a person can do whatever they want with their bodies. A person body is like a book, we can write each and every story on it. Each story that makes us sad and happy other prefer to

write it down. It symbolises pain, hurt, dark place they been and then defeat and healing.”

Her mouth is wide open and her eyes are rolling on the floor. I am sure I said a thing I shouldn't have said but...my tongue don't communicate with me when I talk. When I talk I talk and I just talk, I know nothing about digesting words. I only digest food.

“The bible didn't say that. It said the body is the temple of god” she said ready to jump up and grab her bible. She likes acting like fifteen hundred years ago mothers yet she is just few minutes away from 60.

“Yes but...you were ready to teach us about sex” I retort.

“Because I know you children of today, you like to satisfy the needs of flesh” she defends herself then turns to look at the calm man next across her.

“How old are you?” she questions. Before he could replies my uncle walks in with Tondani on his heels.

“Maswingulo?” my uncle said with a frown on his face.

Chapter 13

****L.D MASWINGULO****

“There is no way she is his daughter no ways” I said pacing up and down, busy kicking the chair and a couch that is placed nicely at the middle of my study room.

It is just one long, L-shaped couch that is black in colour. The study room has nothing of out of normality, just a normal study which has a whiskey cabinet.

“Will you calm down” mbengi says, with smoke covering his whole face.

He is telling me to keep calm when he is busy punishing his lungs for what? “You don’t understand man, I love her. I want her. I need her and me...me being her father’s killer changes the whole thing” I brush my head in frustration.

Khumbudzo is sitting quietly as for Rendani he is standing by the door with his one leg against the door. He is also a chain smoker like his big brother, and they both have dreadlocks, just that Rendani doesn’t have them on a full head, only half of his

head. The only different one is khumbudzo; he rocks his chiskop any day of the year.

“Then don’t tell her, its doesn’t have to change anything because she won’t know” Rendani mindlessly utters, then walks in further. He then throw himself on the couch, “I want to be with my wife” he mumbles.

“It’s your birthday, this would have waited until tomorrow now you bring a lady then leave her with other laddies just to try to find ways to hide your past from her, no man. We are here to loosen up and have fun” Rendani sulks, he was a party animal and we all know that once a party animal always a party animal no marriage paper can stop you from that.

“We will deal with it don’t worry. She wouldn’t have to know about who killed her father. She is my wife’s best friend. I would know when she starts sniffing around then we offer to help her.” Khumbudzo utters.

I feel a bit relieved; I can’t lose her over her father’s death. Things happened and they happened there is nothing I could do to change it or stop my feelings for her.

“See. Sorted. Now let’s go party. Does Mrs know that she is dating a sugar daddy?” rendani question and I keep quit.

“Mxm, you’re fooling kids with those tight muscles, you have a good gene brother. By now your face should have been covered

with wrinkles just like my old man here” Rendani utters already up and ready to go.

“Who has wrinkles?” Mbengi questions taking out a gum.

“I didn’t say anyone, you just taking it the other way round. But if you think it’s you then what do I have to say” -Rendani says already opening the door and running out. Chicken.

“Okay, let’s go then” I utters. After gulping down the hot contents that were on the glass on the table. I needed something strong-whisky before facing her.

“Give me a minute” Mbengi then chew his bubble gum for few minutes then spray his mouth with a mouth spray. And throw another gum on his mouth.

“And now...” Khumbudzo is laughing, Mbengi serving him with death stares.

“Crisis management/damage control.” Mbengi retort then shrug his shoulders.

“I don’t want to sleep on couch because of some dead fucker” he mutters then we walk out.

We are at my town house in Makhado, that where I live and have a business based at Thohoyandou.

We stride to the kitchen talking about nothing at all, the girls have moved the party to the swimming pool and there is

nothing being down there other than dipping their legs inside the water while they just sit and enjoy their drinks.

Madam is drinking juice

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I don't know if she doesn't drink alcohol or is because she isn't used being around my friends. I also hardly drink when we are together but today it's my birthday and a fucked up one. The Goddess I brought makes it worse without even knowing.

I don't feel like swimming, so I just go and sit behind her, wrapping her in between my legs.

"I love you Ndati. I love you more than I love myself. If I have to make the sun stop shining for you I would do it." I whisper in her ear. And she giggles feeling my warm breathe fanning her neck and tickling earlobe.

"Are you okay?" her scratchy sweet melodic voice whispers back. She tries to turn and face me but I kiss her neck. I don't want her to look at me, not now.

I just want guilty conscious to eat me up in silence, until I learn to love her with no regrets.

"Urgh bro, get a room" khumbudzo says slashing us with water and we all laugh, while Ndatiso screams a little, feeling cold water on her body.

“It’s my house, if you have a problem brother leave us to it” I say and he laughs.

“So, Ndati how old are you” Redani asks. And his wife pushes him a little.

“Honey, it’s rude to ask a woman her age” sweet Muvhuso utters and my queen here smiles.

“It’s okay sis. I am 23” she utters and the eyes I got boring my skin are six in total. Love knows no age, why are they looking at me like that.

I pray none of these monkey brothers of mine opens their mouth about my age. I have been avoiding this age question for ages. I have to break my age down for her nicely first. For her to understand.

“Damn, how do you feel dating a 43 years old man”- Rendani.

My nostrils stops taking in and out the oxygen. Did he have to say that? Didn’t he notice my begging eyes but what did I expect from, them. If not Mbengi spilling things out its Rendani, khumbu do have his moments other than that he keeps his nose out of other people’s business.

Ndati laughs, taking a sip of her drink. How old does she think I am? 29? Actually I am her senior. But love knows no colour, no age, no muscles no genes. Knows nothings beside love too.

“Who is 43?” she questions, and the blood rushes through my body, leaving my body covered with Goosebumps.

“Ooh, you didn’t know?” his voice comes out lower this time. And everyone is waiting for her reaction. She can feel everyone stares on her then slowly turns to look at me.

“You’re 43?” she questions.

My chest dries out quickly, fear projected on my eyes. I bite my lower lip and starts breaking my fingers. Not knowing what to say.

Chapter 14

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

Finding maswingulo at his sister's place makes him more anxious and nervous.

His merciless voice rings in his head and each and every word he uttered that fateful day makes sense bursting his head "I will wipe away each and everything thing that has contact with the Philip Madzivha. Whether is a dog, cat even a rat that feeds there will be caught in the cross fire" he was fuming with anger that day. His fore head covered by veins and ready to bust. If it wasn't for Mbengi who tried to calm him done, it was going to be another story.

His eyes were red, burning with fire of hate and no mercy. "He messed with a wrong guy, you hear me. A wrong guy. I am trained to assassinate people. No evident will be found that is me. Only dead bodies will pile up, heating the world with fear. Don't dare me, Steven don't" that day is the day he learnt to never to cross any boundaries. With fear he vowed to keep his distance, it was by luck he was let go but...today he is here.

Just after ten years he has come back acting like he loves his niece. His sister is already inviting him at her house.

“What was maswingulo doing here? Why is he with your daughter Muofhe” his voice comes out harsh, anger burning his eyes.

“You know him. Apparently she is dating a Satanist” Muofhe (ndati’s mother) said absent minded. She didn’t mind the tone he used with her.

All she was thinking about was the lion’s claws tattoo on her future son in law. That is the only thing that made her no longer have interest on teaching them about sex, a tattoo is a no, no thing for her and she hates it with every fibre of her being.

“What was he doing here?” he said in between his teeth with his hands in a fist. I am trying so hard to fight anger brewing at the pit of my stomach. They just invited a murderer on their safe space.

“I wanted to have a sex talk with him. I don’t want grandkids, at least not now. She still has to live her life without kids worrying her” she says.

“Teach a 43 years old man about sex Muofhe really” he screams at her. Banging the table. This got to be a dream, when I wake up it will all be over.

Tondani is in feast of laughter. He has long forgotten that he shouldn’t be here in the first place

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listening to adults' conversation.

"You're laying Steven; Ndati can't date a man who's that old. He is what two years young than you. Hayi...nope she can't" she defends her daughter, but shock on her voice is not miss able.

"I know him Muofhe, I know maswingulo. He is a bad guy. We don't need her close to her. Allowing them together is a suicide mission please."

"But age is just a number uncle, isn't that what you said that day you showed me your 20 years old girlfriend" Tondani chirps in.

"Tondani keep quiet man. This is adults conversation unless you feel like an adult" I said, ready to pounce on him, but this guy here never reads in-between the lines.

"I don't feel like an adult malume, but she is doing the same as you. Any way moms you were teaching 43 years old man who is fit to be having 12 children about sex how do you feel about that" he asks supressing his laughter. He thinks this is funny. This is not, that man is a notorious killer. A cold blooded one who lives with no regrets.

He killed their father; he can't date the daughter of the man he killed. He once said he will wipe out the entire generation if he has to now...it all makes sense.

“He is still a boy if he sees a childlike Ndati then dates her” she says standing up walking towards the stove.

We haven’t left the kitchen since they left us few hours ago.

“You heard that uncle, you date a child you’re a boy” he says already close to his mother. He knows I can beat that nonsense out of his head.

I huff in frustration and walks out for some fresh breath. Ndatiso and maswingulo cannot be a couple ever. Philip must be turning in his grave.

I take out my phone and type a message.

Me: maswingulo we have to meet and talk.

Maswingulo: Monday, my office. 12 0clock. Don’t be a minute late.

I sit on the batch that is under the tree, take out my cigarette, light it then start smoking. I need to calm down and find out what he needs. What his price, he have to leave my sister child alone.

Guys give me six shares of novelsguru.com at least please. And don't forget to comment and react.

Comforter

Chapter 15

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

It is just 10 minutes away from 12; the car is packing at the parking area. His nerves are skyrocketing, but he has to do it for his niece.

A black truck (v-class) parks few meters away from him, mbengi and his brothers step out of the car. Laughing, walking into the building like they own the building. With their heads held up high, bowing and submitting to nothing. Daring the devil himself with how they carry themselves.

One could wonder how the man like mbengi got married, it raises question if he forced himself into her life then bulled her into marrying his ruthless merciless self, but the hear says also said that he is one sweet man when he is around his wife. That she brings a positive aura around him and they are very much happy.

Staring at them makes Steven to feel bit shaken, that he should chicken out now, but he doesn't want to give them such satisfaction. He has to fight this tooth and nail.

He breathes out then takes his brief case, hop out of his black range rover evoque , lock it then recite the lord's prayer just in case things turns bad in there.

He can't help but admire how Maswingulo has done well for himself. The two storey building with MASWINGULO CONSTRUCTION COMPANY written in bold capital letters. Even a passer-by can't miss this place. Flowers that are planted outside the building gives the freshness to the place and unavoidable scent that makes you take in nature, giving life to the beautiful side of town where everything is quiet. Not like the busy street of mvusuludzo filled with vendors, taxis and people going up and down.

He strolls inside still taken by the beauty of the place, he didn't even realise that the receptionist has her eyes on him, but she has to forgive him. He is taken by the way this whole building is constructed, the reception is painted with warm and welcoming colours but what was he expecting from maswingulo? He is man of class and everything he does he do it well. Even killing, it been ten years and there is no proof that it's him. Who saw him? A man is dead but no one knows who killed him.

“Good afternoon” he greets to the dolled up receptionist lady, who have a welcoming smile on her face. Her big and dreamy eyes can make any guy who is salivating on having her on his bed tonight to ask for a three storey house plan, with a budget of R2000.

“Good afternoon sir, how can I help you” she retort with her beautiful broad voice. A smile never leave her face. She is a well-trained receptionist.

I clear my throat and tap my fingers on her reception desk, tightening my grip on the brief’s case.

“I am here to see Mr Maswingulo” I utter and look at her clicking the computer in front of her then rises her head to me again.

“Do you have an appointment” she questions “what is your name” she continues before answering her first question.

“I do have an appointment, I made it with him personally, and I am Steven Mulaudzi”

“Let me call his office first” she utters then, press the telephone that is beside her.

After talking to the phone she give me visitor’s card, then gives me direction, I strides to the lift. Get in, press last floor. It doesn’t take long before it opens and I get out. I feel my legs

losing its joints and sweat flowing down my spine. My heart beating out of its rib cage, and my breathe shortening.

There is another reception desk just outside the CEO office, and that makes me more nervous. I might get out of this building inside a body bag and my body get buried somewhere none of my family members will get me.

“I am here to see Mr Maswingulo” I utters with my heart galloping.

“He is waiting for you” he retort without look at me

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I slowly push my feet's towards the door and hit my knuckles against the door few time until a tired and bored come in permit me inside.

I know they are waiting for me, so I push the door and walk inside the lion's den with my head held high.

“Ooh Mulaudzi, you're five minutes late” maswingulo says, taking a bite if a chicken wing on his hand. His friends aren't focusing on us but food.

“Blame your receptionist on that one, she was busy bombarding me with questions” I said with my eyes on him. One thing I learn from him is to look your enemy straight on the eyes. No matter how afraid you are of them.

“Okay, come join us” he mindlessly utters then I hear chuckles.

“This is not a social visit maswingulo” I said, still standing and tightened grip on my briefcase.

“Ooh, but food is not a social thing but an important thing” he squirted his eyes when saying this. I just clench my jaws and stands there staring at them.

It all starts as a chuckle, then grows into laughter. They were laughing their asses off and I just stand there feeling like a rained on chicken. Like I wetted myself, but I compose myself very well.

After they have done with their laughing moments he leads me to sit on the chair at his desk. Lowering myself to it and sit comfortably with my back rested at the chair and he is looking at me like what’s up? But I take my time taking him in.

“Heh, boss I don’t have the whole day. So chop, chop my company won’t run itself” he says snapping his eyebrows and I sigh then push myself closer to him resting my hands on the desk.

“What do you want?” I question. He gives me a confused looks them a goofy smile forms on his face.

“I want nothing; you’re the one here for me. So Steven what do you want?” he retort.

“Ndati” I say still my eyes on him.

He snaps his neck, looking at me like he is enjoying the view.

“What about her?”

“I don’t know what games you’re playing but I want you to not involve her in your games maswingulo. Ndatiso is just a kid, she is too young for you and you killed her father maswingulo. Now you want to tell me that you love her. I am not a fool Lawrence, I am not. I know you have a score to settle, so what is it.” I say getting worked up.

“Ho, wait tiger. Hold a little. What do I want? What score, and what makes you say I don’t love her, you’re not me or my heart after all” he utters, still not affected by the tone I am using on him. Damn this isn’t going to work out, the way I planned it.

“I know so maswingulo, remember when you say you will wipe the entire generation, do you remember maswingulo.” I scream at him banging the table. His friends seem to be minding their own business and he seems to be enjoying this more.

“You have a sharp mind Mulaudzi; I wish you were using it profitably. You would have been South African bill gates. But you’re using it to store useless information. If I want a person dead there is no need to be friend the person. I have my ways.”

I sigh in frustration then take the briefcase I came with. Placed it on top of the table. Before I could open it the brothers are now standing next to him, like they are his goons.

I slowly opened the brief case, mbengi curses when his eyes lands on the money nicely placed inside the briefcase.

“Is it real money, yoh? I wish to date ndatiso right now so you can throw money on me to stay away from her” mbengi utters. Taking one buddle of R200, 00 notes.

“This is R500 000, 00. Take it and forget about my niece. We will never have any conversation about her like we promised each other years back. Never to cross our path ever again, so is this time around.”

Chapter 16

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

The more I calculate the gap between my age and his, the more my brain feels like busting. My head pound, trying to convince myself that this is not it, that I should be ashamed to call him mine, but the heart is the stupid organ. It is head over heels with him and his name makes my heart skip countless beats until it catches the rhythm again.

I have missed him, ever since that birthday mini celebration I haven't really been with him. I have been avoiding him and it's like he have saw right through me and allowing me a chance to do so, peacefully. That is what I want, but at the same I want him to keep pestering me, call me even though I won't take his calls, message me every minute of the day, assuring me that age is just a number.

But his last SMS, made it clear that he wants a face to face conversation when I am ready, but that is not enough.

I need assurance. I need assurance not only from him but my friend as well. I can't just dive in the crocodile's river and expect to come out alive.

Her phone rings few times unanswered and I was ready to throw in the towel when she decides to answer.

“Hello” Khumbelo, voice burst through my phone speakers. And I see no need to great rather than going straight to the news, I even don’t have enough airtime to gossip about the whole firm.

“Am I a bad person” I blurt it out.

“No babe you’re not. What up” she says with her voice laced with concern.

“I love him K; I know he is too old. Fit to be a granddad but am I wrong for loving him like I do?” I say walking to the window to look outside just for the sake of it.

“No, you’re not wrong babe, you love him, he loves you then there is nothing to feel guilty off. Why should you be guilty of loving someone who loves you too? Age is nothing my love” she retort.

“But you know people...my mom and...” I say. Hearing people’s crucifixion ringing in my head, I cannot survive name calling.

“What about them Ndati? You just have to convince your mother that you love him. Your mother would be happy for you, that you found love. That you have someone who would move mountains for you sis, don’t close a door when you know you still want to explore what is behind that door” she utters, making so much sense.

And I nod, agreeing with her.

“So, you’re saying I should give us a chance. And not care about the age difference and what people will say?” I say.

“No, I am not saying give him a chance. I am saying do what makes you happy and what won’t leave you with regrets”

“Okay

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thanks sis.my lunch break is over. Let me go before Mrs Madia comes and eat me alive. We have interviews to attend to in few minutes” I say then we bid our goodbye.

I immediately pack the documents I should be having at the interview then head to Mr Maswingulo’s office. I know he is going to be part of the interviewer panel. So, why not ask to talk to him later after office hours now to avoid the awkwardness at the boardroom.

I knock two times then open the door, before I would be permitted to get in.

My uncle stands there with an opened briefcase facing Maswingulo and his brothers standing besides the sitting Maswingulo. Rendani has his mouth wide open, and his eyes wide open. And they are all looking at me; I gulp at nothingness and my throat become dry.

What is it that my uncle is doing here? He hates me and likes to threaten me; he can't be ruining things for me can he? He is my uncle and I know him, his is bad news. Maswingulo looks at me a bit afraid; the tension in this office is so thick and unbearable.

"Mmmh, I will come back later" I said turning then he calls my name. "Miss Madzivha" too formal but...yey.

I turn to look at him; he doesn't look at me but my uncle instead.

"Mr Mulaudzi it was nice doing business with you" he stands up, they shake hands. Khumbu closes the briefcase then put it under the desk.

My uncle reluctantly leaves the office giving me those icy cold stares that always make me wonder where I went wrong.

"Babe" he utters as soon as my uncle closes the door coming towards me.

The trio excuses themselves, making excuses of a meeting they are heading to, taking the brief case along with them.

"Are you okay, is everything alright" he asks cupping my face, my heart heat up in happiness, knowing he still care.

