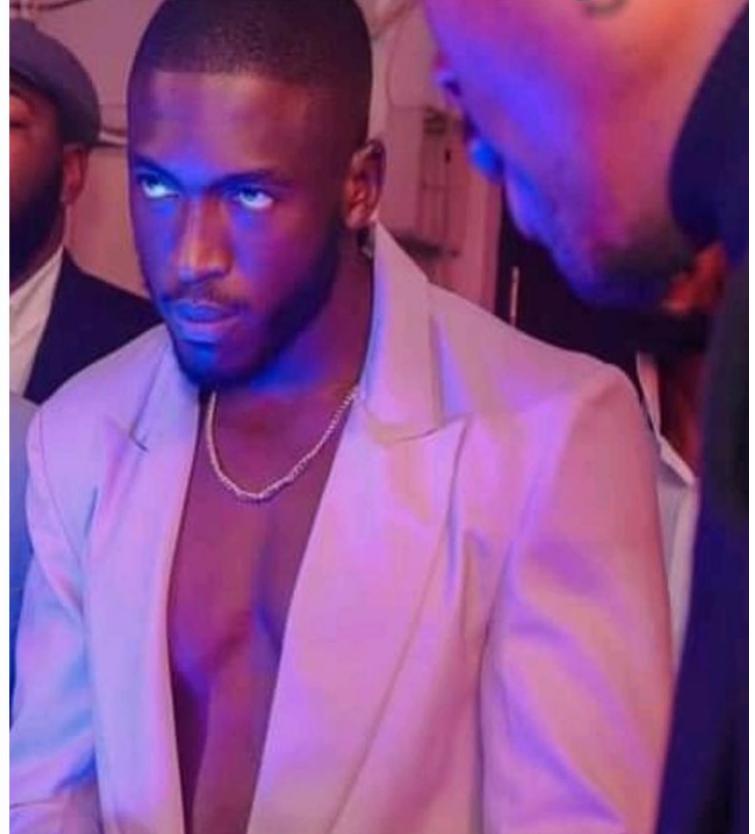


Nkosazana M



Diamonds In The Rough



DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

PROLOGUE

★MILANI ZIKODE★

I catch the rooster's last morning cry and immediately know I'm kak late for my job interview. There's no time to yawn or stretch like the fortunate, I've shot up my sponge and thrown my blanket aside in a matter of seconds. And I'm the only girl to three boys household chores fall under my morning routine. Whether I've become the star of idols or Minister of English, when I'm home I'm home and I must act like the child that I am and abide to my mothers laws and T's & C's.

I'm done by the time ma wakes up and joins me in the kitchen. Oh yes by the way, I must leave the pots already done for those lazy sons of an Indian's backside! Porridge is fast anyway so I

don't mind. After this I'm going to get ready for the big day.

Oooh I can already taste the freshly squeezed orange juice; the air around my atmosphere wouldn't be the same I know that for a fact. I'd probably be inhaling Breadwinner flavoured oxygen. MaZikode snails into the kitchen, a red towel is wrapped around her lower body and a doek over her head which indicates she's in her spring cleaning mode.

"Are the clothes washed?", she asks, taking a very comfortable sit on the bench posed in the middle of the kitchen. Outside it's quite chilly so I guess she's warming her body up.

"Yes it's done. I did the Windows too, mopped the floors; dust the cupboards, swept the yard, applied dunk and I'm finished cooking", most people, especially my age mates would such, child abuse. Which is completely opposite what

this is. A parent having given birth to a baby girl means they are raising that child with certain responsibilities such as keeping the house clean and cooking every day. Same as the boy child, their responsibility is bring women and babies home. Easy for them to do that since this ‘responsibility’ comes in a package so there’s rarely ever a need to teach it.

I love and respect my mother, if cleaning her messed up house and feeding her lifeless offspring is the way to show my gratitude towards her then so be it.

MaZikode fiddles in-between her breasts, although it shouldn’t be legal to call these breasts. They hang like heated water balloons.

“Take this and go buy me a white chicken by Mr Mzilikazi”, she says handing me the wet with sweat paper money. This woman can’t be serious.

“MaZikode I have an interview today, remember?”, she’ll guilt trip me into the demon daughter.

“Uyabaleka yini umsebenzi? Ngikutshela mina Milani'maZikodamhle...”, here goes the presidential speech.

“When I was still a kitchen girl at some farm in Albert Falls that too for a stingy white wrinkled woman, I was carrying you in my belly at that time, 7 months. Do you know how heavy you were and I was only 19....”

“Wait isn’t teenage pregnancy wrong?”, I’m shocked. Miss innocent here who always preaches ‘Sex before marriage is a sin’, doesn’t say she was one of the unfortunate with a living and walking, breathing sin.

“Go buy the blerry chicken marn Milani, and hurry up we have to thank the elders for this great opportune they have sent our way”

I love how my mother has allowed me in not as just her one and only daughter but also as a friend. A confidant, maybe I can't share all life problems with her for different reasons but whenever I need someone to let out all my worries and frustrations to, she's there.

I hope Ginger and Danger are not around. Ever seen a fat person jump a fence? Hha, that was me once. I've forgotten why I had come here but I think it was to fetch my mother's bath salts. My lord as I touched the gate I heard a clear furious bark I swear it was accompanied by hunger, guess when those dogs saw me they saw a human pig and wanted to devour me whole.

“Relax my child, they are long gone”, bab'Mzilikazi waves and laughs at me from his stoop. The man is skinny, too skinny for a wealthy man – the more amount of live stock you own, the wealthier you are to society.

“Oh shame. What happened to them?”, can he just say it’s a long story and skip!

“Some nyaope boys stole them last week along with four of my cattle. These boys need serious community management, their behaviour and unruliness is out of hand now. Can you imagine they have resorted to stealing me chicken just yesterday”, oh my god yesterday Letho (my younger brother) brought home a full feathered fat chicken.

“Oh I’m so sorry to hear that baba. Maybe the pastor must come and lay a hand on these boys to release all these demons holding them back”, I say.

bab'Mzilikazi softly chuckles at me and offers me a seat on a wooden stool situated on his huge red as mam'fundisi's lipstick, stoop.

“Don’t you worry. Nobody steals bread off my table and leaves to boast about it”, I feel my

stomach turn. When I get home I must vomit out all I've ate. Anyway he goes inside his lavish house and comes out again after a few minutes with two glasses of sprite, I know it cause I've drank it so many times.

“Thatha, wehlise izintuli”, he offers me a glass I take with both hands.

“Ngiyabonga Baba”

“So, any suitor available for you MaZwane?”,
WTF!

“Just saying ... you are turning 27 this year and your mother is getting old. You are getting a job soon and moving out, who'll stay with your mother?”, is he being serious right now? He's there isn't he? He'll warm her wounds same way he warms her sheets.

“Uhh...”

“No no it's fine. I was just asking.”, whew. Next time don't bother asking anything.

“Well actually my mother sent me here to buy one white chicken”

I hand him the R50, I know it's crazy R50 for a skinny chicken that eats rotting food from the neighbour's dirt pits. One might expect it to die automatically, and boil itself while at it. After being given what I originally came for, I make a run for it home. God be with me what does she want!?

“Mntaka ma, how are you doing today?”, Amanda stops me. She's one of those annoying girls around the area that are thirsty for clout.

“I'm fine Manda”, it's as flat as my future.

“I'm also stupendous”, another thing this girl forces English till her nasal blocks. She should go audition for South African cabinet.

“Good, hey I must go now. See you later neh”, before she murmurs another sound I'm already

running back home. Jeez it's difficult being famous. Everyone wants a piece of you.

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"Took you long enough. Were you carving the thing?", MaZikode snatches the animal off my hands and yells for my brother to bring matches, candle and a dish.

"Bab'Mzilikazi said I must say 'Mcwaaaaaa'"

"Fusegi we-Milani. Get me the dish so we can begin your ceremony", yes first sergeant.

We all sitting inside the rondavel used to house our elders, my mother and I are kneeled in front of their sacred place, with the chicken in my hands and a candle lit in front of me.

“Lalelani-ke...”

We-babo. If it's not MaZikode then I don't know who it else it could be.

“Let this be the last chicken I'm wasting on you. Other kids have flashy cars, double story houses and electronic windows...”, what a way to stretch it.

“...because their ancestors are busy having sleepless nights paving the way for them. All we ask for is the exact same for us, here is your only daughter Milani. Be with her, light up her journey and being wealth her way cause I'm starting to get tired of boiled eggs and livers everyday. Hope this is the last time we addressing this issue of bringing luck in our home”, her nostrils flare up and the little hairs in them blows around. What a journey this is going to be!

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★THE INTERVIEW★

I'm welcomed by the over-scented smell of urine as I step down the taxi. The streets are inundated with filthy water and garbage lying by the gutters, then it's the intolerable noise of conductors shouting to commuters, commuters shouting to each other and the drivers swearing at each other. Crowds pancake me further as I leap forward. I only have two priorities, my bag and my outfit.. snap the Do's and Don'ts have slipped my mind. Is it important that I smile? Interviews aren't my cup of tea, I've never tried them before and regret starting now.

“Yeyi sdudla uyangena?”, they're still rude pregnancy machines? I nod thinking the taxi will reverse back to where I'm standing, until it

clicks that I must be the one running to catch it before another driver snatches me. They do that in Pietermaritzburg which is why I came to realize that no man, what if PMB is a huge mental health institutions for the people mentally damaged forever? It could make sense.

I hop in front seat, running away from being sausaged again. As I make myself comfy, because I pay after all so my comfort matters. This driver pushes my thigh to the side, harshly.

“Close your legs, your huge thighs are blocking my gear”, he says taking quick jabs at me then out the window to continue the swearing contest.

“Hey it's not my fault your car is tiny, there's no space”, I snap at him.

“My taxi isn't tiny, you just occupy majority of its space”, haa. That's it rather I keep to myself

or else I'll walk out here thin of depression. I'm not fat, people must learn the difference. I'm a lean chubby girl, when I wear a jean my belly doesn't form three stomachs. Whether they see it or they don't, I'm a kak mooi s'dudla.

"I don't have change, only R100", I say at the end of his collecting and distributing change in the taxi. He gives me one look and swerved car to the side of the road. The R100 in my hands flies away.

"Where is he going?", the lady behide me asks.

"I don't know", I shrug.

Seconds later he hops inside the car with cabbage in his hand. This guy!

"You making us late for cabbage?", I can't believe it.

"No I'm making you late for my change, singadlala nina", he places the huge cabbage on my lap, takes his change and gives me mine.

“What am I suppose to do with the cabbage?”

“Eat it”, he stamps on the accelerator and the car flies on the road. The cabbage is still in my hands, as to what or how I will explain this.

Only this tomfool knows!

By the time I enter the gate I've sweated enough to fill the river Nile. I'm not that late, just and hour and another one. I push through the ant-children, pacing on the corridor until I've reached huge double doors. I get lost as to which window-office to approach.

“Mam, can I help you?”, a fair cute lady says to me. I catch my breath then pile out my English files.

“Uhm I'm here for the interview, Miss Milani Zwane”

“Oh student teacher, you late mam but please come through”, she leads me inside the vacant

office. There are three blue couches and one wooden stool opposite the couches.

“Sir, this is Miss Zwane the student teacher”, the lady tells me to sit on the chair and wishes me luck of which I don’t need. I’ll ace this, how hard could it be? They stare at my cabbage for a while.

“Oh I brought it for y’all, as a sorry token”, the principle hesitates abit but ends up taking it anyway.

“Hi miss Zwane. Lovely certificate you have here”, I’m guessing he’s the principles.

“So, Miss Zwane have you worked with children before?”, who me? Work those devils? Never!

“No I haven’t. I have a very thin laid temper that erupts when it comes to dealing with children”. Why do they look shocked? I was told to be honest, I’m being honest.

“Okay so how do you think you could improve the learner’s marks in L.O?”

“By teaching them, that’s why you called me here isn’t. to teach”, these people and asking useless things. I didn’t take four taxis coming here for this.

“... Miss Zwane can you tell us more about yourself?”

“I love food , gosh I love food i think eat three times per hour...”, they all raise their hands at once.

“We talking about job related issues”, the woman in all black next to him jumps in the meeting.

“Didn’t you get my CV?”

“Yes we did mam”, the woman is speaking now.

“You read it right?”, I ask and they nod.

“Okay then, can y’all tell me about myself?”

They all give me weird looks and wide open eyes staring at me like I'm sick in the head. I wasted too much money putting that CV together for nothing. Imihlola kaJames bo.

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DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER ONE

★MILANI ZWANE★

It's 16:50 now surely they should have called me by now if it so happens that they are low on airtime, a please call 'Congratulations Miss Zwane, the job is yours' would do too. I'm not a picky person. Last night I was sure the neighbour's bad spirits had me by the clit. There was no resting for me, I kept tossing and turning and farting. I thought maybe Sanele would help me erase the stress hence I snuck to his place in the middle of the night. Had an entire four hour long midnight prayer, Sizwe honestly makes me second guess the reason I chose to give him, out of all people in this place, my virginity. He's slow; quiet; annoying and can be unnecessary at times. Our

relationship is not different from Eskom services in Cato Ridge, electric currents flow in slower than grant money. One day we enjoying each other then next thing you know we facing stage four load shedding if it wasn't for those ridiculous specs he wears and those oversized dungarees I would say someone is calling his name in a river. But who would bewitch Sizwe? Imagine him as a tikoloshe, they'd send him to fetch money and he'd come back with a packet of cheese curls. Oh yes he loves those, I might buy them for him for valentines. I don't know what I'm valentining with that man anyway, he's never fed me a strawberry dipped in chocolate and cream ever since I opened my legs for him. Instead he chokes me with stolen peaches, one filled with worms at that. Tell me to write a list of good things about Sizwe I'd probably dry out of ink trying to name a mere three. Anyway, *khethile khethile*, they say.

Eventually I get famished of waiting for a replay from the school regarding my student teacher post, a long nap might do me justice. I lock my door, shut my window and grab my pillow. I can't help but think about my life and how it has come to a sudden halt. Everything I work towards never works out, it's either I fail or life fails me. I'm not close to perfection but hey I'm pushing my arse off to meet criteria, that interview was going to be the start of a lot of good things for me. But then my uneducated self might have ruined the chance I had.

Sigh. Lord only knows when this heavy load will lift off my shoulders.

As my eye lids are about to clip, a bang on my door wakes me up in a jiff. Ma is back? Kanti how fast does it take oldies to get it on.

“I’m coming MaZikode”, I throw the pillow on the pile of neatly folded blankets stacked in the

far corner of my room. MaZikode would boil me along with her chickens if she found me sleeping at broad day light. Right after assuming I'm pregnant cause apparently only pregnant woman get tired from nothing and only they have midday sleeps. Ever heard of in-house parental prison? Yeah that's where I'm at right now.

"I said I'm coming nje, why you keep knocking... Sizwe?", I frown.

What brought him here so early? ... but before that, what in the fu€kery is he wearing?

Brown blazer; yellow shirt, red tie and brown poker dot socks. Is he entering Embarrassment Of The Year Competition?

"Ntandokazi yenhliziyo yami", he turn crimson immediately. It's his thing to feed off my irritation, I've learnt that much.

“I bought you these... “, he hands me eat-some-mores and a P.S written ‘I love you’.

“And?”, these are nice although I don’t eat chocolate cause I’m allergic, however I still appreciate the thought. Mad as it is.

“Happy Valentine sthandwa”, someone should ask him to brush his teeth.

“Oh wow. Thank you Sizwe, I was going to get you something too but I’ve been so stressed lately”, I’m not a brat. Sizwe ticks me off and all but I was taught to appreciate every little and big thing anyone does for me because we living at a time where a person would rather watch you die than hand you a little bit of money to seek for help. So if someone takes their time; effort and money to give you some thing, being grateful is a must!

We stroll around the yard, it’s quite big. Until we reach a shade and have a seat there.

“So will you tell me what's stressing you my milkit?”, ughhhh. Why do you ruin everything?

“I'm unable to find work, my mother needs me here. She can't afford all of us and herself at the same time. I'm the eldest so everyone's eyes are on me, but I keep disappointing them every time”, shucks. I've been avoiding this conversation ever since I came back from Chase Valley.

“But you can't be hard on yourself and the interview how did it go?”, he folds his legs and places his elbow on his knee to support his palm holding his chin. Those socks!!!

“They haven't sent me a reply yet but I already know they will reject me. It's how it has been for four years, either I get fired or rejected”, story of my life and millions of other young south Africans.

“That's not true”, oh please.

“I got fired from MacDonald because I ate left over hamburger; got fired from Emanzini Lodge for standing my grounds then got rejected from Edgars because I don’t twang, my English doesn’t even qualify as a language”

“But you never got fired at that salon”, his optimism is seriously stupid.

“I shaved a shembe man's afro, if I didn't run for my life I was going to get a Nazareth beating”, I still feel guilty about that. Whenever I see an afro on a male head I want to run for my life. I always hear people say messing with a Nazareth will leave you burnt out form the thunder.

“Ever listened to Nomfundo Moh's song Umthwalo?”, he asks. Pulling some thing out his torn pocket.

“No I haven't but I've heard about her here and there”, I shake my head.

“You see when she says: “Kunzima nokuletha isinkwa ekhaya, amaphupho ayashabalala, phelelwe amandla, phelelwe ithemba” my eyes build blockades of waters because I live that life every day. Sometimes I don’t leave my room because when I enter the house all eyes will be on me, waiting for me to bring food on the table. If there’s one thing I fail to do, it’s stare them right in the eyes and tell them how stuck down in poverty we are”, I’ve never seen him this broken.

And it hurts more because us Africans have this tendency of chowing people’s esteem behide the shadow of ‘building us’. It’s not a joke being unemployed, you can go from stressed to depressed to coffin in a space of six months.

Worse for us we can’t say we have a backbone that will stand in for us when hurricanes take us down. Our siblings don’t understand that in as much as nothing is happening WE ARE STILL

TRYING, our parents have their own frustrations so going to them to cry on their shoulders would be ungrateful of us, our so called friends turn their backs on us as soon the sun starts to shine on their side. Relatives this side are awaiting your downfall, society smiles on your face then laugh till their legs split behide your back. Don't get me started with this crooked system in our country. Somehow through the madness you lose your essence and your sanity, start making bad decisions along the way. I for one have never been the kind to give up in life because I was raised to be strong but throwing in the towel tastes sweet before it even hits my tongue.

“Yeah kona uyasinda umthwalo wethu”

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★NHLANZEKO NCGOBO★

His name gets called from the far end of the corridor, he can tell by the voice laced with authority that it's one of the guards here to fetch him so he must get his wrists ready. His friends and himself were recently placed in solitary confinement after the two incidents that reigned havoc inside the prison. One of them led to three people being stabbed to death and at least ten injured. One of the wardens also lost their life in an inmate attack between the wardens and the aggressive inmates. It was first suspected that the brawls were your normal everyday fights that break out in the middle of nowhere and require extra hands to keep the prison on lock but from a few snitches it was later confirmed Nhlanzeko and his crew were the cause of it all. Ever since their

removal from the main base, peace has blessed the wardens again.

“Sboshwa vuka. You have a guest today!”, he slowly raises his head from the pillow and puts his book next to his pillow. He's dressed different from other inmates, instead of the normal prison jacket, he's wearing grey NASA hoodie and white chuck tailors. Along with the orange stamped prison pants.

He forms the warden with his dark eyes, until the warden throws his over Nhlanzeko's head in fear.

“Mafikizolo?”, Nhlanzeko questions him. The warden nods rapidly, swallowing spit that isn't there in the first place. This isn't his first rodeo in a prison but it is one in this prison and even in the previous ones, he was never met with the bad luck of guarding the high risk criminals. He always stuck with the small fry that do petty

crimes and yelp at every sudden noise. The man standing before him looks like he'd snap his neck right here this second and not caredem!

“I see. Never ever call me that again, asibona ontanga”, damn right y'all not mates. The warden is old enough to be his father.

“Yes ..yes sir”, the warden stammers. Nhlanzeko releases his breathe and puts his hands out the little box. The wardens cuffs his then opens his cell.

They pass through the echoing thick concrete walls, till they reach the normal cells. A racket of whistles and banging objects inject through their eyes. With nhlanzeko it was two things, either you hate him to death or love him to death. Majority inmates love him because of how he stood up for them when the rules were changed. They use to eat porridge for

breakfast, lunch and dinner but now they get better meals then people outside these walls of punishment.

“Bo-sweetheart”, he winks at the gays sitting in silence. They fear him which he doesn’t understand because out of all these people in here he has stood up for them more. Not that he was looking for some thing from them in return but bullying as always been his borderline. He hates it to death, also compared to other inmates, he shows more leniency to the gay community. Mostly because he watched his community stampede his brother for being gay.

They reach a fancy room with blinds and a big brown shiny table with two couch seats on the other side. The wardens knocks twice then instructed to come in.

“Here he is sir”, the warden says and bows a little. The ‘sir’ shuu’s him away with his fingers.

“Pholoba”, the sir smiles, pouring a single malt in a small glass to offer Nhlanzeko.

“Phumba”, Nhlanzeko says, lifting his legs ontop of the table and taking the glass in at once.

“When will you give me the respect due to me?”, Phumba asks.

“When you have earned it. Why did you call me here?”, he pulls Phumba’s glass and sips his malt as well then burps arrogantly.

“To have a chat with an old friend”, Phumba chuckles.

“Friend? Who said we friends? And why would I leave my book to come here and have a chat with you?”

Phumba sighs and brushes his furrowed forehead in frustration. Nhlanzeko makes his life a living hell, although he's behide bars but this boy keeps giving him chest pains and sleepless nights. They made deals only because he was sure that he's just a small fish in the sea acting like a big dog, Phumba had no idea this dog doesn't only bark, it bites.

“Nhlanzeko you still want to get out of here don’t You?”

“Sho”, he starts his nonsense language.

“Then co-operate with me here. It’s not easy clearing your files and ensuring you keep your assets as well, especially when your name is splashing on tabloids!”, Phumba loses it.

“Ungazonya wena. Kanti what do I pay you for? You promised me a ticket out of here so you will get me that ticket, what I do with my time inside here shouldn’t bother you”, funny thing

Nhlanzeko doesn't raise his voice but authority is emphasized from capital letter to full stop.

“You killed a warden damnit”

“It was self defence and stop talking to me like I'm your wife. We share no sheets you and I so put some respect on my name. Gatsheni I warned you about double crossing me, I told you about my temper issues and what I do when I lose it. Continue fu€king with me you'll lose this minister of kak title”, Nhlanzeko takes a stand and travels his chained feet towards the door.

“Pholoba ...”

“Eyi Fokoff mqundu wakho”, he says exiting the captain's office.

Nhlanzeko Ngcobo is a headache bone, always has been one ever since he turned his back on everything. Nobody can say what color he's

painted in because nobody has ever had that luxury of knowing him. That silent, chilled and ill-mannered demeanour of his is what makes him so hard to crack. He considers himself a lone wolf, lives in the moment for enjoyment. Hence he does shitty things and not regret them, he's cool with any outcome in life. Even death. And along the line you'll see how much his childhood played a huge role in his fu€ked up life.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWO

☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

He's been awake since 22:00 pm reading a book – Bloodline by Sydney Sheldon. A vivid image of what use to be his world kissed his eye lids awake, the shock of the dream is what woke him not the fear. How long has it been since he saw her, and yet her skin still looked radiant and bright like sweet Sunday morning. That killer smile that afforded even the most weakened and infirm, something to smile for. Nsingisi was just that kind of woman. She warmed hearts prior warming strange men's penises and they resented her for that, mostly those sheeben queens who feel like God's descended side chicks, feel as though an opinion of their own should be your life

manual. Nsingisi cared none about the naysayers, in her life it was always about her and what she perceived about it mattered most. Perchance it was those rotten traits of hers that got him today. Stuck in cross roads leading to hell.

His lengthy legs are stretched across the bottom bed bunk in diagonal position. His heels are hinged on the staircase-like leaning against the bunk. The top lids of his eyes slowly drop half way then fling up again. The body needs his sleep but the conscious is too afraid to dare sell a single chance for sleep to take over. Deep within he loves his mother, nevertheless the dust of resentment and shunned shadows hovering his surface, bury that small shining star deep inside him. Nhlanzeko is glad she died before he could get his hands on her himself.

Anyway, silent is bliss to his ears since it's not a luxury. Nothing irritates his testes as much as that shackling noise of keys clashing into each other but then his mind swiftly goes from irritation to ponder. A visit from the wardens at 00:00, either they have been paid by some cockeye to grant them access to his cell or they are here to yet again accuse him of beefs he was nothing to do with.

He can hear the key being turned and his steel door being slid open. Boots and shackle sounds invite great amounts of annoyance in him, when does peace come his way?

“Whose rat did I slaughter now?”, he sighs. Getting up from his bed and handing his hands over for the chains. He looks at the two wardens carefully, they see what he's suspecting and it leaves them uneasy to know once they leave this cell, there might be a target on their backs.

“We have to talk, ndoda”, says the captain planted in front of Nhlanzeko. A cold chortle coiled with stoned rile.

“Are you sure you don’t want a job from me? Bafo you get too bored man, men your age are busy playing bingo and wena you here licking a\$\$”, the captain has gotten use to the rudeness, though there are times where he feels the tip of his nose shrink but he learnt how to master patience when it came to Nhlanzeko.

“I managed to...”

“Awu Octopus!”, Nhlanzeko loudens, calling out the name of one of the wardens written on their staff badge as ‘Octor’. Very formal prison he thinks to himself.

“Sho, you were saying?”, he looks back at Captain. Something deep within Captain's eye

twitches, one day he'll smash this boy against a cell!

"I managed to get you back into the normal cells, you moving today morning. Your name has been cleared from those gold shipments, it wasn't easy but I found a way into their weak system. Your cars and all your assets are safe, the police will stop snooping around you once you outside as well but you also have to keep it on the low", he should look happy, the captain. Instead his cheekbones are sagging like gogo's dairies. The crease on his forehead thickens by a minute, the redness of his eyes could install sympathy in any human being not this one.

"I know you killed people to get all this done which was unnecessary, it's not what I would have done but anyway. Sibonge Gatsheni, you good at something beside blowing up until you pop ..." , Nhlanzeko strolls to his bed and plumps his behide on the spring bed.

“But you haven’t answered what I’ve been questioning, when am I getting out of here... five marks nje”, Nhlanzeko.

“Pholoba can you just be patient...”

“Ah Ndlovu uyangiphoxa. Zero out of five, imagine. How did you pass in school?”

“Know what I’m out of here, get your belongings you going to the other cells along with your friends”, captain drags Nhlanzeko out the room.

“Ndlovu Ndlovu The Elephant ”, Nhlanzeko chuckles.

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His cell mate is nuzzled in the frosty corner nearby where the gate opens. You can tell by

the nerdy looks; top to bottom tidied uniform and fresh scent. None of the inmates smell like bubble bath soaps and expensive cologne except Nhlanzeko and his buddies. The others have the same smell as rotting neat, if not worse.

Being for the first time he expected some sort of leniency, look at him, tinier than a can of sardines. A tap on the shoulder is enough damage on his shoulder blade. That on its own should have told the officers there is no way he can stay in a cell with such a deadly man.

Nhlanzeko is fast asleep on the spring and only bed in the cell, his feet are nicely crossed on the wall, his black bucket hat covers his face too. It's nicer to sleep like this, good dreams come easier and faster.

“Pholoba you have a guest ... 40 minutes max”, the wardens brings in a model like lady, in pink and purple slim fit dress with an open back and curly strings on the sides. The dress itself is shorter than her hair.

“Ew it smells here, what’s this?”, she looks at the metal toilet in front of her legs and yucks her face as she twiddles towards where her boyfriend is resting.

“Love”, she throws herself ontop of him and bring out her shopping bags, emptying them on the dirty bed.

“I bought you food, proper food and not the prison garbage”, the lady pulls out a Woolworths chicken and rolls. Nhlanzeko melts away, just like any other man would. It feels good to have a woman that can take good care of you and Nokwazi is exactly that.

She hands him a plate of a quarter leg and two rolls then opens up a can of beer for him as well, and places two serviettes next to his paper plate.

“Ngiyabonga sweetcheeks”, he blushes, welcoming the warmest plate he’s had in years. Nokwazi turns red and cherry quick.

“I promised to always take care of you”, she says like it’s an obvious thing.

“I know and you doing it so well. Ngiyakuncanywa, in fact ungishaya ding-dong Nokwazi”, Nokwazi giggles behide her hand.

“So vele when I come back you’ll be cooking for me, right?”, he scoops a piece into his mouth.

“That’s if you ever leave this place”, she mumbles.

“Hai hai hai sweetcheeks. Why don’t you like peace cause you weren’t born into polygamy”, Nhlanzeko puts his plate on the floor.

“What did I do?”, Nokwazi asks.

“You know exactly what you did, we spoke about all that angisho?”

“You said you coming out last week, did it happen?”, her spirit is riled up and all on his face.

“Hehe mind your tone Nokwazi, just because I’m soft to you doesn’t mean you means to disrespect me.”, he says.

“Nhlanzeko I’m tired of dating for short phone calls and 40 minutes visits. I’m a fu€ken adult, I need more than just a hug to soothe me”, Nokwazi shouts. Others can’t hear because of how rowdy it is in this block or else Nokwazi would have been grilles cheese by now.

“Don’t you think I consider that, try to understand where I’m at at the moment. My hands are tied”, he raises his voice just a bit. Nokwazi has that ability of turning him into a

lover bear then next second he's a fire breathing dragon. Only her tantrums can do such.

"Nhlanzeko, you have police in your pockets not going to start with criminals in high power. Why can't you use that to your advantage?", Nokwazi whisks her brows.

"Kwazi it's not that easy peasy, this is nothing like pointing at your favourite pair of shoes. Connections are there for sticky situations like death and all that"

"Oh this is not a sticky situation to you? Our relationship is not of top priority?", she's beginning to form glossy eyes and red cheeks.

"C'mon Kwazi that's not what I meant, don't take it personally", one thing Nhlanzeko wasn't gifted is the ability to comfort someone especially women. He rather wait for them to stop crying cause their tears freak him out.