"I wanted to ask you, if we could meet and talk later" I retort, he heave a sigh before nodding letting go of my face. And I

immediately feel the distance between us. I can't believe I have missed him this much.

"Are you going to leave me?" he questions, looking at my eyes searching for assurance. It's the first time I have seen how nakedly his eyes draw emotions in his eyes. His voice comes out deep and strong but his eyes projected those of a baby, who needs love and comfort.

I shake my head, fighting the bile rising in the pits of my stomach.

"I love you Maswingulo, age and what, what aside. I loved you without knowing how old you where, now that I know I can't just switch off those feelings" I says.

He cups my face, link our foreheads. A swarm of butterflies form in my stomach and I feel my blood rushing up to my head.

"Ndza ku rhandza" he mumbles, making my heart to beat faster. I don't know what he said mean but I like it.

A kiss is planted on my lips while I am still digesting what he have just said, I close my eyes taking in the moment. I till I remember the meeting. I break the kiss and he lazily looks at me, then I feel the need to explain.

"We have the meeting to attend to" I said then he nods. Plant a kiss on my forehead, whispers a thank you before he walks to his desk, to take his staff then we run to the boardroom.

Chapter 17

****L.D MASWINGULO****

A smoke fills the empty space, and whole room smells of marijuana. He is with the trio (mbengi and his brothers) busy drinking and smoking in silence. Only bob Marley could be heard playing on the background “lion of Zion”.

The few randela papers that mulaudzi thought to donate to them are splashed in front of them. Nothing has been said about the money and if he is really going to break up with ndatiso.

But curiosity shines on the trio’s eyes, but he think maybe they are wanting for him to tell them.

“So” rendani utters taking a puff of his marijuana satchel.

“Great stuff neh” I said, taking in the smell and its refreshing effect.

I know I am shying away from what he wants to hear but he has to specifically ask for it.

“Yeah, they are good but I want to know about the money” he points out and I smile.

Maybe we should just donate it to children's home foundation. Maybe I can use it to take my sweetheart to a vacation overseas, ha be this is the money to break up with her after all.

"Money aside, but did you see her reaction when she saw him in the office" mbengi said, jaggig up my memory back to that day.

Her eyes...fear plastered on her eyes and she kept biting her lower lip. She couldn't have her eyes on her uncle and could barely utter few words because of...fear, fear. No Steven can't be doing anything to my woman. He is her uncle after all.

"You want to tell me that..." I couldn't utter it. It won't make sense coming out of my lips. He protects her right, not molest her.

"I think so too, but I hope I am wrong. But my gut feeling is never wrong, if he is not forcing himself to her then..." I cut mbengi short because I couldn't hear it. I could listen to it, my woman being a victim, never.

"Don't say it please" I say

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stomping on what's left of my (smoke) satchel then stands up. Take three strides to the window and look out with my hands buried deep on my pockets.

“We are not returning the money back to him” I said feeling my blood boils in anger.

One inappropriate touch, just one. I will squeeze life out of his useless body if he thinks I am to be messed with. No woman deserves to be stripped off her confidence and self-esteem because of hungry vultures.

“What are you going to do with it?” rendani questioned and a smile breaks on my face. it’s a forced one .

“Treat my woman, take her to vacations” I retort with a smudge.

“And his uncle?” khumbudzo questions.

“Please do ask your woman about him and I will try to make her open up to me” I answers looking at them and he nods.

He can’t do anything to my woman and get away with it. I strolls to the take my phone then type a message to Mulaudzi.

~thanks for the money. I will use it to spoil her~ I press send and stand there still smiling-devilishly. I love ndatiso and nothing and no one will make me want to try living this life without her.

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

He has been pumping on her like a wild animal, groaning like a lion and cursing none stop. Painful moans mixed with a bit of pleasures escapes his companion lips and she keeps throwing her head back in exhausting.

Two more fast and deep thrust he whimpers like a wounded dog resting his body on her, still buried in deep her sacred place. He have released the stress that was residing in his body, now he feels refreshed.

“You’re heavy Steven get off me” his girlfriend utters pushing him off her with the little energy she is left with. Her whole body aches, sweat covers her body, she shut her eye listening to her burning vagina and swears to never offers herself as a stress reliever to any man.

As for Steven he keeps thinking of what maswingulo will do, their meeting was interrupted by ndati and he was sent out just like that. His blood boils each time the thought of his niece with that devil.

“Steven” a low and tired voice calls his name in a whisper. He opens his eyes and looks at her. Fear covers her eyes more than being tired.

“Mulalo mulandu” (mulalo what’s wrong) I said feeling a bit worried. I have never seen her worried like this.

“Please forgive me” she says as tears escape her eyes and she silently let them fall.

I feel afraid at the same time as my blood kicks high. I hate betrayal. Reason why I deal with betrayal accordingly it would be sad ripping her head off her beautiful body because of that.

“I, I am pregnant. I don’t know what happened but I always take my pills and ...and” she talks so fasts that she got choked by her own words.

My face hardens; she can’t be pregnant of my child. Mulalo is a street bicycle. How sure is she that the pregnancy is mine? Only one person, just one person is supposed to carry my seeds, not her. Never, I refuse.

“Abort it” I said then my phone beeps indicating a message.

“But Steven, I can’t do that. It’s against what I believe in” she mumbles and I act like I didn’t hear her.

I open the message and my heart nearly stops.

Chapter 18

****NADTISO MADZIVHA****

I have been staring at myself for more than half an hour now, my eyes keeps admiring the person whose future shines brighter than the president's daughter staring right back at me. I can't believe that's me, i can't be her right. I am just a simple farm Julia who has nothing out of normality on her.

Not minding that I date the business man whose financial status might be close to match that of Bill Gates. But that has nothing on me. I am just the girl who have a fling with him going on, pushing time till he meets his late thirties girlfriend whom he will wife her right after two days of knowing her.

They said it doesn't take too much time for one to fall in love with a person and in falling deeply in love, through nurturing that love, from a small sparkle to a flame, a whole fire ball that makes eyes sparkles and brighten the future of love rested deep within us. A man knows he wants to marry you just after what...few minutes, seconds' but hey that is different from each and every male species.

But mine said he loves me and I see hope of being the incoming South African bill gate's wife to be, motsepe has nothing on

Lawrence deep pockets. That why I said the girl staring back at, me through the mirror have a brighter future that shines brighter than Mr President's daughter.

My eyes runs around my reflection few times, and my heart swirls with happiness, I look good.

My one inch afro, that has been curled and twisted into dreadlock like style look good on me. I know nothing about make ups so I just settle for a red lipstick, and it brighten my face. A red body hugging dress, showing off all what god graced me with rightfully, I look modest no joke on that.

My phone flashes on top of the bed and I slowly move to it, and it's my babe, calling. My heart beats fast; my body heats up and a smile broke on my face.

"Babe" I softly whisper.

His voice breaks free a swarm of butterflies that come live each time, he touch me, I hear his voice, I see him, it just...leave me with a yearning feeling but for what?

"Nkatanga" he calls and I faint countless times before I tell my screaming heart to slow down.

"I am almost done" I say, biting my pointing finger already messing with my lipstick, but...I will check that later.

“Take your time love, I am just informing you that I have arrived” he replies.

I nod my head like he can see me, then he drops the call. I throw it on the bed and also throw myself on it. Yes, he is my everyday crush but, I have to get hold of myself or else...yoh, is that love warming yup my heart. Didn't they said that a spark dies when the relationship matures, which means those Google articles lied, because heyi, it's been three months and the fountain isn't running dry.

After few minutes of recollecting myself, I stand back on the mirror, take the wipes, and wipe off the lipstick then reapply it again. Then give myself a satisfied look and some pep talk for confidence boosting. Walking with a hunk like Lawrence you have to have your confidence check and up high with zero insecurities because he is a snack and every horny chick wants a piece of him.

I walk into the kitchen finding my mother busy on the tasting the salt the tripe's she is busy preparing for dinner, and I find my self salivating to the tantalizing smell busy teasing my nostrils, my tummy almost grumbles in hunger and I nearly cancel on this dinner date.

“It must be nice dating older man, right” she mutters side eyeing me and I act like I didn't hear her.

She has been giving me some ridiculous eyes since the sex talk that didn't happen and I choose to brush it off. And now, I get why she have been like that. I guess she knows how old Lawrence is right. Because after all age is just a number, and if it makes those who said 'If age is just a number then money is just a paper' then so be it, and being truthful have you ever checked how the rand is compared to USD currency. You only buy one packet of ten tomatoes with R20, and never gets a change. While back then I used to use it as the pocket money for the whole months and transport as well.

"I don't know what time I will be back" I mumble, making sure she hears me. I am still standing at the kitchen entrance.

"Your grandpa is waiting for you out side. His knees might be hurting because of all the sitting waiting for you for the past hour. Ha be he is old, and should sit in one position like that- just few seconds for grannies grants" tondani utters walking in, from where, search me.

"Yeah, right that my cue" I said turning ready to run away from this people.

"10 O'clock is your curfew" the landlord retort making me turn like an Asian bold

she can't be serious.

“She won’t understand, she is into sugar daddies” tondani mindlessly utters and I throw him a death stare. And he laughs throwing his hands on his cheeks.

“Beside she is old now, she can come back after 12” he said again and my mom looks at him for some time.

“yeah right, a thi being older is sexually transmitted” she said looking at me and I never take into account her remarks but only take yeah right, it means I can’t come back after 12. His loud and runny mouth is at times useful.

I walk out and walk just two house away from home, that where he packed. I walk to the car surrounded by few guys and they are busy listening to amapiano songs busy talking while drinking. When did he make friends? Was I that long for him to be drinking already?

His eyes fell on me, and I try not to blush but yey, I am busy turning red, and thank god for that black paint he thought of generously using it on me, otherwise I would have been a hot mess.

It’s not yet, dark. He can see me very well. He whispers something to the guys and they giggle like little babies and I feel jealous, wishing it was me. Giggling like that.

“Love” he said staring at me and I stare down ready to stumble on myself and fall, embarrassing myself.

“Gents, I have to go now. My lady has arrived” he announces, then walks to the other side opening the door for me. And I gently slides I, seat comfortably then he kisses my cheek.

“You look beautiful, like a goddess you are” he compliments and I just blush. He chuckle closes the door then jogs to his side.

Get in the car, then brings the engine to live. Starts moving, playing a soft Tsonga soft music, I have heard it few times people capturing videos with the song on ticktok with their partners, it’s a song by Henny C- Xiluva Xanga. In don’t even know the lyrics but I have heard him call me “xiluva xa mina” few times which means good things I am sure.

Before I could deeply indulge with my mind on finding the lyrics and meaning behind the song he is packing his car, at Thavhani mall parking lot, news café side. And I feel a smile creep on my face; I haven’t been in this place before. I have heard that the bill can cost you few thousands, for just drinking their cocktails. Eating their ribs and wings can top it up to millions, so I don’t have money to throw away.

I wanted for him to open the door for me, which he did and he makes me walk in front of him with his hands gently resting on my hips.

Its Saturday for wry out loud and the music inside in already calling my two left feet's to the dance floor. The music isn't two loud but the music can easily take you to the enjoyment mood.

We walk to the two sitter table that is on the corner, he opens the chair for me and I sit down comfortably before he takes his seat. A waiter comes and introduces himself leaving menu on the table.

Then the mind battle begins, what do, I order. If I order ribs and wings he might think that I am trying to bankrupt him. So burger and orange juice will do just great.

He is looking at me and that sparkle I always find in his eyes is there, I have never have to search for it. It stays there and never leaves.

"I want some meat, so what are you having?" he questions and I nervously smile.

"Meat too" I said busy fumbling with menu.

He smiles then shakes his head when looking at me.

"Do you know how much I love you? Girl, this heart beat for you, only you. There is nothing in wouldn't do for you babe." He utters holding my hand, and I feel my body heating up. His hand that is resting on mine increases the heat and I feel like I am the only living thing inside the sun star.

Two hours later we are done eating, the place is already piling up. The music is bit higher than beer and then he started ordering beers for himself and cocktails for me. The mood is still good now that the alcohol is kicking in, I am bit talkative. The skeleton coming out of the closet.

“You know I miss my dad. I missed him every day of my life. And I make me wonder if he was alive how my life was going to turn out like.” I said. He is just looking at me minding his drink giving me the platform to vent.

“You know life is not fair, and god himself. You I ask myself why he didn’t take him when he has flu, or other illness. But he chooses he happiest day. I curse the man who felt it fit to make my mother a widow, who chooses to take away my role model, my best friend, my father. I curse hi, and if I could get my hands on him, I will stab him until I break his heart cage and take it out. You know why?” I said shaking my head.

Don’t blame me it’s the alcohol doing the talking.

“Because he is heartless. He doesn’t have a heart, so why should he die and be buried with it. I would like to see the person rots right before my eyes, be eaten by maggots while I witness. I am sure he is celebrating his life with my father out of the way.” I said.

“And you know the funny part is, I don’t know if it’s you or other maswingulo with the same initials with you who had a thing going on with him. I can feel it, uri if I get hold of that man. A lot will be brought into light” I utter busy drawing patterns onto my cocktail glass. Then I saw him gulp.

“It’s not you right”

Chapter 18

****L.D MASWINGULO****

His back flooded with sweat, send electric wires to his palpitating heart. His hands drips in sweat and a ball of emotions forms deep down his throat.

Her tone is cold and each and every word she utters is filled with pain and hurt. Hatred can't be missed on her tone and it sends signals of belief in every word that comes out of her lips.

It's not like he doesn't want to tell her to learn to forgive, reminds her how much her father loves her and how much he would have loved for her to live her life, letting go of pain and leave everything in the capable hands-god.

But the tight knot that has temporarily resided in his chest tightens his heart. The heat keeps increasing, feeling like it could peel off his skin any moment and at the fear creeps in.

He couldn't talk as he fears that his galloping heart might have effect on his voice and it comes in a not convincing tone. That is the reason why, he chooses to hold tight on his bottle to let not his trembling hands slip the bottle. For that he thank god, she is bit drunk to notice that.

As he keeps calming himself and pep talking to his self, convincing himself that it's just alcohol talking she questions, and that made his blood stop moving so and the heart stop beating for a moment.

"It's not you right?" ndatiso questions with the voice that trembles on its own.

"I...I, me ndatiso really" he find himself stuttering. Shakes his head and a loud crack of laughter erupt making him feeling...not explainable.

By the time he tries to get hold of himself, ndatiso is already at the dance floor. Screaming her lungs out, singing along with the song busting through the speakers.

"ndi khou humbela bonus. A ni pfi kani vhanna ndari disani" she sings gyrating while taking little steps towards Lawrence.

"Baby come dance with me" she screams, giving me her hand leading me to the dance floor. A hand which I gladly takes with my heart slowing down a bit.

It was alcohol talking, I keep saying to myself.

After few minutes of her tweaking on my throbbing boner, she is panting and sweating. I lead her to the table and let her cool down. I wasn't doing anything at the dance floor, other than being her tweak –on person.

“Babe” I breathe out. Holding my fingers for a good response.

“mmh” she lifts her head from the table and had her eye half closed eyes set on me.

“I can help you, I can help you search for your father’s killers” I mutter while looking at her.

“Good night babe” she closes her eyes with her head resting on the table. And then I knew, by tomorrow she won’t be remembering anything she have just uttered few hours ago.

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

It’s been weeks since he head of the news of becoming a father. But he isn’t ready yet. Not really ready, ready but, at least not with her.

He has his own fantasy, his own nicely written love story with colourful and eye catching drawings and words that warms each and every one hearts. A dream that only make sense to him and only him. And that dream can be shattered by the unplanned seeds that he is told to be growing.

That why they are here today. This topic of abortion has been what he has been talking about, and the more she seems to disagree with him the more his sharply sword words stab deep

her heart and making her a ball of emotions. She can't fight back the hand that feeds her

she has nothing but very much dependable on him.

"Mulalo you have to understand" he utters trying you hold her hands but she swiftly move them out of his reach.

"Steven you are not a boy. Who would question you of impregnating a woman? Your mother? No man, Steven you can expect me to abort because you don't want to be part of the baby's life" she breathed out, with a shaky voice. Truth be told, she is tired of the same conversation again and again.

His forehead creases, and his lips imitate that of disgusted, "you're insulting me mulalo. I might slap back." He retort and she sadly smiles, holds her hands up as a sign of surrender.

"Great, there is no child of mine that will come out of your vagina. Be nurtured in your womb never. You know what get ready I have already made an appointment for you" he coldly said and she felt her self losing the battle. Abortion it is.

"But..." she couldn't finish as he gave her cold stare and she shivers a little.

Three hours later they are sitting at the cold steel chair. The insides of the building looks, shady and all but outside it has the doctors sign.

Her eyes keeps moving as the coldness of this room, gets to her bones and fear grips on her conscious really tight.

“Mulalo” a lady called out, with her head popping out from one of the rooms and she felt her heart descending to her feet’s.

“What are you waiting for mulalo? Don’t forget this will stand in your way to a brighter future” Steven encourages and she sadly smile, shoving the tears that where ready to flood her cheeks behind her eyes.

She takes small calculated lips and the walk seems to be very long. A tear she have been fight back escape her eye and she quickly wipes it away.

A counselling could have been better, but now she has to let it are side and focus on the fruits of brighter future she is being sold to.

Walking inside the room makes her want feel like telling them she can’t do this.

“Mulalo, take off your clothes and wear this, then lay there on the bed” the lady whose face have cold cloud hanging on it utters. Filling the form in front of her. She hands mulalo the gowns.

Mulalo slowly stripes naked and wear the gown she has been handed to and go lay on the bed with her eyes closed. Tears

couldn't stop flowing down her cheeks. And guilty eats her up like a cancerous wound.

"Do you want to do this?" the lady doctor questions and she sadly smiles.

Her heart screams, "She doesn't want to do this" but her mouth becomes a desert dry. She just nods her head and closes her eye for few minutes.

"Legs up. And part those legs" the doctor said slapping her and she winces in the burning sensation of the slap and she partly opens them.

"Mulalo, wide, open those legs wide" she utters and she does as told.

The doctor takes what looks like a long steel which has curved on the top. What looks like a rod.

He then shoved her middle finger inside her sacred place. Roughly separating those folds that cover the gates of her heaven.

Mulalo flinches in pain, trying to run back from her finger.

"Steady, dear steady" the doctor lady slowly said. Then pulls out her finger and positions the rod thing on her mound.

“Don’t move, it will surely hurt” she utters and mulalo takes in the coldness of the steel. With her eyes closed and tears keeps burning her cheeks. She is silently sobbing.

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Chapter 20

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

Two hours has passed since mulalo has been inside. The nerves are sky rocketing and that feeling of almost being a father keeps burning his heart.

It's his blood being deprived right to life after all. And the guilt is nicely knitted inside his heart. But the convincing game of always thinking that he will get the chance again warms his heart a little bit. The thought of being a father with someone he dreams of and in that a joyful and cheerful father.