“Eish nawe. Don't cry phela sweetcheeks “, he rubs her back awkwardly. If he could he'd run away and come back once the site of tears had cleared.

“Leave me, nawe don't take it personal when I land in another man's bed!”

He doesn't speak a word. The shot his eyes delivered did all the warning on his behalf. He wouldn't care if she ended up leaving him for another man. She's young after all, her life can't be on a stand still cause of him, however why did she have to say it in the manner she used? That's what pisses him off to the T.

“I.. I'm sorry baby it came out wrong, I'd never do that to you I swear Nhlanzeko. My tongue slipped that's all”, her forehead creases, dropping more sweat then when it was straight. Her pupils sprung out.

“Baby please I'm sorry”, Nokwazi pleas.

Nhlanzeko is still staring at her blankly. It's his calming down method.

"Nhlanzeko...", she gives up and picks her baby berkin and tip toes her fine legs to the gate.

Firmed hands grip her hair back and she lets out a scream, smashing her little palms on his chest.

"Don't hit me please ..", she cries. Nhlanzeko frowns and continues with what he was about to do in the first place. Smooch her lights out.

Their tongues dance beautiful tango, intertwining in the middle then slipping away from each other. Eventually the bag drops off her hand, leading the pair of naughty hands around his neck and pulling him forwards.

Nhlanzeko has his grab secured at the bottom of her bums, squeezing the butt cheeks kiss by kiss.

Nokwazi slides her soft hand under his hoodie then brings them down inside his trousers. The second she touches the warm and firm dingle berry, Nhlanzeko grunts and ends up accidentally clenching his teeth on her chest bone.

“Awu”, Nokwazi yelps. Slapping him across his face playfully. It wasn’t just a playful payback for the bite, it was for making her cry and scared. He knows that and finds cuteness within the humour.

Kwazi undresses herself for him.

“Mmh you as perfect as the sunset, sweetheart”, he smirks, rubbing his hands together and walking her direction. Kwazi throws him on the bed, Nhlanzeko bounces on it and releases a laugh.

“Don’t intrude”, Kwazi warns him. Peeling off his clothes one by one. Her eyes locked in his. A few strokes of the hard member sets him off,

showing her he's ready to enter her warm vulvarine. She first fiddles with it, until its positioned directly on her entrance, her butt lifts off his lap and then slowly brought back down as the rod slides like a slithering snake.

“Ooouu”, Nokwazi moans loudly.

She places his hands on her waist and lays hers ontop of his bare chest then begins with the circular movement. Round and round, up and down, slow then fast to faster and back to slow. Nhlanzeko is losing his mind.

“Fu€k”, he says heavily when he realizes he's going to come faster than he normally does.

“You owe me for leaking that fast”, Kwazi says annoyingly. Picking her heels up along with her bag.

“I owe you seven orgasms for what you did to me today”, he kisses her and accompanies her to the cell gate.

“Call me”, she winks. Nhlanzeko steals one last smooch in front of the warden.

“Yeyi yezi, that’s enough”, the warden shoves his face inside and pulls the girl away.

“Whew”, he plucks himself on the bed, catching his breathe. A tumble of something on metal causes him to jilt his head to the corner. SNAP!

“You saw that? Hai nawe Zithini unga ringi?”, Nhlanzeko forgot about ever sharing a cell with someone.

“Take this and eat you look like you’ll blow away anytime”, he says offering the full chicken and rolls to the poor guy.

“Sit on the bed hawu, you’ll eat while standing?”, he shifts.

“Thank you”, the guy says softly.

“How old are you?”, Nhlanzeko.

“22”

“Hmm you old enough. Run away from women,
they'll fu€k you up big time ...

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THREE

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

“Okay, three; two; one JUMP”, I shove my high waist wide leg jeans at least half way my hips and take a two second break, to collect more energy. I use to think fetching water was an extreme sport when I was still size 2, fit and energized but now anything that requires effort is an extreme sport. Especially wearing jeans after having a bath and your legs are still damp.

I’m not sure about the weather outside but I’ll take the chance and wear a white sweater croptop along with my graphic design wide fit slides, sounds fancy? Got it as a gift from another idiot who use to court me, he brought flowers; goodies and these slides. I took the useful gifts and left the nonsense. I’ll never

understand why girls go crazy over a bunch of red leaves tied together in a bow and placed inside some fancy plastic. There's nothing cute about it, including the price I mean paying R250 for something I can plant with my bare hands in my backyard, pppfff, rather give me the R250 so I can find something proper to do with it. But you'd die, men rather spend crazy amount of money on useless gifts than actually give you a sum of money, kind of like South Africa. We sell education like hotcakes in the market but when it comes to giving us jobs we turn to no-shows.

I'm not a political person, I don't like politics or follow them but I'm a Zulu woman from Cato Ridge, finding someone to blame for all my misfortunes is what draws me to politics.

Basically I like complaining, it makes me feel less worthless about being unemployed for four plus years. I skip the calamine ma forced me to apply on my face, for sun protection because in

her head I'm going to Pietermaritzburg to prey on men willing to pay 12 cows; two goats and a house in Beverly Hills one specifically with a remote gate. Those are MaZikode's requirements. The calamine is suppose to prevent sunburn and dark patches so that my fresh face isn't ruined.

"This is all I have to offer for now, get food and go fetch your medication from the clinic with it. I'll send you more once I've gathered enough cents", I say sliding the money across the table.

"What will you live with? No it's fine keep it, I will see how I manage with my pension", I love it when our parents act like innocent people when money is concerned. Next thing you know, you being called 'Mam'mabantshi'.

"MaZikode keep the money, I'll see what I put together. Anyway I must go before I run late and miss out on a taxi. Bye ma and take care of

yourself”, she gives me the most tender hug ever. Her inhaling got me rolling my eyes, she’s over doing this now.

“Relax, I wonder what mess you would have become if I got married and left you here in this tin village”, MaZikode takes my bags and shoves them in my hands. And pushes me out her house.

“Hamba ngoba uyasangana, uze ungisize ungabuyi la nesisu we-Milani. And take this, to eat along the way”, what could possibly get me pregnant? The holy spirit? I was told big town men are walking HIVs and STDs, so I must run when I see them. Especially those red and white GTI skinny guys with torn jeans and creased trunks. Kanti mase nikotiza emkipitweni, don’t y’all iron those things since y’alls men hung them over the jean. Whuu!

Time to say goodbye to my brothers now, they look sad all of a sudden.

“Nina behave yourselves and look after ma. Thabiso, stop chasing girls you’ll get aids and thin out. Wena, Phiwe learn how to address adults, dare I hear ma saying you giving her attitude problems. I’ll fly from town if I have to, and give you a good beating. Take care of each other”

“Yes sis’Milani”, they sing together.

“Good. Give your sister a hug”

Being a deputy parent has me growing grey hairs and thick skin before the rightful age. Some days you feel like plunking your hair and sending it to the nearest witch to kill you straight. And some, you feel like the President of U.S.

There’s a lot these kids come with, good and bad however I wouldn’t exchange them even

for the most precious jewel in the world. I just hope all this sweat; blood and tears doesn't go in vein cause I'll kill somebody that day!

Time is flying and I'm pretty sure the stop is full of commuters already. People here wake up early in the morning, while I'm taking my morning toilet drop they are already marching to the stop. Lucky me I find a taxi soon as I arrive, Lord Jesus help me. It's that cabbage driver again. I jump in the front seat and give him a look.

“If you hear to claim I’m your child’s father please get out of my taxi”, he points me out the door. Father of my baby se voet. I know gifts from God aren’t returnable but one that comes from this fool, I’d gladly send it back with N/R written in bold.

“That’s the last thing id ever want for myself. A child with you that is. Might as well go adopt a phara on the side of the road.”, hha.

He looks offended but straighten his face quick. Did I just shut a taxi driver up? An arrogant one at that? No, no set up a presidential speech for me people cause wow. That’s a rare talent not even Nomathalente’s are talented of. Yes, he should keep to himself next time and know us women aren’t just dumb nutheads.

As I was about to drift off to my catnap he blasts the radio on. C’mom, kwaito out of everything. Whooosa Milani sisi. I pull out my broken KFC earphones, the life span of these earphones needs improvements. It’s almost like they time them to a certain period, after two weeks one switches off, if you lucky it might revive for one or three days then go off again. It doesn’t take long for its partner to follow. But just not to give him the satisfaction of irritating

me, I'll pretend to be listening to the nothingness coming out of my earphones.

For extra emphasis I'll even hymn along random lyrics. I think its working, he keeps jabbing me with his frowned ugly face.

Eventually he gets to me once again with those stares.

“What now?”, I roll my eyes around and around.

“Nice song you playing there?”, he asks. Ohh I see my plan is having an effect on him.

“Yes very nice song, it makes me lose my sense”, I smile like a proud fool. As I should, this is impeccable.

“Is that why you forgot to plug them in?”, he says looking down on my hand. Sherbet!

How could I be so careless? Never count your chickens before they hatch. Gha!

“can you mind your own business”, I hiss between my teeth. Angrily folding my arms and looking out the window, he does some cheeky laugh and minds his own business like I asked.

By the time I get to town I’ll be too exhausted to go around looking for a job. Lucky me I have a good friend that hooked me up with a job at some construction company. Reason I never told ma is I know she would never have allowed me to take the job because of the stigma surrounding ‘Genitors’, to her she thinks it’s all about slaving 6am to 8pm everyday which is partially true so I preferred saying I’m going job hunting instead. I pray I get the job. It’s not an option I need it more than I need oxygen to breathe.

“Hey, sorry about the cabbage the other day”,
the driver calls me before I step onto the
pavement leading to the rank.

“Are you staying around here or?”, ishwa lami.
Is he thinking about courting me? I’ve been
warned enough about taxi drivers in
Pietermaritzburg I don’t need to learn through
mistakes of my own.

“No I came to visit my sick cousin”, I lie. Last
time I checked my cousin went crazy and
jumped into a flowing stream.

“Oh, hope she gets better”, he smiles and
speeds off. I wonder what gall God gifted taxi
drivers with, they treat these streets as their
own playground.

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★MZAYFANI NGCOBO★

The first born, according to his mothers. A print of his father, inside out, they are the same man with the same beliefs and share similar values. The breadwinner/successor is what he's known for in the family. Aged 37 and already has a well-run company, picked it up from the dusts and lifted it to the highest pinnacle.

Which father wouldn't be proud?

People proclaim he's the spoilt one, apart from Scelo of course. He's the last born its bound for him to be spoilt.

Mzayfani is your everyday African man. When he wants something, he gets it and not by force. It finds its way to him, love; money and all. He carries abit of everything. Two wives; four children; three huge homes and a

successful life, all a man could wish for. He possess.

As he hops out the shower, MaGumbi (first wife) is already waiting for him with his ironed clothes in her hand. His shoes polished, shining all bright. Three ties are laid on the bed, he'll pick which he feels himself rocking today.

“Ngiyabonga mama kaAsakhe”, he does the usual. Kiss her forehead. He'd do more if it wasn't for their marriage situation. There are boundaries since their marriage wasn't built on love however she's still his wife, he said vows to her on the alter, in front of masses. The fact that it was an arranged marriage doesn't change the respect and genuine love he has for MaGumbi, that's why he kisses her on the forehead even morning. It's his way of saying ‘Thank You For Everything’.

“I didn’t know which tie you wanted to wear, your belts are on the bed as well. I’ve packed your briefcase too. Must I take it to the car?”, MaGumbi scuffles through his sock drawer for matching pair of socks. Her husband is an OCD man, he should smell the way he looks, look the way he feels and be seen the way he sees himself. No matter the laze-day he’s having, you’ll always find him clean and fresh, even after gym.

“Are you okay?”, he checks on her.

“Yes I’m okay, just tired that’s all”, she lies knowing well enough Mzi can see through all her façade.

“Sesiakhohlisana MaGumbi?”, he raises an eye. MaGumbi sighs and goes to assist him with tying his shirt. It comes natural for her to take such good care of him since he returns the favour no questions asked.

“Well I am not okay. Asakhe had another nightmare last night regarding the same matter. Today she cried and screamed when I told her she's going to school I don't know what else to do”, the distress in her voice is heavy, on both of them.

“I'll have a chat with baba about it this afternoon. Mama, stop worrying please I'll sort it out”, she knows that. But there's a different light to it in her eyes, just that she finds it difficult to say it.

“You want to say something?”, Mzi asks tucking in his shirt and brushing his beard after moisturizing it nicely.

“Don't you think all this is happening because of the drift between you and your brothers, I mean it's been so many years since you guys had brotherly love again”, she's brushing his back in hopes that it will soothe the deliverance

of the news. She watches him freeze through the mirror and continues combing his beard.

“... Okay I hear you telling me problems, mama kaAsakhe but what is your solution to the problem? You know I expect solutions along with problems, what is the way forward?”, this is exactly what she feared. He’s not mad or fighting, it’s just how he generally is. Maybe a trait he got from being a negotiator.

“I haven’t ...”

A knock on the door disturbs them. After being given permission, MaMthalane enters with Asakhe in her arm. Wailing higher than ever.

“She wants her father”, MaMthalane says and gives the little princess to daddy.

Almost all the children love daddy more. He’s their hero, their superdad. Although majority of the time he isn’t physically there but he always makes time for them. Even if he’s in meetings

across towns, he'll set time aside for his wives and another portion for the kids.

"What happened to daddy's princess?", he asks Asakhe. She blinks thrice and the tears stop pouring, she's silent all of a sudden. Her tiny arms suffocate his neck, but he doesn't mind.

"I saw a ghost", Asakhe eventually responds.

"We'll beat that ghost up how dare it masses with my baby. we'll get it? For now go to mommy".

"Don't worry sisi, I'll take her. Have you prepared the breakfast?", MaGumbi looks at her sister wife.

"Oh yes I've done it. Also his lunch is on the table", they share a brief hug and then MaGumbi exists the room with her child.

Their bond wasn't the best from the very beginning, all three of them (one passed away). But after a while of realizing Mzi isn't a man of

nonsense they got on with the program and learnt to get along with each other and now they are best friends even their husband is getting jealous. Outsiders would think he fed them some muthi of some sort.

“I missed you babakhe”, MaMthalane slides her hands down his torso.

“No I’m in a hurry mamakhe. I have a zoom meeting in three hours, a site visit and then come back to take you for that spa date you guys want to go to”, as she was about to complain he shuts her up with a wet kiss. His hands glide down her back and stop for a mean grab of her butt cheeks.

“Mmm... ngiyakucela just one round”, MaMthalane moans inside his mouth and aggressively holds onto his navy blazer like her life depends on it. He gave her four rounds last

night, what thirst or hunger is this? Even tears are coming out of her eyes.

“Sorry I must go. See you when I come back, matefa”, he chuckles and leaves her with one more kiss.

She enjoys watching him walk around, the way his butt is so tight when she sees it all she wants to do is just grab it in her hands.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER FOUR

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

“Hey sorry excuse me, can you please direct to Pholoba Construction Company”, I tap on a random shoulder nearest to me. The person turns their head to me, but their eyes look mesmerized. What is it now? Haven’t they’ve seen a clean female before?

“Sho mamazi, eish mara nawe uyababa stufuza”, this phara idiot better not start me. I’m not afraid to strip him of his belt and whip him with it like a child caught in the act.

“Thanks. Now can you direct me?”, hope I don’t sound too rude, old and dirty as he may be he is still an elder to me. I owe him respect regardless.

“Yeah sho sho, where are you going mamazi?”, he laps his lips with his brown tongue. Does he smoke nyaope or does he eat it?

Men should leave this ‘mamazi’ thing to Nhlamulo. Only he says it exactly how it is suppose to be said, if I was Lindiwe I’d orgasm every time he calls me like that.

“Okay please do”

I listen to him direct me to five different directions. Pointing there and there. Speaking in tongues while slurping, I’m heavily broke but this is for the people. My people.

“Here is some mint”; I say giving him mentos and fleeing away. That was abit disrespectful to say the least but it came from a good place in my heart.

Beside the ignorant taxi drivers and their hoot-wars; irk odours; shoves and toe-stamps and filthy streets I’m actually pretty fond of this

place. Not having to walk the streets with a millions of ‘Sawubona ma’, ‘Sawubona baba’, ‘Impilo isakahle?’ on standby. I love that nobody has entitlement to your life, knowing whether you doing some thing or not. This one old lady stopped me, mind you it’s pouring cars and dogs, there’s no electricity, the skies are grey and I’m hungry this lady stops me and greets nicely and warmly only to ask me what am I studying towards. I looked her straight in her eyes and said “ I’m studying towards being a mother eight just like your daughter” and left her mouth wagging like a sad puppy. Sometimes minding your business is very helpful and recommended too.

After being lost for an entire hour, I finally find the place I was looking for. All of a sudden I’m getting cold feet, I never get those. Especially

when I know my task and stick to it, today that all went out the window.

I should have worn diapers because I'm sooo going to sh!t my pants right now.

“Whuu, this is for ma and my brothers”, I say a little inside prayer and step into the high fenced premises. Automatically my head turns to the parking space, cars say a lot about your job status and here I'm looking at all sorts of fancy cars. Ones with two doors; others with five wheels and some don't even have a roof.

Ridiculous! Imagine the stupidity in buying a million rants car that's unfinished all in the name of peer pressure. ‘Slahla this, slahla that’. There was a time when we were called names like Hippopotamus and Elephants To The Exponent Infinity. When we were denied access to public pools by more petite people because they thought if we as much as stick a leg inside the pool, the water will splash out the pool.

And now I'm getting inboxes on Facebook from people asking me how I became such a sexy sdudla? People want to gain weight like never before just so they can be called 'imama' or 'stufuza esihle' on social media. Siiish all that peer pressure for a virtual compliment. Let's get over ourselves. We live in a day and age where you stay in relationships for the 'You look so sexy' more than the support: love: respect and uplift-ment just cause you don't see the beauty of yourself. Hence I always preach self love in a woman. Love your shelves; dark thighs; geometrical butt; big belly and double chins. Angisifuni kabi isidudla esingana confidence. Same with lean women, love your flat tummy; your matchstick legs; your bums and your portable body as a whole. Loads of men out here use your insecurities to buy your love so mend those loop ends so they cannot

get to you. DAMMED, I should have been a motivational speaker.

I check my wrist watch for the time and thankfully I'm two minutes early, better than the last time. I lead myself to the reception, clutching my bag under my arm while dragging my suitcase with the other. Every person in here is giving me uncanny looks. Oh fly a kite! What's so amusing in a lady carrying a suitcase to a job interview, hope they don't think I'll be living in the store rooms.

By the time I get to the receptionist, my throat has dried out like the Sahara, I have no words to say and yet I prepped a long twanging speech.

“Good day mam”, such an accent!

“Good day, Miss Mahaja... Majajaran... Mahaj...”

“Majadiason”, she flicks off in annoyance. Oh well great start Milani, way to go. You just arrived and already pissing people off.

“Mj... Good day Miss M.J”, I recover. She smiles a convince one, and dribbles her pen on a piece of paper then sticks it at the corner of her computer.

“May I help you mam?”, geez don’t her cheekbones get tired of stretching and growing all the time?

“Yes. I’m here for an interview for the genitor”, I’m itching to get this over and done with. All I want to hear is ‘Congrats Miss Zwane the job is yours’. I don’t care what people would say but if I score this job, I’m throwing a R100 budget party.

“Name and surname please mam”

“Milani'maZikodamhle Zwane”, maybe she didn’t catch the first name.

“Oh I found you, Miss Zwane... uhm mam you late, by a hour”, she memes. Late? Late for my funeral? Cause I cannot be late for my interview, I checked the time. I checked it, it read 13:25, I saw it.

“Wait sisi I think you made an error maybe. How am I late? Kanjani mhlampe awuchaze”, no no I’m having chest pains on top of chest pains.

“My watch said...”, oh MAZIKODE!

I forgot ma once dropped my watch in water, basically it’s been on 13:25 since 2019. I feel like such a fool.

“Isn’t there anything that can be done, please I’m pleading you I need this job.”, grovelling was not part of the plan but I’m in need.

“Let me phone Mr Ngcobo”, she taps on her landline.

“Mr Ngcobo”, she beams. So much for a boss.

“Sir there’s a late interviewee”, she’s still smiling.

“Okay sir will do. Good luck on your board meeting”, she nods and then drops the phone.

“And?”, I cannot wait any longer.

“Well he said the space is full already, two people filled your spot earlier today. I’m so sorry mam”, sorry mam my left eye. Where is this boss? Boardroom. She said boardroom. I know a boardroom is one of the fanciest room in an office space. So I march around the entire building searching for a fancy room and lucky me I bump right onto it. I see a bunch of rich people in navy and grey suits, shiny expensive watches and bright smiles across their glowing faces. I push the door open and march straight to whom I perceive as Mr Ngcobo. An old and grey man sitting on those big chairs.

“You Mr Ngcobo the live breathing monster? How could you eh, how could you? I drove so many miles to come here and get a future. Have something any cent big or small, I came here with the fulfilment that finally I’m going to make my mother proud of me by helping out at home. I'M THE ONLY HOPE! ...but I'm not expecting you to care about that because nothing matters more to you then filling your fat pockets. It's true When they say ubuntu sebufile ebantwini abamnyama!”, why do I even bother with these twits. I'll go before they call police on me. But fu€k man why does life have to be so difficult, obstacles after hardships.

“Wait”, a hand grabs hold my elbow and forcefully pulls me somewhere secluded and fancy. This is a nice office Tbh.

“Let go of my hand”, I shout and remove it myself.

“Calm down. Here drink and wipe your tears”, he hands me tissue and bottled still water. I’m crying? ... oh gosh, I forgot I applied viks on my fingers earlier then rubbed my eye before going in the boardroom. We all know that viks trick.

“What you said touched me, it reminded me a lot about my very own life. And my mother”, I didn’t notice before, he looks handsome, too handsome for being such an arsehole.

“Would you like a seat?”, I’m dying of happiness inside. Me, Milani Zwane being offered a seat on a million dollar chair by a handsome and RICH man. Haibo, where is Amanda and her naysayers?

“Mr Mzayfani Ngcobo and you are?”, he smiles looking at me welcomingly. His Zulu is fluent and strong, you can tell this is a KZN guy.

“Milani Zwane”, I mumble. Where did Malcolm X go? I was serving people their dish just a moment ago.

“ohh uKaMangethe. There are no vacant spaces as yet but one of the staff members are going on maternity leave so you can take over from her as from tomorrow morning, 6 o’clock sharp. The key will be with the security so if you need cleaning tools you can ask from them”, oh my gawd. My heart is thudding like drums, I feel the sweat build up under my clothes. A tear trickles down my left cheek.

“Oh my gosh sir thank you so much. Thank you so much, you have no idea what this means to me and family. Actually you can have this”, I’m at a loss for words maybe the skhaftin MaZikode packed for me will show him how thankful I am I got this opportunity. As I walk out I feel like the dollar sign on a dollar, mama would be so proud that I got something

however she cannot find this out so I rather celebrate by myself.

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☆NOKWAZI ZONDO☆

Life is so fiti for her. Two men; two love of her lives; two bank cards; two good di€ks; two warm homes and two hearts she owns. Nogyal wants everything in pairs and much to her pleasantry she found that and more. Them being brothers wasn't part of the idea it just so happened that two birds of the same breed flew to her cocoon. There's no turning that down now is there?

She just came back from a visit in prison, to see her first love, Nhlanzeko. 2021 August the sixth is when they met, the memory is as fresh as a baker's bakery on Christmas morning.

Nhlanzeko had just finished securing his third car wash/shisa'nyama and at that time Nokwazi was a well known model hence he requested she become one of the influencers. Nhlanzeko was desperate for these three businesses to be a great success since his intentions were to leave the life of crime and abide to proper laws and make money the legal way.

Nokwazi agreed and from day one sparks flew across the sky blazing hot, those are the very same sparks that about to bust in their faces.

“Hello mamncane”, France jokes. Nokwazi giggles, waving France off while blushing instantly. France is part of the Safety Management around here. She’s close to Mr Ngcobo that’s how she knew about Nokwazi

and Nokwazi being a chancer, made sure that they become best friends – France and herself.

“Uyaphapha, we not there yet or anywhere near”, Nokwazi sighs.

“Ugh man stop overthinking it so much my love. That man loves you to death, I'm sure he'd leave his wives in a blink of an eye if you made him choose”, what is the part of a friendship called, where your best friend looks you straight in the face and lies dismally.

“Yeah friend but what if he finds out about Nhlanzeko and I? it'll be over for me on both sides”, she could say she fears Nhlanzeko more because there's a slight possibly he might harm her physically. But also, Mzayfani is one of those who leave you marked emotionally for ever. Take his ex for instance , she went from sweet heavens and cookies to being a mean sour brat. That's the part she's afraid of when it

comes to Mzi. Worse is you do the damage all to yourself. Miss Ex said she wanted nothing to do with a polygamous man so Mzi let her go just like that, with the love he still had for her, he's those types that live by that ~ IT IS WHAT IT IS B.S.

The last thing Nokwazi wants is to become that image to other women. Which is too late to pray about.

“Why can’t you just choose one and stick to them?”, France enquires.

“Cause I love them both, I want them both cause they both give me different feelings”

“Riiight”

“I’m serious. Nhlanzeko makes me feel like this princess; this well taken care of egg that will break any second. He goes all out for me and makes me feel fuzzy inside but at the same he brings so much suspense and nerves to me, I

don't know France but I love him so much. And then there's Mzi, I'm inlove with his authority; his heart. He's such a chill human I mean he gets along with everyone unlike Nhlanzeko who has to watch his back all the time. Mzi's way of treating a woman could make you want to sell your kidneys to him as a offering of some sort. He makes me weak and feel important, I love how he takes care of his family. Ugh man I love these men France it's no longer lust or infatuation.", Nokwazi whines evincing happiness through the glow from her smile. France shakes her head. The amount of problems this child is creating for herself will bury her some day wait and watch, France things to herself.

"Hayi I wish you nothing but pure bliss hun. And good luck with that man of yours in prison", France hugs her friend and goes about her daily routine. Other than the fires of reality,

guilt is also eating her up maliciously. She didn't mean to cause such a mess in all three of their lives. It wasn't in her intentions however her heart has spoken hasn't it?

Prior the visit to her second man she first passes by the toilets to powder her nose and re-apply her lipstick carefully after that she's good to go.

As per previous instructions Nokwazi knocks thrice awaiting for a response.

“Come in”

She opens the door slowly and peeps in.

“Hi Sir”, she whispers.

“Is this 12:30?”, he asks, chuckling softly.

12:30 baby girl was still at the prison, from there she had to rush home for a quick shower.

Mzi loves his women fresh. Look good and

clean, have an appealing unique scent, that's why he buys his wives cologne exported from places like Grasse. Abo-Miss Dior Rose n Roses and My Way by Gorgio Armani. Be neat and organized, he wants your outfits to have a sequence. Show that you are his woman, not a lot of women succeed in relationships with this guy because of this obsession of his. All his wives are of high standards, gorgeous and sexy.

“You smell divine”, he says planting a warm sensual kisses on her neck and shoulder.

Nokwazi pushes her frenzy to the side and sits on the chair opened for her.

“Would you like a refreshment?”, he asks.

“Yes please, spring water”, in actual reality she'd love wine but that thing makes her feel funny and she's trying to avoid having sex twice in a day with two different men.

“So, who is that girl I just saw leaving your office?”, that question slipped out her mouth. See what dating Mzi turns a woman into.

He laughs just like his brother and it at times freaks her out a little bit.

“She’s part of the staff members. It was her interview today”, he chuckles his water inside his mouth and dispose the bottle in his bin.

“Interview so late”, Nokwazi’s jealousy demons have woken up.

“Yes she comes from Cato Ridge, that’s far. Why are you asking all this?”, he knows why she’s asking. Why else would he be smirking and smiling proudly.

“Nothing... it’s just that she’s your type you know. Fat and pretty”

Mzi loudens his mirth till he throws his head back.

“You accusing my wives of being fat?”

“No no no I didn’t say they are fat. They are both thick not fat but I’m just saying compared to me ... you understand”, maybe she should have shut up from the start.

“You feel insecure about being lean?”, her vagina button twitches as he puts all his focus on her. His fingers intertwined like that. Oouu.

“... Yes, no ... maybe just a little bit. I just don’t want to lose you”, oh God who invited the tears?

“Why would you lose me, MaZondo?”

“Cause you’d go out there and find a thick pretty girl to marry”

“Uyabona ukuthi uyazihlanyisa?...”, typical Zulu men trait.

“I’m 37 turning 38 in three months, do I look like I have time to go pick new random flowers

in the garden? No I'm too old for that, maybe my brothers can but not me. I want to settle down now, continue building my farm so I can leave all this flashy things and be with my family in peace. You here for a reason, I'm still keeping you with me for a reason”, he opens his draws and takes out a tissue box and hands it to her.

“Angithandi mawukhala, stop stressing mina I love you the way you are. However me loving your body doesn't mean you'll love it as well. You can't depend on me to give you solid self confidence How ever I can help you lay the foundation”, at long last he gets up from his chair and walks around the table to give her a hug. A tight one.

“We good now?”, Nokwazi nods slowly. Mzi smiles and pecks her quivering lips.

“Ey wena noMaMthalane ave nitefa. Bomatifa, that’s what I will call the two of you from now on”, he chuckles.

“Mxm, you make us softies”, that’s true.

“imama mele libe soft isn’t”

Nokwazi rolls her eyes and sleeps on the couch. Gazing into space. The thought of having to tell these men the truth someday kill her to bits! Why can’t she choose like other children!?

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER FIVE

☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

SPONSORED BY ANONYMOUS ♡

Earlier...

He woke up feeling drained once again, dreaming his late mother brewing beer again. It's clear this matter needs immediate attention and he has just the right man for that. One of the inmates granted him access to their personal phone of course in exchange for protection, at least a week.

The cell mate has gone for a shower with the first bunch, he along with his friends will have a private shower with bubbles and proper soaps.

“Mbutho”, Nhlanzuko greets his long lost friend. Honeymoon phase has Mesuli on locked down. You’d have to book a call three weeks before in order to not receive the ‘You Have Reached Mailbox Of...’

“Sgebengu, I was about to call you”, Mesuli. “And I thought Sangomas don’t lie”, the men share a laugh.