With a partner that would make parenting much easier and he would love wholeheartedly. The burning sensation in his heart dies a little as that thought brushes through his mind.

When he is still buried deep inside the shallow pool of his thoughts the lady doctor who he is very much sure is the one helping Mulalo, comes out running.

Frightened like hell, and you would see sweat dripping down her face. Her eyes bulge out and her forehead worn a frown from her coldness hanging face.

The white jacket she is wearing is soiled in blood so is her hand gloves.

“Mr Mulaudzi call for help” she screams running back inside the room she was in.

“What...what’s wrong, what happened. Where is she, doctor where is mulalo” he retort with two line creasing on his forehead.

His heart races and a cold air soothes down his spine. He isn’t really a coward but this moment reminds him why he corwar from the madzivha and maswingulo issue.

“Mr Mulaudzi” the she doctor screams.

He stands up and race to where she is and his heart almost stops beating.

The bed covers are socked with blood, her lazy eyes slowly fading, shying ways from the evil world they have been subjected to, finding comfort behind those eyelids.

“Sis...sis don’t close your eye” the desperate voice of the lady kicks him into reality.

“Call the damn ambulance” she utters, with tears clouding her eyes.

Ever since she started this illegal abortion place, she has never had a case like this. She didn’t just wake up and starts but she

was helping in a way she could also escape her financial struggle.

Who doesn't want to walk into the shop and pick something without looking at the price tag? She wanted that kind of freedom, the one where her card will never decline. The one that will make her smile all the way to the bank knowing that 'insufficient fund' sentence will not be her daily bread. And it did, it has made her quite few dollars. Her wallet might not be fat-fat

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but it weight more than many pockets.

"So you're incompetent, I paid you thousands to do this job. What there complicated about this whole aborting thing. You just take out the foetus and that's-that and now...now." I said brushing my head feeling out of the place.

This cannot be happening. What will I say to her parents, my parents? This complicates everything and hardens my life much more than before.

"I know what I was doing; just that...it's just happened right." The doctor lady shouts. Taking off the hand gloves then taking out her phone from one of the pockets and makes a phone call.

Telling the other person to arrive just now, they are closing down.

I can see the life drained out of her body slowly, but the heaviness of it all punched me really hard. I cannot call the ambulance, this is an illegal abortion what will I say. If she dies what will I say.

I force my legs close to her and squat to the bed side holding her hand. She opens her dimed eyes and smiles like she has always been.

“Are you happy now” she question and I feel my intestines moves to my throat. Blocking me from taking in and out the air. I shake my head and a tear escape her eyes.

“You didn’t want my child. My child with you. Now my life has to pay the innocent blood. Please take my body to mother, and let her mourn me. Don’t come at my funeral. Don’t cry but I pray guilt eats you up till your last breath” she utters, her voice laced with hate and anger.

“Don’t talk like that, you’re not dying here my love” pain strikes on my heart and a clout grows on my chest and I felt out of breath.

Her eyes close and no matter how I shake her she doesn’t open them. I can feel her heart faintly beating and by the time I step out of the cloud I was in the house already smell like petrol tank. And it’s wet all over the floor. The doctor has freshened up with her teary eyes fixed on me.

Mbengi and the other man I don't know are the ones pouring petrol on everything.

"Are you going to take her to the hospital or she is no longer with us" the man I don't know utters still not looking at my direction.

"She is burning as well, unless you have something to tell the hospital people" the doctor lady utters and I swear I felt my breath leaving me instantly.

"We can't burn her" I protested then Mbengi looks at me with a cigarette in between his lips.

"Then take your bitch and disappear." His cold baritone voice echoes and I feel like a wetted chicken.

"What is it gonna be." The other one questions with his eyebrow raised challenging me.

I close my eyes and turn to leave.

"You owe me one" Mbengi said and I nearly fainted. Which I wished I did so they can set me in fire as well. I can't owe the devil.

I walk to my car, close the door and wind down the windows. Look at the direction of the building. I see them walking out with few of the things that were left, other stuff I have already loaded into the van. Then Mbengi sets it alight. Then

they drove out in speed. I couldn't go. But just stands and witness the mess I created blow out in smoke.

Her words rings in my head "...Please take my body to mother, and let her mourn me. Don't come at my funeral. Don't cry but I pray guilt eats you up till your last breath"

Chapter 21

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

“I said I don’t know where she is. Am I her keeper? No, I am not. She is an adult. She has brains and she doesn’t report to me her whereabouts” my voice rumbles out, getting more agitated.

We have been sitting here for two hours, the questions keeps coming but the one that keeps bouncing back is where is mulalo? Her mother wants answers, so is my parents and they need them from me as they believed I am the last person she was seen with.

“Calm down, Steven. We understand that this affects you as well as she is your girlfriend but you have to work with us” my father utters.

This matter weighs more than any baggage his father has ever had to carry. A person goes missing at his compound. And he has no idea where she is, trying to crack his old brains seems useless as well as he doesn’t know what this kids of nowadays are up to.

“Okay, how about I find an investigator. Maybe he can help us locate her” I suggested holding my fingers hoping for them to agree into this.

I cannot sit here any longer. Listen to their indirectly accusing voices and questions that already putting pressure on my stranded conscious.

“You didn’t do anything to my daughter, Steven?” mulalo’s mother questioned with her low toned voice. The wrinkles on her face shows it’s been days since she hasn’t slept. She looks tired and her voice resembles the emotional and mental exhaustion.

I nod my head. I couldn’t bring my voice to life when I know what I did, or just witnessed but anyhow, I am the one who took her there, I am the one who left her there to burn is that building and that’s alone is murder in the books of the community. I can get implicated as well.

It has been two weeks since the incident and the nightmares haunts me like some evil looming house. I know it will get better with time and before I know it will have long faded, the only thing that will always peel off the layers build surrounding this secret is her last words “I pray guilt eats you up till your last breath” and her mother’s voice when she asked if I did anything to her daughter.

My phone vibrated, pulling me out of my pool of thoughts and I dart my eyes to it, it's on top of the table and have flashed, with the caller ID, Munyai displayed.

My heart beat quickens and fear prickles my nerves. Sweat runs down my back.

I could feel my father's eyes on me

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as it keep vibrating, with no intension of answering it. His eyes are busy boring holes on my skin and by the time it starts ringing again even my mother's eyes are set on me.

"I have to take this" I said excusing myself and not wait for their respond.

I walk out of living room, standing at the veranda, with the main door closed.

"Mbengi what do you want" I whisper. Not wanting anyone to hear this conversation.

"Hey, come to maswingulo construction. Be quick" mbengi voice bust through the phone speaker.

I felt anger building up and I clench my jaws while tightening my fist on the free hand.

"I am not your errand boy Munyai." I hiss.

“Now” mbengi says, and then drops the call.

****MARIA****

Home, whoever invented the word home was in a happy mood. Topping it up with “there is no place like home” made home sweeter. Years has passed since I last step in this grounds but everything still looks the same.

Only new faces have made few appearances than the old ones. I am pulling my bag heading to where I used to know as mvusuludzo taxi rank, that where we used to get taxi, to Tshakhuma.

The hawkers, people littering the whole place and noises make my head buzz. The sun is at its best and the not so tiny hand holding on to mine is greased with sweat.

“Mma, when are we getting there” my daughter, Tsireledzo question. With so much enthusiasm of meeting her father. She has drawn pictures of how she believes her father might look like yet she is only 8years old.

“Nope, we are not. We still have to board a taxi to Tshakhuma then walk.” I announce and she nods.

I wonder how things are going to be like, when I left things where not looking good. Where I am going I don't know what to expect. But I can't help but feeling anxious about this whole thing.

We couldn't miss the taxi conductor's voice screaming. "ho sala vhararu, vhane vha cou tuwa Tshakhuma na ndila"(only three people left, to fill the taxi" I pull Tsireledzo and our luggage's. I didn't want to miss on the opportunity. Waiting for another taxi to get full will make me more nervous.

We sit at the back sit and lucky the last person to fill in the taxi gets in. so is the driver and starts driving out. The more he drives the shorter the distance. The more words flew out of my head on how I am going to approach this whole thing with elias. The question what is he is married lingering on my head. What will I say to muvhuso and more especially Rendani?

Chapter 22

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

It has been quite few minutes since I have parked outside the Maswingulo construction. My heart is racing and hands keep vibrating because of fear. I hate finding myself at the mercy of either the Munyais or Maswingulos.

I take in few deep breathes, get out of the car the locks it. this is much worse than sitting and lying right on my mother's eyes only guilt dug its claws on my heart and I smile through the regret and pain but here, here I am to be reminded and made to feel more guilty like they are saints on their own.

It's already after five so there is no one at the reception. I strides to the lift. Press the open button and waits for few seconds before it beeps and slide open. Welcoming me into its cage. I get in press the floor I am going to and it rushes to my destination and I wish somehow it could have stalled it.

Few steps I am already hitting my knuckles against the CEO door, I am permitted to get in. taking a deep breath and preparing myself for this, before opening the door. I hold the door knob and open the door.

Walking inside feels like I am throwing myself into the devil's dinner table-the lion's den. But I can't turn back now. I held my head high and fear strapped into a tight leash.

"Why am I here?" I question still standing.

Maswingulo has the glass of what I think to be whiskey while Mbengi has his cigarette rested in between his fingers.

"That not how you greet an old friend Mulaudzi, don't you have manners. Stop misrepresenting your mother" Mbengi mutters with a smirk plastered on his face and I wish I could wipe that away. But who am I kidding I can't do it.

"We are not friends, leave my mother out of that rotten mouth of yours" I rumble out, feeling anger rising from the pit of my stomach.

"If I talk about her what will you do? Kill me? Burn me like you did to that little barbie of yours. Or should I say she used to be yours" Mbengi dared me, and I shake a little from that. Don't he feel the ashamed for being the one to throw in the match flame. He is the one who set that building in fire.

"Say her name and you would see what I will do" I mutters with my hands formed in fists.

"I have been talking to your niece" Maswingulo cuts our Tom and Jerry fights. Blubbering nothing, but involving me in his personal matters.

“So, what’s that has to do anything with me. I hope she dumped your wrinkle ass. Because my sister won’t be having a son in law who is my age” I snort. And a smile forms on his face.

“Unfortunately, I don’t love your sister and her opinion about me doesn’t pay any bills. I love Ndatiso, and she doesn’t give a damn care about my age” maswingulo retort and I clench my jaws.

“Sit down, and listen Mulaudzi and stop acting like a haunted man” mbengi utters and I heave a sigh, I know he knows that I know not any sleep. But I keep quiet and pull the chair having it scratching the floor and the stares I get are bit satisfactory, at least I can irritate them.

“What have you been talking about with Ndatiso” I fold my arms looking at them. I am afraid but no man should show other man that he is afraid of him. That is my living principle.

“She have documents that shows that her father and the man she isn’t sure if it is me or not were talking. She believes that a certain L.D Maswingulo is the one who killed her dad”

“Which is true” I stated and they both chuckles.

“It is true, but she doesn’t have to know that” mbengi utters.

“So what do you want from me. I didn’t kill my brother in law” I stated and maswingulo devilishly smiles.

“You didn’t but, you are the master mind behind all this. Remember how you got the mayoral seat” Maswingulo says and I keep quite.

“Now cat got your tongue,huh, yeah right” Mbengi says enjoying all this.

“I want you to destroy any document that has my name on it. Just think of what she will find once she managed to crack the encrypted documents. Not only my name but...”

“Yeah sure, give me a month” I cut him short.

“Just for motivation” mbengi hands me a USB. Then I stand up and head to the door.

Thinking of how she promised us she is no longer going to investigate all this shit and now, now we are back to square one. I never want to hurt her but she keeps pushing my hand and this, this will kill my sister.

****MARIA****

This place has changed

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the development is all good even though there are still houses which haven't renovated yet. Where Muvhuso used to stay, they have beautifully renovated the house and I wonder who did that, and how Mavis has been doing. I hope she changed.

Greeting people on my way to Elias's place isn't a problem as most of them hardly recognise me but, when I meet those who do the greetings takes longer as they want to know where I have been. What I have been up to and those who cares to update me about what has happened in my absence, they have even told me that Muvhuso and Rendani are married, which is also fine and I am very much happy for her.

Right now I am few houses away from Elias place, fear keeps rising and I can't even listen to this loud mouth I am with. She reminds me a lot of her father, quiet when he wants to but talkative once he becomes comfortable.

"Mma, do I look like dad?" Tsireledzo questioned and ever since I have told her that we are going to see her father, such questions have been on her lips.

"You have his eyes, and skin tone" I replied and she smiles.

"So, he going to love me?" She question and I smile a little.

"You're loveable babe, anyone would love you okay" I replied and I see happiness pouring out her eyes and that warms my heart a little.

Elias's home haven't changed, which makes me wonder why he haven't executed the plans he used to tell me about his home. His quantum is parked under the tree and that send my heart to the horse race.

Walking inside this homestead I felt empty, like there is no life in here. And I know that is not the good feeling at all. My legs jell and I feel wobbly. A kick of fear and pain strangled me and I felt breathless.

It feels like something is placed over me depriving me of oxygen.

"Mma" Tsireledzo utters, shaking my hand.

"I am not feeling well" I tell her, I feel like I can pass out any moment now. I hold onto my knees praying this feeling quickly washes over me before anyone here sees me, I can't visit other people's feeling sick.

We have been sitting with Elias little sister Luvhengo. She is no longer the little girl she was 8years back. She is a woman and a mother of two cute kids.

The parents went to the clinic; her father is only accompanying his wife to get her pills. So they will be here any moment.

"So where are your siblings" not wanting to sound like I am asking about Elias but he is the one I am asking about.

“We don’t know” I could see pain laced on her eyes and also I could tell that she doesn’t want to talk about this. So I keep quiet and we talk about other things with her eyes keeps running to my daughter who is now on the floor playing with Luvhengo’s kids.

It’s not so long when the main door opens and her parents walks in. the frown on her mother’s face is not miss able.

“Maria” Elias father calls my name and I bow down a little.

“Aa” I respond.

They settled on the couch opposite us. Tsireledzo runs to me and holds on to my shirt.

“Is this Elias’s daughter?” Elias’s father questions and before I could answer his mother utters with tears clouding her eyes.

“Look at her eyes. Her skin tone and those dimples baba, she is his daughter. She resembles him so much, ohh my God” tears streams down her cheeks and that feeling of heaviness I felt walking into this home steeds hovers around me again.

“Come, come to grandma” she calls for Tsireledzo, who firstly looks at me and I nod. She runs to her arms and she holds her tight into her embrace. Telling her how much she is happy that she is here today, how much her father would have loved her so much and that alone confirms my fears. Elias is no longer with us.

Chapter 23

****MARIA****

I have been holding the cup of coffee that Elias mother asked Luvhengo to prepare for us an hour ago. It is now cold and I also feel cold. My mind keeps picturing the river and the black plastic bags but, I can't seem to make up my mind on what it is.

"Mazwale"-Elias father brought me out of my thoughts and I just sigh. (Daughter in law-mazwale)

I feel like the truck load has been loaded on my shoulders and it's crushing my chest. And I smell blood as well.

"Sorry, what were you saying" I questioned still gripping on the cup. Even though my hands are bit shaky.

"We were telling you how much pain radiated on his eyes after you left, Elias." His father clarifies and I nod.

"Where is he?" I questioned for the hundredth time. Every time they tried to explain I just see a river and black dustbin plastic bags.

"He sent us a message the same year you disappear on. Saying he is going away to find himself. He needs some time away for

himself and focusing on his healing. And since then he haven't made contact" Luvhengo explains.

"What about Tshililo?" I questioned again.

There must be the reason why I am being shown rivers and black dustbin plastic bags. And I can't help but feel like it has anything to do with both Tshililo and Elias.

"Went back to the mental institution, and the message said that she is not allowed to make contacts with the outside world-relatives. She will reach out once she has healed" Luvhengo continues to clarify. But this information doesn't make sense to me. It really doesn't, 8 years is very long time for one to search for healing without making contacts with the outside world.

Especially leaving the pensioners parents and expects them to understand that.

I close my eyes and it's bad, I know I am feeling cold and it's not even cold outside meaning this is not some kind of my own coldness but ...yeah this is it.

"Mma, baba I am sorry about the way I left. There are so many people I have to ask for forgiveness to but, after everything I have been through the first people I thought of where this family, Muvhuso and Rendani. But I guess I come back late, very late." I said looking at them.

They are both wearing a worry on their faces and pain of not knowing where their kids are, and that pain has found a home in their eyes. One could tell that their final wish is to leave their children as one united family but how when they don't even know where to look for them.

"Coming here was to also introduce Tsireledzo to her father but, I am glad I found you at least she will know her father's family..." I am buying time for strengths. How do I break their faith of finding their kids? How do I tell them how I am feeling and what it might mean to them without breaking their hearts. These people are old, what if after saying this they have heart attack and dies Luvhengo will think I killed them, Yoh, one of the reason why I have the love-hate relationship with this work of mine.

"I don't know how to say this but first I will tell you, why I left. I left because I had the calling. I had to endure on my spiritual journey for lots of things to go well in my life. And now I have been trained and okay..." I taking in some deep breath and put the cup down. Hold my hands together, as an anguish pain hit me on my chest like a bullet penetrated in between my heart caged aimed straight to the heart. And I wince in pain.

"Why didn't you consult Mma, if you feel some type of way why didn't you. Now all I see is a river and to dustbin bags...I feel cold and...and my chest and head areas are burning in pain,

I...I can't breathe" tears escape my eyes and I heard Elias mother instructing Luvhengo to get me some water.

I feel like screaming...wailing in the immense pain I am feeling. After sometime I felt like I am slowly losing my breath. And I just sit there with my head buried on my lap.

After sometime I feel a bit okay, raise my head and take the glass of water placed in front of me and down the whole glass in one go.

"I am sorry, but their spirits are no longer in this world. They are busy roaming around like they don't have a home because they weren't buried where they should be buried. There was no burial of them at all meaning no ceremony was done to welcome them back home man. They were not bathed hence I smell blood."

I can feel my tears burning my cheeks and a loud scream erupt from his mother and I just felt my whole world crushing. All the hopes I heard for my daughter faded before she could even see the face of the man she could have been calling dad.

The whole room is filled with scream and the atmosphere has long changed fitting well, the situation at hand.

"Tell me your joking Maria. If I failed to get answers on what happened to my children it mean I am an ignorant mom, a careless mother. Please don't break my heart like that..." Elias

mother said while in her husband's embrace and I wished this task wasn't given me at all.

*

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A case of a missing person was opened, digging of the bodies was done and it's true. Only the skeletons were found. The burial was prepared and today is the day we will be laying them to rest.

Tsireledzo is not taking it well she just keeps crying. She had hopes of being like her friends. Having both love from both parents and she have already bragged to them about her father owning the taxi rant no matter how many times I told her it's not a taxi rank but just one quantum. Now that dreams is a distant dream or doesn't even fit to be one. It will just be a dream that will never come true.

The whole Tshakhuma village is shocked about this and this one; it is as well going to be a cold case. How are they even going to start to look for the murderers for the murder that happened 8 years back?

I kick off the blanks

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walk out of the guest bedroom, we have been using here and walk out. I get to the kitchen and find it already filled with lots of people who are preparing for the funeral as well but I couldn't spot Luvhengo.

I have to check on her, so I rushed to her bed room, knock two times then open the door. Finding her looking at the video on her laptop of the all of them.

I sit next to her and watch with her, they looked happy beside Elias always fight Luvhengo because he thinks she was a child they were happy siblings.

"It feels unreal..." she utters still looking at the screen even after the video have long ended.

"I have learned to leave without them for the past years but I carried hope and pray for their safety always. That one day they remember they left me back and come back for me...for us. Only for them to be ditched in some abandoned river somewhere to the point of their flashes being finished by maggots and we are to burry skeletons. The fucked up world we live in" tears streamed down her face and hurt is very much evident.

"Who has my back now...what will become of me when my parents die? Become a loner? Because relatives have their own families to prioritize" she said her voice laced in pain.

“I will be here for you always. And Elias left us with his copy; we will remember him through her. Tshililo was a loving sister who let you get away with many things and try to remember her through happy moments” I tries to comfort her and she just nod and smile a little.

“She was crazy too. Thinking Rendani will love her and let go of his woman because she was promised Rendani long time ago” – Luvhengo.

“She was a go getter that one. Stubborn as hell” I said thinking of her.

“Bipolar...she had bipolar”-Luvhengo.

I wasn't aware of that but, that doesn't matter now. We sit quietly for few minutes. Until I break the silence again.

“We have to get ready, the ceremony will be starting in few” I announce. She nods and I stand up walk back to my room.

Wake up my princess and we prepare. It was already ten minutes after eight when we walk inside the tent that is outside the yard. People have come all out, they are here to confirm the truth in the matter, and we all know reality only starts hitting once the casket slide down to the grave hole.

Walking inside the tent I fetl cold breeze down my spine, and the hair at the back of my head stands. I roam my eyes around

and they land at the Munyai trio, their wives and the other guy with what I assume to be his wife too.

I stroll to the front seat and sit down. People were called to speak; even Muvhuso was amongst those who spoke about Elias. Only few people were called for Tshililo and those who knew them both did speak about both of them.

Their parents and myself didn't say anything. I had nothing to say but Tsireledzo wanted to say something so she was given the podium.

She walks there, with a brown big envelope and a piece of paper.

She greets and then fumbles with the envelop and takes out the painted picture and a drawn one. It's the picture of her father she drawn and painted. Its bit messy but she hasn't learned to perfection her art, so forgive her.

"This was my gift to my father" she said showing us.

"I didn't know him and I had plans on how we were going to spend the daddy and daughter time. He was going to paint with me, that is why my first gift for him was this painted picture of him" she utters and I couldn't help but smile as tears runs down my face.

She then opens the white paper that she had in her hands. She has long placed her art paintings and drawings beside the podium.

“This is my message to my father.

DEAR DAD

I know physically I don't know you but mom and grandparents and aunt said I look like you, that I have your skin tone, eyes and dimples and a heart like yours. I loved you dad and I will continue to love you always. Mom said you could have been so happy to see me and that you are now my guardian angel. That you're my shining star that will always lighten my path.

I know you love me too dad, rest well with aunty.

Goodbye until we meet again” she utters and walk back. I look at her as she model towards her chair, she sits and place her head on my lap and I let her be.

After everything and everyone has spoken we head to the cemetery. The mood becomes sombre. The comforting songs keep coming and in an hour we are done at the burial site heading back home.

The people are busy sitting in group getting to know each other. And others are going up and down looking like headless chicken. I walk around looking for Muvhuso, I know that maybe

this isn't the appropriate space to have a conversation I want with her but I can't act like I didn't see her.

I look around and spot her sitting at the tent. The trio, and their wives plus the other guy and his wife too. That feeling of feeling ice cold comes back and my back hair stands but I try to fight back the feeling.

"Hi" I said as soon as my feet get me to them.

"Hello" they replied all together.

"Do you mind if I join you guys" I asked, with my eyes on Muvhuso, she have to be the one to agree with my request.

"Yeah, no problem" she announces. And I take a chair and joins in the circle.

The topics of how people are cruel, how they can kill people and dumped them by the river and never said anything for the past 8 years just shows their cruelty. That villages are no longer safe just like lokshions and other cities.

My eyes keeps shifting to the girl I don't know. And she caught my eyes on her, I smile.

"What is your name?" I questioned still smiling.

She innocently smiles back before she replies.

"Ndatiso Madzivha" she replies

“Don’t let anything change your heart Ndatiso. You have a big and wonderful heart. But truth can turn you into something you’re not.”

All eyes fell on me and I shrug.

“I say things that make no sense sometimes” I said, trying to shift the attention away from me.

****CHAPTER 24****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

I keep moving my eyes from the strange woman I have met just right now. I can feel my palms heating up and sweat starts to cover them. Her glare makes me more uncomfortable but her smile wants me to loosen up. The atmosphere has changed and you could tell that the tension is building up, being ignited bit by bit.

A smile broke my face but it doesn't lite up to my eyes, it just a awkwardness smile.

"What do you mean Maria" Rendani asks, throwing daggers at her. She gulps then claps her hands together and let out a heavy sigh.

"Excuse me, my brains lose wires sometimes" the lady replies, standing up ready to step out of this choking atmosphere.

"Maria" muvhuso whispers, standing up as well.

She turns back and smiles looking at her, tears build up on both pair of eyes.

"I have to go, greet other family members and check on my daughter. We will talk. Call me" she turns on her heels and head towards the crowd until she disappeared inside the house.

My eyes were still set on her, wanting to see the lady whose present envoke something in me. It makes me nervous and also that homely feeling as well-like feel free. I stared at her because I want to be able to identify her when I meet her, there is no insane person who can say that. Maybe I should ask Muvhuso her contact and meet up with her.

"Babe" Lawrence calls out my name while gently shaking me. I didn't realise I was staring at spaces and his shake brought me back. I smiles and bat my eye lashes at him and a smile forms on his face.

"Are you okay?" He questions and I smile sending him a nod. Which he didn't believe because he kept staring at me looking a bit worried.

I let him be, and try focusing on the on going conversations here. I am not contributing anything on the topic my quietness made me see that there was a lot being said by action and signs of eyes by the guys right here. And as the laddies we didn't notice nor hear it.

I look around, trying to locate the toilets. I can feel the emergence of my pee to be released growing and I can't hold it any longer.

"Do you know where the rest room are?" I asked no one in particular.

"Go behind the house, you will see one" muvhuso says and I hurriedly strides towards the given direction. I easily locate it, get inside and yew, I scream a little when I feel burning sensation while sitting on the toilet sit. This proves the theory that metal pit toilets absorbs heat real bad and they are real hot. After doing my business I walk out, finding those nowadays little tanks they places at the gatherings for water. I wash my hands and leave them to dry while walking back. I am busy

taking in the beauty of the mountains and how one can easily take in the view of almost the whole community when standing where I am. Leaving at the steep places has its own advantages, it easily makes one fall in love with nature and see the beauty in green leaves, those turning yellow leaves and dead leaves. The birds chirping, chickens running around the yard and dogs fighting for left overs. I feel like a tourist, what I left is my self phone to capture this kind of beauty. I know I live in rural but I didn't notice its beauty because I have never tried to see its beauty from a distance I guess.

"Ish

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sorry, sorry" I say stepping back. I bump into another person because I have been staring at dogs fighting.

"Its okay, Madzivha." The lady that was sitting with us said. She is still wearing her smile and you would swear its her crown, she wore it with pride.

"Why aren't you well? What is bothering you?" She questions and my eyes pop out and I bite my lower lip. I feel tears build

up but why do I want to cry. Crying for what? Am I not well?
What is it bothering me?

"I...I...I am okay, what makes you think I am not" I retort with my eyes staring at her.

She chuckles then shakes her head.

"Why aren't you not looking for answers again like you were doing before. You protected my love and nothing can hurt. Only your heart will. It's bad that darkness is trying to defeat the brightness of your light but the more you stay in the dark the more you start telling yourself that everything is supposed to stay like that. If ever you find yourself and be able to turn the stone that hides the truth from your eyes learn to forgive"
Maria utters.

"What are you talking about Maria" a frown covers my face and my brains starts registering her earlier statement 'my brain lose wire sometimes' maybe now they have lost signal.

"No stone will be left unturned if you want to see clearly, but that is all in your hands Madzivha" she utter, I just stare at her. Wires getting tangled in my brains and nothing seems to be

coming to my mouth. I just stay mute staring at her like she aren't really well on her head.

"They are about to leave now, and they are looking for you. Remember trust no one on the task at hand. A lot can go wrong" she says and then I hear Khumbelo's voice calling me. I quickly snap out of it and smile back to Maria.

"It was nice meeting you again" Maria says and I nod. Khumbelo gives Maria a quering eye, but dislike masks the eye more than queries.

"What were you talking about with her. She is weird and sends weird vibes. Everytime I look at her goosebumps grows and covers my skin. She might be a witch" khumbelo opens her judgemental books like she always does to people she dislike and I just nod.

It's true she send some weird vibes but calling someone a witch just because you don't jell with, it is not good.

We get to others and we bid our goodbye, we all come in different cars. Only this time around they was a young lady,

whose said to be the sister of the people who were buried today- Luvhengo.

"Are you okay" Lawrence question again. He has been asking me that question all day long. I dont blame him, what Maria told me makes my brains just freeze. I can't think of anything and I don't have anything to say. I just want to put my finger in the whole Maria situation, she was talking in tongue and tales but heyi, that a heavy load offloaded on my shoulders.

"Yeah...yeah I am okay babe" I replied giving him a little smile, hoping he back off a little.

"But you haven't been yourself since that lady talked to you" he retort and I just shrug.

"Dont let it consume you babe. You heard her saying she loses her wires sometimes" he reminds me and I smile nodding.

"Will you be okay?" He questions like he his dropping off some strange place, while he is dropping me a house away from home.

"I am okay love" I utters. He nods then kisses my forehead before he captures my lips. We kissed for quite few minutes until I feel that warms sensations- that itchiness between my thigh sky rockests and want to be attended to with need. I break the kiss and he stares deep to my eyes.

"I love Ndatiso, and I see myself with no one else but you." He utters still staring deep in my eyes.

"I love you too" I reply. A beautiful smile breaks his face revealing his beautiful white set teeth. And I couldn't smile but smile as well.

I get out of the car and walk home while he is still staring at me. I open the gate, get inside before he starts his car and drive away. I walk inside the house, only to be welcomed by laughter and an ugly face of my uncle.

"Ndatiso, come greet your uncle" uncle Steven calls out and I froze, where I am standing. Why do the universe hates me like this?

CHAPTER 25

NDATISO MADZIVHA

"Should I run out like right at this moment, or just faint it will be much better" I said to my self feeling over powered by heat and that feeling of suffocating roughly taking over. I can feel my heart ready to break free and gallops right in front my eyes.

My mother clicks her tounge and gave me a 'don't embarrass me in front of visitors look' and I know if I do as my brains commands, I will be left in hot water.

A smile slowly forms on my face but I couldn't bring joy to my face.

"Hi uncle, it's been a minute" I utters and my voice just decides to expose my fear and comes out squeaky and high, sounding like a sick duck.

"I have been around and busy. Maybe you should also visit your grandparents" he flashes a Colgate smile and I nod. Feeling

guilty of abandoning my grandparents but I can't visit them in his presence not after every traumatic experience I went through under his supervision. He was supposed to protect me but...

I close my eyes blocking everything and anything that takes me back to that fateful day. It's no secret everyone knows what happened but because he is family, and there is no dustbin to throw away family we just move like nothing happened. I couldn't even write him off, but I have to build walls that hold tight my fears and uncomfortability in his presence.

"I will be in my room" I announce already half way across the room until I heard Tondani making a comment.

" ever since she started having sex with her grandpa Bae, she have no time to spend with us" Tondani utters, I just look at him, and sadness weighs his face more than anything. He is just young sweet boy protected from everything, he won't understand. But the guilty conscious, stabs my fragile heart and feel like turning back, but I couldn't so I continues running to my room.

Its already late at night when my bedroom door slowly opens, I look at the door waiting for the person who wants to invade my privacy. People knows not how to knock and that's bad.

My uncle walk in with his hands buried deep inside his pockets, and a cheeky smile on his face. And right then I feel like I can just punk on his face.

"Do you ever listen Ndatiso" he questions and I close my eyes, taking a deep breath. I want no threats.

"What did I do uncle" I asks with a bored voice. I hate him, and I fear he might hurt me. But feeding off his ego through my showing my fear would never happen.

"He knows that you're investigating about your father and he wants your head severed to him in a sliver platter" he announces.

I feel my heart drops to my knees, and a bit shaky. I stop...I stop, it's been a while since I have been investigating further my father's death. Why would the person wants to kill me. So,

my uncle is here to kill me? Should I scream before I die, yoh!
What should I do?

"Are you here to kill me?" I whisper with tears building up. "Am I going to die?" I utter under my breath.

"I can kill you right now, or take you to him still alive. Just think of what he will do to you. Well well well. He announces stepping fully inside walking straight towards me. And I walk back until I am against the wall. His hands cage me in and he smell me from my head to my neck. Then lick his lips.

I am so afraid and I can't feel anything until I feel warm water flowing down my legs. We both look down and yeah

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I have wet myself. That how much I am so afraid of him.

He chuckles, while stepping back a little.

"Dont play with fire Ndatiso you will get burnt. You're just a fish in an ocean full of sharks. So, stop gambling with your life" he announces and start sizing me before he turns to go.

My knees feels weak and they just couldn't keep me up. And I fall down siting to my own urine. What did I get myself into.

****MARIA****

The feeling of sadness still covers the whole atmosphere. And one can't breath without thinking of Elias. He is no more. He will never turn back. They never work on their relationship. When they part they parted when things were still sour and she was the main cause of all that. And that tears her up. She is broken for herself, for their daughter and for his family.

It's been a week since everything has unfolded, and like they all know it's just a cold case. So, what's is keeping her here nothing. After meeting up with Muvhuso, she will go away just to start afresh like she always does.

"Mama, where are you going" Tsireledzo question seeing Maria looking like a fly. She is beautiful and no hiding it.

"I am going to town. I am meeting with aunty Muvhuso" I announces and she nods.

"Do you want yo go with me?" I questioned. I can't leave her of she wants to go with me. She isn't anyone's responsibility but mine.

She shakes her head "no Mami, I won't get bored. I will be playing with prince" prince is Luvhengo's son.

I nod, kiss her goodbye and promise to bring her snacks before I walk to the main road to catch a taxi. I flog the taxi down, get it and in 45 minutes I am getting off the taxi.

We have promised to meet each other and some some restaurant that sells Nigeria food. I get there first, sit by the window and I could see out side. I start playing game in my phone after placing my drink order.

"I am sorry am late" muvhuso utters sitting down.

"No, your not late. I just arrived early" I said flashing her a smile.

"No, do be silly" she utters smiling as well.

"Have you ordered anything?" I nod.

"Yes, I have ordered a drink" -Maria.

We place our orders, talking about nothing at all. I am here to clear off some air but words seems to fail me. We have already ate, and busy smiling to each other like chimpanzees but still I can't get hold of words that shows how sorry I am.

I managed to get myself started with my apologies and we talked about everything leaving no stone unturned.

We have long separed, she leave me behind as hse have to run back to her kids and husband and I have snacks to shop.

I am carrying six plastics bags and they are so heavy, taxi rank is still a distance. I don't have 10 rand to pay those people who help shoppers with their bags so I have to suck it up.

"Mama, let's me help you with that." The person says taking most of the plastics.

"No, I am fine" I utters and he just flashes a smile and I melt right infront of him.

"What if you run aways with my bags" I questioned and he smile. This is Thohoyandou, they scam you money right infront of everyone. And people just keep on walking. By the time you scream "thug" he will have long sprint out.

"Do I look like a thief" he utters and I feel the urge to shake my head. But I head even politicians are thieves but hide behind their flashy suits and higher position. A white collar crime.

"I dont know you" I utters.

" I am Steven Mulaudzi. Your future husband"

****not edited****

****CHAPTER 26****

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

It's not everyday that one get to meet a beauty like have just met last week. My mind keeps trailing back to those moments, their were so short lived but they have tottoed my brains and my mind. I just...I just keep seeing her. Her contagious laugh, her warm and weird like aura, she is someone I would really like to be friend in the future. I can't really say like I need romantic relationship even I still have my eyes on Ndatiso...yeah that's right, you now know. Ndatiso is the girl that makes me want to commit sins, insult my ancestors, inviting demonic spirits and cures for the coming generation. But one thing of sure if I can't have her then maswingulo also won't have her.

Mxm, back to the mamasita have just met, she can be my fuck and pass kinda girl. But...maybe polygamy. My heart makes flip backs by just trying to picture the whole thing. A threesome would be great, I have seen such videos on internet and they make me think mmmh, sbwls the attention the male partner gets the double a deliciousness, double attention, everything is double double. And I just can help but want to experience it as well.

I look around, I can't leave the room in a mess. I dont even know where she keeps the documents where to start looking, actually I have no idea. A door opens and Tondani walks in.

"Uncle, what are you doing. You're invading Ndati'privacy. You can't go through her things in her absence" Tondani utters giving me judgemental looks and I feel like rolling my eyes. Yes I do roll them feeling annoyed.

"I want to buy her present" I bluntly utters. With no words coming to my rescue.

"So?" He questions. I hate kids and this one is one annoying kid.

"So, I am looking for clues of what I can get her" I foolishly answers and prays he was dump like my neighbor's child. I heard that he helped people to steel his grandmother chicken but hey, that is the story of the other day.

"I can tell you what she like, there is no need to snoop around her room" he utters and there goes my chance of getting the document. I have a people baying for my blood just because of those documents.

I walk out with him

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and he is busy showing me watch, bracelets, earrings and quite a few speakers and I just smile to be polite.

"Yeah, she will love this one. I have never seen her wearing this kind of ear rings." Tondani says brows through his phone and I just smile. Tell me who loves combo earrings. Not any lady I have been with but heyi, what do I know about different taste of woman.

"Give me your card, they will deliver them tomorrow don't worry" he utters and I look at him.

"Uncle we have to pay" he utters ,he seems more happy about all this than me. Bit I am forced to this I can't be happy.

After everything I get in my car, and head to Maria's place. Not place, place but where she lives. Driving around hoping to bump on her. I just want to see her, maybe when I get back I would find Tondani not around.