“I’m not a sangoma in my defence. She came through didn’t she?”

Nhlanzuko frowns abit confused then quickly remembers what the discussions were going to be based on from the start. His mother!

“Yes she did last night. This time she was brewing beer singing that stupid wedding tune... she looked happy, very happy and at peace. I don’t know what the rejoicing was about but the moods were high that’s for sure”, Nhlanzuko says. Some moments of the dream

left him with a smile, horrible of a mother as she was but a child's first heartbeat is for the one who gave them life. While other parts left him in the dark, angry and more frustrated.

There's nothing more he wishes then for Nsingisi to fu€koff!

“Hmm, her desires are aligning however... bafo leave this stubbornness behide, you turned your back on your home not only your family but your elders as well”, oh there goes the speech. They've had this warning chit-chat about seven /eight times. And Nhlanzeko is over it.

“You still have a chance to change the wheel, the fact that your sister passed away and you didn't should tell you something. They are still in your corner, be in theirs too”

“Ei I'm done with those people. I want nothing to do with them and their ancestors. I just want

inner peace and contentment that's all I ask for. That family is completely opposite what I want”, Nhlanzeko.

“She'll give you that that's why your mother is here. But there has to be something you offer her back, unfortunately for you all she needs doesn't come from you it comes from your mother. You blocking that girl's blessings by being this retard”, the truth sits on a heated pallet. Who is this she? Is it still about his mother, his mother is the she? Mesuli and his confusing statements, isn't he suppose to be the light-shiner.

“I hope you consider this cause it will determine your fate”, with that Mesuli drops the calls. More weight has been put on Nhlanzeko's shoulders then lifted off. The dream is less stressful all of a sudden.

“FU€K YOU NSINGISI! FU€K YOU!”, he let’s his anger get the better of him whenever his mother is concerned, emotions become too overbearing and boil up inside of him. At a time like this he’d be working the anger off at the gym, weight lifting and punching punching-bags. This toned body didn’t appear from nowhere, that strong core and broad back with shoulders that look like rock caves all derive from his mother's anger.

When he sees fisting walls does him no good, Nhlanzeko resorts to destroying his cell. With two firm foot stamps the tiny toilet breaks, cracking small parts of the wall that was supporting it. Blood spatters are everywhere inside his cell you’d swear there was a murder scene right here. The gate opens, he heard it but chose to ignore it and keep facing the wall. Heaving like the bulldog he is; blood dripping from his knuckles; his eyes bloodshot red with

visible veins inside them coming from the corners. No warden wants to be part of this, none want to be in the wrong hands at the wrong time; none of them want to be added to Nhlanzeko's bodycount. So they group just outside his opened cell, devising a plan to restrain him without injuring themselves in the process. Tricky but could work if they stick to their guns and quit fearing a little boy.

"Erh Pholoba hands on her head. We don't want to use force so just co...", the wardens are taken aback by the quick response. No retaliation whatsoever, that's highly unlike him even if he wanted you dead. He faces you exactly like how a soldier faces their enemy. Head on, toe to toe.

It's hard putting cuffs on such an intelligent and unpredictable criminal, especially with his shaky left hand. The wardens accompany

Nhlanzuko to the captain's office for whatever scolding in store for him now.

...LATER...

The captain gave him his last verbal warning, all these outbursts of his close up the possibility of his release as if that's not enough punishment, one more warning and he's landing back in solitary confinement for another month long probation before his appeal can be looked at again. He did promise the captain it will never happen again. He got lost in the anger and irrational emotions took over but from here on out his sh!t will be under his supervision.

He's chilling by himself under the tree shade. Smoking zol as always, trying his level best to ignore what transpired earlier on. Later on the

day he should remember to call Nokwazi, she always finds a way to ease his pain a tad. Looking at the running bodies push against each other as they rush inside leaves him to a wide laugh.

Nhlanzeko shakes his head and says a low, “The children I live with”. It’s probably those brawls again, or could be the crew wars that happen every now and again. He’s skating on thin ice already mixing himself in such fights, he wants none of that he misses Nokwazi enough.

His head lifts from the wall, starring at his friend running towards him looking out of it. His hands on his head and eyes pumped with blood.

“And nou?”, Nhlanzeko looks at him with eyebrows arched. Shouldn’t his friend be busy there in kitchen duty?

“Ubhodile boi ubhodile”, Neh screams, wondering around in circles. Screaming fu€k a thousand times, kicking rocks.

“Ubani obhodile?”, Nhlanzeko.

“Ethan who the fuck died?”, he’s no longer calling him by his nickname. It’s Ethan now not Neh.

Ethan stops on his tracks and stares down on the seated Nhlanzeko. His hand is covering his mouth. Tears are kissing his cheeks.

“Ethan!!”

“Jabaru, they killed Jabaru”, Ethan murmurs.

“Who did it?”, right now his mentality says – Avenge now and mourn later.

“Caphius”, Ethan replies.

“Nx lezinja”, he pulls out his sharpened T-bone from last supper’s. He had heard through normal prison rumours that some idiot was

after him so he took a T-bone for just in case purposes.

It takes one shout from one of the inmates for them to stop what they are doing and pave way for Nhlanzeko to pass through. The wardens are trying to stop as much chaos as they can, but hey arrival of Nhlanzeko has them slithering back into their holes like hibernating snakes.

The first victim of his is grabbed by the collar of the jacket and thrown against the steel pole.
Okay he's dead.

The second one gets a painful choke slam, sending him straight to his ancestors. Now that Caphius's crew has been taken care of, his main focus is finding Caphius which takes less than 15 minutes, thanks to the crowds cheering the fights on. The two bulls in a kraal are now face to face with each other, staring right in the

beads of each other's eyes. Caphius with a pocket knife and Nhlanzeko with a sharpened T-bone.

"Deda mfana omncane uzolimala", Caphius storms the room with his deep voice. Hyping the hooligans shouting behide them.

"This is where the big boys play ntwana, no small boy is allowed around here", Caphius says aloud.

"Why did you kill him, Caph?", it's almost like he's in denial of those words. Each uttered word comes from a doubtful corner, he has benched the acceptance for a bit.

"I did it for my sister", Caphius lifts his shoulders as if he's saying 'So What You Going To do?'.

"And now I'm about to kill you, a small favour for your mother"

The move was quick and out of normalcy. Even Nhlanzuko himself cannot fathom what to make of his actions, one time he has Caphius by the jaw, poking his neck and chest with the T-bone, then feeling sharp shooting pain through his legs that's when he realized he also got a stab wound on his thigh.

“Grrr”, he groans at the sting of the wound. He’s faced more fatal situations, this is nothing in exchange of his best friend's killer's body!

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☆MZAYFANI NGCOBO☆

He just left the office thirty minutes ago, headed to Woodlands to fetch Nokwazi for a night stay over. Pamper her a little, make her

feel special. But first he must pass by Woolworths buy her some roses, add some R200 notes on them and a basket of goodies. He buys three of each.

“Anniversary?”, the cashier asks hiding a smile behide her weave. Nhlanzeko sees a child about his sister's age while the girl is looking at her future blesser.

“Everyday is an Anniversary with my wives”, he pays a stack and takes his belongings and continues his journey. The cashier clicks her long tongue and chews her gum harder and snappier.

“Mxxm”, she clicks her tongue and fiddles with the money machine.

“NEXT!”

All three bouquets are sorted with regards to money. Their goodies are ready now he can go fetch Nokwazi.

He waits less than 15 minutes for her. Oh goodness another argument with her mother?

Nokwazi doesn't bother with the greeting, she shuts the door soon as she enters and crosses her arms on her chest. Owkay.

“Sawubona dali”, Mzayfani says as he starts the engine.

“Grrr my mother makes me so angry! I'll strangle her one day”, she bursts. Mzi looks at her.

“Sorry just she annoyed me today can you believe she blamed me for her brats whoring ways”, Nokwazi the pot calling the kettle black.

“Why would she blame you?”, he asks.

“I don't know, that woman hates me. Anyway the flowers?”, she asks.

“Oh, they are yours... Not the white roses, those are MaGumbi's ones. Take the red ones, that's your favourite color right”

“Yes it is but why do I have less R200 notes cause I know money is not a problem?”, the ungrateful brat awakens.

“Cause you not my wife yet”, he responds with chill.

“But you said you love me the same way you love your wives njena”, she creases her brows and adds a sad face.

“I do love you all the same, I wouldn't be talking to you if I didn't”

“But?”, she leans forward.

“Your positions aren't the same. In whatever I do, my wives come first. They get more of everything that has to do with me, it's how I show respect to them.”, how she longs to roll her eyes.

“You’ll be like them one day”

That lights her up.

“Really? ... you’d marry me, Mzayfani?”, not even in her wildest dreams did she ever think Mzi would marry her. She thought she’ll forever be a girlfriend.

“Once you’ve gotten rid of your attitude, learn how to respect me and dress appropriately. I see no reason not to marry you. Inhliziyo yami iyakwazi, MaMthiyane (Zondo clan name).”, she is over the minor tantrum she was throwing just a second ago.

“Nami eyami iyakwazi Ngcobo; Pholoba; Mashiy'amahle, sthandwa sami”, she smiles leans over to his seat. Kissing his soft lips, down his neck and softly bites his earlobe. Mzi chuckles.

“We not having sex in my car”, he laughs.

“Ah Ngcobo why not? I’ll be neat trust me”, she continues kissing him.

“Firstly I drive my wives and children in this car secondly you don’t filth a place your elders are present in”

Nokwazi stops, sighs and sits back on her chair. Irritated. His phone rings, it’s his first love, MaMthalane.

“Matefa”, he chuckles with so much love in his eyes.

“Don’t start with me, Mashiy'amahle”, MaMthalane giggles and laughs loud when she sees her husband struggling with the video call cam, “Haibo Jesu, Ngcobo misa kahle i-phone I can’t see you properly. Kanti what does MaZondo teach you that side?”

Oh yes before he made the decisions to take Nokwazi as a girlfriend, first he asked his wives for permission. It was bound, he told them

from the start that he's a polygamous man so they've been armed and ready for anything since!

"You so forward. Are you enjoying your spa pedicore?", Mzi.

"Oh gosh Bhinca lami, it's called a pedicure and yes we are enjoying everything especially the food. We miss you and mbhe..."

Mzi clears his throat, warning her to stop talking.

"Oh she's there? Say hi for me anyway I have to go now, see you later. You'll come back and fetch us right, I low-key don't like these drivers you send us. Bye, love you and don't do something your wives wouldn't appreciate?"

"Ngiyakuthanda nami", he smiles and switches the call off.

"She's so bubbly and cute", Nokwazi says.

“Yeah she is, talkative too. Y'all will get along so well”, he says.

“And the other one ?”

“She's nice too, just very distant and quiet”, he finishes dialling her.

“MaGumbi”

“Ngcobo”, her voice is so sweet and low it makes him melt wholeheartedly.

“Are you good?”

“Yes, we good abit tired but we good. How are you?”

“I'm also good. Missing your good massages”, he laughs at the sarcasm. MaGumbi has the most painful hand ever.

“Oho udlala ngami, hhe”

They say their goodbyes and hung up. Years ad years later and they still haven't worked on their relationship or tried building one even.

It goes from awkward to weird sometimes they finish hours on silent. Maybe it's her calling again.

“MaGumbi ...”

“Mr Ngcobo, it's about your brother...”,

“What happened?”, he parks the car on the middle of the road, his heart beating in abnormal speed.

“He's in hospital...”

“Yeyi yeyi don't tell me that dog shit Caster, I pay you shit load of money to look after that boy”, Mzi shouts and smashes his hand on the steering wheel.

“Hey Mzi man you'll kill us!”, Nokwazi screams.

“Someone is dying alright”

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER SIX

CONTINUATION...

SPONSORED BY PETRONELLA SENGANO 

17:30 pm the road is busy, traffic is at its peak; workers are driving either from or to work; taxi drivers are at their worst with their Vin Diesel driving skills. School children are buzzing in the streets galvanizing in groups getting up to no good. It's mayhem hour and Mzayfani is here causing more catastrophe than ever. Swerving in wrong lanes; angering caution drivers; blowing pedestrians away with the horse power and frightening the hell out of his passenger.

“Mzi slow down can’t you see your speed!?”
Nokwazi holds onto her seatbelt and shuts her

eyes. For a person this terrified of death she sure as hell enjoys playing with fire. Still, Nokwazi hasn't figured out where their destination is. In her mind somewhere between the lose strings for all she cares there could be an emergency with one of his wives or children she's not sure as yet. Either or, MaZondo is not ready for a casket.

"I'm sorry my heart but I have to move. You can hold onto me if you scared", he says coming back to his senses, recalling the tragic accident 'his heart' once met. It was one of those unexplainable happenings, car was perfectly fine one second and the next it's rolling down the highway to Howick. The only logic explanation was messed gears or tampered gears, time went by quick the case went cold, in the midst of so many murder files; serial rapists, active gangsters groups; intelligent thieves and corrupt high power holders.

Nobody cared to figure out who would tamper car brakes and why.

Nokwazi wipes away her tear and lifts her legs, snuggling her knees onto her chest while rocking herself back and forth. Like majority of us ‘poor’ civilians there’s no affording therapy or counselling for such trauma. Cars are moving objects, you get inside knowing there’s a possibility your life will be taken so she did what we do best. Suck it up and move on.

“MaZondo?”, he slaps her thigh until she finally blinks. Mzi sighs in relief, pulling his portable babe closer to him. Gradually her arms snake themselves around his torso and her head rests on his man-boob, comfortably.

“I didn’t mean to scare you or remind you of your past traumas”, he whispers and kisses the top of her head. Nokwazi feels safe with him at all costs, she knows he’d never lay a hand on

her no matter how mad he gets which is why she feels more bad about lying to him. She knows he won't do any harm to her in the name of revenge or pain. Instead he'll walk out her life and deal with the hurt along the way.

Nhlanzuko is a whole entire story. Hundred percent he'll avenge himself, even kill her maybe. It's how he is, it's what attracted her to him. He's unstoppable and no one tells him to, he's careless and messed up just like she is if not more. That's where the two men come in. there must be a balance.

"Why are you a polygamist?", she is playing smart. Wooing the conversation into her corner. Mzi releases a sharp breath and stares ahead, holding tight onto the starring wheel.

"You wouldn't understand", he always says this but never gives her the benefit of the doubt. If

he can convince three women to share him
then surely he can explain why.

“Try me”, Nokwazi adjust her butt and looks up
at him.

“It's complicated, Nokwazi”, Mzi says.

“Nothing is ever complicated especially with
you. You straight forward and real, no matter
how hard the truth coming from you is”

Mzi laughs and shakes his head.

“Please tell me, I just want to know that’s all”,
Nokwazi pleads until he gives in. He has never
been comfortable with sharing the reason
behind his decision to have many wives. Only
MaGumbi knows and that’s because he found
more than a wife in her, he found a pillar.

“I know the drill you’ll say I’m selfish and
exploiting women and and and. I know how you
feminists are ”, it’s what we all say cause part

of this is true. Polygamous men tend to think women are their face-powdered slaves.

“I won’t I promise. I want to hear your side, I’ve heard enough from women”

“Because I easily fall inlove. I love being loved and I love loving, I’m selfish when it comes to that I know. Once I love you, I want nobody else to love you like I do hence I always do my best. Same feeling I give is the same feeling I want from you”, he realizes he’s going too deep in it and it might scare her off but he continues anyway.

“It takes a lot more than you think to get me to fall inlove with you. I don’t care about beauty although I have been lucky and have gorgeous wives, I don’t care how you twang or what your pussy game is like. None of that phase me. I don’t care about the dinners and vacations”

“Then what do you care about?”, she’s lost.

“Respect, loyalty, the beauty of your intellect, your valuable contribution towards my life. I care about a woman with a good heart. Greet when you pass by an elder, make kids feel your warmth even if they don’t know you. Have that pride about yourself. All those things make me a gone man”, he chuckles thinking about how mad he went over MaMthalane when they first met. Till this very day she drives him bananas.

“So what is your view about polyandry?”, Her lips are quivering right now. There’s a chance the nonsense she’s asking might land her in trouble but she’ll take that chance.

“What's that?”, he frowns.

“Hawu, a woman taking two or more husbands”, she says.

Suddenly the car vibrates at the laughter of Mzi, “Ohh that. I don’t know, if women want it then go get it girl who am I to judge”.

“Okay I get that but what is your personal input?”, Nokwazi presses.

“Why are you so curious? You thinking of having one?”, he arks his brow at her.

“No way no I was just asking nje. How you feel about sharing a woman.”, her heart has stopped beating for a good minute. So many thoughts pile up in her mind. Good and bad, she’s trying to make herself choose subconsciously but it gets difficult specially when she starts comparing the pros and cons from both these men.

“Good cause we were going to have serious problems. I don’t like being taken for a fool”, his face is not sweet. The jawline is more visible and his eyes tell her he’s not playing around.

Nokwazi feels a drop of urine escaping her vagina as she peels away from his body. She

makes a little mental note to figure this mess out before Nhlanzeko gets out of prison.

“Let's go”, Mzayfani opens her door, waits for her to take her bag and then shuts the door and keys the car. They are welcomed by a tall buff man, carrying an assault rifle in his arm.

“Chris, any news on him?”, Mzi weighs his wary in his voice.

“Sir. No there is no new news on him but I've been keeping an eye on him since I arrived. Also placed two of my best men by his door, I think that should be enough protection”, Chris is a friend whom he made while he was at the base, working in the army years ago.

“What transpired leading to this?”, Mzi again with the questions.

“Nobody fully knows but I spoke to a few inmates and they told me some thing about rivalries”, Chris hands him two pictures.

“What’s this?”, Mzi.

“The two who are accused of ordering the hit on Nhlanzeko’s friend”, Chris says. Nokwazi freezes on the spot, holding very tightly to Mzi's arm. Her High blood pressure has reached the max, sweat particles form like rain droplets.

“I can call hits on them”, Chris.

“No leave them to me, I’ll sort them out myself. I want nobody hovering over my family”, Nokwazi watches his jaw twitch and flinches. Chris says his byes and gets back to his work, whatever it is.

“Ba-babe what... what are here for?”, Nokwazi swallows spit and reverse her steps.

“Nhlanzeko got involved in some fight and got stabbed. MaGumbi told me earlier to get him out of there but I didn’t listen, look where we are now”, he feels bad honestly. Blood is blood and blood comes first to him, there might be

issue along the way but Nhlanzuko; Scelo and Zimi are part of his baggage.

“Honey I think I it’s better I give you two space to talk”, her heart is racing fast, cutting her respiratory system down in a jiff. This cannot happen to her so soon!

“No c’mon there’s no need for that. Come”, Mzi pulls her hand towards the guarded ward.

Nokwazi starts feeling the chest pains with every leg put forward, she sees her life flash before her eyes, she feels her whole body shutting down and next thing lights out, she’s lying on the ground just an inch away from the ward.

“MaZondo, Nokwazi”, Mzi holds her swiftly before she meets the ground. Tapping her cheek gently trying to awake her.

“Doctor! Help somebody get a fucken doctor here!”

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☆MILANI ZWANE☆

I've been here less than a week and already I've seen enough wonders through my roommate. I can't say we are friends exactly but we buddies that were friends through the love for gossip back in Cato ridge, she's the not-so-angelic angel that found me that job, on top of that gave me a place to stay. Besides her boring blessers and their daily visitations and her stupid boyfriend's beating, I find the place thrilling. Especially after those weed boys trying to steal from me today morning while going to work, I gave them serious hand of discipline.

They'd be looking for war if I catch them continuing their bullshit. We work long and hard hours for all out sweat to be enjoyed by corner hood rats!

Perks of getting paid izilamali ezishisiwe, I could afford another streetwise and their hacked earphones. To get through the boss's office with no hassle it'll help me to slip these on. The manager of Genitors seems to think she is same Handy Andy Judge. She comes in everytime telling me where to redo and where to shine more, I don't know what more I should do really? Lick the entire surfaces with my tongue for it to shine.

“Erh bafo why don’t you pick your calls? Baba tried to contact you and your phone went straight to voicemail”, a man I don’t know enters the boss’s office. Speaking so loudly at that, while looking at the phone at th same time. Who does that? My mother would have

slapped you till you cross-eyed busy calling her name while on your phone. So much rudeness!

“Sorry bhuti can I help you?”, I tap him on the elbow and place my hands on my hips. The gentle brother takes his time checking me out with lightened eyes circulating my body.

“Hey, stop sexually harassing me or you would like to get reported?”, he leans back and clasps his hands innocently on his chest. He frowns abit.

“No, no nkosazana it's nothing like that, I was just mesmerized by the beauty”, he smiles. Oh gosh a man with such deep dimples is not normal. And his lashes are so long, do they derive from Indian hair? Are those blue eyes? He's so light it's freaking me out.

“Thank you for your compliments but I think you messed my floors with your muddy feet. Wipe”, I hand him the mop. He must not dare

think I'm sharing jokes here, I spent a lot of time wiping these floors for him to filth them and not clean up. Angenziwa njalo mina.

"I'm not joking with you sir. Please wipe your dirt so that next time you see a yellow warning sign placed on the floor you know not to dirty my floors", I say giving him the mop respectively and then getting back to my work.

"Does your boss know you forcing his younger brother to mop?", he asks with some smug across his model face. Does he think just because he's the boss's son or missing rib he can do whatever to bully me?

"I don't care what your boss thinks bottom line you can't mess my work and expect me to rush and mop for you, you not disabled so you can mop for yourself", weh babo. I carry on dusting the chairs.

“You still standing?”, I look at him. He does a little bow and a smile, “Nkosazana”, he leaves with the mop and starts wiping over his mud. Good boy.

A few minutes later, Kokiwe my nosy colleague barges in the office. Hands over her head and her mouth hanging wide open. The first thing she does is smack her hip and do that long ‘iihhheeee’ for some odd reason that’s what people think we do in our village when prepping for some hot gossip.

“What?”, I shrug.

“Was I not dreaming seeing Scelokuhle mopping the passages. That cheeseboy?”, ohh it's that. I thought someone shagged someone in our backrooms or something to that effect.

“He must learn to humble himself before people before life humbles him the hard way,

I'm only teaching what any parent would teach”, being a deputy parent to your siblings makes you think you the deputy parent to every empty sack.

“Haibo Milani you will get fired you know, Mr Ngcobo is strict when it comes to that.”, she gasp.

“Hawe-jesu Ngaze ngangendaba, stop feeding people egos because of their success. Wrong is wrong and they should know. Let's go I'm finished cleaning this room ...”

“Pretty lady”, it's that Scelo again handing me the mop.

“Are your hands broken?”, he chuckles and I giggle.

“... actually I can't feel my fingers imagine”, hawu!!

“Mxm next time you'll mop the whole floor. These old women mopping after you are not

your maids, they are here to work. No need to serve them the taste of your power, just be careful and don't mess their work", he looks at me and laughs abit. Shaking his head.

"You remind me of my mother"

Hha! I rather he had said 'fuck you' then swear at me this way. Me, mother? Clap once I've seen it all. Let me just get going, I have enough problems in my life. Dead people I don't know are expecting beer from me as we speak. I was visited by red ants today while cleaning in the morning, I had to run away from them cause firstly I don't know where I'll find maize meal to chase them away and secondly I don't remember having an ancestor in the city. Maybe it could aunt' Thulisile she was a moving prostitute.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER SEVEN

☆NOKWAZI ZONDO☆

SPONSORED BY MADLAMINI 

I'd be lying if I said I don't regret every bit of deceit I'm responsible for. The fainting explains it all, none of this has digested itself properly into my head. Any of it. Dating two men who happen to be related; sharing mutual feelings for them; being stuck between a rock and a hard place, it's too difficult to pick. I haven't registered all this yet. All this while I'm thinking of how they'll react if ever they were to find out. How will this affect what all three of us share. It bothers me really, I can't stomach the pain I'm going to cause them when my lies are brought to light.

It's the 21:00 pm alarm that woke me up from my nap, I had set it as a reminder that 21:00 is time to head over to the prison to check on Nhlanzeko. My eyes flick repeatedly, trying to adjust to the intensive light spearing into them. I manage to open them half way giving myself a blurry vision of the room I'm in. There's a drip connected to me. Wait, wait what drip? Why do I have a drip on? Just as I was about to scream for nurses and far away birds to hear, Mzayfani walks in the room. Tie loosened; shirt is folded upward his wrists, his head is wagging down low and his eyes are pure red. The inviting smell of nicotine leaves me dumbstruck, since when does he smoke? That to so publicly. That's the first.

"It's just water, the nurse said you were dehydrated", I wasn't dehydrated but who cares. Anything they say I nod to it. My eyes don't tear away from his face, hard and yet

filled with questionable emotions that he will forever bottle inside his heart.

“Hey what is it?”, he brings his head to the left then to the right, still facing his toes. That bottom lip of his is secretly tucked between his teeth.

“C'mon I know there is something you want go get off your chest, say it Nhlanz...”, he shoots his eyes up at me once and I’m sure I left a stain of my hot urine on the bed that second. I felt my insides do the Durban gogo on me. My heart is beeping louder than these hospital machines.

“What did you just call me?”, the ice!

“What- baby no I was going to say. Say it, Nhlanze ko is troubling you. I just wanted you to open up to me”, I’m trying hard to restrain my nerves from spilling over and possibly digging

my grave. He slowly eases but not completely, his eyes tell me there's still a seed of doubt.

“Baby...”, I’m literally pleading with his eyes to stop staring at me like a cow ready to be slaughtered. “...Mzayfani please...”, I don’t know what I’m pleasing but he seems to have reacted to that statement. His face has relaxed completely, he’s back to distress and wary. That was close too close.

He takes a minute to himself, brushing his palms together and blowing hot air through his mouth with both hands covering it. I watch him stand up and walk to me.

“I’m all over in my mind, forgive me. Will you be fine? I must get back home now it’s getting late”, he says, rubbing my shoulders gently and plants a peck on my dry cold lips.

“Yes I will be fine. Greet home for me”, I know he won’t, apparently it’s wrong to bring up a

girlfriend while with the wives. I don't know how long I can take being put in the back for.

"I love you Mthiyane ", he whispers in my ear.

"I love you too", I giggle on his neck.

"Must I bring you anything? Food, clothes?"

"LakeSide burgers please"

He laughs shaking his head.

"You want to balloon up I see", he chuckles, walking closer go the door.

"I'm still going to carry a little junior soon anyway"; I laugh because of the pregnancy scare I had last week. I've never been that shit scared before. It's still too early to have a baby, cause it would mean I have to pick one between them. I'm not ready for that yet.

"Can't wait to plant my seed in here", he comes back. Brushing my flat tummy while kissing me

gently. Good thing Nhlanzeko doesn't want children ant time soon.

"Get out of here before you get me pregnant", I giggle and push him away. He says his last goodbyes to me and then leaves. Whew I can breath finally. But I badly want to see Nhlanzeko and how he's doing. I'll take the grip with me.

Oh gawd the drama of these bodyguards!

They are still concreted in front of the door. No smiles, no warm hellos, no eye contact although that is understandable they are Power transmission poles compared to me.

I take that chance and attempt to hold the door knob. Hard hands pull me back fast as lightening. Ouch!

“Mam, stand back please”, this tall dark cement human says to me. His hand is against my chest so painfully.

“You hurting me!”, I yelp, flinging his hand away from me. Couldn’t they just let me go through? I’m so tiny what harm could I impose on a man as ripped as Nhlanzeko?

“Mam no one is allowed through. Step back”, that fool repeats.

“I just want to see him, please. I’m not a threat, I’m his brother’s.... brother’s girlfriend”, there’s that ping of guilt knocking me off already.

“Sorry mam, we can’t let you through without permission from the boss”, what boss?

“But I’m telling you ...”

“What’s the commotion about over here?”,
GREAT CHRIS!

“Oh thank God you came. They don’t want to let me through, please plead with them please I have to see Nhlanzeko. Look at how they bruised my wrist”, I show Chris the red bangle on my skin. Bloody construction human machines!

Chris pulls my hand gently to view the injury. His face says it all, they are in shit already I can tell. Even them, they look close to storming out of here screaming aloud.

“She’s the Ngcobo’s woman, do you two understand what this mean?”, Chris scolds them icly.

“Yes sir”

“I think you owe this lady an apology”, I don’t care about forced apologies. I want to see my man. The two bullies apologize and open the door for me.

“Miss, does he know you here?”, Chris asks.

“No and he doesn’t have to know I’m here. There’s an issue that I need to address with him, both of them. Please Chris don’t tell him I came to this room”, I don’t wait for no response. I’m inside already.

His eyes are closed but he’s not sleeping, I know him when he’s asleep, he looks dead.

His wrists are cuffed onto the bed, what cruelty is that?

“What happened to you, Nhlanzuko?”, I’m on the verge of tearing up.

“Minor things no big deal. What’s with the drip? Are you fine? Is it your attacks again? Oh those, I have those.

“Nothing much just dehydration nothing more”, we keep our silence.

“You look weak, will you be fine?”, I’ve never been this worried about another person in my entire life.

“No I won’t, sbwl ilamza la small”, this monkey finds something to joke about in such a tough time. Lol.

I peck his soft lip and slide my tongue inside his mouth. He keeps deepening it and weakening my knees, before I know it, I’ve cupped his cheek and pulling his face closer to mine slowly.

“Mmmm”, he moans softly. I stride my hand down his body, feeling his hard abdomen, all the way down to his penis.

“Nokwazi”, he says through the grits of his teeth. Getting more and more aggressive, he’s fighting the bed, cause of the hand cuffs. He wants to untie himself so badly.

“You’ll hurt yourself, my love”, I send shivers down his spine.

“I want to touch you, sweetcheeks, lemme touch”, I feel my vulvarine getting warmer and more moist.

“Bring me that scissors”, he points to one of the surgery instruments. I take it and give it to him. By all means he tries to enter the scissor point inside the cuff hole and rotates it over and over until his hand is freed.

“Come to me baby please”, he murmurs. It’s painful but I pull the drip out my wrist and get on top of him. I feel hard, cold hands grabbing my waist. I didn’t notice he freed the other hand.

“I love you Nhlanzeko, I love you so much”

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“You’ll kill me one day”, I laugh at the irony of my statement. It’s no longer about our sexual interests. It’s about my deceiving ways.

“I aim to please Sthandwa!”, he chuckles, buckling his belt. We hear a knock on the door and my entire body freezes. Can it please not be him, please lord, please.

“Gatsheni”, Nhlanzeko says out of the blue. He’s looking at the door, I turn my head to it and my lungs float on air. Thank God!

“Sisi”, Gatsheni man greets me respectfully. I offer a hug but Nhlanzeko’s eye warns me not to dare move any closer to him. Whoa.

They share a handshake. Some old news agenda, laugh and a warning. Then get down to business I guess. They are far away from, standing in front of the big window how ever I can still hear their chat, shallow as they may

speak but their voices are bold enough to echo and be heard from afar.

This hospital is so fancy jeez. A hospital room that looks like an entire office!

“How is the wound?”, Gatsheni who I have figured out, he’s the captain helping with this case.

“I’m standing next to you breathing and fine aren’t i?”, to say I’m thrown off guard is looking below the situation. Why is he so snappy? I get Nhlanzeko has his ill-mannered attitude here and there but this man is helping him so much. If it was any other man, they’d be kissing his feet.

“You use to these things anyway. It has been finalized”, Gatsheni.

Nhlanzeko turns to him. He looks shocked. Didn’t he trust this guy ?

“You getting out of prison tomorrow. I’m here to fetch you, so we can go back and finish off what needs to be finished”, WHAT!

No, No, and NO. Nhlanzeko can’t come out now, it’s too soon I haven’t done anything to mend the situation.

“See, I knew you were smart. I don’t know what took you so long, I could have handled things quicker than this manje-ke someone had to learn a lesson”, he crackles his knuckles and neck.

“Ukhuluma ngani Pholoba?”

“Don’t act stupid you know what you did, all for a mere position you ratted me out. And futhi unenhlanhla, do you know what I do to rats, Ndlovu?”

I see sweat particles forming like crystals on a dress. The already tight shirt is close to losing its buttons.

“No”, he stutters.

“Mmhhh. From now on you my lap dog. I throw an instruction you catch it no questions asked. We clear?”, I can’t believe this.

“Nhalnzeko you can’t do that, this man is too old for t...”

“Was I speaking to you?”, ... who is this and where did he take my Nhlanzeko?

“Gatsheni from now on you are my?”

“...I – I’m your lapdog”, I’ve never!

“Good, next time learn better than to double cross me”

I’m out of here. I can’t believe he spoke to me like that? The look he gave me. Who was that animal cause it wasn’t my man. I get strong looks from the guards. They can fuck off honestly.

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☆NONHLANHLA GUMBI☆

Was I not 18, dumb and too young when I was forced into a marriage I wanted nothing to do with. Like any other girl in the rural area who dreams of one day being in the city and living the lavish life, driving fancy cars, being married to a man that worships the ground you walk on, uplifting the community and building your parents a home. That was me, I was one of those girls who dreamt big and wasn't ashamed to show it. I was known as the delusional quiet girl. Most people know me for being quiet. I'm not shy, I put my thoughts on the table when I want to but I love being silent cause I want nobody knowing me or reading me. I don't know, I find comfort in not being an easy

emotional access. I feel less in danger when closed off.

My mother was against this marrying me off business, she hated that for me cause it's exactly what she went through with my dad. It was my uncles who kept pushing this idea. Apparently, bab'omncane as well was friends with Ngcobo's father. They came up with it all, the marriage, the dreams, the negotiation dates. Everything. I was bombarded with 'Naba abakhongi' one shushu day. Hhe, it felt like a dream, a terrible one at that. Like I could just drown and never be found. I was so little, whole life ahead of me and what happens? I get robbed. I'd be lying if I said Ngcobo did the same. The day before our supposed wedding, he asked me if I want to do this and I said yes. Again during the wedding he asked if I'm sure. Even after. We had no relationship but we had

one important thing and it was respect. Prior tying the knot I was told about his desire for a second wife. I already knew he loved someone else, a part of me wanted to hang myself cause I strongly believed we would meet half way of love. The way he spoke of her and the way he lit up told me otherwise. From that very day I was so sure we will never be, I still am hence I never give myself away. I'm cooped and rather stay cooped to avoid being broken again, I've been there when he fell for MaMthalane I don't need to go through it again when he brings Nokwazi home.

It would be deceitful of me to blame Ngcobo for all this. We were both forced to take this decision, and falling inlove is not a crime I can't hold him to that. I just had hopes that he could love me too one day.

“Mama, mama”, oh goodness the bratty fatties are back. Asakhe smashes herself onto my knees.

“You energetic, who gave her sweets?”, I know this one like I know my hand.

“Zotha's girlfriends”, Sisekelo says and passes. He's always on his phone all the time, he pays little attention to whatever is around him. Just like Zothani but Sisekelo is much softer. I swear once these boys turn 16 They think the world is their oyster. Wait, girlfriends?

“Sisekelo get back here”, you shout everyday in this house. But it's nice, it keeps my mind busy.

“Hawu ma, I have homework to do”, he whines, dragging his two bracket legs back to the living room.

“How many girlfriends does your brother have?”

“Uhm... I don't know”

“Don’t lie, you came in here hot saying your brother’s girlfriends”, I love that they are close and not fighting each other like the older ones. Nhlanzeko and Ngcobo. However the lying is too much.

“Ma you heard wrong, you sure you not missing dad? You know what they say about salt and old people”

I’ll smack the cheese out of this boy. TF!

He’s laughing happily by the end of the couch, seeing he seems pleased by my reaction.

“I’m joking ma. Well don’t tell him I told you this but he has three girlfriends. They all know each other and love each other but behide their backs they always talk about stabbing the other one’s eye. Fake!”, Sisekelo rolls his eyes and takes a seat next to me. Is that boy lose in the head? Three girlfriends? Grade 10? I can’t!

“When he comes back from practice tell him to see me, cause I can’t with your brother really”

“Can’t with who manje mama?”, I know by the dragging of slippers that it’s MaMthalane. She's pregnant this one I can feel it.

“Is it not that boy of ours turning himself into Mseleku. Sisekelo says he has three girlfriends”, Nombuso laughs.

“Like father like son I always said this. So do these girls know each other? “, this has to be the third tray of wings for the day. Ngcobo shouldn't feed her like this she'll encounter problems during birth.

“Yes they know each other. They act fine when he is around but want to separate each other's breasts when he's not. The other one once tried using me to get to Zothani, imagine but you know how Zo is, he paid no attention to her and carried on with life until the girl came

running back to him herself”, the way this kid narrates stories. We rolling on this floor, Nombuso and I.

“Mzi needs to hear this ngeke”, she laughs.

“I agree, he would die I tell you”

“Ma, mama how did you two get along so well?”, nosy. Sisekelo is nosy!

“Go do your homework, you said you have homework so go do it”, I chase him away.

People think we were good from the word go. No we weren’t, I was still harbouring pain and she was still insecure. Those two things clash badly when it comes to females. Some days we never looked at each other at all, others we laughed and cried like sisters. Until we saw no reason to fight cause Ngcobo made everything equal for us. Regardless of who came when and who has the heart he treated us the same. That

is what made me still love him this hard till this day.

“Ngiyabonga till this day, for letting me in. not only in your house but your heart as well”

“Nombuso there's really no need to thank me I was just doing what is right. He love you”

“Believe it or not he loves you so much”, she says. I want to believe that buuut...

“Mommy I wanna go see daddy”, Asakhe pulls my fingers. Does she think she went out of daddy's penis? She came out of me, why does it seem like she doesn't see that.

“We'll go tomorrow”

“But maaaa...”

“You can take her I'll look after this bunch”, Nombuso. Asakhe kodwa.

“Go fetch your shoes”

“Yaayyyyyy!”

She's still restless at night but better than before. I've given up trying to talk both Nhlanzeko and Ngcobo into sorting their mess.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER EIGHT

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

SPONSORED BY MAKUNENE 

I'm almost off thank goodness. My back is showing me banana flames! Is this what labour queens feel like all the time? No thank You, "Dear God I pray You deliver my child from a plane, even if it's a commercial one I don't mind". Whuu!

No wonder pregnant ladies walk like injured ducks. Could never be MaZikode's daughter. Speak of that con parent, she's calling for the sixth time today.

"No I haven't met any man I'm willing to prison myself to, there are no grandchildren to expect and there's no one bullying me", those are the

main things I get interrogated on whenever she calls. All the time.

“I didn’t call for that. You failed to keep a man grade 3 why would you keep one now? 27 and aging further. I called for something else”, ouch. I thought February was cold but wait till you meet MaZizi and you’ll see who made evil.

“You need money?”, I ask.

“Yes, I’m thinking of going to the prophet today regarding the nightmare you told me about the other day”, I forgot I mentioned that. I’m honestly over it. I blame the alcohol I was given by roommate, that girl drinks worse than a fish even they take breaks. She doesn’t, after an hour of not touching alcohol it’s as if her body suffers from alcohol deficiency. Although she once shared the story of how she became a human cocktail indulging machine. Her uncles and father used to rape her all the time, from 15

years old to 22. Her mother was a typical drunkard woman with problems enough to drown three people. Her sister gave no care about that, so she kept quiet and allowed people to kill her inside bit by bit. It disgusts me having to hear such disgraceful things. Father's are suppose to be there for their children and protect them from every evil in the world. MaZikode is nuts I know but she would rather break her hip bone and lose her tooth then allow other people to do as little damage as hit my face. That's the kind of not her every child needs.

“Ma, you don’t have to do this I promise it’s okay now. I’m better”

“I don’t care but these things are not to be ignored. Send me the money, I’ll call tomorrow to tell you how it went”, she drops the call.

Whoever taught my mother how to drop a call,
committed the biggest sin of all mankind!

I skip my Nokia back inside my apron and finish off the coffee I was sent to prepare for the boss. “Three teaspoons of sugar or two?”, I’ve long forgotten. I’m sure I heard three though or is it because ma usually requests for three? Whatever, he’ll flush it with water if it’s too much.

I knock seeing as he’s busy with a client maybe.
“Come in”, he says.

“Your coffee sir...”, I feel my leg being clenched by something as I place the tray on his desk. It’s not normal around this place, I saw the looks some of the staff members were giving me when I was walking with it on my hands. Mxm those full of it brats, first of all they don’t even

give me tips after cleaning their messy offices!
Broke snobs.

“Asakhe!!”, the woman behind me scolds. Oh goodness whose child is this?

“Mama it’s her! This is her, mama it’s her”, the kid who has her tiny arms wrapped around me says. She sounds so excited and thrilled.

“Hey baby”, I pinch her cheeks. Asakhe giggles, the cutest thing you can ever see in this world. Her face is plump yet she isn’t fat, her eyes are avocado seeds, and her lips are tiny and pink like candy. It’s rare that you find a pretty baby, most babies are just tiny versions of their parents. No offense to them.

“Excuse me”, the woman grabs the kid from the floor and storms out the door. The boss follows her as well.

“I told ma drama is found everywhere, even the rich and beautiful face issues”

Not me sipping my boss's coffee while he's out there sweating for whatever reason. There's so much commotion outside the office.

"Yeyi girl there's chaos on the sixth floor, where are you?", I call my partner in crime.

"By the laboratories girl I'm on my way"

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☆NONHLANHLA GUMBI☆

We arrived just in time, he was just about to knock off anyway. Pass by Nhlanzeko and then come back home. I wish Nhlanzeko could just let Scelo and Ngcobo in, they use to be good brothers and now they fight worse than cats and dogs. And it stresses their mothers.

“He's coming out today”, Pholoba says out of nowhere.

“Oh is it? That's good, you two can work on your brotherhood then”, he nods and Carries on playing with Asakhe.

“When are we working on our relationship?”, my breath ties into a knot and my stomach turns.

“We have a relationship?”, harsh?

“You know what I mean, MaGumbi”

Sigh.

“Ngcobo nothing is wrong with you and I, we fine the way we are”, me.

“You fine with you and I not speaking frequently? Or it's me you do not want?”, he's being difficult.

“Okay tell you what. This Saturday we can go to Yellowwood lodge, just you and I. please”, I have

nothing else to I not and watch my daughter play with her little fingers on her father's lap.

"You'll love it there I promise", he says with confidence. The door opens as I'm catching a nap, but Asakhe's screaming wakes me up quick. It's a girl I've never seen before, nor heard about. She looks pretty.

"Mama it's her mama, it's her!!", Asakhe keeps her arms tight around the girl's leg.

"Hey baby", she pinches my daughter's cheeks. That's when I decide I've seen enough already. I scoop Asakhe from the floor and exit that room, its space was getting to suffocative for me.

"Nonhlanhla where are you going?", I hear him shouting behide me. He can screw off.

"Nonhlanhla!", his hand tugs me by my arm swiftly.

“Leave me alone, Mzi!”, double yanking my arm away from his grip.

“Why? Ngenzeni mummy?”, his voice has sunk again. He’s making confused frowns and sad eyes.

“I gave you one rule, just one rule and that was never to introduce your girlfriends and side chicks to my children... and you go and do exactly that behide my back that to！”, I’m beyond livid. There’s no part of me that can be reasonable at the moment, I’m furious maybe not just because he found another one but also because he’s never broke my rules, my trust.

“What side chick or girlfriend?”, he’s acting skills are very good but I saw what I saw and I know it.

“Don’t patronize me. Asakhe wouldn’t just scream for women she doesn’t know.”, shit I’m crying!

“Nonhlanhla, I am not cheating with anyone and I didn’t introduce my daughter to anyone why can’t you just believe me? Milani is staff”, the fact that he sounds so convincing irritates me. I saw the eye contacts, the smile from her and now my daughter and her are exchanging pleasantries. I’m not blind.

“Usale kahle”, nx, I pick my child up and pass through the people, heading to the car.

“Put your seatbelt on baby”

“Mama, gogo said that lady must marry baba”, I feel my chest closing.

“Gogo?”, I stare at her through the rear view mirror. She nods.

“How do you know her, Asakhe?”

“I saw her in my dreams. Can we get ice cream?”, grrr what did I just do? I must apologize to him and her, since when do I lose my temper over emotions.

"Come let's go apologize, to baba"

I'm still hurt that even dead people are sending him more women am I that invisible? But wrong is wrong and I acknowledge that part very well. What does all this mean for me?

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☆ MILANI ZWANE☆

In my entire existence on planet earth I've never been this embarrassed and belittled by another woman, worse one I do not know. Out of everything I could be accused of, she picks being a side chick, a side chick of a married man even. Shwele!

How is it any of my fault that the kid loves me?
Haibo, cha izimanga ngizibonile zonke namuhla.

“Milani.... Just a second”, my worst nightmare calls me amongst the crowd.

“Sir”, it never sounded this bitter before.
Penises have always showed me flames!

“About what transpired a few minutes ago, I apologize both on my behalf and my wife's behalf. Nonhlanhla isn't like that I have no idea what pushed her to explode like that”, he's soft spoken and beside that, he looks so down and out, I feel sorry for him but as for the wife I do not care whether she is Putin's long lost daughter or God's mistress but I demand a well crafted apology. She shouldn't have done that to me.

“Speak to her maybe there's something bothering her”

“There's nothing I have not done to make her open up to me, I feel worthless for not being able to hold her hand the way I should”, is he

about to cry or his eyes get red when in distress?

“Then why don’t you let her go cause obviously she doesn’t seem like she wants to stay with you”, it’s simple but people make it complicated. One day you’ll fall in love and understand what we feel – they say. Crap that. You can never force anybody to love you or fight for you, cause that would be playing yourself.

He places his hands on his hips and draws in his breathe, looking up at the ceiling,
“Ngiyamthanda, a lot”.

“Then where is the problem? ”, I fail to comprehend this. I once studied psychology before realizing it would get me nowhere. Men are selfish naturally, once they attach themselves to you they want you there all the time. They don’t want to let you go, could be

for their own benefits or inability to accept losing a part of them which is you.

“Why is it so hard for her to understand that I love them both the same?”, Owkay why is he shouting at me?

“How can you love two women though?”, beats me.

“Cause I don’t love with emotions, those don’t exist in me. I love with actions”, ...

I'd say something if I knew what to say. Part of the reason I dropped clinical psychology. I can be blunt, too blunt, other people call it being insensitive.

“Can I speak to the both of you”

My heart almost stopped beating. I wouldn't wish to be accused again. She enters the office and stares at both of us with red bulging eyes. Now I feel horrible.

“I’m so sorry for my reaction earlier it was out of hand. I’m sorry sisi, I don’t know what happened to me in that moment”, she’s sincere.

“It’s okay. I’ll take my leave now”

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My legs won’t carry me all the way to the rank I feel it in my bones. Neither will my pockets afford an uber right now. Lucky me I just spotted, Jefe Omhur. Some rich Nigerian with loose strings in the head.

“Ah, papa Emily!”, I bring out my Niger accent while acting stupid.

“Mama Emily is this you na?”, yes he calls me that nonsense but since I’m edging on him for a lift home, I’ll take it.

“Is me na, is me. How far?”, don’t ask how I know all this stuff.

“I’m good I’m good. You?”, the wallet in his hand makes my heart do push ups.

“I’m not good at all Papa Emily, I’m not good at all. I’m BROKE ooo. I’m BROKE”, I’ve seen many actresses but none are like me I swear.

Jeffe pulls out his wallet again and opens it, “How much money would you wonts?”, AH!

“A couple of thousands nairas will do papa Emily”, look at me bowing my head for a man I barely know money.

He hands me a couple of R100s.

“Chizos. Hhee, heeeeeee papa Emily!! Shaka Zulu gon bless you ooo, hhheeeee”, I feel like a little Docus right now.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER NINE

☆SCELOKUHLE NGCOBO☆

He arrived two weeks ago from the UK with his little sister and his girlfriend, as per his plans he was going to start at his father's house for a formal introduction of the new makoti he's bringing home but then Bruna smashed those plans into potato mash. She felt it was too early to meet any family member, that to the father out of all of them. Not even the two bull-locked brothers. So they'd stayed at resort in Durban until she felt ready to be introduced.

"You have all your suitcases here right?", Scelo asks her, counting the bags both in the boot and backseat. They weren't going to stay here for that is what he said, soon as she settled in the family and introduced her to his ancestors

they would leave and head back to the UK. June on the other hand insisted on them starting a family here, says she's tired of being stuck in the UK with no family and no life. It was an on-going argument that she chose to end by bringing all her belongings with.

"Yes I did... oh no I forgot my underwear suitcase", she says after the uneven count.

"Bruuuna", Scelo groans.

"I'm sorry baby", her blue eyes pop more and bring out her inner beauty furthermore. She has this spark in them and light his world and shakes his body inside out. Her longshot lashes flap like angle wings and they reel him in each time he looks at them.

"You so beautiful", the gone boy says.

"I know, one of us have to be good looking in order for the equation to balance out you see",

she winks and blasts the parking lot with her squeaky laugh.

“You’ll get your own bag since you find amusement in this”, Scelo shuts the boot and makes his way inside the car. First, checking if Zimi is here or not. Good, she's fast asleep at the backseat so him and June can get some peace and privacy for the ride. Something they haven't really been blessed with since Zimi tagged along. This week it's her 21st ceremony. She's dead excited and worried at the same time. People, the friends to be specific keep bombarding her with nerve wrecking thoughts like the cow fat falling off her shoulders or the spear not sticking to the ground. She played netball and tennis both in school and professionally, there is a possibility that her hymen broke that time, will it show?

One thing she is sure of she is definitely a di€k virgin.

Scelo watches his babe drag the last suitcase, he finds himself laughing at the fit being thrown by madam. It's crazy that they found love the way they did, Facebook inboxes. Unlike most stories where the guy shoots their shot and the girl demands money first to buy make up for their first video call. It was Bruna who sent an inbox saying she'd love to one day wear isidwaba and be smeared in gall and be presented to the world as his wife. Scelo shared mirth with her and ended it there, that whole thing was too weird for him. Being courted by a girl? But as time went by and the hun was still adamant, he also eased into the thought and went with the flow. Look at him now, happy; inlove and at peace.

“You will never see heaven! Not even the mere toilet”, Bruna jumps inside and bangs the door. Her cheeks are plump and red.

“Aww I’m sorry my baby”, he holds her chin and brings her face closer. Their hot breathes collide as well as their soft lips. Gradually his hand slides up her body and grabs one breast, clenching it in his grip. “Selo...”, she moans softly inside his mouth.

“You still mad at me?”, Scelo rustles, grazing her hair-raised neck. It's so warm, the heat brings tension in his body.

A wire snaps in her head and the kissing stops, “Yes I’m still mad!”, Bruna appends. Peeling his hands away from her skin.

“June ...”, he’s in awe. That quick and that heartless?

“Drive Selo”, her arms criss-cross on her puffed chest.

“Nge suitcase liliye, indoda incishwa u-kiss”, Scelo shakes his head and brings the car engine to life.

“Ay buddy I don’t care if you insulted me there, but if it was an insult then forget this cherry apple pie down here for tonight mate!”, her finger wizzes on his face. Scelo grabs a bite, capturing her index finger with his teeth.

“Are you mad? Let my finger go, Selo!”, she wags it left and right.

Scelo puts it in his mouth and sucks it slowly. Bruna’s mouth makes an O shape. Then he winks.

“You such a nasty nasty man, Ngopo”

Scelo laughs loudly. Hitting the steering wheel three times.

“Baby, leave my surname out of this. You’ve already ruined by name”, he says.

“Ha-ha very funny. I’ll master your surname one day, sir”

“I’ll be waiting”, and he continues laughing.

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They just passed town, in Richmond, heading to Richmond farm. The ride has been silence since they arrived here, June has her focus outside the window at the people passing by with barrels of water. Her mind rotates in circles when she thinks soon that might be her some day. Carrying buckets of water on top of her very beautiful hair that she worked so hard towards. Then that fairytale crushes. She's a white woman not only that but a foreign one as well. Scelo once mentioned the dreams his mother had for him. Marry a rural girl who can fetch water; light a fire and cook with it. A woman to bare her 12 grandchildren, and kiss the ground Scelo walks on. Bruna is completely different from that.

“Hey, what are you thinking about so much that you forgot me?”, he slides his hand between her thighs.

“I haven’t forgotten you, I’m ignoring you”, she rolls her eyes.

“Kahle MaAdams, talk to me”, he pinches them.

“What if mommy doesn’t like me, well I already know she doesn’t but what if she hates me?”, June strips her wall down. Scelo sighs.

“We’ll cross that bridge when we get there, babe. But I’m sure she will love you. You one amazing person after all”, Scelo.

Bruna chuckles, “We both know being an amazing person doesn’t impress people nowadays”.

“Hhayi Bruna let’s be positive please. Even if my mothers don’t accept you, my heart has and that’s all that matters”, he kisses her on the

forehead and looks ahead before sucking in a long breath.

“We're here”, he points to the big house with a huge yard. Clean yard that is. The fence is made of barb wire and wood logs. The houses themselves look nothing like what she came across on their way here, this one is massive and kind of modern with traditional elements.

Bruna feels her urine slipping through her bladder. Her lungs seem small and her body feels like it's sitting on pins and needles.

Her cheeks are red as cherry.

“Calm down, okay?”, Scelo.

She nods, “Okay”.

“Zimi wake up we home”, Scelo opens both the lady's doors. Helping Bruna climb out the car, holding her hand tightly so she doesn't fall cause her knees are weak and noodley.

“Ma!!”, Zimi runs pass the couple and throws herself on one of the women sitting on straw chairs outside the main house.

“Missed me?”, her mother asks.

“Yes I did, a lot and I missed your cooking and your insults. Where is Baba?”, she looks around the yard for him.

“Out there by Bhengu’s house drinking”, the other one says sounding over it and drunk.

“MaShelembe”, Zimi's mother warns her.

“Mxm it's true he's a drunkard is he not? Who told him to take a young girl as a wife buka manje ingane ihambe nezumbulu, usele yedwa inkinga ziyamgangaza. Shidi wendoda”, MaShelembe shakes her head and continues sipping her bev with her animal cup.

MaShelembe is the blunt one, the fearless one, the one that speaks her two cents and not give a damn how you feel about it. People say it's

the alcohol that makes her lose in the mouth, you wouldn't even tell that she drinks. Her skin is still youthful.

“That's our husband you know”

“Hhayi suka”, MaShelembe waves her hand in dismissal of her sister wife.

“I'll go inside now I need some rest”, Zimi jogs inside.

The two women stand together at the edge of the veranda, watching Scelo drag Bruna closer and closer towards them. He keeps pulling her hand whenever she tries pulling it away and walking back to the car.

“Who is that?”, Zimi's mother asks MaShelembe with a frown.

“I don't know, kwase kuk'hlophe bo”, MaShelembe whispers.

The two finally come. Both are standing a few steps away from the women, Bruna looks close to fainting and her body is visibly shaking. They exchange pleasantries.

“Ma, nawe MaShelembe I would like you to meet my fiancé, Bruna Adams”

“We-babo!!”, MaShelembe throws her hands on her mouth and stares dead on Bruna.

“H-hi ma's”

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☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

Just two days he's been out of jail and already the streets are rowdy. The warzone just begun, what's worse is the fact that old enemies have decided to chime in and mess everything he's

built over the years, that pissed him off and sure as hell will get him another shot in prison.

Today though isn't a day for stupid enemies with death wishes, today is a day of reconciliation, well not quite but anyway MaGumbi begged him to see his brother even for a second. Just for them to be cordial with each other at least. Nhlanzuko is over that thought, all he wants is to put things pass him and move on with his life as usual.

He's wearing trim and proper, in his eyes. He's wearing a gold loose madiba shirt, black scotch sweat pants and a pair of black sneakers. That silver chain his mother gave him is still hanging around his neck. With a tool tucked in front of his hood, he looks like one fresh criminal, hai tattoos contribute to the thick aura as well.

“Sorry bafo but you can’t park over here, this space is for reserved bookings”, the security guard says to him.

“I’m reserving a booking myself, right now”, Nhlanzeko switches off the engine and stares up at the guard. One hand on the wheel and the other fisted under his chin.

“Hehe you small boys think we’re your age mates, this is parking is reserved!”, the security guy firms his tone.

“Have you ever seen your mate looking this good?”

“We-mfana! we-mfana!”

Nhlanzeko opens the door of his Mercedes Benz, hops out and fixes himself. Revealing a bit of his GSR Granite. Security man swallows his dry spit. Throwing his eyes out their sockets while shifting his eyes everywhere around the parking space.

àa “I’ll be back in a minute, watch over my car”, he says walking off.

“But what if the people who reserved it come asking for their space?”, the guard.

“Tell them I said they must fuck off!”, Nhlanzuko shouts while moving forward. The nerve of this boy.

The restaurant is nice, Elephant & Co, it has broke people elements he thinks to himself but continues waltzing in. The receptionist stops him by the entrance looking nervous.

“Sir no weapons allowed inside the restaurant”, she's so tiny he'd squash her like a roach with his thumb.

“I have no weapon on me … oh this? This is my toy, I call it the fuck off o’clock machine”, he says. The girl looks at him and he smiles.

“You look too good for this place, here’s my number call me”, he winks and lights his cigarette, walking pass the girl and heading towards the outside where he spotted his brother.

“You came?”, Mzi calls the waiter and they come running. “Get me something strong ... for both of us”, he orders. The waiter nods and leaves.

“It's nice isn’t?”, Nhlanzeko says.

“What did I ever do to you, Nhlanzeko?”

“Don’t ask me such stupid questions, you know what you did along with your hypocrite father. And I don’t recall getting an apology from you now you want me to just act like nothing happened and smile like a fool?”, he loses control but quickly collects himself.

“An apology for what? More than anything I deserve an apology from YOU”, Mzi shouts back. Nhlanzeko chuckles coldly and adds a click at the end.

“Apology uzoyithola kunyoko....”, Nhlanzeko.

“DON'T bring my mother in this!”, Mzayfani stands on his feet and bangs the table. Usually they would be fighting by now as in fisting each other so this is progress.

“I will if I want; you mother had the gall to bewitch mine didn't she?”, Nhlanzeko shouts.

“Your mother was whore that is not my mother's fault...”

A fist hits him hard on the face. In no time, Mzi flips the table aside and grabs Nhlanzeko by the collar.

“Hha-hha what you want to hit me? Do it!”

“I won’t hit you cause you my little brother but I’m getting fucken tired of dying for other people's sins. Fix your damn attitude, we need you back home. Nx”

“I have no home”

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TEN

☆SCELOKUHLE NGCOBO☆

SPONSORED BY ANDILE MYEZA 

They stand there awkwardly waiting for the women to welcome them inside the house. Offer drinks and scones, hugs and kisses, see all those type of sweet stuff mother in-laws do to their daughter in-laws. It's clear Bruna ain't getting none of that, just sword-eyes and awkward silence. Scelo is becoming more and more anxious at his mother's silence.

'Say something say something' he keeps telling himself that under his breath.

"Nice to meet you Bruna, I'm MaShelembe but you can call me ma", MaShelembe breaks the

tension. Bruna takes the hug offered by MaShelembe, warmly.

“If you came yesterday you would have met my son, he’s a busy man and all. You know how they become when they have wives. Come let’s go inside”, MaShelembe places her hand gently behind Bruna’s back and walks with her inside the house. Scelo stays behind with his mother, who doesn’t look anywhere near happy or proud that her one and only son has brought a girl home.

“Ma wami”, he attempts to hold her elbow but she sways to the side, her arms remain crossed on her chest. Her face not pleasing and it doesn’t seem like it will be any time soon. He can see the disappointment written all over her face, he sees a shattered mother not an excited one.

“Ma”, he calls out for her and still she says nothing. They are just stationed there, looking at one another.

“Ubaba wakho uzothini, Scelokuhle?”, she finally spits a few words. It amazes Scelo that out of the things that could be thinking about, his father's ego comes first. How TF?

“Is that all that you worried about? So you not going to care about my feelings or my woman's feelings because your husband won't approve?”, he's actually hurt more than shocked. Their father is kak, they all know that hence they rely more on their mothers and now having to deal with their mothers turning their backs on them.

“You know how your father can be, Scelo or what you also want him to cut you off like he did with that criminal thug?”, shock him again!