I drive around for quite sometime, until I decide to call her, fuck some pride. I can't waste my petrol like that.

"STEVE" Maria utters as soon as she answers the call. And I smile a little. I like the feeling I get when I am with her it's bit deeper than that what I felt for Mulalo.

" I am around your place. I was wondering if I can see you" I hold my fingers hoping she say yes. And my prayers head straight to heaven.

"Okay give me few minutes" she utters. The I gave her direction of where I am and with 30 minutes we are sitting at the back seats of my car. Having a light conversation until she just blunt out things that makes my heart races.

"She needs a proper burial. Her last wish was to be mourned by her parents. Do right Mulaudzi, nothing under the sun stays hidden for ever" Maria utters staring back at me. Straight to my eyes and I feel my back being covered by sweat.

My throat dries up and I blink my eyes repeatedly before clearing my throat.

"What are you talking about. And who are you talking about?" I questioned and she smiles. Weird right, psychopath vibes sort of and it's a red flag on its own.

"I might have made quite an impression Mr Mulaudzi. For you to keep wanting to be in my company. " she utters, like she haven't just thrown a bomb right at me. And I just stare at her.

"I still have some few tricks neh. I love a man of both action and his word. Make your story clear Steven, I don't want mixed

signals i might end up with the wrong side of the stick" Maria utters and I smile.

"I enjoy your company, I like you bit I don't want us rushing anything. If anything is to happen it will happen naturally" I utters and flashes a smile that don't reach my eyes. I don't trust her, what she have just uttered have shaken me a bit.

"Okay, so when are you taking your friend out for date" she utters and I smile. Just like how I prefer and pick them.

****CHAPTER 27****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

The parcel that Steven have just brought for Ndatiso, has just been dropped at her workplace. There is no card, no name just the address and the person it is going to. But they are just the earrings she have been dying for, she really needed to add this master piece to her afracanisty collection of earring and they are just perfect.

Who could have bought it, she couldn't think of anyone beside her babe, the reason why she is sprinting to his office. One could only pray she doesn't trip and fall because she might never recover from the injury. The excitement didn't even make her knock, she just pushed the door open. Already screaming with excitement.

"Babe, thank you, thank you" I screamed getting inside, but immediately turns to halt as I spot the presence of people.

"Oops, you're busy. Sorry" I awkwardly mutters under my breathe, my eyes moving around.

My eyes locate the Munyai's trio, Lawrence, an elderly woman who have few features you can spot on Lawrence and a young lady with three large suitcases placed on the middle of the office. It's like they have been in the middle of an intense conversation and I just interrupted them.

"Miss Madzivha" Lawrence formally calls me, but my surname and I feel my heart sunk down to my feet.

I try to fake a smile, but I just couldn't but what I applaud myself for is being able to calm my voice, and not sound like a wounded Bitch. Which I am just that I am not a bitch.

"I am sorry for not knocking, sir. I just wanted clarity on something, but I will come back later" I say already turning and the son of a bi...woman decided to rub in the salt.

"Leave what ever it is to my PA" Lawrence.

I couldn't reply, I. Just nod.

Phew, I can feel my breathe threatening to leave my body. But I have to hold it in and do the walk of shame, with the tail resting in between my legs.

I could hear the voice of one of the laddies asking if all his workers calls him "babe", I really loved to hear the bloody swine answer that but I don't want to be eavesdropping, I might end up more broken.

Getting out

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I ran to the resting rooms before I head back to the office. I just want everything that happened to sink in but they are doing so slowly and I just...I just can't fasten the process.

Maybe I am being dramatic over nothing, or he is just afraid to let the old lady know that I am his woman. But I let him meet my mother. I...I do everything without holding back, but am I ready to meet his mother. With all the monster in laws I have heard about. Am I just getting ahead of myself, allowing hurt to consume me for nothing.

I wash my face, and prepare myself to get back to work, my phone vibrated and I immediately open the message it's from uncle Steven and the other one from Tondani.

" I found uncle inside your room, he said he was looking for clues for your surprise present. So I suggested he buy you earrings because I know you always loved such designs. Hope you love it"- Tondani.

Steven in my room? I think he was looking for...for the documents that he thinks I have for my father's murder. What makes the case so important to him and his people. I suspect he is one of the people who killed my father now, but would he kill her sister's husband? I don't know. Does my mother know, that is the reason why she never wanted us to talk about it.

I pause the thoughts and opens Steven's message. "I hope you love the present baby girl"- Steven.

Mxm, bloody two sides snake. I mutters under my breath and strolls back to my work stall. I should have throw the earrings on the bin but I just can't bring myself to do that. This earrings are expensive and I just can't afford then,so I shove them inside my bag and take out my personal diary. Pieces of news papers,

that have my father murder news and other pieces I have collected for the investigations fall to the floor and I pick them and open the diary.

WHO IS L.D MASWINGULO???? Is still circled with thousands questions marks.

Can it be him? Or not. I start jotting down what I think it's necessary to find the maswingulo who my father knows about.

I also add Steven Mulaudzi and his sister Muofhe Mulaudzi on the list. This marks the beginning of the investigation.

I take my phone and text my best friend khumbelo.

"Find who killed Philip Madzivha, project. We are back in game. Meet me at four O'clock and KFC for ice cream and discussion" I sent the message.

Takes a deep breathe, then packs back all the things back to my bag. And starts working.

****MARIA****

Is loving someone when living with your inlaws wrong? I mean the person who is supposed to love you is no more and never coming back, but does that stop one from living. I am not old, I still have needs that only man can take care of. Do they even consider me as their in-law? Things were over been me and their son. Do I love Steven or is just the fling? To be honest I don't know. All I know is that I feel things that I shouldn't be feeling considering we have just found Elias body and have just been buried.

"Maria, are you okay?" Luvhengo asks taking the spoon from me and immediately switching off the stove.

"Mmmh, yeah" I replied. Taking the pot off the stove. Looking at the mess I have just created. The house is filled with smoke and I have just burnt eggs.

"No. Your not. Who in their right mind burns eggs Maria. What's up?" She questions and I just start washing my pot. The

window are long opened and the fresh air is starting to fill up the space.

"You can talk to me Maria. What is going on.?" She begs, how do I tell her this. Maybe I should just spit it out without thing about it.

"I think I found a person....I am not sure if I am on love with him or not . But he has dark aura. My question is am I misreading the help him feeling with romantic feelings. I am frustrated and worse part we have just buried elias" I heave a sigh looking at her digesting all this.

" I know you loved my brother. And what ever happend between the two of you, only him and you knows how you were going to solve it. I can't say it's two soon, because he has been dead for years...close to decade. Despite the fact that we have just buried him but it's been long since he have passed away. You can move on, have fun with anyone you want. Life is very much short and there is no need to let you leave it in the shadows Maria. But what I think my parents won't appreciate is you finding a person staying with them. You're like their

daughter in-law and you can't be bringing another man here" - luvhengo says and I nod. It's very much understandable.

I know I should have looked for my own space long time ago, but I still thing I should go back because there is nothing for me here. But Steven, man. I just can't pack and leave without seeing him again.

Am I in love already?.

****CHAPTER 28****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

Papers scattered all around the room. With a pencil stuck at the side of her ear. Music busting through the speakers. She is sitting down busy circling, underlining and jotting few pointers on her diary. It's been two full weeks she has been at it, busy turning the house upside down. She have stole few big brown enveloped from her late father's office and hides them in between her bed mattress. Her relationship with Maswingulo is bit shaky. She have been trying to avoid him ever since that day, the office gossip concluded that the young lady is Lawrence's wife.

If I said that didn't hurt, I will be lying. There were nights were I slept soaking on my own tears, could literally hear my heart tearing apart. That even hearing his name, feels like a sharp sword has just been stabbed straight to my heart cutting it to half, you would only just imagine how I felt by just thinking of him, if I didn't die then, nothing could ever kill me. I have blocked his numbers and at work I pretend to be very much busy. So I hardly bump onto him and luckily, I no longer feel the

need to take any document straight to him but his P.A or just send one of the interns, they were hired few days ago and already they are life savers, God sent.

Maswingulo L.D appears more than any other name on each and every document. I take his picture, not the ones I took with him but the one I found on his social media. I printed it at work. I paste it right next to the article of my father's murder. It's unfortunate the article doesn't have the perpetrator's name. I take few pictures of how his signature is like on the three documents that both my father and maswingulo have signed. What is left is to find his signature and compare it to this one.

I take my laptop and starts going through few articles about maswingulo and its unfortunate to me that is all about his great work. The community projects he is involved in and how much of an angel he is. Nothing really interest me, but annoys me. I check my uncle out and the only thing I found is that he became the replacement mayor. When my father dies, and that wasn't news to. So, actually internet have nothing for me. The thought of taking the brown envelopes I stole from my father's office come through my head.

Lucky, my bedroom door is locked that I felt safe to take out one of the brown envelopes at the middle of the mattress and mattress base. I took out the thin one and opens it. It has mother's documents. Her pictures, a baby teeth brush, pieces of hair and a letter from a doctor.

I read through the documents, I had to read it several times for it to make sense atleast. Sweat drips drink my face and I feel tears flowing down my face. I feel...I feel betrayed. I feel confused. I need answers. Who do I ask, and how do I do that. My hands trembling. I just saw my whole world crumbling right before my eyes. It's one problem not solve, moving to another mountain of problem, pains

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confusion, betrayal and numbness.

"This can't be true, it can never be" I say to myself. She is my mother" I say to myself, trying to calm myself.

****L.D MASWINGULO****

Lines of stress creases on his forehead, his eyes blood shot red. His veins popping looking like a fucken beast, but it can't feeds on his mother. The baggage on his shoulders is weighing him down and two weeks only, he have lost weight. His appetite is just not there and he can't focus on anything. His mother have been treading carefully around him, handling him with care, like an egg.

The bush covering his face and head, just shows how miserable he is.

His fingers keeps murdering the screen keyboard of his phone, swearing and tounge clicks kept been thrown around.

"Vele, she should stay away from you. I don't want dirty, hungry skinny bitch to be clinging on you for nothing. Busy pretending like they love you while they are playing you. They only need your money" His mother utters.

He doesn't even bother to look at her or just rectify her statement. He also feel like life tons of bricks are being loaded on him. Being investigated he is okay with that, he is few steps ahead of her but her ignoring him hurts him more than anything.

"Don't call her that" I defend her. My mother clicks her tongue and keep shaking his head.

"Do you want to go to jail Lawrence. You want to leave me childless because you want to fall for the child of the man you killed. You want to leave Thlari (Vuthlari in full) with who? Since when do we fall in love with enemies Lawrence" Mrs maswingulo utters, fear masking her voice.

"I didn't mean to Mma, mara I love her. I can't help but feel she is my missing rib" I retort and she laugh, clapping once.

"Your missing rib, is any female you connect with not her...not madzivha's daughter Maswingulo." She said.

"I love her and I don't give a damn about who her father is".

"She will be your death maswingulo. What will happen when she find out you killed her father? She would clap her hands for you put you in pedestal applaud you for what you did. He wasn't a dog but her father maswingulo. Her father dammit."

Fear has long disappeared, she is fuming with anger and disappointment.

"She won't find out ma" I snapped at her but I didn't mean to.

"She won't? Didn't you said she is conducting her own investigations. How would you make sure she doesn't find out?" She questions.

"Her best friend is helping her out. She is Khumbudzo's wife. So we asked her to tell us, Ndati's plans so we can offer help as well. And Steven Mulaudzi is her uncle, he will destroy each and every document on Madzivha's computer before she gets hold of them"

"Okay, that great. But does it have to be this girl maswingulo" Mrs maswingulo have calmed down a bit. Now addressing the issue as a mother who have been dying to hold a little baby with her hands and shush her to sleep. Vuthlari have long grown.

"I love her mom, I am past the liking stage. I love her and want to make her my wife" I replied.

"Does she know that you have a daughter?" Mrs maswingulo questioned and I shake my head. I am afraid she might leave me. Already my age is too much adding a child might make her run away.

"You have to tell her maswingulo. We can't be hiding that you killed her father and your daughter as well. We can't hide her, she also needs her father" Mrs muswingulo said.

"She doesn't talk to me, she avoids me. So how will I do that?"

"Figure it out. Like how you figured out how you're going to hide the truth from her"-Mrs maswingulo.

"Bring her home for diner this Friday " she utters walking to the kitchen.

****CHAPTER 29****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

I have been breathing in and out. Pacing back and forth. My brains still refuse to let in the reality of my parents not being my real parents. I don't know what is it, but this is just a sick game. Philip Madzivha was my dad, people said I look like him. Muofhe madzivha is my mother, I act like her. I don't know where this is heading.

My head is pounding, and I kept ruffling the papers on my hands. I kept reading word to word.

"This are the DNA results of Mrs Muofhe Madzivha and Ndatiso Madzivha, the results certify that Mrs Madzivha has 0.00% blood relationship with Miss Ndatiso Madzivha"

"This are the DNA tests results between Mr Philip Madzivha and Miss Ndatiso Madzivha, the result certify that Mr Philip Madzivha is 0.00% not Miss Ndatiso Madzivha's father. "

The weight loaded on my shoulders is too much, I felt like I have just been hit by a truck. My heart keeps racing and heart beat raising. Confusion , curiosity and anger leave me trembling. Everything is just confusing. And now thinking of it, it makes sense.

It's makes sense how they could preach we are family, how family should protect each other no matter what. How each and every family have its own skeletons but choose not to show case them to the world. How I was abused right under their nose and the family card was already laid on the table.

Even though Philip was fuming with anger when he found out, about the abuse. But I was not his child, he can't take the matter that far. Would any parent keeps quit when they know their little princess, their angel have just been played with her privates parts. If a tounge danced and fingers fumbles with her privates, opening her folds like she have given a consent for all that. Shaking until that condense milk flows out from my privates area. That was childhood ripped off from me. Its was like a can of worms have been opened and there was no going back. Which I did try to live with it, let it not entirely consume

me and be closed off. With the help of them "my parents" now...now it's like the fountain that I drink from has just ran dry.

I am at my lowest, lost and lonely. I so much want to confront her, but what do I say? How do I say it? What if she sends me packing, where do I start looking for my real parents. My heart tightens as the thought keeps kicking my brains to reality I am already living in "Philip madzivha is not my father".

I wipe my tears, look myself on the mirror. I couldn't stare at myself like how I used to, I see Philip when my reflection appears on the mirror and now that he is not my father, I see him more on myself. My heart breaks when I see him through me

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so looking at myself would be a no-no going forward. I manage to calm myself down and strolls to the kitchen.

I kept swallowing the lump on my throat, and taking deep breathe to be able to let her know of what I think of her, and how I feel about being deprived the privilege of being raised by real parents.

I found my mother, her brother and Tondani busy having their little cozy family tea. Busy chatting the roof off, laughter fuel the energy in the room-like setting the room into a beautiful fire. Looking at them makes me feel like an outsider.

Each time we tried to sit like that ever since Dad died I always end-up running away from them. It's either mom and I are arguing about nothing at all if not everything. My uncle...well I never liked him ever since the abuse. The only person who annoys me and I would lay my life for is Tondani. He is just my baby boy but will this affect him as well.

"Ooh, Ndati come. Your uncle said he was really handsome back in the days, do you remember how he used to be stubborn and a biggest player of his age" my mother questions with enthusiasm in her voice.

"He was vile, with a black heart. A devil with horns and tail as well. Ready to deep his claws and claim an innocent life and..."my mother cuts me short. Tears are already flowing down my cheeks.

"Ndatiso, Hai sis. We don't talk like that" she says with anger building. And I just chuckles and shrug my shoulders.

"You're all the same, birds of same furlers flock together right." I mumble, exclamations leave their mouth like a Sunday choir. But I still stand unfazed and unapologetic about it. I don't know where I am getting strength but I am doing this, insulting the woman who used to tell me to jump, whether I am reluctant but I would always end up asking how high.

"Ndati" -Tondani.

"Where is my parents Muofhe" I utters hitting her with the brown envelope and my uncles eyes pop out and ready navigate down the floor.

"What is this?" She question , taking out the document from the envelop and her eyes nearly hit the paper.

I felt my self getting weak, I lean on the table. With my head bowed down, tiredness becomes so heavy that I just felt desperate for rest.

"Why Mma? Why?" I whisper. The energy I had coming to confront her , has long disappeared. My heart is breaking repeatedly, a clot fills in my throat and I desperately needed to breathe but I can't.

I bend, and hold on my chests, trying to breathe but tears cover my face and I can't hear what they are saying. But I can feel hands holding me and I am on the ground. My mother keeps begging me to breathe, patting my face, begging me not to close my eyes.

Until their voices fades away, and darkness covers the whole room and it was light out.

****Chapter 30****

My eyelids are so heavy, fighting for them to open is draining the energy I don't have. I can feel the presence of people in the room, reality of what happened hovers around me flooding my brains. I can feel my cheeks getting wet and at last I manage to open my eyes. The room I am in is painted in white and blue, the smell on its own has long sold off my whereabouts, I hate Hospitals.

Hospitals smell...they smell like medicine and are very cold as well, I guess it's because the atmosphere there is that of life and death, neatly knitted into a beautiful ball which we all don't see. We all see those people in blue and white running like headless chickens trying so hard to mend us whole back again.

We all either walk or wheeled in through those hospital corridors, some come out alive others don't. Life begins and ends here, hence the thought of it being hovered by the spirit of life and death plays in my mind. I mean people gave birth in here, throughout our whole life we are being serviced in here, while others take their last breath in here.

But fortunate for me, I come here being wheeled through this corridors, lifeless as I was I will be walking out on my feet, ready to face the heart breaking situation I could never act like it aren't there.

"Breathe ndati...breathe" my mother begs holding my hand. I shake my head.

"Where are my parents? What did you do to them?" I question, tears flood my face and a loud sob escape my lips.

I am shattered, I am in shambles, I am in tatters. I just can't put in words how I am feeling. I feel failed, robbed and ripped off my identity. I want nothing to do with her, and anyone close to her but I also need answers.

"I am your mother Ndatiso, I don't know where you got those documents and why my name was there but I am your mother. I gave birth to you, I stole you from no one." Mrs mudzivha utters with her voice bit hoarse. She have been crying ever since and she is confused and need of answers as well, but mostly she feel disrespected by Ndatiso and her actions. How

she choose to approach this whole thing was wrong and no child should act like that to their elders.

"If you don't want to tell me who my parents are rather leave and never come back here. You're heartless Mrs Madzivha. And I would find my own parents my own way" I spit out and her tears fell and something in me moves. The last time I saw her tears like this it was the day my father died, but the time we buried him no tears were left only the wound continues to grow deeper and deeper becoming more painful each second.

"We can perform the tests again Ndatiso, but I swear I am your mother" Mrs madzivha utters feeling defeated.