“That’s my brother you talking about and your son! He’s not just a criminal”, his mother flicks her hand and looks away.

“Ma, kanti what is happening in this family? Niyabhidlika nje, being home is not as good as it used to be”, it’s the absolute truth. It’s more about impressing their father than being a family.

“Wake up Scelokuhle and smell the coffee, can’t you see what happened to those who went against your father’s orders. You want us to end up like them?”, His mother scolds. Scelo pulls her aside away from the house so Bruna doesn’t catch a single bit of this mediocre. There’s no mommy’s boy on his face anymore, it’s hard and furious.

“I am NOT giving up Bruna for anything, not you, not you filthy husband and nobody else in the world. You and the rest will deal with it as if

comes if you do not want to give me your blessings I'm fine with that but what I'm not going to have is you meddling in my affairs with your evilness", he's speaking in a moderate tone but it delivers the message sharp and clear. His mother frowns and leans back, in see and shame.

"So you rather lose me?", she widens her eyes.

"All I know is I'm not letting Bruna go just because of her skin pigment and race, never ma never!", he says and strolls back inside the house. Someone strangle her, that's how she feels right now.

He finds her smiling and laughing at MaShelembe and her fake stories about how she was back in the day. He doesn't mind those anyway just as long as his girl is happy.

“You see me when I was your age, hhee every Tom Dick and Harry wanted me I was the hottest girl in the village, don’t see me all wrinkled and old now. Nganginyisa mina”, MaShelembe.

“Oh my gosh I can only imagine. I still see the beauty a little bit”, Bruna giggles playfully.

“Sukaa. Do you drink i-juba?”

“Haibo ma, you want to turn my woman into a drunkard now? She has surgery to perform tonight”, Scelo says with a warning eye being sent to his mother.

“It’s not surgery it’s a check up”, Bruna corrects him.

“What are you anyway?”, MaShelembe asks. At first she thought she's unemployed judging by how long her nails are, how does one work with such long nails?

“I’m a neurologist”

“Ohh you fly planes to the moon?”, Scelo laughs so loud, even Bruna is tempted to laugh but she manages to hold it in and not mess up her chances of being approved by at least one wife.

“No Ma, I specialize in the brain, spinal cord and disorders of the nerves and muscles that have effects on the brain”, Bruna smiles feeling proud. It took 7 years for her to get that privilege to call herself a neurologist. That’s why a smile creeps up her face each time she shares a piece of her journey.

“Child you lost me at specialize”, MaShelembe says, laughing along with Bruna. Then all of a sudden her face gets serious, her cup is placed just above her cleavage, close to her chest.

“Bula ntombi...”, it’s Bruna but Bula will do as well. “I’m talking to you woman to woman, mother to daughter. Marriage is not an easy

thing, ask us fools who dived in the sea without testing the waters. This family can warm your soul when it can but at the same time it can destroy it, take it from me and my past mistakes. Till this day I live to regret them ...”

“Ma”, Scelo stops her but MaShelembe hears none of it. This is her chance to burp the tension out as well, it’s her chance to release but also she’d hate for such a lovely girl to be coiled in the cures of this family.

“She must know, it’s crucial she knows so that this doesn’t pose threats in your relationship in the near future. Like I said wena Bula, it will get so hard that you will wake up one morning and feel like packing up your bags and taking the first train back home. It will get so hard that even when your heart tries fighting your mind, it will lose terribly. But never throw the towel for as long as Scelo hasn’t thrown the towel.

We can hate you all we want but at the end of the day, whose feelings should matter to you?”

“Selo’s”, Bruna utters.

“Good, welcome to the Ngcobo madness ke sisi. I wish you nothing but the best in everything”

They share a brief hug with smiles widely spread across their faces. It warms Scelo to know he has one on his corner, oh make that two, Zimi loves Bruna too. Nhlanzuko doesn’t care where the sun shines and where it falls, Mzi hasn’t heard anything about her yet. It’s still abit difficult for Scelo to share himself with his brothers. Mainly Mzi cause he can come off insensitive at times, even rude and harsh. That’s the last thing he needs at the moment.

“I love you, Bruna”, he says when they walk out the door. Bruna blushes and looks away, staring at the cows being brought home.

“Don’t you love me?”, Scelo enquires.

“I love you”, Bruna.

“Then why didn’t you say it? You know how it drives me insane when you say those words to me?”, Scelo licks her behind her ear and kisses her on the top of her head.

“Stop it, ey you like licking and sucking me”, Bruna laughs.

“You delicious my love...”

“Haibo wait Bula ima!!”, MaShelembe runs to them with a live white fat chicken in her hands. Twisting and turning for dear life.

“Did we forget something?”, Scelo.

“Yes, you can’t leave without anything. You drove all this way for nothing and wasted your petrol, does your mother even know how expensive petrol is but anyway. Here is a gift

from me and the elders", Bruna heats up and moves back abit.

"A live chicken pet?", she stumbles on words.

"No silly, this one knows what to do with it. Hold this makoti and look after it. Okay byeeee", MaShelembe dumps the chicken on Bruna. "Aahhhh", she screams throwing it at Scelo and running to the car.

MaShelembe is left on another level of shock. That was a good gesture wasn't it? It was suppose to make her feel welcomed and loved not what just took place.

"Sorry ma, she has chicken phobia. Uhm I'll call later, thank you for everything"

"Awu okay bye-bye. We-Shembe!", MaShelembe claps once and slides her hands inside her apron again. Still puzzled about what just happened. Oh well, she has to accept it, that's their new daughter in-law cause Scelo

doesn't seem like someone willing to let that woman go.

"We-mfana come here, I need you to go to Bhengu's house and ask for Raymond, tell him his crazy wife is calling him back home", the boy nods and runs off. She has accepted her nickname 'crazy wife' and the only thing crazy about her is that unlike MaSbisi, she doesn't sit and watch as she is being exploited. She'll speak up until she's heard.

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☆NOKWAZI ZONDO☆

I found him parked outside my complex, his head was on the wheel and the doors and

windows were locked. I had to bang like I'm mad in order to be let inside the car. When I turned on the cat lights inside that's when I saw the busted lip, I don't know from what cause he hasn't said a word since I got inside this car. He's busy looking at me as I clean his wound off. He's scaring me with that gun on his lap, I thought he placed it on his waist not somewhere in the open.

“Done. Are you coming in?”, I’m speaking to brick walls obviously. Oh well, I rather get back in my tiny room and stuff ice cream then sit here in the cold, silent.

“Wait”, he stops me. Pulls me back inside and sleeps on me lap. He keeps playing with my fingers over and over, bending them, pulling them, intertwining our hands.

“I went to see him today”, at long last he says something. I know exactly who the he is, what I want to know is the why?

“And?”, I ask.

“We fought. Again”, sweet Lord Jesus what can I do with your children? At this point I don’t know who to point to for the blame and who to point for the sympathy. They both act like babies at times.

“About What? Nhalanzeko you too must learn how to ...”

“About my mother, my past, everything. We fought about it all”, he’s waiting for him to judge him. Unfortunately I won’t. Nhalanzeko is lose, he becomes wild and aggressive fast and can act irrational sometimes but there are valid reasons for that. There’s a reason behide everything isn’t. and that very reason will be the cause of his downfall.

“Babe, don’t you think it’s time you tell them the truth?, you can’t carry the load on your own it’s evident. Allow us to help you carry it”, I’ve never begged someone like this.

“No! I don’t need anyone helping me. If I could raise myself from the age of 17 till now then I know i can carry myself until I die”, ever met a suicidal thug? This is him right here. Okay maybe he’s never put a gun on his head and attempted to shoot but the way he plays with his life it’s if he doesn’t mind it ending anytime soon. When I ask him why he does that, he tells me its life. TF he mean when he says that?
What would I become?

“But Nhalnzeko this is for your benefit”

I moved a nerve there. He moves from my lap and sits up.

“What should I tell them, Nokwazi? That I ran away from home because they were

psychologically destroying me? That when I was 16 I stole a stranger's gun just to try put a bullet through my head? That when life gave me a second chance I felt like wasting it again, worthless actions. Ufuna ngithini? Tell them how FUCKED it left me that I lived on the fucken streets for so many years and none of them bothered themselves enough to come look for me. I lost my brother because of his sexual preference, none of those fuckers bothered checking if I was good" , I want him to cry, why is he not crying?

"They say the primary method of healing is through the release of tears. You don't have to hold them back, baby", he turns his bloodshot eyes on me.

"I have no tears left, Nokwazi", and with that he goes back to leaning on the seat with his t-shirt over his face. We sit like that, only his sniffs make a sound. He's still not crying yet I

can tell but at least he vented out. I don't know what to do to comfort him. Should I give him some?

I hold his hand sensually and brush my toe against his leg. "Not today Nokwazi, I just want to sleep"; oouch okay. I keep my hands to myself. He curses under his shirt then pulls it down his face.

"Will you be alright?", he'll lie.

"Yeah sho, buy yourself some wine or something", a card lands on my lap. I swear I'm going to scream, I gotta call my girls and let them know party or club on me tonight I'll pay. Gladly.

"Awwwe thank you my love. Be safe okay, I love you", I kiss his nose and open the door.

"Love you too", he says. I watch him speed away. Am I worried? Hell yes this is one

complicated man but also this is one loaded
back card whuh!

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER ELEVEN

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

I wonder if we not in hell already?

The sun heat is too much, today alone I've turned red thrice. My cheeks alone look like over-cooked tomatoes and guess what's all that endurance for? A silly inked name of a man with six other girlfriends. Out of all the things I battle to fully grasp, this will have to be number one of them. What in the world are you thinking inking initials or names of people you are involved with in a relationship. Peer pressure?

Roommate over here has it on her thigh, envision me waltzing around the mall with S.K written fat on my thigh, whole thigh ruined!

Could never be Milani Zwane, not getting inside the gates of heaven, not being able to meet the man she's been praising all her life, waiting for Him to answer her prayers ... all because I was once stupid and wrote Thabiso's name on me. Whuu shame.

"Does it look nice?", I wish she never asked me that. The H looks somewhat like a melting SpongeBob, the A is fine but not symmetrical do not ponder on the K it's a homeless I. Nevertheless, I don't want to come across as the green-eyed monster, I'll gladly lie.

"Yes it looks nice. Very cute I'm sure Nhlakanipho will love it", there goes that Naomi Campbell smile I throw off to buy affection from people.

"You think he will like it?", she beams in excited when I nod. You'd say I'm lying if I told you this girl was sucking Jeffe's dingleberry just

yesterday. Not that I'm rolling in complaints their situationship works for me at the end of the day. He buys her junk food; alcohol and clothes, all that's left for me to do is indulge.

"Okay let's go, wait I forgot to pay... Mike how much is it?", I watch sis search for her wallet in my backpack.

"850", Mike says and I die at my funeral same time. 850 what? Cows, dogs, stones.

"850 wani bhuti?", I ask in my most humble voice. Perhaps I'm overthinking it.

"R850"

The room just got stuffy!

What special ink is this? First off I can hardly see the writing because of the darkness of this girl's thigh so which part of today's work is worth a R850?

“I’m thirsty”, I whisper to my roommate. She points me to the receptionist lady near the door, “Ask her for water while I pay”.

“No it’s fine I’ll wait”, don’t want to end up paying R1000 for water, I’ll swallow my spit until I get to the rank and purchase a coke for R10. Roommate finishes her chit chat with Mike guy so we can leave, hopefully head home. I’m famished.

“My friend called, her boyfriend gave her his card yesterday. Do you want to tag along? I mean what could you possibly be rushing at home, nothing”

Erhhh...

“C’mon Mili babes live just a little bit, please”, this live just a little bit catchphrase has dug a lot of holes for the youth especially.

“Please Mili, it’s just drinks nothing else. If you not comfortable then we will leave I promise”, she pinches her tiny bums and jumps in one spot. I’m not sure what effect this should be having on me but I’m finding it weird and irritating. I hate clubs, I hate sweat and people rubbing their skins on me. The smell of rotten egg breath hitting your face each time someone opens their mouths to greet. Just ewe, ewe.

“I’ll pay you... per hour”, now we talking.

“But I’m not going to touch any alcohol or be stripped on right?”

“No silly it’s just a club not a horny freak show. Let’s go, she sent us an uber”, wow, now I’m being pulled in different directions like I’m three. This is NOT an uber and that does NOT look like an uber driver.

“This is NOT an uber nje, ntombi”

Roommate makes a face. Like I'm being extra or something.

“What, I’ve never seen an AMG uber before”, she rolls her eyes that I’ll stab if she continues rolling.

“Who cares let’s go c’mon”, she literally shoves me inside the car. Yehheni, I’m being kidnapped broad daylight?

“Sbari”, roommate and her annoying voice!

“Sbarikazi wami”

Am I high or is that my boss's voice?

“Milani”, he stares through the rear view mirror. His smile creeping the fuck outta me. I wave first then clear my throat and wave again then look outside, feeling so embarrassed!

Skimpy outfits in front of my boss, way to go Milani ntombo, what’s next blow job on his desk? I hate this girl for doing me like this, now

what will he think of me? I said I come from a poor family, yet here I am with a girl wearing a R5000 outfit heading out for drinks at I don't know where. What if I get fired?

At least I know the corners of prostitution around here, I won't be completely jobless.

"She'll be so happy to see you, she's been locking herself up in her room the whole day", oh good they are conversing meaning he's forgotten about me.

"Nokwazi gets like that when on her periods", roommate. People party even on their periods? Mmhh south Africans.

"Friend?", he's looking at me.

"Yes, also my roommate. I dragged her out the house for once so she can be like other children her age", ahhh.

"In my defence where I come from children my age have their own houses, fat husbands and

children that run around with a pampers full of shit”, in all truths I’m serious. Their laughter confuses me.

“She's crazy this girl”, it's true what they say about friends switching up on you when men are around. She paid R850 for something she could have down with a ballpoint pen, whose crazy between her and I?

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We arrive at this huge house, gate with white birds and PHOLOBA written in the middle in gold bars. The garden is stunning and their grass is lash I must say. Clean yard I must say.

“Where did he go, isn’t he coming in?”, I’ll leave the fact that this is not a club.

“He has another family to take care of, but he said he’ll check on her later. That’s why I was called”, she says it like she wasn’t the one jumping over moons and stars a second ago to come here.

“You wanted to come here for the money only?”, honest question.

“Duhh, Nokwazi is irritating. For some odd reason she feels like the queen of everyone. Can you believe she's playing two brothers”, hha. I stop her just as she touches the door handle. I want to hear this properly.

“Two brothers? Scelo and the boss?”, talk about Jezebels.

“No... how do you know Scelo? But anyway, I don’t know the other one but she says he’s some thug around the area.”, and the story just gets better.

“They don’t know?”, I wonder how? They say men catch on fast when their partner is messing around and worse with your brother. I’d snap her fake lashes with garden scissors!

“Nope. I still say the day they find out is sooner than this bitch thinks. She’s coming smile”

“Ouch”, that was a painful nudge. Oh crap, the smile. I stretch my cheeks like a cheese sandwich. Things we do for money, I stan; restan and Pakistan them!

“Heyyyyy girl”, jezebel ... I mean Nokwazi throws herself on roommate over here.

“Hey babe, how are you?”, roommate.

“I’m very good babe, I’m flippen wealthy”, she screams, flipping the black card around. Ugh this girl makes me sick.

“Mzi said you not feeling well”, that’s what I recall too.

“C’mon girl don’t act like you didn’t know I was lying.”, her nose is so fat!

“Oh BTW this is my friend, Milani. Milani meet Nokwazi”, nokwazi takes long looks at me.

“Hi, Nokwazi”, I put my hand out. She looks at it like slime. “If my hand doesn’t please you, you could just say so instead of looking at me like that. We not teenagers, sis”, nx.

“Smangele why did you bring this girl here?”

“This girl has a name and it would be highly appreciated and recommended that you put it to use...”

“These are so cute”, Sma distracts the awkward vibes from spoiling the already ruined atmosphere.

“I brought them yesterday, I was feeling myself and so I brought them”

I look around the house and find atrocious findings. The kitchen looks like a dirt rack, it smells horrible for a woman with two hand that can pick a broom up and sweep.

“For now let’s forget the madness and get turned up. I want to get drunk today till I don’t remember my name”, Nokwazi screams.

Mhlola kaJames noNyoko, is she not drunk already? I’ll sit and watch the evil twits drink. How good is it to be me?

As I’m chilling, a SMS from ma knocks in, ‘I’m coming there tomorrow morning. I found something out’ – oh gosh No!

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☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

He drove home straight from Nokwazi's place. Drank a few bottles with pills and smashed a few, in a few hours he was okay. That's how he gets through the body rush, he feeds the drug with another drug only then does he calm down. Today he was planning on spending the day with the gents, as per usual Fridays are reserved for gents. They are at Sthembiso's Tarven, their usual hangout spot, drinking and reminiscing on old times.

“Who named you that nonsense anyway?”

“This one and Jabaru”, Ethan points to Nhlanzeko.

“He says Neh all the damn time, I ended up calling him that. ‘Bafethu see y'all noon ...”

“NEH!”, the entire squad laugh after saying that in unison.

“Ey Fokoff nina”, Ethan empties the left bit of his content.

“Nhlanz, how did the project go?”, Sbusiso.

“Not bad, I found the place to open the drive thru carwash. All that’s left is to actually do it. I’ll meet Zimi tomorrow and go with her.

“Zimi, neh”, Ethan.

“Not my sister Ethan, not my sister”

“I was just saying Zimi neh that’s all. What’s your problem? ... ”

“Bru, you won’t believe what I saw yesterday. Isn’t I was in Hayfield to check on ma, bru I saw your chick driving with your brother to that all white house we use to call the White House”, Ethan says. Nhlanzeko first laughs, sincerely thinking it’s a joke or a mistake. Ethan sees a lot

of shit, weed makes him like that. Perhaps that's the case cause what he just heard ... will drive him crazy.

They stare at him wondrously, waiting for a proper reaction from him.

“Mad this kid”, Nhlanzuko nudges Sbu and chuckles.

“Bru I bet if you were to go right now to that house you'd find her there. That's your brother's crib what is she doing there?”

The heniken bottle slips off his shaky hand and shatters on the floor into pieces. The room feels like one scene from a thriller. Everyone's eye is on him, strictly him but he's use to that. People's eyes have always been on him since birth, pity they are never gazing at the good, it's always the bad and the worse. It's the level of betrayal that he can't handle, just like that.

“If I don’t come back in thirty minutes, collect the dead body I’ll bury it myself!”

Before his friends can make any sense of what just happened and what was said, Nhlanzeko has walked through that double glass door. With the gun and his friend's keys since they came together. They sit and not move knowing very well their friend might take a life today.

“You think he’ll kill her?”, Sbu asks.

“I don’t know mjida”, Ethan is getting worked up as well. Keeping this to himself would have done everybody good.

“You know how Nhlanz is, he’ll snap her neck in two”, Sbu seems to be the only rational one.

“Akafe vele, why would she do him like that doing how he is and what he’s been through? Just cause we do crimes doesn’t mean we have no hearts”, Teddy The Freaky Bear is what they call this one. He had his fair share of in's and

out's both in jail and recovery centres. So out of all the friends, he understands Nhlanzuko more.

“But what if he harms himself after killing her?”, they all freeze and look at Sbu.

“Eish”, they all say. Everyone of them grab their guns and finish their bevs then go after their friend. The ride is as quiet as death, their heads are still all over the place. Piecing things together. They ultimately don't care if Nokwazi dies, they just want their friend to be safe.

To be continued...

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONTINUATION...

SPONSORED BY MASHENGE ❤️

This is the fourth time he's driving around the same neighbourhood, it's not very far from Mzayfani's vacation house. Yes that's what he calls his escape sanctuary whenever he needs to regroup, Hayfields is where he hides. There is no space for him to be sit and relax both emotionally and physically at home because he's the man and as the man comes a shit load of responsibilities. He has to balance things between the wives and the children, look after the household and support everyone's emotional needs but his.

The ‘White House’ provides that safe space for him, to unwind; eat; drink and watch soccer until late hours without worrying about not doing enough for everybody. That’s Mzayfani’s life by the way.

Nhlanzeko has made up his mind, he’s going to the house, he’ll murder her. That’s what he’ll do, kill her his mind is made up and nothing can change it. The gates are locked however these walls aren’t too high at all. With a firm grip and swift action he can jump it easily, the door is slightly opened fortunately, so he slides in without any hassle. He pulls his gun out and cocks it readying to put it to use the minute he sees her face. He looks around the lounge and finds nobody there, kitchen is empty and the balcony doors are shut. The filth though tells him people are around.

“Can I help you?”, a melodic voice rings in his ear drums a few times. It’s the sweetest thing he’s heard in a while putting aside the attitude laced on top of it. Nhlanzeko rotates and looks at the lady.

“Are you the security or what?”, her eyes drop to the gun in his left hand. Even so since when do security forces wear Nike t-shirts and such fancy sneakers but she overlooks that. Maybe the fancy outfit is for protection, see instead of the criminals breaking in to rob the family, they’ll just steal from the security and flea without trying to steal inside. That’s all Milani can say, cause no other explanation makes sense to her.

“Bhuti, I don’t have all day speak up. First off I shouldn’t even be here, I have flippin work tomorrow but because of manipulative friends... here I am. Just like you I also don’t

want to be here, do you see me throwing attitude about it?”, milani blabbers.

Nhlanzeko is confused abit. He doesn’t pay attention to her much cause his mind is strolling around dangerous thoughts.

“Want juice?”; Milani asks heading towards the kitchen.

“No, I want Nokwazi”, Nhlanzeko’s vocal cords finally open up after a long shut down.

“Ohhh, she is in her room with her fr....”

Nhlanzeko marches off, leaving the poor Milani stunned and angry. “Bloody disrespectful arse. Who do these little Soweto young thugs think they Are?”, she snaps her tongue at the overly inked Nhlanzeko and goes back to the food she was preparing in the kitchen while Nhlanzeko heads up the curved staircase.

He eventually finds the room with the most noise coming out of it.

“Nhlanzeko?”, Nokwazi fixated on the same spot he found her on when he walked in.

Nokwazi has seen many faces of Nhlanzeko. Good to pure evil. The one she's standing before right now tells her it's over. Everything is over for her. If not that she comes up with some convincing lie to pour all the blame on then not only will the games she's playing be over but her life as well.

“Baby I can explain...”, Nokwazi rushes to Nhlanzeko. Not seeing any weapon or phone on him calms her a bit, so he won't shoot her and there is no evidence against her well at least no tangible evidence.

“My love it's not what you think...”

The first slap across her face hits hard. Her friend immediately jumps off the big bed and

runs out the room screaming Milani over and over. Nokwazi gathers the same courage she used to cheat these men and faces Nhlanzeko again, grabbing his t-shirt with both hands.

“I didn’t mean to hurt you, I swear Nhlanzeko. I was going to tell you”;

Another one racks in, this time landing her on the floor with both her hands over her face, waiting for another one to hit but nothing occurs. She looks up, staring at the girl she was bitchy to, fight Nhlanzeko off her.

“You’ll hurt her you fool! Back off”, Milan pushes him away from the crying Nokwazi.

“MILANI let’s go! Lets leave”, her roommate also tries to lend a helping hand however the stubborn bull within Milani does not budge.

“Mils I said let’s leave, come on”

“What if he harms her?”, milani says looking fearfully at Nhlanzeko. He hasn’t lifted his eyes

off the bitch. His mind is absent Milani can see that.

“It’s none of our business let’s move.”, Smangele rather pull Milani out the room then stay another minute in there.

“Mzi please come home, come help me please he’s going to kill me. Mzi please come help ... aahhh”, the third slap takes her to galaxies away from here. The phone flew off her grip and hit against the wall across her. Her hands are on defence mode, locked in front of her burning face. His hand print shows vividly on her cheek, there of them on top of each other diagonally.

“Please stop beating me, Nhlanzeko please”, Nokwazi cries, cradling far and far away from his site.

“Beating you up, Nokwazi? ...”, he laughs shaking his head. “I’m not anywhere near what I want to do to you, Nokwazi. I haven’t implicated the amount of pain I desire for you. This, this is just the beginning!”, he shouts.

“No, no Nhlanzuko ngiyakucela, don’t do this. I’ll disappear and never come back in your lives ever again, you’ll forget me and I’ll move on too. Just don’t hit me anymore”, her voice trembles along with her legs. You wouldn’t say this is the very same girl playing two brothers with top confidence. Nhlanzuko picks her up by her long silk hair and chuckles her onto the wall. Having her lying on the floor makes him want to kick; punch and strangle her to death. His mind might wish for that but his heart doesn’t, there’s a human behind the pain he’s feeling and it’s nit-picking his guilt bit by bit.

From the wall he chokes her, mercilessly too. Looking fearlessly into her glossy red marbles.

She still looks beautiful, still that perfectly carved diamond that he treated like an egg, still melts his heart... broken as it may be now but she still melts those tiny fragile pieces. With all the damage she imposed on him, his heart still notices its owner.

“Nhlanzeko...”, she coughs, out of energy from trying to fight him off her. At least the hands off her neck but with no luck unveiling.

“Why would you hurt me like this?”, he too is out of energy. It’s anger and resentment driving to do all these things.

“I’m sorryyy”

That sorry sparked a short fuse in him,
“Nhlanzeko you’re killing me and my child...”

Nhlanzeko frowns.

“What child!?”

“I’m pregnant ...”, he removes his hand and watches her slide to the cold tiles. Her hands snake around her waist, feeling spikes all around.

“No, you lying to me just like how you’ve been lying to both my brother and I! you not pregnant you just trying to play me”, he walks from point A to B and B to A, rubbing his head in frustration. Nokwazi drags herself onto her feet, and walks to the bathroom.

“Where are you going?”, Nhlanzeko pulls his gun out and points it right in-between her eyes. It feels good to be in this position like he’s going to get his revenge, at the same time it pains him that the one he was so sure was IT, pushed him into this.

Nokwazi says nothing, just strolls into the bathroom and strolls back with a stick in her hand. And gives it to him then goes back to the

floor. she looks at herself on the mirror and shuts her eyes, “what have I done?”, she whispers between her sobs.

“Two lines?”, Nhalenzeko asks with a pouncing chest.

“It means I’m pregnant, four weeks”, she murmurs carelessly.

“STOP LYING TO ME DAMNIT! Why, why would you do me this bad Nokwazi for what, my brother’s penis that’s all?

I told you the shit I’m coming from and the shit I’ve been through my entire life, you watched me lose myself sometimes. You watched me throw my life away only to get it back forcefully. Why hurt me like this then? ANSWER YOU SHIT!”

“I’m sorry, baby I’m sorry”, her head hangs.

“You begged me to let you in, Nokwazi didn’t you promise to not betray me? Didn’t you?”

“I did”, she speaks softly and sounds just as fragile as she was when they first met.

“So what the fuckery are you doing? And don’t tell me you sorry, don’t spite leyo nyongo.

MMHH NOKWAZI I LOVED YOU!”, he took the object closest to him being the picture Mzi framed of her driving for the first time in his Mercedes.

“I was selfish I wanted to keep both of you cause both of you made me feel special, Nhlanzeko and I...”, she gulps down her saliva. Realising his gun is on her head now. Cocked and heated for a quick bullet delivery.

“Bafo, she's not worth it marn. She's not worth it”

Those words hurt her more than the slaps Nhlanzeko gave her. Obviously Mzi was going to leave her after finding the truth but not with such words. Nhlanzeko hasn't fully wrapped his mind around everything, he doesn't know who to and not to trust.

"He didn't know", she clears things out.

"And how do you expect me to believe that?", Nhlanzeko enquires.

"Because he loves you. Hard for him to show it because you don't give him the chance but he loves you. He'd never steal your happiness intentionally", she has a nerve to speak such soothing words after her shenanigans.

"Drop the gun, mfowethu. This is not you", Mzi says. Holding his brother's shoulder firmly until the gun has been lowered. Mzayfani takes the gun into his care and tucks it on his waist.

"Thank you so ..."

“You have 30 minutes to leave my fucken house”, Mzayfani icely.

“Oh and if you not out in 30, security will escort you to the nearest street corner. If I were I would start packing”

“Mzi it’s late, my mother won’t open for me this late at night”

“25 minutes”

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MZAYFANI NGCOBO

He drove him with Nhlanzeko, he’ll use the outside cottage cause surely he wants his own space after what happened today. Neither of them said any thing to each other during the

ride. He'll speak to him some other day, in the morning maybe or the following day. He knows how emotional Nhlanzeko can be especially when he was invested. Mzi on the other hand tucks his problems under the rug and goes about his life. When he's vulnerable enough to deal with it, he will.

For now he has bigger problems.

Nomzamo opens the door for him and makes little space for him to sit on the bed.

“Are you good?”, he nods once.

“How are you and MaGumbi?”, he kisses her cheek.

“I’m fine just stressing over the Olwethu issue, MaGumbi is ... I’m not sure anymore but she doesn’t want to speak to anyone”, Nomzamo sighs in wary.

“Don’t worry about it I’ll sort it out. How is little one treating you?”, he rubs her belly slowly. Oh

yes she did a pregnancy test after MaGumbi's confession. That's when she found out she's expecting baby number 3!

"Fine for now. Will you speak to her... In a warm manner though", she warns him.

"Don't worry. You have to sleep, goodnight"

"Hawu, not even two rounds for I love you??"

"lala Matefa", he chuckles on his way out.

As he was passing through the passage to the kitchen, he notices the lights in Olwethu's room are still on so invites himself inside.

"I know you not sleeping", he says and Olwethu awakens.

"Come here", he opens his arms and she gladly cuddles herself between them.

"Your mother tells me you have a boyfriend", he looks down at her with a straight face on.

“Eish, ma wasn't suppose to share that with you. I promised I will never do it again daddy”, Olwethu wines.

“Olwethu it's not about you not doing it again, it's about you understanding why you shouldn't be doing such things at your age”, he sits her on his lap.

“I understand daddy. It's just that he said he loves me you know and he makes me feel special and beautiful”, Mzi frowns.

“What does he say that makes you feel special?”

“He calls me sexy and he said I look good in his arms. He nicknamed me ‘Thick Mama’”

Mzi feels his homes itch. This is 14 year old baby girl that being called ‘Thick Mama’.