"So, you can tampered with the results. Never" I retort. "Steve, take your sister and leave me the fuck alone. If you have nothing to give me then fok'off" I bitterly uttered. Close my eyes and just keep quiet. After sometime I hear some movement and the door is closed and quietness fills in the room.

Everything comes flooding in, the pain, from the day my uncle abused

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the pain I have tried to hide all the years, losing my father, or so I thought he was my father, being treated by Steven for wanting to know what happened to Mr Madzivha. Muofhe getting angry each time I bring him up. The thought that Maswingulo might be cheating on his wife with me. All that just further breaks what ever part in me that wasn't feeling pain before, literally each and every part of me is internally bleeding and I needed something to help me let go of the pain, like pave a way for it to get out my body, but there is nothing here to help me with that.

I couldn't sob silently, I just need to let it all out. Scream this whole hospital down, and for the first time open up for the world to see me broken.

*

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I wake up to the feeling of someone watching me. I looked at Lawrance sitting beside the bed with his head buried on his lap. He don't know that I have woken up so I just stare at him, waiting for him to rejoice on how he successfully fooled me.

Problems I have are alot, the burden just seems getting heavier by day and I don't have broad shoulders to carry it all.

"Babe" Lawrence utter, I didn't see him raise his head. I was busy getting baptized for million time into the pool of my problems.

"Why are you here Maswingulo?" Straight to the point, I want to feel pain all at once. There is no need to act like you're not going to hurt me while you're going it. Call a spade a spade if I die I die, so what.

He looked suprised at my question but I am tired, I don't need pretenders or drivers - who drives my life while I take the back seat.

"What do you mean, Ndati. You need me" he carefully utters staring at me. His gaze makes my ready to pop veins to loosen up and calm.

"I mean that Lawrance, what do you want?" Its no longer stern like it was before.

"I am here for you, Tondani told me you were at the hospital so here I am for you my love. I know I have a lot to apologize on but don't leave me out your world. I want to be there for you my love don't carry the cross all by your own and I am here for that. To help you carry it, for you lean on me. For me to carry it all for you my love. I am here, and I am not going anywhere" he utters holding my hand.

My anger slowly disappearing and tears building up my eyes, one blink I cold flood the whole room.

"My love let me in. I love you Ndati so bad that I couldn't stay away. I want to be here for you and with you. Whether you try to push me away or not I would be here until this heart stop beating my love. Until then there you have to face this old wrinkled, ugly grandpa-Bae of yours like Tondani calls me until my time on this earth is up" he utters, and tears run down my cheeks.

"You and Vuthlari are my life. My world and there is nothing I wouldn't do to keep you guys happy and safe in my life. Nothing I wouldn't do" Lawrence utters.

I just nods, wiping my tears. "The doctor said it's panick attack" I utter and he just nods. Kissing my forehead.

"Shift babe, I want to hold you" he utters and I do so.

I lay my head in his chest and remember, the best way to get a real answer from a pain is to ask him with your head laid on his chest so you can hear the heart beat pattern changes then its done- the following answer will be a lie, if the heart beat fast.

"Who is Vuthlari?" I questined carefully listening to his heart beat, and like i thought. Its starts beating like it is trapped and ready to break free.

CHAPTER 31

NDATISO MADZIVHA

Sometimes we have to let go of pain, to be able to see the growth in us. I didn't know I can live without talking to my mother and the rest of her family. There were days where I could just stare at her phone number and argue myself not to call her. Pain painted visibly on my face couldn't even reflect what my heart was feeling. I am not there yet. But I am moving, with time and for once I never sets boundaries for myself. And that starts by waking up and cleaning up real good, and confirm that I will love to have lunch/dinner with Mrs Maswingulo and Vuthlari. My fingers are still crossed that the lady I saw isn't his wife because being a side chick was never on my menu, I don't think I can survive polygamy.

I retrieve my phone under the pillow and switch it on, the notifications keeps beeping but I let them be. No one knows where I am beside Maswingulo because he is the one who booked me a room at a lodge. It's not really far from home but I don't want to see them. I don't want to be forced to do tests where results would be tampered with, mxm, I hate people

who acts like they love you while it all pretense. Hate me , hate me to my face. And I will know what I am subjected to when I am with you, but fake love and pretense is a bitter pill to swallow. I never bother checking out on the other messages but went straight to phone book, search Maswingulo's number and call him.

"Miss me already" his morning deep voice vibrated on my ear. A smile form on my face and I chuckle shaking my head.

"Why would I miss you're ugly face?" I bite my lower lip. His laughter tries to fill in the empty spaces in my heart and brings in warmth.

"Then who would call an ugly person early in the morning, my love" he retort.

"Me"

"Nah, you wouldn't. Did you sleep well?"He questions. I didn't see him yesterday as he said to be having a hectic day and I understand. He can't always be with me nursing my wounds. I have to lick them on my own sometimes.

"Yes I am good. I have been thinking" I went straight to the point. If I keep thinking about it I might end up not saying it.

"Talk to me" he replied

"When did you said your mom wants to meet me?" I questioned.

"She wanted to meet you two weeks back, why are you ready to meet her now?" His tone has changed, and I could tell he already have his hopes high, so I nod.

"Babe" -Lawrence

"Yes,will your daughter be there too and her mother?" I didn't plan to ask about the mother of his daughter but I did.

He heave a sigh before answering "yes, babe".

"OH...okay. 6 0'clock I will be done" I replied.

"Okay...but I am spending a day with you right?" He questioned.

I don't know how to reply, my mood is already low. I am preparing myself on what I could say to the mother of his daughter. His mother seeing her future daughter in law who firstly brought chaos to her family. Will his daughter even look at me twice. I mean I am already twice her father's age, Lawrence is my senior for heaven sake.

"Ndati" Lawrence calls my name and I snap out of it.

"Yeah, yeah right. What time" I relied.

"Get yourself ready. I will be fetching you and please do pack an overnight bag. I won't be driving you back after dinner you will sleep here" he announces.

"And your wife" I scream.

The call have long been dropped.

I have enough problems

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meeting and sleeping at the same house with the mother of his kid is a suicide on its own.

I know I don't have to clean my room. As there are people who are paid for that, but I cleaned mine. Trying to push time and help calming the nerves. Making me forget about my bigger problems. I have already bathed but I didn't pack anything, I will rather hike from makhado to Tshakhuma than sleeping at his place.

The weather is bit chilly, so I have seriously covered myself. Wearing my one and only black expensive leggings, a black hoodie and a brawn jacket paring it with my white sneakers. I don't bother combing my one inch afro, I just wear a brown wool hat and sit waiting for his call.

My phone rings when I am still busy paging pictures of Tondani, mom, dad and me. I have been checking it out countless times but I always think that we all look alike. I mean I can see my whole face on Philip madzivha's face. My dark skin tone, my long eye lashes but the DNA test said he isn't my father.

A call come through taking me back to earth from memories world.

"Are you outside?" I said as soon as I answer the call.

"Ndati help...Ndati Mama can't breathe" a screaming and panicking Tondani's voice echos through my phone speakers.

I took the phone off my ear and look at the screen. My heart tells me to go but my brains reminds me of betrayal and lies they have been feeding me. I want nothing to do with them. But do I punish Tondani in all this. I pushed my phone back to my ear.

"Where is Steven?" I calmly questioned.

"Went to see his girlfriend. Ndati help please." He begs and I shot myself countless time stopping myself from running out of here to the road to catch a taxi home. It's just a less than 20 minutes drive from here.

"Did you call the ambulance?" I questioned and he replied that he did.

"Okay, I am far from home, we will meet at the hospital" I lie to him. I don't want to break his heart and tell him to face this on his own.

I dropped the call, and just sit there wondering if what I did is okay, at the sametime I think what I did is what is best for me. I message pinned and it's Tondani notifying me that they have just left with an ambulance. I don't reply but just hug my knees sitting on the bed, listen to my demons reprimand me.

After sometime, Lawrence's call come through and he tells me that he is at the parking lot. I tell him I am coming. I wash my face and apply lotion again. Pep talk myself before walking out.

I get to the parking area, spot his car and walk towards it. He sees me coming, gets out of the car and stare at me making me bit shy. What I have been feeling when I was alone in the room have disappeared and I am a blushing mess. He opens his arms and I sprint and trow myself into his warm arms, he engulf me into a hug. Kiss my forehead several times. We break the hug and he looks at me.

"Where is the overnight bag?" Hr questioned.

"I am not sleeping at your place" I argue and he chuckles shaking his head.

"Then where are you going to sleep" -lawrance.

"Here" I retort and he shakes his head, shoving his left hand on his jean pocket.

"Okay" he replies.

I don't trust him but I let it be.

"So, where are we going?" I questioned. His eyes are still set on me, making me a bit uncomfortable.

"Are you okay?" He questions and I nod.

"I just want to know where you're taking me" I utters and he smiles.

"Thathe" he replies. And I smile, it's been long since I wanted to go there.

****CHAPTER 32****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

Thee greenish, thee smell, birds singing a soul soothing tunes, the sound soulful waterful. It has a way of calming a person, making you forget barrels filled of problems carried by fragile shoulders. Ndatiso is weighed down by tons of bricks offloaded on her shoulders, and gets to forget about it all just one visit to Thathe.

Going to Thathe was one visit she could like to replay over and over again. Live those moments of climbing those rocks, going deeper and deeper into the calmness of the nature. She was at her happiest, but now she is back to reality.

Her phone have been off because she couldn't lie to Tondani anymore, the more it beeps and vibrated while ignoring it the more it raises flags on Lawrence so switching it off was the only option.

We are now on our way to Lawrence's place, he is playing his Tsonga Music singing along and it's unfortunate I can't hear anything. So it makes me think of Muofhe and Tondani. How muofhe is doing, if her sickness is serious, what is troubling her. And how is Tondani handling this all, my brother likes acting all strong and funny but he is a baby at heart. I feel bad...I feel bad for not going to see her, I feel bad for not being there for the only person that makes me reminisce all moments I spent with Madzivha.

"Baby, are you okay?" Lawrence question with his hands resting on my leg and I nod.

"Talk to me, what's up Ndatiso. You know I hate it when you close me out of yourself. How do you expect me to be there for you" he said not looking at me but focusing on the road. We are only few houses away from his house.

"Then don't try to penetrate wall you know you can't break" I snap and the car immediately come to halt.

"What is that Ndatiso?" He looks pissed and I don't get it. I don't really get it. Why people always wants to have their way with me, and expect me to be happy about it. Why is he angry at the first place. I am the one who should be angry here not him.

"It is what it is. My walls are too high you can't get through them. Then let them be, Lawrence. You know know no shit about me. You know nothing Lawrence. And...and " I just couldn't. I feel everything coming down on me, my heart just couldn't. I just needed this moment to breakdown.

"Then tell me Ndatiso, how am I supposed to know what you're talking about. I am not a sangoma." He screams at me and everything seems to be rising. The heat inside here can bake a whole bakery stock.

"You're suppose to know....you're suppose to know Lawrence you're my man. My boyfriend, you're suppose to know that My parents aren't my parents. You're supposed to know that your friend molested me. You're supposed to know who is the maswingulo L.D with same initials with yours had to do with my dad, what kind of business with my father. You're supposed to

tell me where to look for my parents. You're supposed to tell me how Tondani is doing after he called me earlier saying Muofhe is taken to the hospital. She is my mother Lawrance. I...I...I can't lose her ooh God help me" I screamed at him.

"I need my father lawrance...I need him. I promised...I promised him in my heart I need him" I wails louder as he wraps in his hug.

"I am sorry love. I am sorry" he keeps repeating those words, kissing my shoulder. While I let the tears flow.

I cried until my tears dried up. Only what's left is hiccups interrupting the silence that could have befall the car.

One hour later, we are all still quiet no more hiccups, the darkness outside confirm that it's late already.

"maswingulo" I utter with my hoarse voice.

"Mmmh, are you okay now?" He questioned with so much care and I nod.

"I want you to say it babe" he utters still engulfing me in his warm hugs.

"I am okay now lawrance" he slowly let me go. " it's late, your mom would be disappointed" I said feeling bad. I don't know what earlier episode come from one minute I was busy drowning on the pool of my own thoughts the next...the next minute I am erupting volcano. If we were sexual active, I could have diagnosed myself pregnant struu. I was just a ball of emotion ready to explode.

"Better late than never right" he flashed a smile at me and I just nod. "Yeah, we will talk about this later okay. What I want you to know is that I love you okay" he assures me and I nod again. "No matter who says what just know you're mine okay" the insecurities in him makes me a bit suspicious but hey, I have to be a good girlfriend and nod with no questions ask. The truth is, I am just tired. I am just a walking zombie who would do anything not to see another day but hey...life have never been easy on anyone.

We have already drive in, he packed his car inside the garage. Meaning he is not going anywhere, anymore. I hoop off his car and he does the same. Hug me and kiss me countless time all over my face

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then peck my lips. "I love you, remember that" he utters before pulling me to his house. The nerves getting getting best out of me.

The house smells much more better than when I first come here. I know my ways around here but, I am shy now. My insecurities are up high, ready to see his baby mama-my competitor.

There is a lady, whom I assume I saw at his office the other day. She is sitting with TV on music channel, but focusing on her phone. She is wearing a crop top and shorts leaving her pregnant belly all out. I know I have never been pregnant but I know pregnant woman have to cover up so the baby won't feel any old, how the baby feel cold beat me.

"My angel" Lawrence strides his long legs to her, give her a kiss on a cheek and they both smile. I fight the urge to roll my eyes. I don't want to act like a jealousy side chick so. Yeah, I have to suck it up even though I don't like it.

"Where is my mother?" He questioned. "At the kitchen, she is cooking a storm there. Apparently we have a guest tonight" she utter focusing back at her phone.

"Okay, I have someone to introduce you too" he utters excitedly.

And I prepare myself with a smile. My teeth are all out, I look very much stupid if you ask me.

"Okay " she gives her attention back to Lawrence.

"Do you remember when I asked you how you will feel meeting a lady in my life" the lady rolls her eyes and nod. "I have brought her today, Vuthlari this is Ndatiso you're mother. Ndatiso this is Vuthlari our daughter" he drops the bomb on

me. No scratch that he drops it on us. The look baby girl is giving Lawrence is way more nastier than the one I am giving him.

"Mmmmh, Hi" that all manage to come out. The girl looks like is my age mate. She can't be anything less than 20.

"Dad, you're joking right" Vuthlari asks suppressing her laughter, and Lawrence shake his head.

"Yoh, Makoti. You're here" the older woman's voice breaks at the back. Coming from the kitchen and I turn to look at her. She is old, but we all know that people with money age gracefully. They age like fine wine, while us who are poor, have wrinkles just at the age of 30. Anything after 30, you look like 105 years old granny.

I just smile at her, with my head bowed down. Playing with my fingers. I immediately feel naked in this leggings I am wearing.

"Come, let's catch up" she pulls me leaving Lawrence with his daughter who looks my age.

Mrs Maswingulo refused me to help out in the kitchen. She have been asking me questions about my family, myself, where I see myself in 10 years to come. My interest and it's like I am attending a job interview. Curiosity keeps playing on my mind, and I couldn't hide it any longer. So, I questioned.

"Ma, where is Vuthlari's mother?" No, don't look at me like that. I can't hold it, and I don't know any better way to ask her.

She heave a sigh before answering "she died...car accident when Vuthlari was just 6 years old" she utters and you can tell from her voice that her death shattered her, and she haven't really healed from it.

"So, how old is she?" I questioned.

"She is 20 year and a hard nut to crack. Very reckless that one" she utters while smiling and I smile back.

I can't be a step parent to someone I am older than by with only four years. What do I say to her, why did Lawrence lie to me about having a baby mama. Yoh, aredi.

****Chapter 33****

#two weeks later...

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

If a mess is a person then that's me. I don't know whether I am coming or going. How I am feeling, it's like I have lost touch with my emotions. One minute I am happy and ready to tackle thi life thing all by myself and the next minute I am breaking down. I miss my family...I miss my brother, I miss my mom as for my uncle he could die I will never cry at his funeral.

The dinner I had with Madzivha family, was family like. You could feel the warmth and love that family brings. Even though vuthlari is still not only with a person who is three years older than her as her stepmother but she has never shown me any attitude for me to complain. His mother kept preaching the family unity and love like she knows my situation. I ended sleeping at his place and even learned that Vuthlari's mother passed away. I even saw the pictures and am I insecure, yes I am. I mean the girl was fine and looking at my short haired

potatoes head I look nothing close to her, nor her stands but hey, he settle for me.

Staying at the lodge is boring, there is nothing more I could do other than sleeping. Khumbelo have been too busy, which I understand-she is a married woman, reason why they say married women shouldn't be friends with unmarried ones. So, here I am window shopping alone on Saturday because I am bored. Lawrance has a very important meeting with his brothers(the munyai trio) as he has said it.

I am tired of walking around I have been doing, my feets could do with some rest and my stomach have been complaing for hours now. I only have one plastic with only undies. I walk to the nearest restaurant, stop a chair and hurry there.

I am sitting by the corner busy minding my business when a voice startles me.

"Hi" the lady I saw at the funeral I once attended utters standing right infront of me. With her eyes glaring at me.

A smile form on my face, I don't remember her name so, a smile would do "hey" I said sounding a bit happy. That how I respond if I know you but don't remember you're name.

"How are you Ndatiso? Are you alone?" Maria asks while touching the chair. And I know she is asking for a permission to sit with me.

I nod, taking my bag off the table and place it besides me. "Yes, mmh I am alone. Am good thanks and you?" I retort.

She takes a sit and laughs a bit "I am good. I know you forgot my name so I am maria" she reintroduce herself and I feel like slapping myself hard on face.

How did she know that? Mxm, I forget she is a weird person. I just shrug and just look at her. I have nothing more to say, we aren't close.

"Yeah, so what are we eating?" Maria asked raising her hand for waiter. The person minding our table walks to us.

"Wings, ribs and chips" I replied.

She also placed the same order with me. The only difference is drinks, I ordered fruits juice while she ordered Coke.

"What are you here for. I don't see any plastics with you" she questioned again and I smile little.

"Window shopping. I was bored so window shopping is best. And you, why are you here"

"I am here for their burger, I love it" Maria replied.

I frown because she didn't order that but what I ordered. "Why didn't you order that?" I questioned.

"I will add it as a take away. Just trying something new" she replied and I nod.

Her eyes are still glued on me, and I am finding it a bit comfortable. It's like I am thrown in the furnace of fire. I wouldn't even lift my eyes under the heat I am subjected to.

"Why do you like doing this to you're self Ndati" her voice is bit soft now. Tired like voice. I. Just nervously chuckle

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and keep quiet. What do I say? What did I do to myself? I dont know.

"Go home Ndati, you're mom is not well she needs you. You're brother needs you. Every family have their own faults. There are things they didn't do right and regret, but trying to protect family while hurting family as well. You're hurt, you were betrayed yes, but never question their love for you. Your dad loved Ndati, even in death he still does. You don't know how much he fought for you, for his wife and your brother. Go home before its late Ndati, go home" Maria utters and I feel chilly cold feeling right on my back bone. Goosebumps covers me and I became tounge tide.

I shake my head, fighting tears to not fall down.

"Why? Why do I have to feel pain when they love me. What did my head did for him to be killed like he isn't human, like he doesn't have family. Why?" That all I manage to let out.

"You have answers right under your nose Ndatiso. Everything you have them. But who are you trusting with what you have. What are they doing with what you have ndatiso. I don't want to say this but let me. I told you to trust no one the last time I talked to you. But you did exactly the opposite. You're gut feeling told you what you have to know and you know what. You doubt yourself and give other people to complete projects of your life. You can't see light if you still send people to do things for you. This is real life, you're life. You have to look straight at what you're faced with. Without running away. You have to fight, this isn't a spiritual fight. It's physical one, but have you ever asked help and strength to higher powers. Just know that this wants you in it fully. Then things will work out. You have everything Ndatiso, and you know who did it. Then why are you not doing anything" Maria said.

I just see keeping quiet, wheels in my head spinning. Everything not making sense, but making sense in some other way. But you get what I am saying right...yes I also don't understand.

"Look for your father's killers alone. Go home, do test again with you're mother. Or take only you're brother with you."

The waiter brings our food, placed in on the table. Maria asked for her to be made a takeaway because she is now late. Her takeaway is now on the table, she takes out her share of payment, then hold my hand.

"You're one strong lady Ndatiso. But you allow fear gets the better of you. And with fear you won't get anyway. It will always be one step forward then ten steps back, because fear will keep pulling you back"

I nod, not knowing what to say. Her talks makes sense and she always there to plant something on my head.

"Trust and believe on yourself like how you trust and believe other. It gets too much kneel down and pray. Call me I will always be there for you" she takes out her diary and a pen. Write her numbers on the paper. Pull it out then hands it to me.

I have nothing to say, I just smile stare at her as she stands up and walk out. I left there drowning in the flood of my own thoughts. I couldn't even eat any more so I ended up asking for take aways.

What she said the first day we first meet keeps flashing on my mind. "Don't let anything change you're heart Ndatiso. You have a big and wonderful heart. But truth can turn you into something you're not" that what she said when we were sitting outside after the burial. Then concludes on saying that sometimes she say things that don't make sense, so we shouldn't mind her.

"Why aren't you not looking for answers again like you were doing before. Your protected my love and nothing can hurt you. Only your heart will. It's bad that darkness is trying to defeat the brightness of your light but the more you stay in the dark

the more you start telling yourself that everything is supposed to stay like this. If ever you find yourself and be able to turn the stone that hides the truth from your eyes learn to forgive...No stone will be left unturned if you want to see clearly, but that is all in your hands Madzivha" those are exact words she said that day we met. Everything she said makes no sense but the are conjectured with each other very well.

CHAPTER 34

Not edited

****L.D MADZIVHA****

They have been sitting for about an hour now waiting for Steven to show up. Lawrence keeps pacing around, this is his life so he is not at ease.

"Sit down you're making my head spin" Rendani utters standing by the window looking outside.

The funny part of all this is that, the person saying Lawrence is making his head spin is also kicking the wall each second he gets. They are all frustrated. Once a brother gets a woman it's a celebration and they vow to always keep their woman no matter what. And now Maswingulo have followed for the forbidden flower and there is no turning back other than destroying the evidence. Make new evidence then lead her into finding them. Maswingulo has already seen the future in her

eyes and there is no way he is going to let her go because of past life...it is not a mistake, he wasn't at the wrong place and the wrong time and get caught up in the fire. It was orchestrated, everything well planned and when that gun goes off it was a completion of a mission. Which he never regrets and have pushed it out of his life until it forcibly invade his life and a lot is at stake now.

"How did princess Vutlari take you having a woman in you're life" Khumbudzo asks trying to take all of them off their torturous waiting.

"Like any other kids." Lawarance replied paging through his phone book.

"Come on your dating her mate" khumbudzo continues.

"She is not her mate, but her stepmother, and she knows better than acting like a spoiled brat. She doesn't have to like her but she have to act like an adult, she is pregnant and should act like a mother now" he replies placing the phone on his eye with his eyes fixed on the door, while he keeps grinding his teeth.

The phone rings, and the door open. Phew...he almost went to an early grave.

"Why did you take long" mbengi utters already charging to frightened Steven.

"I am sorry, I had to...I had to first make sure that my sister is okay" Steven utters. Holding tightly at the file in his hands.

"Mbengi, let him be man. We have to get done and over with this" khumbelo utters.

Mbengi hiss before turning back to his sit, furious looking like a starved lion.

"Do you have it?" Lawrance question walking closer to Steven who just nods still holding tightly the file on his hands like his life depends on it.

"Then give it to me" Lawrence utters getting worked up.

Steven shakes his head, fear pouring out his eyes. And his heart pounding he has planned this very well. He knew that he was throwing himself into a lion's den but still he still wants to act tough. This should always be a win-win situation not a win-lose situation. They gave him the fake evidence of Mulalo's death and he gave them this. That way he knows they won't have anything on his back.

Lawrence laughs out, but still frustrated. His emotions keep rising and the need to dip his claws on Steven's neck keep rising. This is his life Steven wants to gamble with and he won't allow him the chance to do so.

Steven gulps down nothing down his throat, open his mouth but he fails. He lets out some breath and tries again.

"You...you...you have to give me the evidence you made about me burning Mulalo" he stutters

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with sweat flooding down his back. He have made many bad decisions in life, but he has never been there to face the music. Everything happened while he was off the scene and that makes everything better for him. But right now, now he has to face everything and stand tall and refuse something essential to the cold men right on their eyes.

"You grew a backbone I see" mbengi utters standing up. He search his jean pockets and come out with little pink USB and throw it towards Steven. It his face, and fall. He bends and pick it up and slips it into his pocket too.

"After this, we have nothing to say to each other. No matter how many times our path meets. Act like you don't know me and I will do the same." Steven utters.

Rendani clicks his tounge before replying "You're not that much important to us"

Steven also clicks his tounge hand the file and also the black USB to Lawrence before he turns to go. Everything is there. The torn papers from Ndati's diary. Everything is right on their face.

All the evidence she have collected up to so far the document which are encrypted on the USB.

Phew, this is a victory and calls for celebration.

"Then what's the way forward. ?" Rendani asks. Looking at the delighted Lawrence.

"We create new evidence" Lawrence replies still looking at the file right in front of him.

"How?" Khumbudzo question sitting on the chair beside mbengi.

"We frame Steven Mulaudzi and her sister" mbengi utters.

"Her sister?...as in Ndatiso's mother?" Lawrance questioned with his eyes ready to kiss the floor.

"Yes, the one and only. Right now she have the motive to want to kill her husband. If ndatiso decides to do tests with her mom again they will come back saying she is her mother. But her father is not there to prove that she is also Philip's daughter. So her mother cheated then had her husband killed." Mbengi utters like he have been planning all this for months now.

"Then how do we link all that with Steven?" Rendani asks.

"Simple, he was trying to cover up her sister mistakes and also he gets to be the mayor, when Philip dies" he utters then shrug his shoulders.

"Makes sense, but how are we going to execute all that?" Khumbudzo asks.

"Photoshop pictures. Lawrance will steal his mother in-law pictures from Ndati's phone. Then leave the rest to internet. As for mayoral chair, we delete Lawrence name and signature from the original document only leave Mulaudzi's name and also find his signature then copy it there. Then done" mbengi utters.

"Can't we leave Ndatiso's mother out of this, please" Lawrence asks. Thinking of how broken Ndati has been plus "she have already seen my signature, what left was to verify if it mine" Lawrence utters.

"She haven't verified it, and both surnames starts with M so she might have made a mistake. As for leaving her mother out don't tell me you're getting cold feets now. We have already planted an idea that she is not her mother and that seed is growing, we have to nurture it lawrance. This is not time to grow cold feets. We finish the mission you marry her and continue with life like you have been doing all this time" mbengi utters with a stern voice.

Lawrance just nod, but he doesn't feel like including Muofhe in all this. They stand up get ready to leave as it's getting late.

Lawrance get into his car after bidding good bye to his brothers and tries to call Ndatiso but it keeps rings until it leads him to voicemail.

****CHAPTER 35****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

The closer I get the more wobbly my legs become. I can feel sweat dripping down my spine and heat over powering me. Fear of unknown tighten its claws on my soul.

I have never had this short trip to home before, I used to think that from the tar road to home it's a long walk but not today.

I am holding on my traveling bag like my life depends on it. My stomach tighten, because of my skyrocketing nerves.

Two houses away from home, and I couldn't do it anymore. I just have to keep pushing my shaking legs to home. My phone have been ringing for the 10th time now, and the ring tone is irritating me, but I can't put the bag down and the caller isn't giving up either so I will tighten my jaws and walk head on to what's ahead me.

Atleast my uncle's car is not packed on the open space infront the house. I heave a sigh before hitting my knuckles against the

door and desperately gasps, I am afraid. Maybe u should turn back, when still contemplating on what to do the door opens and there stand Tondani.

His eyes fell on me, and hurt, betrayal and tiredness shows visibly on his eyes. He look tired, like his whole world have just crumble right on his shoulders.

"Ooh, Ndati" Tondani utters opening the door wide for me and then leave me there at the door.

"Ndi nnyi?" A soft and tired voice questioned and I fall in to the living room. Only to find my mother. Curled up in a two sitter couch with a throw over her, and her head balanced on the cushion that rests on the coach armrest. She looks nothing like herself...she looks ill but she isn't dead. That's what I feared most finding her dead.

"Ndi nwana wavho" tondani answers lifting his eyes to me then he immediately excuse himself.

"Ndatiso" my mother utters, trying to sit up straight. I could see she is struggling so I let go of my bag strides to her. Help her sit up straight and her hands cup my face.

"You're my child Ndatiso. You are your father's child Ndatiso. He never doubted your paternity. Philip never did" she utter as tears cover her eyes. Mine too, one blink they could be flooding my cheeks.

"Can we do them again. Just you, me and Tondani" I asked and she nods. "I am sorry Mma" I burry my face on her lap and let it all out.

Maria's voice keeps ringing on my head, and the more it rings the more I see how naive and stupid I have been.

After a good crying session I head to my room and what I find angered me but she'd some light a bit. I understood without even thinking much into it. My clothes are on top of the bed and some work papers and books that I do read sometimes. Just to push time.

My diary with torn papers.

I pack everything how I like it packed, I am not a neat freak but I am just neat.

****STEVEN MULAUDZI****

Her fingers keep sliding down my back

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with her intense stare on my close faced eyes. I could tell that she worried about my behavior but I don't think I am ready to let it out. This is a man don't cry, man carry the world on his shoulders and still stands strong even though he knows he isn't. Flash backs of everything keeps playing and plays. From the first attempt, which was considered an abomination but he did it. He could always look at how his niece is developing and she trusted him like she trusted each and every family member. He could bath her, lotion her, make her wear her clothes and put her to sleep. He could sing for her, tell her bed time stories and before he knew it his princess already growing breast. Her skin became a shade lighter from his black berry. What capture his eyes more was setting his eyes on her twins, standing like warriors. Her shirts, night clothes never made her more

precious. He stopped seeing a daughter/ niece but a woman. A full grown woman who he then...

"Babe are you okay" Mavis shakes me a bit and I immediately snap out of it. But the fear of the unknown keep creeping in.

"I...I am. Just that I am not feeling well" rubbing my head then heave a tired sigh.

I can't, I am tired and desperately need a break. A time away could be really be rejuvenating.

I need time to think, reconnect to with my soul and maybe then I will feel free.

Free from everything I have done for survival. No one told me that this world is a jungle. Every animal on it's own, survival of the fittest.

"Mulaudzi are you sure" Maria with a worried voice question. Her fingers still going up and down on my back.

Her doing that makes my member down there to react but not today.

Today I just want to talk. Just be in her calming presence. Listen to myself, my subconscious and I am not happy. I not happy with almost everything I have done in this life.

I want to lead a different life, I want to be a better person but where do I begin.

"Babe, you know beating yourself up for something you have done is not going to help you right. Own up to your mistakes. Take your makes as lesson and try to do better in future." Maria utters staring at my eyes.

It's like she can see my soul. She could feel each and everything I am feeling. She could tell that I a cold blood killer. Whose heart only feel warmth in her presence. That only her makes me feel alive and ready to do better.

"Babe, don't do this to yourself. Whatever you're going through, we will get through it together. We are a team remember." Maria continues to make me feel better and open up.

And right there I feel like she have just hit a nerve.

I shake my head feeling the tears warming my cheeks. This should have been freedom. I should have been celebrating that I am free from the Munyai claws. That I am done being their clown boy. But my conscious is refusing me that freedom.

"I am tired, Maria. It's like everything I have done have capture my soul and I know no happiness. The taste of freedom I have been seeking isn't there." I utter and she sigh. Looking at me, like she understands what I am saying. Her looks calms and the need of blubbering grows. I want her to know. I want her to tell me what to do and how to do it. It's like I have thrown myself in the pit and waits for someone to help me up. And her eyes are comforting, while her presence calms.

"I killed people who were close to me. I hurt people who were close to me. And I keeping going like I haven't done anything about it. I keep going when I know...I know where Mulalo is ...I killer her. I killed my brother's wife. I tired I just want to be free"

****Chapter 36****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

I have you ever tried to look back, but the way things are can't let you. The guilt doesn't seem to shake off her. It hangs on her so bad and no amount of sorry could make everything alright.

I have been running around this house like a headless chicken. Trying to find courage to confront my brother. At some point we have to talk. He has been avoiding me since my arrival here yesterday noon.

Hence now I am busy cooking his favourite meal, trying to bribe him to even look my way.

My mother and I have talked and now I understand some of the decisions she made and this includes the banned talk of my father. She even gave me a go ahead and his diary that has most passwords of the documents they said are in the cabinet. I am happy but at the same time afraid. I am afraid I might find things that I am not supposed to find and how will I survive all of it.

"Mmmh, smelling good, in here. What is it the prodigal daughter cooking for us" Tondanj utters entering the kitchen.

He head straight to the fridge take an apple out and doesn't even bother watching it as his teeth tears it apart.

"Your favorite" the enthusiasm in my voice couldn't be missed.

"Mmh, why your grandpa babe is waiting for you by the corner house" he utters, giving me some looks.

And I look at him confused, then it hit me. I haven't been talking to my man since I come back home. I have just been busy trying to make everything okay, just like how they were before.

"I will go to him, but first I want to talk to you" I utters, turning down the stove and walking to the table in the middle of the kitchen.

"Mmmh, about what? Isn't the reason why you're sweating blood and water here. You are bribing me Philip's daughter "

"No, what? I would never bribe you. You're just not a bribing kind" pushing the chair and settling well.

"There is a brown envelope on top of my bed you can take it. Go through it for reference" I utter busy playing with my fingers. I feel afraid and ashamed that I even believed that bullshit document. But it is what it is.

"For what, are you dying maybe" he asks pulling the chair sitting too. He seems a bit concerned. And I am happy that he still care.

"No...no I am not dying. Do you remember when I said I want search for our father's killers?"

He nods.

"And mom wasn't happy about it all" I continues to clarifies before dropping the bomb on him.

He nods again.

"I stole some documents from dad drawers at his study and amongst those documents

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there was a documents of DNA tests" I swallow the lump building on my throat and clear my throat.

"For you...are you not my sister?" He whispers.

I shrug my shoulders and let out a sigh.

"What do you mean Ndatiso. You're my sister. You're my sister right" he needs conformation and I don't know how to answer that. I want to see results myself declaring him being my brother and Muofhe to be my mother.

"The results I saw, said that both our parents are not my parents. Hence I take impulsive decisions and one of them was to stay away from home. Let you deal with our mother's illness on your own. I shouldn't have acted that way and I am sorry for that" I utter.

"I understand, you were feeling stranded, robbed and left out. With no one in this world. If it was me on your shoes surely I couldn't have come back" he utters with my hands covers by his hands.

"I want to do the results again. With you only" I announces and he nods in agreement.

"When?" He questioned

"Tomorrow"

He nods again, I thank him and ask him not to tell his uncle about it and he even tells me that he saw uncle Steven sneaking out of my room while I wasn't around and he was carrying envelop with him. I just nod, prepare myself to go see my babe.

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My nerves are skyrocketing. I can't seems to calm myself. My heart is galloping and I am feeling hot.

Boy, never mention the taxi, it's so slow. The taxi driver even asks people if they are going to town while they're still inside their houses.

Tondani is busy playing his music, his headset is plugged in and I could even hear those wannabe raps making irritating noise. Busy swearing at each other through lyrics.

Finally we are near, I start fumbling in my parcel looking for taxi fare.

"Two, Tshilidzini from Tshakhuma" I give the money to a passer in front of me to pass the money until it reaches the driver.

He stops when it reaches Tshilidzini bus stop and he gets out. He gives us our change and we walk in.

"I am afraid" I let him know but he just nods. Take my hand into his and hold it tight. We walk in, find the queue long but we hold on.

In a few hours we are walking in the doctor's room.

The quietness of the room makes my galloping heart being the only sound in the room. I keep shaking, and I am afraid.

The doctor walks in greets and only Tondani could answer. My nervousness wouldn't allow me.

The doctor explains the process, before he draws some blood from both of us and tells us that results will be available in a week time. Then we left.

*

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Now I am on my way to the office. I only want to confirm Lawrence signature. Then I will be out of the office, Tondani is left at MCDONALD.

I get to the office, head to the cabinet where we put our files and I go through them wanting one with his signature.

I go through page by page until...it all booms on my face. Lawrence signature.

****Chapter 37****

****L.D MASWINGULO ****

The drift between us is unavoidable. She is here my she isn't here. She is very much preoccupied and I know she will keep telling me that it's nothing. I can see something is bothering her, but it's like the trust bond is broken.

I stare at her, as she is staring in space. I could tell that she have something on her mind but what?

Not knowing frustrates me more than anything. I have mission to complete and today. Knowing she is back home made everything more difficult.

"Babe, are you okay" I peck her lips bringing her back and she just smile. And I smile back.

"Yeah...yeah, I am" she replies. Holding both her hands, but I could tell she is hiding something from me.

"You know you can talk to me right" I tries to assures her and she nods. That's what she have been doing from the past week and everytime she acts like that I have to stop myself from snapping at her.

"Babe what's wrong did anything happen at home?"

She shakes her head again the sigh "did you remember I once asked you to help me look for my dad's killers?" She questions.

It's my turn to sigh now, as I already have the ready documents that will turn her investigations upside down.

"Yes...I remember" I utters with my fingers running on her bare back. As she is wearing a backless top.