“Baby, that's not a compliment. Guys that speak like that don't value your worth, boys like

that are only ever after one thing and that is the fairy”

“A fairy?”, Olwethu laughs.

“You know what I’m speaking about. There will be many more that come and tell you the exact same thing, will you date all those boys?”

Olwethu shakes her head. Playing with her fingers with her head facing her toes.

“What I will say to you might seem harsh but you’ll understand when you have grown up. There's nothing special about a lady that throws herself to every man, let alone a baby like you. You'll get to an age where your mother and I give you the key of life, Olwethu but you not there yet mntanam. Respect your body so that others respect you too”, Mzi picks her face up and stares at her.

“Don’t worry daddy, mina I’ll make you proud, I’ll forget about boys and focus on my studies”, Olwethu says.

“Olwethu, lezinto azihlelwa ziphethe udko lwegolide zilijikijela e-mine”

“... erh?”, Olwethu frowns.

“You’ll understand one day. Don’t fall pregnant while you still in school cause that will kill daddy”

“I don’t want to kill daddy”, Olwethu gasps.

“I know you don’t. Enza okuhle kujabule ubaba no-mama sisi”

“Yes daddy. I love you dad”

“I love you too, my baby”, Olwethu gives her dad a tight hug and a kiss on his forehead.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

SPONSORED BY NALEDI ❤

The whole thing still feels weird and illusive for him. It makes no sense in his mind, there are galore pieces to this already-solved puzzle. He's been on a wild spin endeavour, confining the afflictive thoughts storming around his head. Nokwazi was it, she was it and he was a hundred percent on that. No woman got him like her, no woman could understand him better than she could. His efforts and his love were welcomed gracefully.

He looks around the room for any familiarities, there are none except the framed picture on the wall. His mother took that picture on his 1st

grade, Nhlanzeko had no clue it still existed nor did he expect one of his brothers to consider framing it. Anyway, he helps himself to the glass of whiskey beside his bed on the pedestal.

There's a faint knock on the door and a crackling sound from the door opening. He looks up and chuckles inside.

"You're up", Mzayfani stays put by the door. A tray of bacon; eggs; toast and tomatoes in his hand.

"Brought you breakfast", he puts the tray on the bed and sits on the edge of the pedestal, arms folded and an apprehensive frown.

"Aww I feel so special right now, breakfast in bed. You see in prison, your type would have been called 'oMam'Doria'", Nhlanzeko laughs alone.

“I didn’t find that funny”, Mzayfani frowns, perplexed as ever. Does Nhlanzeko need a mental institution?

“Ngoba uyabhora”, Nhlanzeko downs his drink and leans on the headboard.

“Since when is using logic boring?”, Mzayfani.

“Why are you not Prime Minister of English anyway? Kucace kuthi you boring and old vele vele”

Mzayfani cares less about the taunts, he’s used to them anyway. To him, it’s Nhlanzeko’s way of saying ‘I love you and you still my brother no matter what’ .

“Are you done acting five years old?”, Mzi tilts his head, raises his brow in question.

Nhlanzeko chuckles. Silence falls upon the room, their eyes are set on the framed picture hung to the wall. Mzayfani takes it down and hands it over to Nhlanzeko.

“And what must I do with this?”, Nhlanzeko lifts it up from his lap.

“Where did that boy go? That little fool that made jokes; respected everybody and always happy?”, Mzayfani asks.

“He died, and you and your family dived into the curries and salads on his funeral as if he wasn't even shit”, no hatred is detected in his tone, like he's just done with holding onto anything hurting him. At this point he's speaking from a general point of view. They killed him.

“What killed him?”, Mzi ignores the ‘Your family killed him’ part.

“Can we not conversant about this, not now at least. I'm tired and I want to sleep”, Nhlanzeko.

“I'm not leaving this room until we hatch things out, you think I enjoy playing swords with my own younger brother? I don't Nhlanzeko. Our

father is a deadbeat dad, I can't be a deadbeat brother as well. You all my responsibility..."

"Is that so? How come you never cared about me then? Soon as my mother left, nothing was for me in that home"

Mzayfani sighs and scratches his chin. "I always cared Nhlanzeko; I just didn't know how to show that to you. My mistake was expecting you to pick yourself up like I did, my attention was too drawn to raising the young ones right.", it feels like a shit load of baggage has been lifted off his shoulders. For how long has he been carrying this.

"I left and you never searched for me", Nhlanzeko.

"That's not completely true. I did try my best however I was battling bad, I felt like I kept on failing you Nhlanzeko. Kept taking away from you I ended up thinking being away from me

was the best decision for you. I would never just leave you because I don't care, even when I found that you in prison for the first time. I did all I could to get you out..."

Nhlanzeko's eyes shoot up, they are shadowed by regret. "You ... you general aren't you?"

"Yes. I left home and went to the army for a few months. I've turned my back on you Nhlanzeko"

Nhlanzeko rubs his head roughly, feeling like a total shit pie. How could he not think of that? The struggles his brother probably went through trying to take care of the entire family.

"...I didn't think of that. I was too blinded by my own misery, bafo I didn't realize I was burdening you. Just sometimes you feel like being away from everything, be in your own space", Nhlanzeko shrugs.

“Oh trust me I understand. We haven’t been a perfect family and we won’t, but we owe each other loyalty and safe spaces”, Mzayfani puts his foot forward. The suggestion is farfetched, their cracks cannot be sealed anymore, the best option is to just break down all the walls and rebuild their home.

“Bhuti it’s too late for us to play black mampatile in this family. All that we can do is just learn to survive each other. I’m willing to put the past in the past and recreate a strong relationship with you and Scelokuhle but the rest I’m not down for them”, and his decision is final. Whatever he thinks MaShelembe did to his mother, hasn’t shifted from his memory. Mzayfani sees that. Demonic as his mother is, she will never bewitch anyone for a MAN!

The same man she told off the second he mistreated her son.

“One day you will be down for it...”

Nhlanzeko attempts to say something but Mzayfani cuts him off half way the attempt.

“Angikuceli. These scandals y'all have must end someday, I'm not raising my children in a warm home only for them to receive coldness ekhaya. You'll suck it up and stretch that fake smile, I'll do it for you if I have to”, Mzi.

Nhlanzeko rolls down the carpet, “No thank you bafo”.

“How are you doing by the way... Nok... you know”, he asks.

Mzi shrugs and removes his butt from the pedestal. “I'm a man, I'll be fine. Your friends were asking for you so what do I do? Call them?”.

“No, I need time to myself. I’ll let them know I’m fine though... and, thanks”, Nhlanzeko says.

“Anytime, let me get going. Oh do you happen to have a gun with you that I can borrow?”, Mzayfani looks around the room.

“A gun?”, Nhlanzeko.

“Some bitch nigga is after my little princess, following her around and calling her stupid names. Nx”, he’s very angry and the sight of that boy will land him in solitary confinement for a year. How dare he? How dare?

“It’s not funny”

“I know but your face is. What grade is this boy anyway?”

“11, imagine. I’m dropping Olwethu off at echo today cause I need to see that fucker and teach him a lesson”, Mzayfani’s jaw twitches you would think he’s ready to kill his ancient enemy and not some High school jock pretty boy.

“Wait for me as well, let me go splash. Uyanya
loyo msunu”, Nhlanzeko gets off bed.

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☆MILANI ZWANE☆

Right when you think you've seen it all: demons and evil spirits being chased away with doom; anus sex and then comes last night's events. Is it not be trying to Braun Stroman a man built of bricks, I broke my finger bones trying to push him off and all that fight for Miss Jezebel Thy Second! I'm sure after that fight no idiot will ever kidnap me, I have one hella of a strong arm but either way who would waste their time carrying a chubby hun like me?

I always say out of all things, in grateful for being this big. Whenever some dingleberries attempt to kidnap me for whatever nonsense, I won't bother fighting nor running cause I know I'll lose. All I'll do is sit on the floor and cross my legs, let's see who'll bother picking me up from the floor heavy as hell as I am. By the time they left my leg, the cops would have arrived. See there are loads of perks to being a full chicken.

Anyway that arrogant mean arsehole really pissed me off yesterday. Absolute nimrod of a man, if there were just the two of us in this world and we had to screw something in order to survive , I'd rather let a donkey giddy up on my behide then him. Nx bloody imbecile!

“Smangele, turn down that volume please. We trying to watch T.V over here”, the girl doesn't hit her listening to me, she's still moaning at the top of her lungs.

“Oh yesss baby, right there right there..... ooouuu Shembe! I can only imagine screaming such nonsense”, I clap once.

I feel like I’m forgetting something crucially important but I cannot put my tiny finger on it. What was... shoot, MaZikode!

The place is a shocking mess, I’ll tidy the visible parts only. Although I know MaZikode will search the entire house for one small untidiness or displacement to woo me back home. The scam my mother is.

I answer my rigging phone with trembling hands.

“Hello Ma”, she doesn’t greet me back, instead I’m thrown to the wolves by her request.

“Open the gate for you? What do you mean?”, when did she leave home and how did she find me? GO-SLOWS! Jeffe is here busy screwing Sma.

“Ehhena, open up for me unless you want me to fly over this gate like a witch”, ohhh whatever.

“the gate is open ma, you can just push it hard so that it opens”, leave the mess my mind tells me, and chase jeffe out of here. Ugg they locked the door. Why would they lock the door?

“Give me water I’m boiling like mash potatoes ready to be made”, MaZikode enters and throws herself on the couch.

“When did you arrive? I thought you’d call so I meet you half-way atleast”, she stares at the glass in my hand.

“Was it washed? Cause I can see finger stains and soap at the bottom”, ugg.

Smangele doesn’t take part in any thing that has to do with household chores, it’s my duty but yesterday I forced her to wash the dishes

and forgot madam has nails sharp and long as screws.

“I’ll get you another...”

“No sit down, we have to speak about something first it has been bothering me the entire day and night”, she sighs.

“Oh my goosshhhhhh jeffe daddy!!”,
SMANGELE!!

I feel my intestines turning to wine, my lungs opening apart to pave way for this lady's looks.

“Umsindo wamakati owani?”, MaZikode raises an eyebrow.

“It’s nothing just a movie ... my roommate is watching a movie with her man”

“Ukipitile?”

“No! she's not cohabiting ma, this is her house. Her boyfriend visited her today cause he's from far”, I lie like a pro marn!

“Mmhhh. As I was saying, like I promised I did visit the prophet and told him what has been happening both to you and back home...”

“Back home?”, erh.

“Is it not your brother screaming that we have two cows in front of our gate. I thought they belonged to the Mbense's but no they didn't. Those things shitted by my gate and left their dunk there”, this is getting scary by the minute. It's more serious than I thought.

“And what did you find out?”

“Whoa, isn't I'm coming with the story why are you rushing me? Do you stop a soapy and ask them what will happen next? Give me a chance to explain”, whose mother is this?

“The prophet said...”

Oh God kill me!!

“That was such an intensive work out sweets, my guy is really full now”, Jeffe loads his wallet out and hands Smangele a couple of notes.

That’s how he spoils her, by sexing her like a Hilbrew streetworker and then giving her money to go buy junk.

Ma’s face keeps getting harder and hotter.

They even bloody kiss, kiss out of everything!

“See you later, Mili please take him out”, mmaye Smangele wants me deceased by the end of the day.

“She's not going there, he has his two feet he can walk out by himself”, MaZikode starring fearlessly into her eyes.

“And you are?”

“MaZikode, umaka mbila (Mili)”, she says with a straight face. Smangele curses below her breathe and decides to follow her man, leaving me with the king of the jungle.

“Sorry about that”

“Hhe, soyicela ivuthiwe. Anyway, the prophet told me there is an assignment awaiting for you. The delay of you attending these assignments and cries, the more your success will delay too. He said the time is more near than you think however someone keeps pushing it forward”, I’m totally lost.

What assignment? Aren’t I done with school?

“When you say assignment, ma... what do you mean?”

“I don’t know full details, I forget child I’m old. But he said all will be in the open. Also he said take note that once you have accepted that responsibility, there’s no shying away from it. You stuck with it until you die”, this thing confuses me but that’s small business. I’m worried about the woman before me. I hand her a tissue to wipe her tears. It’s either more

to what she's saying that I'm not being told or she's just a marshmallow for me. Either or, I hate seeing my mother shed a tear, useless or meaningful.

"Don't cry ma, it'll work itself out at the end. You said never forsake God and God will never forsake you, so don't worry He knows what is meant for his child", it takes time for her to hug me back.

"I don't want to lose you mntanam, I don't"

"You won't lose me ma, you never will and that's a promise"

..

..

..

☆MZAYFANI NGCOBO☆

They just arrived at Carter High School to drop off the kids. MaGumbi warned them not act stupid and blow things out of proportion. Clearly she missed the part where Nhlanzeko said, ‘Soli qinisa isende’ ... this is a child by the way. Nhlanzeko is just one crooked uncle, he just came here and he’s already courting girls for his nephews.

“You have to get laid soon and yet you do not even know a mere tongue kiss, go to that girl with bouncy hair. Court her I’ll back you up”, he throws Sisekelo to the circle of cute girls.

Sisekelo freezes.

“Ringa!”, Nhlanzeko rushes him.

“Uhm... hi ladies, I'm Sisekelo ”

“Sisekelo Ngcobo right?”, one girl asks.

“Yes”, Sisekelo smiles.

The girls have a giggle and a blush.

“So Sisekelo, where is your brother. The hot one, uZothani. Is he at school today?”, another one spoils his mood.

“Nx, ifebe kanti. Let's go mshanami”, Nhlanzeko pulls Sisekelo away from this girls and takes him back to the car.

“Ugrand?”

“Yes baba, I'm use to it. Zothani is the best in everything and is more loved. I'm not here at school to socialize anyway I'm here to learn”, Sisekelo shrugs. Nhlanzeko looks at him.

“Afterschool we need to talk. Go the bell has rung...”

“It's rung not ringed, baba”, Sisekelo laughs.

“Mxm, it ringed. I know ringed. Hamba”

On the other side, Olwethu is still standing with daddy. Kids passing by grow an inch bit of

respect for her seeing her standing with such a powerful duo next to a 1.5 million rands care. Her friends keep stealing glances at them and blush like little skimpy whores. Mzayfani notices and brings it to Olwethu's attention.

"Do you know those girls?", Mzayfani asks.

Olwethu nods.

"Stay away from those hoes. They'll introduce you to disgraceful habits", he says.

"Disgraceful habits like?"

"Drooling over grown men..."

"Daddy, baba ... that's the boy that wanted me", she points to the yellowbone stepping out of a Jeep.

"That sunburnt Chris Brown?", Nhlanzeko frowns. Olwethu bursts into laughter and nods.

Mzayfani gets to the parent and the boy himself. He taps the father on the shoulder until he turns around.

“May I have a word with your son?”, the question is rhetorical. He has already granted himself permission.

“You the one harassing my daughter?”, Mzayfani.

“Me? Maybe you have the wrong person, these girls love me like honey..”

Nhlanzenko laughs so loudly.

“So you know nothing about an Olwethu Ngcobo the Thick Mama”, His heart itches just saying it.

“Ohhh the curvy queen. I wanted to bed her nothing seri...”

“What did you say?”, Mzi grips the kid by the throat and stares right into his eyes. The father

tries meddling but Nhlanzeko is holding him back by the collar of his shirt. Sitting back and enjoying the show.

“Nothing sir nothing”, the boy stumbles.

“If you dare look at Olwethu's direction I'll pop your eye out with a fork nx”, he lets the boy go and walks back to his car. The crowd of nosy school children disperses immediately after the principal's arrival.

“Is there a problem here?”, the principal asks around.

“Keep your horny dogs on a leash before you smell trouble”, Mzi. This principal was warned when Olwethu was brought to this school, that nothing should ever disturb his baby or trouble her. He'd kill a crocodile for that little girl.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

☆SCELOKUHLE NGCOBO☆

He is bored as hell, he finished his zoom meetings an hour and a half ago. Done some paperwork and overviewed his drawings that are set to be presented in two days in front of the Board members of TRANSNET. Scelo was gifted with a pencil and paper from birth, since High school he was known as the pencil genius. The things he drew sometimes without the necessary materials. His EGD teacher thought during tests he had an already drawn sheet that he places under his answer sheet and sketches over it. The way his measurements and angles were so accurate, his paper always fitted the exact picture even from the memo. The ability to bring a picture to life on paper left the entire

staff room astonished by the God given talent. It was then that he figured the route he wants to take in life. Being an architect was written in the palms of his hands. Across the world he is well-known for his ability to create an outstanding structure like none other and has been given credit for that. Their industry isn't full of dollars only few with less experience get the privilege of being called in by major businesses or wealthy kings and queens. Scelokuhle is one of those privilege architects to become millionaires just after three years on the grid.

He's walking back down the stairs for the sixth time, planning a way to distract Bruna from her mediocre meditations. It's her before-macro-surgery-ritual, to calm her nerves and align all her chakras so that her mind; body and soul is a good place. Scelo grabs one of her candles and

blows them off in a sneaky way. She doesn't notice though, her mind has tapped in her casual solar plexus chakra. Unlocking her deepest intelligence. The Second candle goes off, its smoke invades her nostrils, disturbing her meditation in the process.

Bruna opens one eye and shoots it at Scelo angrily, "WHAT SELO!?", she erupts one eye open.

"I'm bored baby", Scelo whines like a baby at times. One point he refused going to work and ended up losing a couple of hundred thousands just for a stay-in cuddle with Bruna. Childishness at its highest peak.

"Go scribble on paper; build stuff with your building blocks... I don't know Selo do something and give me my space", Bruna sighs.

"No I want to snuggle with you", Scelo groans.

"After midnight", Bruna says.

“I’m leaving this afternoon. Bhuti summoned us all home, I don’t know for what exactly but that’s where I’ll be”, Scelo again.

Bruna sighs realising he won’t shut up nor leave her alone in peace. She blows off her candles and collects her crystal stones and mat.

“Whose that anyway?”, She frowns. She only met the crazy alcoholic wife and the slay queen Zimi. Besides these people have complicated names, her brain can’t grasp them all.

“The older brother, his name is Mzayfani but we call him bhuti..”

“Oh the wifing machine?”, Bruna giggles. Scelo nods and takes her hand, sitting her on his lap directing above his turned on member. The slightest of things turn him on, whether it’s a laugh; a giggle or a blink from her he’ll erect.

“Then there is Nhlanzeko, his mother died years ago. We were born on the same day hence we referred to as the ‘Magical twins’ ...”

“What’s so magical about being born on the same day?”, Bruna shrugs completely lost. It’s a coincidence that occurs rarely but it happens just that we don’t see Polygamy women giving birth the same time.

“One of us were going to die. Family curses and stuff... but a couple of years later they took Nhlanzeko’s brother”, he shakes his head in disbelief. Bruna collects his head and lays it on her breasts gently, brushing the tiny hairs on his arms smoothly.

“The community stoned him and two other boys accused of being gay ... to death. He’s never been the same ever since. You know sometimes I think it is my fault”, he says.

Bruna stops with the tender brushing and stared at him.

“What makes you conclude that stupid thing?”, Bruna.

“It’s not stupid Bruna. My mother entered those gates with hell amount of noise, certain people were not happy... people ancestors of that family guarded with their everything. Inside her marriage she wasn’t perfect, her mistakes were hefty. It would make sense for the elders to want me as the ‘sacrifice’ for whatever we owed. Not Siboniso”

Bruna lifts his face up to hers and smooches his crusty cold lips. Her soft hand caresses his cheek softly. She pulls out.

“It’s not your fault. They knew why they wanted the other one and not you. They knew if you didn’t survive, they had my wrath to face!”, she giggles, he laughs. She’s not tiny but

definitely not strong enough to win a fight against a weak puppy. She is too soft for that.

“I want to face your cookie jar's wrath...”, he says getting on top of her. Kissing her lips and grazing her chest with his front teeth.

“Selo you know I can't have sex ... I'm still on my p's”, Bruna moans.

“What are those?”, he trickles his ticklish tongue all over her erected nipple. Sweeping it up and jiggling it on his wet tongue, squeezing her thighs with his free hand. Bruna screeches, gripping the couch pillows.

“You taste as fine as old wine, sthandwa sami”

He goes down on her gently sucking her skin leaving red marks all over it. Bruna lifts her butt off the couch as he pulls her leggings down tardily, she's not wearing any underwear yet she said she's on her periods... women and being scared of dick! Scelo chuckles to himself.

“Open your thighs, Bruna”, he slaps her thigh. Bruna shakes her head. having sex before surgery messes up her brains, she ends up focusing on the good strokes over the actual work she is paid to do.

Scelo gnaws her thighs from the outside inwards, until she gives up the hold and opens her legs wide open for him to enter her gently.

“Babyyy”, her toes curl as the warmth of the wet tongue makes contact with her nub.

Swooping over it thrice then taking a long suck on it.

“Selo please ... I can’t do this. Ahh. I have surgery”, she tries to close her legs but he’s locked in anyway.

“What surgery is that?”, he asks pulling his head out of the claws with juices flowing down his chin.

“Craniofacial operation”, she says breathless. He keeps his state while she takes hers elsewhere.

“Crouzon treatment”, she tried to enlighten him. Still he’s clueless.

“You know those people with abnormal features like biiiig eyes; uneven facial surface and rigid teeth caused by genetic mutation”

Scelo yawns and sits back down watching her push on her legging. He’s waiting for the perfect opportunity to ask her, or maybe he should wait till tonight after her surgery. But what if it doesn’t go well then she’ll be sour the entire week and probably won’t agree to going to Richmond for the week, in preparation of umemelo kaZimi of course.

“Hello I’m talking and you busy day dreaming. Am I also to expect a sister wife soon cause I’ll

chop off your balls and wear them as earrings if you ever try”, Bruna eyes him.

“I'd never do that to you my queen. You rule in this heart and I want the world to know you mine. From the street kids to the wealthy across borders ... and my long distance relatives”, he waits for the whole thing to simmer in her noble. She'll flip he knows but he hopes putting his hands on her waist and blowing hot air on her neck shall help.

“What are you requesting from me, Selo?”, the corner of her eye twists to his direction. Scelo looks the other way and whispers.

“For you to come with me home for Zimi's ceremony”, he keeps his eyes shut.

“Okay, when is it?”, she asks. Clearing the pillows she was using, off the floor before the helper arrives. They share great amount of

respect for each other, some times they cook together too.

“It’s this Friday... But we have to be there before that, meaning we have to be there latest tomorrow afternoon”, he will forever hate Mzi for putting him to this. Bruna is dead fragile unlike the others, she is easy to break and very difficult to mend. Once her mind has been set on a certain feeling it remains there till further notice. Scelo knows his family they’ll butcher before she even opens her mouth.

Bruna stop picking up and the pillows and looks at Scelo dead in the eye. “I have work I cannot take unnecessary leave unless there is an emergency”.

“This is an emergency. Bruna babe, the whole family will be there. You have to be there as well ... as a new member of the family”, Scelo.

“I get that well, Selo. However I’m not just a housewife, I’m doctor ... NEUROLOGIST for clearance. My work demands me more than cooking pap on a three legged big black pot!”

Scelo rolls his eyes and puffs. There goes that ‘I didn’t study for 8 years just to be a sit-around-nun’ talk. Scelo loves her independence it’s what drove him over heels for in the first place. Bruna though has a tendency of using her job as a scapegoat for tons of things.

“My job is also demanding, Bruna. But don’t I put it all on hold for you? Even a mere flu, I rather lose a deal than miss nursing you to health. Can’t you do this one thing, this one single thing Bruna!”, Scelo rasps. Bruna gasps in shock, guess she’s never seen him scold anyone ... especially her, like this.

“That is not fair, Ngopo. I told you before we set foot here in South Africa that I want to

achieve my goals first and then we can speak about marriage and all that stuff later. I'm too young to lock myself in a submissive marriage!", Bruna yells her packed lungs out.

"Submissive marriage?", Scelo dips his eye lids and crosses his arms.

"I know all about it. Soon you'll want me draped in blankets all day; cooking on the fire; with a big belly carrying 10 children. I'm willing to make that sacrifice but not so early in my career!", she yells again.

"Your problem is you assume a ton of shit, Bruna. Who mentioned anything about a submissive marriage? You think educated and well groomed as I am, would want to marry a woman with an empty brain? A powerless female whose motion relies on me? A woman who doesn't challenge my intellect? Give me some thing more than just beauty and babies. A

person who'll have no interest in what lies beyond the eye because of their ignorance? C'mon Bruna I thought you more intelligent than that”, Scelo does that low ‘nc nc nc’ while walking away with his shaking head.

Bruna picks up a pillow and throws it towards the short passage leading to the lounge from the main door. She doesn't realize what it hit but she sees it fling onto the couch she threw herself on. Slowly her eyes lift off the palms of her hands and look up wondrously. TF!

She shoots up the couch in a matter of seconds and bounces her eyes all over the place in search of Scelo. The gentleman who got the bitter end of her frustration relaxes his tensed face. Not that it makes him look any less scary but she'll take it.

“Uhm... I was ... it was a mistake... I – I’m sorry. Can I get you a plaster ... I mean did I hurt you or ...”, Bruna mumbles.

“Relax he’s ducked bullets; hand grenades; C-4 explosives; knives and shit. A pillow is nothing. You can throw that vase too so you can see what I mean, he’s indestructible”, another one pops up. Bruna just remains on that standstill wondering what is happening.

“Do you have juice?... oh nevermind”, Nhlanzeko grabs a shiny bottle from a mini round table next to the couch.

“He doesn’t appreciate people touching his alcohol, that one in your hand to be precise.”, Bruna says.

“He’s under age, he should be playing touch with other kids on the grounds. Where is he anyway? Playing with his building blocks?”, Nhlanzeko looks around. Bruna laughs then

quickly cuts it off remembering the cement face still standing in front of her directly staring at her.

A heavy presence sweeps her off her feet from behide. He kisses the curve of her neck and the top of her head follows.

“Who is a child you moron?”, Scelokuhle scolds Nhlanzeko.

“Hey watch your tongue or else you’ll get a whip on your ass boy”, Nhlanzeko warns him.

“Mxm, bloody sgebengu”, Scelo laughs. Their English teacher use to call him that. ‘Sgebengu’ because he use to steal pens and calculators.

“Whatever... Bob The Builder”, Nhlanzeko.

“Fuck off, Nhlanzeko”, Scelo.

“I’m older than you. Watch your tone son”

“Older by a minute?”

“Yes bottom line. I exited the vagina first”

Bruna stands back and enjoys the show. It's lovely seeing her man happy with his family, though she is still furious.

"I'm glad you back", they share a long meaningful hug. That speaks levels already. They both are where they belong. Together as a family.

"Are you ready?", Mzayfani finally speaks. Scelo nods fast and starts wondering his eyes all over the show. The question following this one irritates him entirely.

"We leaving now so you can load whatever it is you need packed into the car, here are the keys. She is coming right?", Mzi points to Bruna while staring at his brother.

"Yes, she's coming... you coming right baby?", Scelo and being a fucken monster!

Bruna frowns and thins her eye. she wants to scream and strangle him with the rope in his

hands, smash his big fat head on his stupid building blocks and drape his dead body in toilet paper then flush him down the flippin river. How could he sell her out like that? After she explained properly as to why she cannot make it. And yet he said she won't have to turn into some village wife, what's this now.

“Great, I’ll take that as a yes. Can you prepare food for us, I’m starving”, Mzi makes himself comfortable on the couch. Putting his arm on the arm rest and taking the remote into his hand. Nhlanzeko joins him. They squabble over which team is about to score, they are both rugby fanatics. Soccer is more of Scelokuhle’s thing.

In the kitchen she marched. Huffing and puffing like a wolf ready to blow over the straw houses.

Scelo slowly places his hands on her woken haired-arms. “Leave me!”, she signals with her hands. A soft scold from Bruna is worse than a lady breathing fire. He has a heck of a lot of work to do in order to improve this current situation.

“Baby, look at me”, Scelo pleads.

“I’ll snap your neck if I do”, she says through her gritted teeth. She’ll warm the risotto she prepared last night, whether they hate soggy rice or not is none of her business. She adds a piece of chicken each. Through Scelo’s eating habits she learnt the necessity of meat on a man’s plate.

“Bruna Adams”

She ignores it.

“My love”

She ignores that one too.

“Mama”

Her chest sinks down to the ground. She puts the wooden spoon down and looks at him. There's something about being called that that makes her melt and surrender immediately. Maybe because he barely uses it.

“I'm sorry I did that, but you have to understand where I'm coming from. I know it's being selfish but I need you Bruna, I need you just this once. Please”, he continues begging.

“Fine, I'll wear your clothes though cause I don't have time to pack. And I must call the office and let them know I won't be able to save a little girl's life today because I have wife duties at my boyfriend's family home where nobody likes or welcome me.”, she rolls her eyes and throws the plates of food on a tray.

“Take the cloth as well, baby”, he gives her the wet cloth.

“Sure... anything else I should do maybe? Kiss their feet and kneel?”, her nostrils flare.

“I’ll make it up to ...”

“Whatever, Bob The Builder”

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MILANI ZWANE

My body pains from head to toe thanks to the lazybodies I clean after at work!

Today I had enough of their B.S and called them to order one by one, I'm not aunty mavis or Sis'Gloria. I'm Milani Zwane, I dust off nothingness and mop invisible dirt prints off the shiny floors not the stuff some of those brats make me do. This other girl had the nerve to ask me for coffee, boss told me not listen to those bratty interns and walk away whenever I feel like I'm being slaved for nothing. And then come to my journey from work to this Spar. Did I not suffer the unsufferable?

Throughout the ride I was squashed between a child stinking like intestines gone bad and one of the guys I work with, well we share the same boss. To say I fainted would be an understatement. In actual fact I died thrice and rose in the end. It's high time we took to the streets a petition or else a storm of a strike will erupt. Construction worker's kit should be accompanied by showering lotions and deodorant, maybe a set of fresh clothes for after work. I think if enough of us gather the courage and fight for our nostrils the world would be a better place. Viva to hygiene for our men VIVA!

What a refreshing evolution it would be. To bad this is South Africa, a place filled with growling tummies and silent cries that sound the loudest when given the chance to hear out. Yet still, they turn blind eyes to them. Shame!

What a waste of our grandmothers and grandfathers strength to fight for liberation. There's no major change honestly, except the big culprits are sitting at the back enjoying their luxury while fuelling wild fires this side. We've turned our backs on each other so much so that we fear our neighbours black cat over the giant corporates power. It's true what that thug once said, "Give black people guns and watch them destroy each other".

SMH!

Oh well the world has never been kind to us. What do we know about resolving matters civically, with no threats attached and no war waiting. We've been fighting our entire lives for the mere sip of freedom and look at us now thousand and thousands of years later and we still haven't gotten that privilege to sit on a table and taste the sweet nectar of life. The

taste dissolves before we have even savoured it properly. We one resilient nation.

Soka isn't his best, that is what ma told me last night. She says she found a packet of weed inside his school backpack and his brothers claim his attitude has dropped down to zero lately. He has thinned out and now has a pair of red eyes not the brown ones I know. So now I must ask my boss for leave, at least two days for me to sort this mess out. I work too damn hard for them to serve me a plate of kak. I'm not going to be here for long, just pick up the few things Sma asked me to buy her here. Personally I would never shop at Parklane Spar, don't ask me why ... you have no idea what the price of a braai pack did to me here!

If I was one of those with medical aids, an ambulance would have fetched me on a stretcher.

“Can I help you?”, the devil is a liar!

He grabs the trolley steadily as I attempt to yank it off his grip. The eye he's giving me does not make my livers boil any less.

“Yes you can bring me back my trolley. My hands were on it first”, I say praying to God this man doesn't infuriate me. I'm fuming regarding that boy's new attitude already I do not need this one adding to me load.

“If it was in your hands first then it would be in mine now, would it?”, smart mouth I see.

“That does not matter, this trolley is mine!”

He laughs like a sick hyena. Throwing his huge head back. Small minds get amused by small things I guess.

"Show me the slightest glimpse of your name on this trolley and I shall let you have it", Jesus Christ the attitude You gave some of Your children is out of this world.

Our hands are still linked on the blerry trolley. Mine on top of his and I'm NOT letting go any time soon. Until he learns not to mess with women, I'll give him another heartbreak fast if he doesn't watch himself properly.

"I saw it first, that's why it's mine. You were going to take the basket, what flipped your mind then?", my free hand flies to my hip. I'm terribly short compared to him, so here I am on my tip-toes; eyes bulging out of their sockets, leaning on the damn trolley and breathing on his face. He stares down on my like shingam under an expensive shoe. He looks pretty confused and irritated to the max. Such a hot idiot. Especially with his lips hanging open like that, his teeth a fresh white. His breath on its

own hits like the Durban sea breeze. Me in those arms ... Oouu child help me breath please put me on life support, from the thermal polo neck he's wearing I see nigga fit. Wait, sies what am I doing, this fool out of everyone!

Wake up Milani and stop day dreaming nonsense!!

“I’m still by the trolley section. Some fat lady is blocking me over a trolley”, haaa I’m the fat lady?

....

“I know your mother just called me. Okay I’m on my way”, and he hangs up.

“I’m not ‘Fat lady’ I have a proper name sir!”, this monk and touching every button in my system.

“You look cute though, pumpkin”, he winks and smiles like the nimrod he is. Mxm.

“We've been waiting for you mate... am I disturbing?”, is she bleached? ... oh there are mlungu Khanyi Mbau's too?

She looks at us; he looks at me causing me to drop my eyes as well. Oh damn my hand. I remove it swiftly and start gulping dry spit over and over. This is still my trolley though. Nothing serious really I just love pushing the big trolley it makes me feel like those wealthy housewives shopping ingredients they won't even use.

“Yo buddy; let's go”, says the milked human alien.

“See you later, pumpkin”, he smiles. Wonder what evil plan he has behide that ugly smug on his face. And my name is not pumpkin it's MILANI!

This man's brain is slower than a fucken tortoise that's low on petrol. I must call Jeffe

after this, there is no way I'm taking taxis. I've seen enough areholes for the day.

He keeps blowing kisses to me as I push my trolley around. I'm trying by all means to avoid his face, even if I look like I had a toyless childhood by hiding behide shelves and all.

Finally; I'm done. The grocery isn't has much as I figured it will be. Now that I think of it, the trolley wasn't necessary honestly. A basket would have been fine.

“Mam, this is for you. Sent by that gentleman”, one of the cashiers I think, give me a slab of chocolate with a note underneath.

‘MAYBE THE SWEETNESS OF CHOCOLATE WILL DISSOLVE YOUR SOURNESS’

I'm NOT sour he just annoys me.

“Keep it!”, I shove it on her chest.

“Mam please take it, I need this R4k he promised me”, she begs.

“Ever seen Pablo begging El Derado to take the drugs Pablo was given by El Chapo? I don’t think so”, I watch t.v I know stuff.

“Please mam”, she pleads. I’m craving it anyway. I’ll call me to pray for it before I eat it. So much drama involving one human being.

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☆NGCOBO HOMESTEAD☆

The main reason they were brought here was their father. Apparently he has some thing to

say, not guaranteeing its appropriateness, the man has a tongue of a beer brewing wife!

Over the phone he sounded desperate for a chance. Change of heart maybe?

Nhlanzeko hasn't stepped anywhere near the houses. He's leaning against the bonnet, staring at the childhood he tried so hard to bury. In fact he was convinced it was deep inside a hole he would never dig, funny how it didn't take more than a day for Mzayfani to convince him otherwise.

Nonhlanhla appears walking with her brat in her arms. She looks beautiful, she always has.

“Bhuti omdala”, to avoid calling her sbari she calls him that. Nhlanzeko laughs.

“Koti”, they share a long hug. They've always has that bond, that connection. The vibe and the mood.

“She's fast asleep now yet she was screaming to see you”, Nonhlanhla laughs.

“Aah bring my baby here, this one doesn't grow now does She?”

“Never”

Silence stumbles upon their presence. He knows what to ask but wants her to empty her chest out first.

“Your brothers seem happy you back. Even the mad MaShelembe”, Nonhlanhla says.

Nhlanzeko chuckles, “MaShelembe has never liked me. Maybe she feel guilty but TLC? Nah”, he shakes his head. 100% sure there's no such.

“I'm glad you came back... now we need you back home. Inside these walls and in that alter. We need you back, maybe this dark cloud in this family will end”, she speaks sense generally Nonhlanhla always speaks sense in every thing she says. However some of the major factors

concerning what she's saying are not mentioned or took into consideration.

"I'm not fit enough to do that, right now", Nhlanzeko says.

"you'll heal once you have given yourself the opportunity to heal. Just give yourself time to"

"How's your marriage?", this is none of his business technically speaking. But since they share everything...

"I don't know, it's just floating about. I'm getting tired of this housewife ritual though, I want to make my own money in my own ways you know. Feed and afford myself without any help from a man or anyone else", she blinks twice and sees the entire plan unfold before her eyes. It seems like a far-fetched dream that she can see but cannot touch. Smell but cannot taste.

“What is stopping you? You have your CA degree right?”, she nods.

“So then what is in your way?”, Nhlanzuko asks.

“... I’m married, I have kids there is a lot really”

“I know for a fact my brother doesn’t mind you working, the kids can stay with MaMthalane, or get them a nanny. So what is really stopping you?”

Nonhlanhla keeps quiet.

“You... you are stopping yourself. Take that degree and go to a bank, they’ll hire you quick”

She remains silent for a few minutes and then smiles like millions have fallen upon her.

“You are such a genius”, she beams.

“Yeah I know. Let’s go inside and hear what that old man has to say”, Nhlanzuko holds her hand and they make their way inside.

All eyes stick on them, him to be precise. They never thought they'd see the day this boy has grown a full beard; full dick and not chained in shackles or dressed in an orange uniform. His father firstly, is beyond shocked to see how well his son has prospered without him in his life. It scares him too. Will he get the forgiveness he's looking for?

“Aw ndodana”, MaShelembe stands up and claps her hands like a madman. Her cheers enlighten the heavy aura in the room. Nhlanzeko sits down in a corner, and folds his arms across his puffy chest. He's not interested in anything. Especially that woman speaking him to right now. He looks at her like she's some virus that spreads germs all over.

“My wife is greeting you”, Ngcobo scolds him.
“Mh”, Nhlanzeko.

“Let’s just get this over with; baba and start the preparations”, Mzayfani does what he’s known for in the family. Mediate.

Madoda sighs and takes his seat on the main chair and dribbles his eyes over his family. The wives; the daughter in-laws; the sons; the daughter and the grandchildren are outside playing ama-tin with other kids. They are rich kids that side in Howick and all, here they are normal kids that play in the mad ... well except for the boys. They are probably somewhere by the river asking telling girls lies for a silly kiss.

“The ceremony was suppose to be on Friday which is two days from now I know. However my brother and I decided to make it tomorrow afternoon.”, he says.

“Mameshana!”, MaShelembe claps once and places her hands above her hips.

“Bavimbile! Bavimbile!”, Madoda warns MaShelembe repeatdly.

“Mxm”, she snaps her tongue.

“Our decision is final. Umemelo will be tomorrow, anyone with a problem deal with it.”, Madoda announces.

“When will we brew the alcohol, baba? And the food... grocery as well? Zimi asked for decorations too, isn’t it too much of a short notice?”, Nonhlanhla says. Her voice sounds like a baby's voice. She's the senior wife all the duties fall under her, plus there is a new wife loading that she has to mentor. Talking about Bruna, she didn't receive the warmest welcome from the father but at least she got a hi. Madoda always knew something was wrong with his son, Scelo – that's his ‘logical approach to everything concerning him’

“Makoti, make a plan... all three of you”

“Us?”, Bruna bursts out by mistake. Scelo grabs her thigh and squeezes it. It’s a silent SHUT UP and APOLOGIZE.

“What, I’m just asking”, she whispers back to him.

“Apologize babe”

Bruna drops her eye on him and thins it out as if she’s sending a warning. The Second she turns all eyes are on her.

“Uhm... sorry sir ... I mean father”, she does a dramatic bow. She looks at Scelo and whispers again, “Anything else to do to His Majesty?”

“I love you too”, he smiles and kisses her cheek as a cover up.

“We can get back to the preparations”, Madoda signals Nhlanzeko to follow him out.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

☆BRUNA ADAMS☆

“How did the surgery go? Any nerves touched, I know how sensitive her body is. You didn’t overdose her with medication right, it’s not good for her at the moment. Did you ensure there were no germs in the theatre, you know some interns don’t care about cleaning the tools”, stress is riling up in me. It’s the fact that we have to make a plan on how to organize a function as big as this one in a space of 24hours. Less actually, which I find fairly dumb. What marijuana does that man smoke?

“The surgery went well. Cassie will be fine, obviously more check ups need to be performed because we faced tricky obstacles here and there but we did our best, Doc.

Although it was hard without you there”, I know my team they crack under pressure unless I’m there to squall at them.

“Well done guys, I’m truly proud of each and every one of you guys and when I’m back dinner on me”, that’s if Scelo grants me permission. Did I mention how I’ve become a walking chained dog? Well yes I have but it’s all in the name of love isn’t?

“The credit cannot all go to us. If it wasn’t for Dr Kunene we would have lost all screws”, oh that man. I heard a lot about him ... if I'm being honest I never listen when people gossip about other doctors cause majority of the time they are blabbering about their looks, money and status. All I do is a mini background check enough to hold a conversation as long as our lunch breaks but other than that. No thanks.

“Well, thank him for me...”

“Actually he’s right here. Dr Kunene, Dr Adams would like to speak to you”, Mpilo!!

Eish, Scelo is most definitely outside though so a few minutes won’t get me kill. I hope.

“Gorgeous lady”, whooossaaa.

“Hi Dr K, my most sincerest apologies for not being able to make it. I had a minor issue to fix”, I hate it when men giggle as if what we saying is funny. There was no joke there.

“No problem, Bruna anything for you “, he loves using this line. I can’t count the number of times I warned him about this charmer boy ways, Scelo is a crazy lover with two very insane dangerous brothers. At the gas station they almost choked a man to death for making sleazy comments about my bums.

“Okay chow”

Gosh. Okay what was I doing? ...

Right the chopping of onions. The junior wife left with one of the aunts, to do last minute grocery shopping. The senior wife is the one running around headless calling all shots and sweating up a storm in the kitchen, couldn't have been me. Zimi left this noon with an unknown gentleman however I think I'm the only who spotted them so I'll keep this to myself in case she wants nobody knowing about her business, just as long as she's safe.

Scelo's shorts are so flippin huge, weird, my nigga is size 28 so I don't get this. Anyway I throw in his Nike slides, Nike drawstring shorts and his oversized NASA Tee. I'll keep my sneakers on for the time being.

My hair gets irritated easily, I might skip the doek part. Now where the hell is the kitchen?

“Yeyi, where are you off to, other men are sitting under the tree... HAWU”, why is she so shocked?

Oh she thought I was – LOL.

“Hii”, why am I waving again?

The woman waves back, her mouth hasn't closed and her eyes scream 'WTF' if I'm not being deceived.

“I've never seen you before, who are you?”, her senses climb back inside her brains. I don't know her too.

“My name is Bruna Adams, Selo's girlfriend”, I should have been warned I'm here for meets and greets more than being of any help.

“Selo? ... udukile sisi?”, she rubs my arm with concern overpowering her eyes. Aww is she welcoming me?

“Aunt’Phindile, the pots are outside not in here”, that must be my mother in-law.

Phewww don’t I want to spring out of here right this minute!

“MaSbisi ntombi, how do you allow such things to happen in your house? On your daughter’s big day? Haibo MaSbisi”, the aunt says.

“We-Phindile, my house problems are for me and my family to sort out not for you to spread out. What my daughter in-law does shouldn’t itch your hole”

They are speaking deep vernacular, I can’t catch a word. All I here are their furious tones and shaky breathes. Ma looks ready to kill.

“A white lady? Hhe, wahleka ntombi kaDlomo! Does the rest of the family know about this?”, the aunt.

“No, it’s none of your business. All of you, my son loves her so will I. Kanti-ke I do not recall

sticking nose in your son's business after his fiancé left him on the alter like a cold chicken. So help me Phindile and VANISH, don't dare embarrass my daughter in-law or you'll have me to deal with”, jeez what are they at it about now? I've never seen mother in-law this angry. Is it me again and the fact that I'm not the perfect daughter in-law she wanted?

“Mxm klibi klobo, Nonhlanhla awuze ngapha sisi”, and just like that I'm left alone with hell to face. Whooosa.

“I was about to make tea for Selo, he loves it. Can I make you one as well?”, old people love tea.

“What are you wearing, is that why you here. To embarrass me and tarnish my son's name?”, uuhh excuse me.

“What wrong have I...”

“Ngisakhulumu ungalinge ungingene emlomeni. Listen here girly, there is no space for you here I don’t know what tune I have to use in order for you to get that. You will not marry my son”, she rasps at me, snapping her eyebrows and all. I’m stunned on mute. My hands even clasped over my mouth and chest. Trust a rock rather than trusting a person, she is living proof!

“Your son loves me, he’s happy with me. You can’t just break us up like that ma”, as if she’ll hear my cry. This woman is beyond heartless.

“Watch me little girl. Do you think I will sit back and watch you turn my son and I against Madoda, never!”, ... what is she on about? What business do I share with that old greedy man?

“But...”, she raises her hand to shut me up.

Her elbow nudges me out the way aggressively I almost hit the wall. “Ungifakela ukushisa nx”.

“Whooosssaaa, Miss Adams, no tears please not today at least”, screw it I’ll lock myself in the room for a while until I’ve calmed down. Since when do I allow words to cut me this deeply.

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>>>THE NEXT DAY>>>

The yard is buzzing more than expected. The call was last minute, but in these areas support comes in large numbers in a short period of time. Other neighbours go as far as leaving their pots boiling just to assist in chopping onions here. It’s custom to hold the hand of those surrounding you because you too might need theirs someday. That’s guaranteed.

Nonhlanhla is in the alter hut, placing the last of the beer for the elders. Technically one of the senior wives should be doing this, this is their child's ceremony but one is nowhere to be found and the other is somewhere around ... getting drunk and bashing her husband.

As she steps closer to the alter, a very quivery breeze grazes her skin. The door is closed for privacy purposes, there are no windows here, and the weather isn't that chilly. Nonhlanhla shrugs and kneels on the mat and places the clay pot on the ground, but before it touched the cemented floors the clay pot shatters unexpectedly and the beer spills everywhere. Out of fright Nonhlanhla screams.

In no time the door flings open, he's been searching for her anyway.

“Sthandwa Sami, yini?”, he lifts her from the floor and engulfs her in a hug.

“The... I swear I didn’t break it. It broke on its own as I was putting it down, Ngcobo someone is here. In our presence”, she keeps tapping him on his chest and turning her back to see what she saw with her mind.

“There's nobody in here, baby”, Nonhlanhla is so puzzled she doesn't catch the change in his he calls her. Baby? Sthandwa sami? ...mmm.

“I felt a cold breeze when I walked in, Pholoba I swear I’m not crazy”, she shivers.

“Let me go, Bruna is alone in the kitchen and I do not trust those women in there. I’ll be fine, thanks”, the rush is over and the adrenaline has dropped down. She peeps over his shoulder and the room is surrounded by the entire community.

Sigh, here it goes.

“Sisi, are you okay?”

"Yes ma I'm okay thank you", she smiles reassuringly. The old woman nods and disappears again. She's still shocked and puzzled, what she felt was real that they cannot deny her but where does all this derive from?

Hands land on her shoulders causing her to fringe, bringing the crowd to their other direction.

"Sorry, I'm going to town with Nhlanzeko not sure if lover boy will tag along. But do you want me to bring you something?", Mzayfani asks.

"... No I'm good. Actually I'll take a Play, two please"

Mzayfani raises his eyebrow. Oh shucks, he doesn't believe in energy drinks cause they weren't good for you. And he says he's too young to lose a wife over a flavoured chemical.

"Pizza is okay, I'm hungry make that three for the kids and Bruna. I'm sure she's hungry as

well”, she's back to normal and over the little episode she had earlier on. Mzayfani stops her halfway, and just day dreams on her face. His cheeks grow into a wide smile.

“What?”, Nonhlanhla whispers.

“I don't think I've ever recognized your beauty like this. You light a dozen sparks inside of me, MaGumbi”

Nonhlanhla blushes and looks the other way. It's not everyday you get a compliment from Mzi. No matter how much powder and paint you put on your face, you'll never get one unless your beauty truly touched his heart.

“Thank you”, she smiles.

“No thank you. You know I love you right?”, not this ...

“Hm, Bruna. I must go check on her”, she tries to flea but gets nowhere. He pulls her back by the waist and smooches her lights out.

“WE-MZAYFANI WENA, WHAT IS A ROOM FOR?”, his mother yells across the yard. She's sitting under the tree with her friends. Drinking and sniffing snuff.

“Yobe MkaPholoba”, Mzi raises his hands up in surrender.

“Nxayi suka”, his mother waves him off. Nonhlanhla and Mzi share the laughter until they see it fit to part ways. Butterflies swing on chandeliers inside her heart.

He shows more affection towards her these days, he expresses his love in depths. Although, she is not giving herself up fully as yet but at the rate Mzi is going, she'll open her heart wider than she opened her legs during birth.

“Hey girl”, they call each other by that.

MaMthalane introduced it to them and they just went with the flow from there. Talking

about that lazy body, Nonhlanhla wonders where she went cause from morning she hasn't seen her but ignored it thinking she slept in Mzayfani's room.

"Have you seen Nombuso so far?", she asks Bruna. Whose chopping onions skill need immediate attention.

"I saw her getting in the car with the national husband", she laughs and cuts it fast when Nonhlanhla doesn't join. Eish.

"Ow I'm sorry about what I said if it hurt you", Bruna apologizes feeling so bad. Nonhlanhla giggles.

"Stop being dramatic, maybe she wants food so he's getting her food", Nonhlanhla.

"Is she pregnant or I'm seeing shitty things?", Bruna and gossip, she's forgotten about the cooking, her mouth is occupied by that carrot.

"Yes she is", Nonhlanhla smiles.

Beside them being sister wives, those two genuinely care about one another. That's how polygamy lasts, bonds and respect are crucial.

"Oh my gosh I knew it. Yho this is the fifth child of Mzi's. Guess he doesn't shoot blanks", they both laugh scoring ugly looks from the old ladies stirring creamy samp and curry.

"Who doesn't shoot blanks?", Scelo enters the kitchen and slips his phone inside his trouser pocket. Bruna looks down on her onion. She's still giving him the cold shoulder.

"Mh baby", he stands behind her and wraps his arms around her waist. Dragging his tongue on her neck undercover.

"Stop it, Scelo. Why are you here anyway, I'm busy aren't I?", Bruna.

"I miss you, we miss you", Scelo whines.

"We?"

“Yes we...”, he grazes her bums on his erected buddy. Bruna gasps.

“Selo we are in front of people here”, she whispers.

“Let’s go then”, he whispers back.

Nonhlanhla laughs at them and leaves them there to find their way out of that room without being tossed with questions after questions.

The décor is coming together just right. She wanted a heavenly theme. Pure white all throughout. Touches of black here and there to add some powerful color.

“That frame can it be shifted to the left abit, it must be straight”, MaSbisi orders the decorators. They sigh and shift the frame for the 20th time. “No, it’s not straight. Wena that table must be wiped first. Haibo, the cake will fall you fool put it properly”, she rants again.

Nonhlanhla shakes her head and makes a small note in the head to pay them an extra 10k for this last minute call and the nonsense MaSbisi is putting them through.

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The girls are back from the river, she can hear them singing. Her father welcomes her inside the yard, feeling proud to see his girl is still sealed after all these years not in front of his eyes. A pint of fear shadows his heart when he thinks soon men are going to have her and ain't a thing he can do about it.

“Take good care of yourself ntombi yami. I’m proud to call myself your father for you took the values and morals taught by your mother, seriously. It must not end here, continue the

good work and make us even more prideful”, he kisses her forehead and steps aside allowing her to get in.

“Pholoba”, she thanks her father.

The woman jump around cheering to the top of their lungs. Some hoping on one foot while ululating aloud. It’s a joyous moment, Mzayfani even did a little zulu dance. He’s proud of his baby sister so much.

Nhlanzeko joined him too. The whole mood has switched thanks to Zimi keeping her virginity till now.

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Her umbrella is filled with blue and red paper notes, her relatives have showered her in more

than 100k already. Nhlanzeko steps forward and leaves a card on her hand, Zimi picks it up and checks it.

“Aahhh bhuti, a black card?”, Zimi screams.

“You did well dade, you deserve it”, he hugs her tightly and plants an adorable kiss on her cheek.

“Thank you, thank you so much”

Now it's her hubby's turn to put some money on his girl. Zimi prays he doesn't go all Nigerian on her and throw his money all over her. But is this not Emmanuel? He does it anyway. She's not sure if he's happy to get pussy or he's proud of his woman.

“Don't kiss me, my brothers are around and my father too” , Zimi stops him from leaning more forward.

“A huru m gi a'nyana”, he whispers in her ear and goes back to throwing money on her. His

brothers are getting suspicious, she can see that so she decides to just cause commotion and dance.

“Lililili”, everyone ululates.

After a few minutes Zimi stops and puts her hand on her chest, she says she needs water cause she can barely breath.

“Bring her water!!”

Someone shouts. In no time Zimi drops to the ground, not moving at all.

“Umtanam!”

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

SPONSORED BY LELETHU

Terrible headache out of nowhere itch my skin!

Since this morning I've been suffering from excruciating unexplainable headaches; drowsy eyes and horrible nightmares. I've resulted to following MaZikode's dramatic advice – burning izinyamazana. It didn't help much, I still felt someone watching me. I woke up again and prayed normally it tones down the nightmares but this time it never worked. 3:46 am and I was losing my mind thinking whose evil lurking spirit did I attract?

Me out of every one? I can't even rely a message to my mother how will I send one to a complete stranger, with what time and money?

I ended sitting awake till late night, since burning incense didn't work as well. The match fused out before igniting the incense.

Here I am now catching z's on the stoop, gosh if we could sell our lives I would put mine on a R2 sale with a 50% discount I don't mind.

Jeffe enters the house with a few plastic bags in his hands. Talk about man of the house duties. He plops himself on the vacant spot next to me, opening his legs wide open and resting his elbow on my shoulder.

“Mama Emily how far?”, he greets funny. Today he sounds too serious, cold and angered by something.

“I’m fine just stressing about a few life mishaps. What’s up with you papa Emily?”

What can I say...

Jeffe and I have become very close buddies, we share with each other more than we've shared with anybody. There are times when we cry together, laugh together and act foolish without a care in the world. He's that one person I would put a good word for in heaven, as crooked as he is in reality.

“I’m screwed”, he sighs and brushes his face with his dry hands.

I look at him blankly, waiting for him to elaborate. Oh, wonder whose wife Smangele caught him in bed with. Jeffe is that guy, 40 years old and above type of guy. Smangele is just his stress dissolver.

“I double crossed someone I should have never tempted, he’s out of prison now and I’m sure he’ll come after me”, I hate it when people

speak in riddles, what's so hard in sharing your story from beginning to end?

You can't tell us to crack the egg in the pan without adding oil and heating it.

“Double crossed them how?”, I’m so interested I’ve forgotten all about my issues. Jeffe rolls up his sleeves before lighting up the cigar in his hand. A few puffs and he looks like a deadman walking and talking.

“Jeffe speak up phela. What is going on with you lately anyway. We rarely see you around and when you are around you distant, what causes that?”, I ask.

“Nah, forget about it”, he opens his can of beer and gobbles it up all at once then disposes it on my carpet. My carpet that I brought from the market with my bare hands, on discount of course there was no way I was going to buy a carpet with a tiny hole full price. I held a solid

strike, convincing them that that carpet of theirs probably have depreciated till R0 nx.

“I’d pick that up if I were you”

We can be emotional and cry all we want but I will allow him to turn this place to a dumpsite. It’s not his girlfriend's tikoloshe that cleans here, I do.

“Sorry mam”; mxm whatever.

“So, where is Smangele?”

His face changes. His eye maps out annoyance or is it anger? One of the two.

Wonder what nonsensical argument they had today? It’s always one of these three: Sma denies him sex or he denies her sex or other people in their circle disturbs their sexual activities. ALWAYS!

"I don't know", he says, narrowing his eyes and flaring his nostrils. He look like those baboons we learnt about in Geography.

"What do you mean, she left with you didn't she?", unless he found out about her other bidders I don't think he'd be this angry at her. It might not be love but he cares deeply for my friend. I see it and he told me that to.

"I left her at the mall with her friend", he puts emphasis on the word friend.

"So why are you so angry, it's just a friend isn't. I'm also your friend", duuh.

Men and having unmatched double standards all the freaken time and then point to us as devils.

"A friend with a fifty year old penis and a ring on the finger", ohhhhhhhh ... shame.

"I thought you said you don't mind her having you know just as long as she respects you about

it.”, and I sooo told him he'll regret making that statement. It hasn't been a week and he's swallowing his words?

SMH, tomfoolery at its best!

“I don't care about that anyway. I'm angry at the way she's going on, I pay for every thing plus give her sex allowance....”

This girl gets paid for opening her legs??

Talk about children with overtime working ancestors! Allowance ye-kukhu!? I must call Sizwe he owes me and KaMangethe some money.

“I do all those so that she doesn't go back to the life I dragged her out of. But I see all my efforts are not appreciated. Nx the fuck”, he kicks the table.

Oh no I appreciate the full chickens and nice snacks, he must not dare cut us off.

“I’m sure it’s deeper than just money. Maybe she needs rehab you never know”, I shrug.

“No Mili...”, he shakes his head, “ I gave her that option before and she refused it blatantly without giving me a chance to help her heal”.

“Do you think a prostitute would want therapy over money? Obviously her mental state wasn’t focused on healing, she thought money is all the money she needed since it’s the reason she ended up selling her body. But also Jeffe don’t you think you the reason she hasn’t moved on from that past?”, oops.

He dangles an evil eye at me.

“Think about it. You throw money all over her after every sexual encounter. You take her out to expensive restaurants before banging her, you buy her all these things that those dirty pipi-less jerks bought her. You always refresh

those memories, not intentionally but the damage still gets done.”

A shadow alerts my eyes to look up. Snap!

She couldn't have heard that, I'm about to be homeless oh gawd!

“Oh so this is what you left me for? To come here and gossip about me with your girlfriend, kahle kahle I'm the fool here”, she chuckles.

“It's not what you think Smangele, Jeffe and I were ...”

“Save it. Wena jeffe it's over I want you out my life and you better never set foot here again!”, Owkay we screaming now.

“Smangele, Milani and I were not gossiping about you. We both concerned”

“Concerned about what?”, she yells louder.

“Your sexual thirst, maybe you need therapy”

AWU JEFFE THE DOMKOP !!

You don't say things like to fuming women. You don't just never tell an angry woman the cold truth it makes things worse. Rather shut it and wait for her to calm down.

"Sma!", I'm out of breathing, air is not breathing in my lungs. I'm dried of oxygen!

Is she mad? Chineke clap once child of MaZikode. Did she just slap him twice?

"Get out, both of you!"

Jeffe lifts his hands up in surrender and walks out drained as hell. I better leave or else fires will ignite on my head. This girl is not wired properly, she's just like our power lines in Cato Ridge. Some wires are definitely missing.

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☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

They are all sitting outside the ancestor's rondavel, biting nails; popping knuckles and tapping feet. The incredible happened today. The fainting of their baby sister, the breaking of the clay pot containing the beer belonging to the elders and now their father is sick as a dog.

All this in one day!

The others are just puzzled, which is understandable. All this is confusing and questionable. For the fact that it happened in one day make a it suspicious, Mzayfani is mapping and crossing out names in his head of possible suspects. Be it because of witchcraft or enemies, and his father had loads of those, he'll find out and punish whoever needs to be punished.

Nhlanzuko is not puzzled cause he doesn't think too much into things. For some odd reason his soul is restless, something is off and he feels it in the freezing breeze inside his bones. It's not concerning Zimlindile and also not him. The chill is concerning his dad, some thing will happen.

“Sanibonani le grand?”