"How far?" He eyes stare at me and it's like a challenging look. It's like she just wants to confirm if we have the same person.

"Babe...I think it's best you let it go. I think it's best before it breaks family" I say looking at her as I await her reaction but nothing.

"What family?" She questions. Nothing shifts from her. She kept the very same energy and I don't know if I am sending right signals or not.

"Is there something I should be worried about Lawrance" she asks with a straight face.

I just up and leave, head to my in-house office. Take out the brown envelop and stride back to her. I find her still sitting like how I left her and her mind back into the train of thoughts she have been ridding in.

"Here" I placed the envelop on the table and sit on the opposite couch, just to see her.

She slowly takes the envelop, tear it open. Then fish out the papers and photos from the envelop. Her eyes pop out when she sees a man with her mother. The man looks like her dad but is not her dad. She placed the pictures down then scan through the documents. She immediately pushes them back to the envelope and stands up. Tears flooding her face, she is silently crying.

"Babe" I said standing up trying to hold her but she hold her hand up stopping me.

"I will call you" then she run out.

I smile to myself feeling proud what's left now is going after her try to make sure she gets home safe and okay. Be there for her.

I take my phone and car keys.

~mission completed~ I send to group whatsapp. That only consist of me and the trio.

The run out

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get in my car to look for her before she gets to the rank to catch taxi back home.

****STEVEN MULAUDZI ****

"Please take my body to my mother, let her mourn me. Don't come at my funeral. Don't cry but I pray guilt eats you up till your last breathe...I pray guilt eats you up till your last breathe...till your last breathe...your last breathe" the words keeps ringing and ringing until they become so faint and disappear, from the thin air.

Dust gather and splash on my face, the sun feels like it burning right on my skin then I could hear her voice again but not all part "Please take my body to my mother. Let her mourn me. I pray guilt eats you up until your last breathe..." Then out of the blue the house is burning while you just stands there but not burning. I watch her burn and silently crying. At some point I could feel like I heard her faintly calling my name for help.

"STEVEN" a loud voice calls my name and my body starts shaking. It feels like someone is shaking it but I can't see who. Then I starts calling out her name.

"Mulalo...Mulalo, Mulalo am sorry, I am sorry"

"STEVEN" the voice calling my name gets louder and the shaking getting more aggressive. Until a clap lands on my face.

I flick my eyes open, and I am covered in sweat. Both my parents are looking at me and I feel little lost.

I look around trying to make sense of everything, my surrounding and my dreams.

"Are you okay son?" My father concerned voice whispers and I feel like nodding. I lift my eyes up to meet him and his face just change to Mulalo's face.

"Take my body to my mother..." I close my eye, tightens them shaking my head. It's the conscious doing this to me. I take in few deep breathes before I open my eyes again.

Everything still seems the same. A clap lands on my cheek bring back again. I know this was a game over for me.

"Mma, baba I am a bad person. And I can't go on like this" I utter still feeling disoriented.

A tear escape my eyes the followed by the other one and the other one until I am a crying mess.

And I let everything out, I tell them each and everything starting from my involvement in Philip Madzivha's death, Mulalo's disappearance and how I made sure Ndati never finds who killed her father. I know a man don't cry but it feels good

letting go of the burdens you're carrying unnecessarily. You have to let go of some of the things to be able to carry new burdens on your freshened self- the new you with new problems. Solving and letting them go before carrying new ones.

****Chapter 38****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA ****

It's been a week since I have been browsing through the document given by Lawrance. I haven't called him, I am avoiding him at all cost.

Everything is happening too fast and concurrently, and not time to let them sink in first.

The results from the doctor come back a week back confirming that Tondani is my brother 99.99 percent.

As much as I am confused about everything deep down I know the results I got and the one Lawrance gave me again have been tampered with.

I can't trust no one but Tondani at this moment. And I want my mother to help me in this. But I don't know how to ask her. The disrespect I will be casting out to her will be compared to no level. There is no way in hell you can tell a black parents that you have pictures of them cheating. That death application on its own.

So I decided on keeping this to myself.

All the documents from my father's documents are all gone. What's left is the documents I sent to my phone via email. But breaking the encryption is going to need all my saving, which I am will to do.

What's left is to find the best IT specialist then I will be good to go.

The kitchen pots are busy hitting each other, setting the whole kitchen to fire. The tantalizing smell of the beef stew making me salivating.

I can't help myself but keep on tasting. I am actually proud of myself. I should have gone to culinary school to enhance my skills but that's the story of another day.

My grandparents called a family meeting today and what it is for I don't know but in a jolly mood because it's not about me.

Even though questions like "when are you getting married" always escape their lips accompanied by a smile. And like everyone else in my shoes, I tell them soon. Making them happy and setting their hopes high.

"Sis, you have been busy since dawn. Will we even have breakfast in this house?" My mother questions walking in, slowly balancing with a walking stick. I hate that, I hate myself for that. But she said it's water under the bridge.

"I have prepared soft porridge for you guys" I replied taking a bowl ready to dish out for her. When Tondani walks in.

It's 10 O'clock and I have been up since 2 O'clock. From 2 to 5 I was busy connecting dots on the investigations even though I don't gave much. Only his signature.

Then I started preparing for family lunch today. I can't wait to see my grandparents, as for my uncle we will just continue tolerating each other but I have my eyes on him.

I know one way or another he is involved in my father's killing. But mom, I doubt unless she is a legendary on this acting thing.

"Where is cheese and beacon. Where are eggs. This is not what I signed up for when I choose you to be my sister" Tondani complains pulling a chair, settle wait for his bowl.

"You didn't choose me." I retort. Then he chuckles.

"Vele, I couldn't have choosen a sister who is in relationship with a blesser. But what I love about your sugar daddy, he isn't stingy at all. He would just give me R200, 00 just because I am your brother" he says taking out a R200 note from his pocket. And swing it, for all of us to see.

"Ooh, you love maswingulo more than me?" I questioned and he laughs, nodding his head.

Mxm, idiot. He is supposed to deny that

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deny deny deny. But heyi, I don't blame him I once choose Lawrance over family.

"Okay, he will make you breakfast then" I said, putting one bowl to the tray, take it to my mother.

"Mxm, anyway I don't care about soft porridge. I will make myself real breakfast for real man" he utters standing up. Walk to the fridge and starts taking out things he will use for his breakfast and we just laugh out. I know he doesn't like soft porridge when the fridge is still loaded. Maybe in the middle of the month, he can starts joining the soft pap gang.

"Ooh, before I forget. Lawrance is out side waiting for you. He said you haven't been answering his calls for days and he is worried about you"- Tondani.

"How do you know that?" I questioned. He can't ask my brother to guard me. That's can't work, there has to be some type of explanation.

"He called me some other day. Asking how you were doing. And if you where busy. I thought you're the one who gave him my contacts" he utters without even bothering looking at my surprised face, he is busy buttering his bread.

"Strange right. I didn't give him your number or anyone's number." I replied. Everything is a red flag to me this days. I

took my phone and send him an sms informing him that my grandparents will be visiting today, so I ma preparing for them. I will see him later. Then I switch off my phone.

Two hours later my mind is still on what Tondani said.

Tondani is in the kitchen helping with final touches.

"So you and Lawrence?" I said. Trying to fish out some info.

"Dont talk like that. It's not like I am dating him or plan on dating him. I like girls, young and fresh. Not some old cow meat" I retort and we just laugh. I am always used to how he calls lawrance. Not that at this point I care how he called him but...yeah I don't know how I feel about him. Or how to feel about him talking to my brother behind my back. Plus his signature on the documents.

"Okay, what were talking with him anyway, if you don't mind me asking" I question and he laughs, shaking his head.

"Many things, actually anything and everything. Us doing DNA tests. Actually he is like my safe space. A man I can talk to without holding back. Someone who doesn't judge me but talk to me like he is in my age. He understands and sometimes comes to watch me playing our soccer game at school."

Tondani replied. And I feel like my heart could stop beating. Everything seems well planned here. What game is being played.

"Ooh, did he asks questions about the DNA?" I know I I pushing ut but I have to know.

"Yes, I told him you were fetching them, that day you went to fetch them. He asked me the doctor who helped us but I couldn't remember her name" he answers and I feel like fainting.

Are the new results also tampered with? If they are whats the plan. What does he want? How deep is he involved in all this? When I find out what is going to happen to me? Will he kill me? What is it that can stop him from killing me. This seems deep struu.

****CHAPTER 39****

****NDATISO MADZIVHA****

Bang!Bang!

Bang!Bang!

The gun shots went off. As soon as the car that just packed outside come to halt.

Screams are eye defying, and fear wears on us.

My heart is beating fast and I have already take cover under the table, I am screaming my lungs out. With my hands closing my ears. My vision is blur, tears covering my eyes while others stream down my cheeks.

"Ndatiso...ndatiso" Tondani's trembling voice calls out my name and I raise my head to look at her, hold his hand out for me to take in.

He pulls me out, under the table. Then pulls the chair for me to sit. I am visibly shaking like a leaf, another gun shot I will drop dead.

My mother's screams jack me off the chair and run out side, Tondani is behind me.

"Bang! Bang" the gun shots go off again.

Tondani cries behind me falling. I immediately stop running. Everyone is laying down beside me. Soft groans behind me, something tells me to turn but I can't.

It's like my head can't turn back, my heart immense is a dark shallow of pain.

I gasps for some air, before slowly turning back and there he is. My little brother laying on the pool of his own blood.

I want to run to him. Hold him. Tell him I love him. Beg him to come back to me. Tell him to hold on but...words can't leave my lips.

I just stare at him turning cold in my presence.

The neighbors are already by the fence. This is one of the best scoop in the community. And only those who saw it will have something to talk about.

Pity eyes bore holes on her skin. Cameras flashes, taking evidence of her turmoil.

Her legs becomes wobbly and couldn't hold her up, she doesn't fight the feeling to stay up straight as she falls on her feets, defeated.

She can't cry anymore. She sits like that feeling like her soul have just being sucked out of her body.

This all feels like a bad dream and fight to get up from it seems like a useless sport.

Her life can't be turned upside down like this. Not when she was starting to get everything in order.

She was starting to have a slight idea who killed her father now is back to square one. Back to the hole where no one will be able to pull her out of it.

She could see Vho- Mudau, the woman who stays next door beside checking pulse on her mother and grandfather.

"Bring me a bucket of water" she could hear her talking but who was she taking to.

A boy next door, who-mudau's son runs inside the house and come back with the bucket filled with water.

I could see what is happening, it's like I am watching a movie. Everything is on slow motion.

Vho-Mudau pours water on my mother

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and my grandfather, who both gasps for air before coughing badly.

Then the ambulance and police vans arrived. Yellow tape, is taped.

Unfortunately for her grandmother, Tondani and Steven this day marked their last day in this life time.

Muofhe and her mother taken to hospital, just for check ups.

Ndatiso is no longer feeling the pain, she is just numb and close off. She can't even feel her heart beating, even though you pinch her she feels nothing.

****L.D MASWINGULO****

Winning taste sweeter than sugar, than sugar cane, than cream.
Actually no taste that taste sweeter than winning.

He fills a weight lifted off his shoulder and even lighter.

Even though he is bit hurt by the turn out of things but he did what has to be done. And now he has one task left to mend a broken heart. That is easy than not having her at all.

Everything he did, he did it to save his relationship with the love of his life- Ndatiso.

When he receive the text from Steven telling him that the deal is off, he will be telling his family everything he snapped and act like how he has been trying to avoid all this while.

He went took his gun, then go there with Mbengi. The plan was to shoot Steven only but his old lady tries running to Steven and she caught bullets that weren't meant for her.

As for Tondani, he just worked as someone to avoid us being suspects. Who would want to kill a young boy. No one. And also a promise, that was once made long time ago. That Madzivha will be no more by the time he will be done with them.

And that promise has come to pass, Ndatiso will be Maswingulo when he marries her and carry his seedlings.

"Done, that busted though he can play us" mbengi utters chuckling. His fingers holding on his cigar.

"Yeah, no more loose ends. I wonder why we left them in the first place" I respond taking downing the can of beer down my throat.

"Yeah, so what's next?" Mbengi question.

"With Ndatiso alone. I be her safe space. Then marry her. Live happily ever after" I announces then he smiles.

"That great plan." He utters and I nod.

I take my phone and tries to call Ndatiso until it rings unanswered. Then I send her a message telling her that I love and I will always love her.

The shove my phone back in my trouser pockets. Then continues to celebrate the victory.

Final chapter

#one year later

****NDATISO MADZIVHA ****

Through all the lows, curvy and bumpy road. Ndatiso tried to go on. Her will to move from everything seems too dimmed and hope become a foreigner.

The only people she always pushed herself for daily is her mother and grandmother.

She is trying everything to be there for them, to try and move forward for them but that seems impossible.

She has her days, like any other person.

The anger brewing inside her keeps boiling and boiling.

Reading the brown envelop, going through everything made more sense. The tenders, fraud and corruption was against her father's principles.

The senior Mr Maswingulo tried to drag Mr Philip Madzivha to a dirty pond but his integrity couldn't allow him. Then that's where Steven's name come up.

Philip madzivha was murdered, a hint was placed on his head without knowing and the beneficiary of his death was the Maswingulo's and Steven of course, as he gets the chance to keep the mayoral chair warm.

With everything and every little details of the blood colded murder. Excuted for the world to witness.

Ndatiso stare at herself for few minutes on the mirror. Her short hair are no longer short but a cute afro head instead. She takes a red lipstick to brighten her dark skin with some color popping.

This is new to her but she wants this more than anything. To let go and try building something new for herself and future self. This is a new her, Ndatiso who is no longer too trusting but ready to fight for herself with no help at all.

She twirls on the mirror admiring her beautiful flawless skin. Her legs out to play. She loves herself. She takes her handbag and stride out with confidence.

Two hours later am at his gate, I haven't seen him in like week or two.

The walk to his door, leave mixed emotions in me. I am afraid and anxious at the sametime.

I knock once before pushing the door open, lucky for me it's not locked so I walk in.

A loud tsonga music playing, he couldn't hear my footsteps because he is busy in the kitchen and singing along the songs too.

The tantalizing smell of chicken stew leaves me salivating.

I cat walk to him and hug him from behind. He is bit shaken but loosen up when he notice it's me.

I plant soft and wet kisses on his back, moving to the crook of his neck. Then nibble on his ear, making him to smile like a little boy.

I have him eating at the plum of my hand and I love that.

"Are you okay?" Lawrance asks turning to look at me. He holds my chin and hold it high. Staring deep my eyes and I bite my lower lip.

Trying so hard to lock in emotions, I don't want him to see how wounded I am.

I nod looking at his eyes, then lower my hands to his hip. Unbuckle his trouser, then let them fall with his boxers.

I slightly move him aside, switch off the stove and go down on my knees. Coming face to face with the big man. I run my

fingers, then slowly massage it, going up and down before I glorifies it with my mouth. Taking half of it in my mouth.

I continue giving a hand job and a blow job, until he fills in my mouth with his juice and I take no time in swallowing them.

"That's a turn on mami" his deep voice whispers striping me off my clothes.

Turning me around, pushed himself in my hole. I clench my jaws taking him in.

I cum countless time before he reach his own organism. Then slips down on the floor, my legs feeling like wobbly. I couldn't stand anymore from the tiredness.

*

*

I have just wake up from afternoon nap. Lawrance is still fast asleep, and even snoring.

He is a deep sleeper

that's an advantage. I get out of the room, went to the lounge, looking for my bag. I find it on the couch. Take out the hand cuffs and a gun.

I bought this gun on some guy in town and it's unlicensed.

Then walk back to the bedroom, he is still fast asleep.

Slowly puts his hands together, and cuff them. Then sits as I wait for him to wake up.

After few minutes he starts fighting to let himself go of the cuffs and I just smile.

"Babe what's going on" his voice bit shaky and I just smile still looking at him.

"Does Philip Madzivha, come to your mind" I asked still sitting at the far end of the bed.

"He was your father. Why am I hand cuffed?" He asks getting worked up a bit.

"Because I am a woman Lawrance. I can't overpower you" I retort.

"Whats all this Ndatiso?" He question.

"Me,getting answers why you killed my father. Why you killed my brother. I know I never loved my uncle but why you killed him. And my granddad" I retort.

I love him, trust me I do. But everytime I set my eyes on him I always feel betrayed by him.

"I...did no such thing Ndatiso I would never heart you. I wouldn't " Lawrance replied.

"Ooh, you wouldn't. What makes you think I would believe nonsense you are spewing now. I know you killed my father. Because he wanted to expose how corrupt you and your family are. Greed caused my uncle to sell out his only brother in law, so he can take the mayoral chair. I know Steven was just your puppet but do you know what you did to me? You killed me the day you killed my father. He was my everything, my life and there was nothing he couldn't give up for us. He was my father Lawrance...my father not an animal. He was my safe space Lawrance my comforter and you took that away from me. You know what I did?" Every emotion comes down on me. I wanted him dead now. But I still want him to die knowing he killed me too.

Lawrance shakes his head, it's now that it starts kicking in, this might be his last day.

"I try to move on for my brother, I looked at him and find comfort and you took that comfort away from me. For what? Do you like it when I have no one in my corner but you? Like how you messed up with the DNA tests, like how you make my friend betray me, telling you everything about the investigations because she is your brother's wife?" Tears cascading down my cheeks. I am hurt. All the pain I have tried to numb just comes to live.

"Ndati we can talk about this. We can get through this my love please. Remove this cuffs on me. Put away the gun we talk about this. But just know I am sorry" Lawrance utters.

"Will sorry bring them back. Will my dad come back like how happy he was that day. He was happy to finally being recognized for the good work he does for the community"

"He wasn't a good man like you're saying, Ndatiso he was human with flows too" Lawrance retort.

"And what do we do to people with flows. Eliminate them right. Just like how you did to my father. But you know what it's fine. It's fine, to you he was a bad man but to me...to me, lawrance he was my world. My end and beginning." I couldn't help but let out a painful sob. I am in pain.

"Babe..."

"Don't call me that lawrance"

"We can work on this babe, don't do anything stupid"-
lawrance

"Stupid, I guess I want to be stupid like you Lawrance"

I cock the gun, point at him. Then stare straight to him.

Maria's voice rings on my head, she once told me not to allow whatever I find to consume me. To turn me into a bad person, and here I am. Sinking deep on the darkness I should have

avoided it. But the thought of doing the same thing he did to my father and brother leaves my heart at ease.

"Good night Lawrance. It's unfortunate my family didn't get it."

Bang!bang!bang.

The bed is covered in blood. The walls covered in blood. I fall on my feet and just cry. I couldn't take it in anymore.

I wanted him dead like how he killed me when he took away my COMFOTER. He is no more then what's next.

I take my phone, dial 10111.

"I want to report a crime"

.....**THE END**.....

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