All six heads raise up to the greeter. It's the boyfriend. Greeting with a cap on and no blazer whatsoever, who let him anyway?

The two uncles stand up and leave feeling rather pissed. This family is packed with intelligent wealthy well-mannered men. Except the father of course. These uncles fit in that circle as well, the NGCOBO WOOLWORTHS OF MEN. You wouldn't guess their age is any thing above 40. Dress in fancy, custom made suits with shoes that outshine the sun of KZN.

“Are you lost, the gate is that way”, Scelokuhle being the only one with proper guest manners, speaks first.

“I would like to speak to Zimi”, Emmanuel stutters. He’s one of those huge scary guys with inked tigers on their chest, as to why he feels intimidated by Scelo...

“Why?”, Nhlanzeko asks him.

“I want to make sure she’s okay first before I leave”

Nhlanzeko stands on his feet and walks closer to Emmanuel. Sniffing him like how the jailbirds normally sniff new inmates.

“Ever had a dick up your ass?”, Nhlanzeko sounds serious, his brothers are laughing for no reason.

“No”

“Ever had one of those shits that refuse to exit your ass, no matter hard you try to squeeze it out they are like cement, it doesn’t move. And see once you manage to push it out, it leaves your ass hole on fire”

Emmanuel looks at this guy like WTF BRO!

But he nods anyway.

“That’s what you’ll feel if you ever break my sisters heart, you hear me. I see you already influencing her to do bad shit like sneak out at night. If ever she gets in trouble because of you, you’ll become the black Jesus and die for everyone’s sins. Understood?”, Nhlanzeko tugs his gun and sits back down.

“Oh, my girlfriend has a fetish for balls. Who knows maybe yours will be added to her jewellery collection”, Scelo says and his brothers Chuck down a laugh. Madness is their middle name, Emmanuel has understood that.

“R10k to enter the room”, Mzi says blocking his way inside. Emmanuel frowns.

“I have a card with me”, Emma states.

“No problem we can go to town and withdraw then come back and see our sister”, Nhlanzeko.

“But it’s late”, Emmanuel.

“Ei nathi asishayi”, the three say in unison and laugh louder again. This will be a loong ass day foe poor Emmanuel.

“Stop bullying the guy, you can go see her but be quick. Nhlanzeko your father is calling you. Mzi let’s go”

“Go where?”, he frowns. He’s still enjoying chilling with his brothers.

MaMthalane mimes, “GET UP!”

Yho, pregnant women. They leave together to do the hanky panky.

“You called for me”, He remains by the door, not whether or not he wants to see his ugly face. Madoda taps the empty space on his bed, looking dire as ever.

That situation shifts Nhlanzeko’s mood from reluctant to concerned. He stands near the bed with his arms crossed.

“Your mother loved you, my son. She loved every bit of you ever since you were a seed inside her stomach. *he cough twice*. Due to health related issues the doctor said there is a possibility one of you won't make it, she called me that very same day and told me if such happens I must not hesitate to choose you over her. She believed you were the new beginning we've always longed for, our breakthrough. That's why she named you Nhlanzeko *Born Again type of thang* “, madoda stops and

coughs again, into a tissue this time. Nhlanzeko notices the blood on it and freaks out.

“Baba, what’s going on, why are you bleeding? Must I call for ma? ...”, Nhlanzeko is stopped right before the door.

“Ah, that’s the little boy she raised. A boy that puts respect on his elder’s name”, madoda.

Nhlanzeko rolls his eyes, “I’m not a boy anymore I’m a grown ass man and I’ll behave how I wish to behave”.

“That’s okay, but just know that your mother always loved you... maybe my selfishness got in the way of her being with you but she loved you”

“Enough about my mother. Why would you change the dates? See what happened now”

“I don’t have *coughs again* much time, I really wanted to see my baby on her special day

cause I know I won't make it to her wedding. Apologize to her for me. I'll make it up to her someday. And another thing, son. Take this number, meet up with that man he has a lot of answers I cannot tell you", madoda slips a piece of paper in Nhlanzeko's hand.

"Go, now. Call my wives for me"

"Ew y'all do threesomes", Nhlanzeko rushes out the room before being eaten up by his father.

It's fucken hot and late, driving to Greytown is a drag but he does it anyway. Leaving his brothers behide. He wonders what answers Mesuli beholds. They talk every other day, why doesn't he tell him something.

The gate is opened by a dark beauty lady holding a glass of what looks like red wine. 7pm and someone is drinking?

“Can I help you?”, she asks leaning over the car door. Looking rather displeased.

“I’m looking for Mesuli, Mesuli Mbutho”

The woman rolls her eyes and signals him to follow her. Along the way she keeps ranting about her problems.

“I haven’t had sex in three weeks imagine. I’m as dry as the Saharan and I’m pregnant for the third time, can you believe that?

Last night I was about to get some but then his visions popped up and disturbed our moment. Wasn’t I fuming?”, Bayede goes on and takes a long sip.

“Didn’t you say you pregnant?”, Nhlanzeko stares at the glass in her hand.

“Oh darling I wish this was alcohol. It’s just cranberry juice, it has wine affect so I’m trying to manipulate my thirst. Babyyyy, someone wants to see you, I’m going to Siphokazi’s

house see you later”, she smooches him until Nhlanzeko clears his throat.

“Don’t miss me too much”, she winks and leaves. He doesn’t mind her going to Siphokazi’s house cause it’s close by. Beside his brother is there to look after her.

“Excuse her, I know she probably went on about being not getting sex forever and her being tired and how hard pregnancy is.”, Mesuli invites Nhlanzeko to share a seat with him.

“You did say she’s a character”

They both share a laugh.

“He finally got through to you, too late but late is better than never”, Mesuli drinks his water and sits quietly for a second.

“I hate how you don’t listen to me sometimes, Pholoba. I’ve been warning you since the

beginning of time, can't you listen for once and adhere to my instructions. I'm not a crazy guy that knows people's business for nothing, when I relay a message to you, you adhere to it! Cause at the end of the day not only are you getting affected but me as well", Mesuli has gotten the anger off his chest, now he can be cordial.

"My father sent me here, he said I must..."

"Exactly what I've been telling you. Your great grandfather is not happy and won't be until he get what he wants. This won't just affect you and the girl, it will affect every married woman in that family.", Mesuli says.

Nhlanzeko feels the heat. This is deeper than he had anticipated. The wives are innocent, they have no faults, he'd hate for any of them to suffer for sins that don't belong to them.

Nhlanzeko covers his face, drawing in a long breath. “So, what do I have to do?”.

“Simple, bring her home. She is not your wife, you not obligated to remaining with her after she’s brought home and necessary things are done. Both of you can separate thereafter”, Mesuli.

“Okahle, kanti yini le ngaka ngalo sisi?”, Nhlanzeko asks.

“You’ll know once you find her”, Mesuli.

“And how do I find her?”, he’s so over this crap!!

“I was given initials, I don’t know her either.
M.Z, that’s all I know”

Nhlanzeko sighs deeply and drinks the whiskey placed on the table in front of him. He’s beyond ANNOYED ASF! Where will he find a M.Z woman?

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

☆THE NGCOBO'S☆

SPONSORED BY NELI SHANGE

“Here have something to eat, I prepared it with my soul all over the pots”, She laughs handing him the plate and then sits on the grass with his hand on her thigh. Scelo chuckles and takes in a full spoon.

“And? I’m not familiar with cabbage but I tried my best, Nono helped me here and there”, that’s Nonhlanhla, she prefers calling her Nono because it’s easier to pronounce. Scelo coughs, choking already?

“Ah Selo I tried my best. It can’t be that bad”, she takes a spoon for herself, “See I’m fine”.

Scelo laughs and puts the plate of burnt cabbage aside. Maybe he should have ate dumplings and tripe like everybody else, instead of acting like a Sandston spoilt brat. His mother is surely joicing around wherever she is. Her point has been proven, Bruna cannot boil to save her life!!

“It's nice, my love”, he lies obviously to avoid getting on her wrong side more than he already has.

“It doesn't look like it's nice”, she pouts her pinkish lips together, tucking her hands under her armpits. Cutest attitude ever.

“Imnandi, perhaps abit burnt but I like chewy things”, he says.

“It is bad right? Ugh can't I get anything right, I've been proving your mother right this whole time. I'm worth one cow huh?”, Bruna exhaust next to him.

“Let’s blame the soul, you put too much soul in it.”, they laugh. And become silent again.

“I’m sorry about it by the way, it must be hard for all of you to digest it especially at a time that was suppose to uplift you all and unite the family together”, Bruna brushes his kneecap slowly. So much bad luck in one day, she cannot begin to fathom the clashes of emotions going on inside these people’s hearts. Is this what she truly wants for herself?

A life as sticky as this?

The hatred from wife to children; the distance between the family members; the deadly eyes from grandma’s she knows nothing about.

Phewww, love neh.

“Nah, you do not have to apologize about it. It’s fine, water under the bridge”, Scelo gazes at the stars above. He smiles.

“It’s okay to cry baby. I’ll never judge you and I will never let others judge you, losing anybody you love is difficult to overcome without sharing the pain”, she kisses his shoulder.

“We lost that man while he was alive. I don’t think any of us care much about his passing, except Zimi. More than anything I’m glad he’s gone cause now our family has the chance to start on a new beginning. A clean slate for everyone. We need a new beginning my love you do not understand”, now he’s emotional.

Bruna rubs his back gently and tenderly whispers in his ear, “Everything will work itself out, trust me sandwa sami”

Scelo stops breathing and drops his eyes at her, there’s a frown-smile growing on his face And Bruna is patting her back already. He’s blushing which means she did good, okay good is an exaggeration but she did well.

“Say THA”, oh goodness Bruna!

“Tha...”

“Stha-ndwa sami, tha do not forget that part”

“Whatever bro, let’s go inside it’s chilly and your mother probably needs you... is that ma?”, Bruna points at the gate.

“It is her but what is she doing outside this late? Shouldn’t she be sitting on the mattress and mourning”, Scelo stands up and walks towards the gate, Bruna is clenching his shirt from behide. She still doesn’t trust the rural, in her head it still rings that perhaps an army of monkeys carrying banana peels will jump off the bushes and attack her.

“Ngiyabonga mfana wami, I was dying of thirst”, MaShelembe snuggles somewhat bottle inside her pinafore pocket.

“Payment?”, the little boy opens his hand to her.

“See behide that hut there is a coup, take one chicken and run”, MaShelembe hurries the kid. That’s a meal for a week obviously he won’t leave it although money would have been better. His grandmother will assume he stole this chicken from one of her neighbours, he has done it before.

“Ma, aren’t you suppose to be inside the house?”, creeps on her.

“Yey wena! You will land me in hospital, what you want me to meet your father already nx”, she opens her 1818 and takes mini sips.

“Why are you outside to begin with?”, nobody gets this lady like Scelo. They are very close, while his mother was busy competing with every whore his father bought home.

MaShelembe mothered both Zimi and Scelokuhle.

“I had to quench my thirst or else I would have died. Besides your mother is annoying with that crying performance”, she flicks her hand.

MaSbisi and herself are not enemies true but they aren’t friendly either. Some are holding grudges from 10 years ago.

“She loved him didn’t she, even more than me”, Scelo.

“Rubbish, your mother loves penises more than you and your father!”

“WHAT?”, Bruna is in shock. Her big O shaped mouth tells it all.

“The only reason she stayed in this marriage was because Ngcobo senior was giving it her good. Hhe, how do you think your mirror broke? They were busy rolling the dice on top of your dressing table”, MaShelembe takes a longer sip and Scelo knows she’s loading more gossip. He hates talking about people in their

absence, but MaShelembe's gossip is hotter than Twitter trolls.

"Last week, they had it in the lounge don't ask how I know all this now. How old is your mother boy?", she looks at him with thin eyes.

"56, Why?"

"Very fresh 56 years old prostitute that one. Her leg was on the ceiling I tell you, they look hilarious. Bula, ever seen two elephants trying to help each other up?", Bruna and MaShelembe laugh till their legs split.

"I don't blame her though. Your father is one toxic sun of a bleach. I chose alcohol and she chose sex", that one part, that part worries Bruna to death. Ending up like these women, its scared the shit out of her.

"Enough about that, when are you two getting babies? I'm old I will die anytime soon, you

must bring me grandchildren now so that she can also gain some weight and have meat"

Bruna took offense to that. She lovez her body, there is no way she's getting pregnant anytime soon. Not with Scelo anyway.

"Hide this in my bedroom I'll use later, let me go be a good wife", she shoves the bottle in scelo's arms and rushes back inside the main house where all the praying and singing is.

"I love her", bruna giggles.

"MaShelembe is ... something else. Cone lets go make her some babies"

"Hha Selo its late now and im tired"

"I'll do all the work myself madam...", he squeezes her bums.

“Zothani, take this for your brother and sisters, where is Olwethu?”, Nonhlanhla looks around at nothing.

“Asleep with Asakhe, they ate pizza ma they will get fat if they eat again. Sisekelo can fetch his own food”, Zothani whines and sits on the barstool.

“Zothani flush that attitude down the longdrop before you land an ass whooping, you hear me”, Nonhlanhla scolds him.

“Yes ma”, Zothani says.

“Take this to your siblings now. Come back and take the juice as well”

Zotha sighs and takes the plates to the room his brother and sisters are in.

“This child will be give me chest pains and he hasn’t grown a flippen beard yet....”

“Uzocosha amaphepha ulokhu ukhuluma wedwa”

WTF, what is this dude doing here?

He looks very different from when they were teenagers but she can still see it's him, the Chinese eyes, cheesy smirk and fresh cut. He hasn't changed much at all.

“Hello”, his wave snaps her out of her dreamzone. Oh handshake?

“Hi Dingani”, what is her voice doing. There is a ring on her finger ... unpleasantly, his too. When did he get married and why didn't she know about this?

“Spawupete”, he chuckles watching her blow out her cheeks. He used to love calling her that, Nonhlanhla hated it with all her being but still found herself feeling butterflies in her tummy when she hears it. Dingani takes off his Nike cap and sits on the chair closest to her. He

smells PHENOMENAL you wouldn't guess his occupation belongs at the dirty corners of Durban. Again, she wonders what brings him here? He isn't close to the family, none of his brothers are which is understandable, this family is a mismatch of personalities.

"What brings you here?", she eventually finds the appropriate words to say. Dingani smiles-smirks, whatever you call it.

"I was here to celebrate Zimi's day with her but I arrived late, Durban traffic"

She doesn't trust that smirk it almost got her pregnant at 17. She nods and offers him something to drink.

"Water is fine, not tap water if possible", he widens his cheeks when she rolls her eyes at him. He's always taken himself as some High in class man, while other boys played soccer he spent his time learning how to drive. Other kids

came home with brown shirts and socks, he came back with his shirt as white as it was before being worn. It's just how Dingani is.

"I saw your father but not your other siblings, where are they vele?", she pouts him juice, there is no bottled water here jeez where the hell does he think this is?

"Busy back home. Beside someone has to guard ma and Hlosile noYolokazi, so they stayed behide", he drinks a small portion and shifts the glass aside. That too he drank it because it was made by Nonhlanhla or else he would have left it like that for the flies to enjoy.

"All six of them?", her eyes spring out.

"okay you caught me. I just wanted to see you, it's been a long time"

Yes it has, definitely but why all of a sudden she wonders. Nonhlanhla remains silent, she has no reply to that.

“And baba requested me to come, he said you guys need extra hands”, he says pushing the chair in. jeez he’s still 7 foot tall?

Men of that family are as tall as pine trees. Like God doubled their legs compared to others.

“Oh okay. Uhm do you want me to dish up for You?”, she just wants a way to get away from him. Dingani is so intoxicating, he is well known for turning good girls into bad bitches without lifting a finger. His aura just brings about that fire in women.

“I wanted you but you taken now”, he keeps staring down. Searching deep in her beautiful eyes that keep opening and closing. Nonhlanhla clears her throat and shifts to the side, cornering herself by the stove.

“Dingani please behave yourself, anyone can walk in here and should they find us in this position there will be trouble”, her breath flings

out her mouth and bounce off Dingani's chest. That's how close they are.

"How is he treating you?", at least he's on the chair again. She can now breath properly and speak fluently.

"He's treating me well, everything is perfect", she lies. Nothing about that union is perfect, there's a lot to do in order for it to be perfect.

The smirk, "Right, oh well good for him. I hope he keeps it that way"

"And wena how is she?", Nonhlanhla looks at his ring. Somehow feelings little sparks of fire inside her heart. She thought he would be somewhere in this world suffering after losing her, clearly nigga wasn't.

"Brain tumour She passed away with my first child, two years ago", the pain in his voice is saddening. The look remains the same though.

“She was pregnant?”, Nonhlanhla asks, once again bringing out that soft spoken side of hers.

“Yeah, we didn’t know until it was too late. Sad part is, we had waited for that moment for over three years and right when we had it, it was lost”, he shakes his head, replaying the moment again in his head. Slow motion this time around.

“Ow Dinga I’m so sorry to hear that. Can’t imagine how hard it must have been for you”

Why is he smirking?

Ohhh ... Dinga. It’s the nickname she gave him, only used when she was trying to smother him for something.

“Nice tracksuit”, she compliments the first thing she lays her eyes on.

“Thanks, some idiot bought it for me”

She guesses the idiot is one of the brothers.
They call each other idiots or nimrods.

“I’m leaving now, going to bed. Uhm ... goodbye Dingani”, she mutters.

“... It's not a goodbye yet. Not until I'm in a casket. But, goodnight Nonhlanhla”, he grabs his taxi keys and cap off the counter.

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She creeps inside the room. Not aware Mzayfani is sleeping there. She thought he'd sleep with MaMthalane today cause of what happened today, pregnant women are overly sensitive after all.

“Where were you, I’ve been looking for you”, he opens his arm for her to lie on them.

“I was making sure everyone has eaten. The kids too. Zimi hasn’t opened her room for anybody yet, I’m worried”, she sighs.

“Relax MaGumbi, she’ll open up when she is okay. Losing a father on the day of your celebration is not easy, no matter how shitty that father was”, oh he was a shitty father alright. None of his kids care much to cry, only one wife seems bothered too. How terrible was Madoda’s parenting skills?

“The burial must be soon. We have lives to continue with, mourning won’t pay any bills”

Nonhlanhla freezes.

“ulale kahle sthandwa sami”, he kisses her forehead and falls asleep immediately.

She is also tired of being here, this place is just a dark cloud with never-ending pain and regret.

Not to mention the exes that pop up out of nowhere at the worst time ever. Her lips curve to a smile thinking of that smile-smirk of Dinga's.

Phewww what a day!

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SN: Busy week so I won't be able to post anything. Sorry peeps 🙏

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER NINETEEN

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

SPONSORED BY ZEKHETHELO 

... A Month Later

In a space of thirty days I have lost
EVERYTHING!

I've lost a friend over a man I don't even love, I've lost a job – apparently the woman I was holding for had a miscarriage and she's off maternity leave now so that meant end of luxury for me. I lost the room I was renting because obviously being jobless means no income and no income means you as important as a rat. To my surprise it didn't end there, I've also lost shocking amount of weight. I look like a two ply sheet no kidding. If I was outside

today I'd probably blow off to Europe in a split minute that's how thin I've become, I'm scared to walk outside. It's been days and days of me on lockdown and I'm not planning on getting out any sooner.

Sitting around doing nothing has to be the most tiring sport ever!!

I don't know, perhaps it's the environment I grew up in that taught me a woman must always be on her feet ... doing something... anything. Hooving leaves off the roof; shining a spoon; ironing your man's underwear.

Sitting strains me more than wiping toilet seats and sweeping dirty corners day and night. This phone Jeffe got me is just as useless. All I do all day is browse through people's private lives that aren't so private. Some stories really make my day and some just pass by me untouched.

And to think I once had a dream to become a flippin waiter on T.V shows, lol I remember how inspiring those people were to me. Until I became the centre of embarrassment during a show and tell at school – we wanted to prove we can match the Model C's as well, only think was our stories were always planned essays.

Two days before show and tell day, you would go home and start cooking up lies about anything believable to you. If you were lucky enough to have a grandfather or neighbour who lives 'Real Goboza' then you'd go to them and milk exaggerated stories and spicy lies for your show and tell.

Wasn't it your girl showing up in an oversized lime petticoat – of which I still stand my ground, looked like a sexy nighttime dress. The petticoat was tied up with a pex. Paired the look with my aunt's brown nursing shoes and

an old crocodile skin bag that was almost half peeled off. I took my sweet ol'time walking to class that day seeing as I was the talk of the town, some boys were even whistling for me. I was the real SophiaTown Queen shame.

Got to the class and BAM, every learner is in their school uniforms. I thought maybe I was blind after all I had seen my mother's frog that day because we took a bath together. It's very weird to see the sacred place you came out of.

When I said I want to be a 'T.V waitress' the class was finished, others rolling on the floor as if they were giving labour. I've never ran that hard in my life, the bee buzzing next to me was nothing compared to my speed. Once I had gotten home I told mama I don't want to ever go to school ever again and guess what MaZikode – THE GHOST said?

“Tsek, school is where you are going whether I tape you onto the chair or set dogs on you so you go to school but one way or another you will go!”

Ever since that day I had grown mad respect for ma. Never messed with that woman ever since. In varsity she heard from a friend of hers who had a child there that I’m drinking. Next morning I’m waking up to a furious woman standing by my bedside with a peach tree stick in her hand. Yeahneh, we grew up rough. Not these fragile children of today that send you to jail for 15 years just for a pinch on their arms. They know NOTHING!

Jeffe said he’ll visit me today just to check on how I’m doing. He does it quiet often now not sure why, but I’m not complaining he is GREAT company. It must be his car engine roaring

outside. I hope he didn't bring his annoying friends.

“Mili Mili The Heavy Mama!”

Lord why me?

He bought Santiago with him, out of every human he chose this one?

Santi and Jeffe have been friends for years, allegedly they snuck to South Africa together, got busted together and jailed together. Cute story huh till they dropped the soap, ever since then I don't think he has ever dropped anything.

Yay They brought food and my favourite, zinga wings. This is what I mean when I say male bestie, not that broke idiot that stole R2s from my back while acting like he's helping me carrying my load.

“Damn, what are you pregnant or something?”, Jeffe says walking in on me chowing my wings. He has that tendency of insulting me secretly.

“Pregnant by what? The holy spirit? Do I look like virgin marry to you?”, hawu. I bite another wing and fly away to paradise. I hear him laugh softly.

“You love food my friend”

Yes I do because food doesn’t bring stress, babies or baby mama drama!

If I wasn’t this Zulu cultured woman I think I would have long turned into a lesbian. That’s where majority of us are running to thanks to ‘Mjolo Uyanyisa’ phrase. Which is soooo true.

Sizwe can attest to that.

“Aren’t you tired of being indoors all day, all the time?”

Ohh he's throwing me out already I see. Cons of depending on someone in S.A, family or not it is wise to have your own back here in this country because woooow.

"You chasing me out?", my mouth hangs.

Jeffe to my side, "No, no you my bestie why would I just kick you out?", he asks.

"No phela it is your apartment if you want me out its fine. I'll live by the street corner begging people for R2s by the robots..."

He tries to block my way and hold me by my elbows tightly, following my face with his eyes.

"C'mon Mili let's not be all dramatic now. You know that's not what I meant, I just thought you tired of being here and want to go out or something", he's bullshitting me.

"No Jeffe it's fine. Have a nice life, enjoy your wealth, enjoy your wings. Thank you, no let me go I'll leave", I'm the one holding grip tight on

his shirt yet I'm asking him to leave me. Reminds of that time in high school this girl who used to bully me came at me with attitude the other kanti I was in a bad mood already. One slap across her boney face and she was busy yelling for people who aren't even holding her to let her go.

“MILANI! Milani, Milani. How many times did I call you?”, mxm.

“Three times”, I murmur.

“I’m not kicking you out, just that my girlfriend is coming back today from Durban and this is the apartment I rented for her, so....”

Hha he is kicking me out. So this is how it feels to have a mastende who steps back on their words? He promised me a place to stay till I'M BACK ON MY FEET, I haven't even gotten on my knees yet. But I'm trying here and there, employers are picky these days.

“For the meantime you can stay with me..”, haibo. That makes no sense, I stay with him and his girlfriend gets the apartment.

“Uhmm.. will she be fine with that?”, I ask.

“Not at all she’ll be perfectly okay with another lady living with her boyfriend. She’s such a gentle soul shame!”, do I sense sarcasm?

“You are being sarcastic?”

“Obviously, Kwazi is a lose screw, she might just burn you if she finds you here that’s why I’m saying let’s leave”, she is a lose screw and I'm an electricity wire in water!

But for peace sakes...

“Okay we can go then. Don’t I have to pack my stuff first? Cause there’s a lot, I got too comfortable thinking my good friend rented me his house, obviously that’s not so”, I roll them like the wheels on the bus that go round and round.

“Okay I’ll wait in the car, do you want to take a drive to town?”

I could use some fresh air. Being stuffed in one place like an animal awaiting death is beginning to suffocate me.

“I’d love to, I hate being indoors so much.”, I say. I’ll pack the important feminine items and clothes, the rest I’ll just fetch them later.

Sometimes I wonder what ma would say if she heard I live with another woman’s man. Jeez even I’m ashamed of that regardless of the fact that we nothing more than good friends.

“Baby girl, how are you and the baby doing? Are you on your way back, you know I missed you dozens”, Is this Jeffe the one and only?

I can’t hear what the lady is saying in response although the phone is on loud speaker, I’m at quite a distance so I cannot hear it well.

“I’m glad you missed me too. Listen I’ll pick you up later, can I?”, Jeffe asks. The lady speaks I guess and he chuckles and blushes, I know this because Jeffe’s blush-laugh sounds like a goat being slaughtered with a knife speared with lemon and dettol.

“Okay I’ll EFT you the money, don’t finish it on those unhealthy restaurants or else you’ll ruin that sexy figure of yours”, he laughs and then bids farewell to the sis over the phone.

Ruined figure mxm... blerry schmuck!

“She’s having lunch with friends in Durban so we have time to pack up everything”

UGGHHH!

I’m tired as hell.

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☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

His car windows are rolled down halfway, his car seat is completely laid down and he's sleeping with his hoodie over his forehead. The strings pulled so that the rest of his face is also covered. The car audio is thumping with good ol' R&B by Whitney Houston ~ Saving All My Love For You. It's his favourite song, since childhood. He always use to tell himself that when he gets married or meets the one he'll play her this song. Sing it even, apart from stealing money and killing people Nhlanzeko also has this musical talent. His notes aren't always on point but they are close enough to score him a feature with Adele.

A slight part of him believed Nokwazi was that woman. The ONE for him, at least that's what she proved for the short while they were

together. Perhaps that's why he's here... about to give her the chance she does not deserve.

Just as he was about to check his watch for the time since he must fetch Asakhe Afterschool as he promised one hot sleepy day. There's no running away from Asakhe, she'll bother you until you grant her wish whatever it may be.

A shadow sparks his eyes and awakens buried pain. It's inevitable, he never had a shot at dealing with it... denial probably.

She stands there by the window with her hand placed on her back and the other on the tummy. It's small... almost not showing actually. His eyes drop to her baby bump immediately, there's a glimpse of a smile that's quickly shadowed by anger. He could have been a father!

Had the family he has always wished for but no yet again life denied him happiness.

Her skin is glowing like never before. Though her nose has gotten a tad big.

Her eyes look red along with her cheeks. Oh she's been crying.

"What's wrong?", the love hasn't gone away yet. Obviously he'll be concerned.

"About?", oww her voice has went from masculine to angelic so fast!

"The red eyes, I thought you were crying ", Nhlanzeko says and sits up. Still, he hasn't invited her in the car.

"I was", Nokwazi replies.

"Why?"

"I couldn't find the donuts I wanted at Crispy Cream", she looks like she wants to wail about it furthermore. Her eyes get glossy and little droplets form on the edge of the lid. Nhlanzeko looks at her stunned. He's tongue tied and

doesn't know what or what not to say anymore.

"Sorry, eish ... I only have igwinya here. It has sugar so...", he shrugs and gives her the bitten vetkoek. Nokwazi takes it and slides it in her bag to throw later.

"Thanks", she smiles.

The deafening silence again, Nokwazi doesn't know where to start or if she should start. She's here anyway so she might as well go ahead and poke the beast out of hibernation.

"About what I did to you and your brother ... I deeply apologize Nhlanzeko. I was wrong I know, very wrong I just got caught up in being loved so much that I forgot love is not always about getting. It also includes giving – of which I didn't do much. Ngiyaxolisa if I could go back in time I would fix all this..."

"Fix it how?", Nhlanzeko frowns.

“... I don’t know right now but I know I would have found a way...”

“Tell me. Who would you have chosen if you decided to be faithful, was it ever going to be me?”, Nhlanzeko asks.

Nokwazi slips her bottom lip in-between her teeth and looks down, what a shameful moment!

“Ohoo, Mzayfani would have been the one you choose. Mh, have a good day Nokwazi”

“Nhlanzeko wait ...”

She's too late he has fled away. At least she was truthful, he appreciates that part but the rest of everything that has to do with ... NOKWAZI itches his intestines.

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“Baba look what I did”, Asakhe scrunches a paper into Nhlanzeko’s free hand.

“Put your seatbelt on, hey those are not candy balls they are rubbers take it out unless you want to choke and die”, insensitive much!

Asakhe drops the rubber and crosses her face, she's one of those brats that hate being scolded. It takes hours for anybody to smother her after being scolded except daddy. That one makes her melt in one minute.

“Did you draw this ?”, he asks her.

Asakhe nods twice, her cheeks still bloated.

“Who are these people, your teachers?”, Nhlanzeko.

“Baba and Mama!”, she she's still puffed up and looking the other way.

Nhlanzeko sighs. “Do you want ice cream?”

“YESS PLEASE BABA!”, she's all smiles again.

“If your mother asks, baba didn’t do it. Okay”

“I don’t know anything about ice cream, I only eat veggies”, she says with pouted lips.

“Hhe does your mother know she s raising a little Sgebengu?”, Nhlanzeko laughs.

He pulls Asakhe out the car through the window scoring a few questioning looks from people. Nhlanzeko has to be the only person in PMB that leaves their car unlocked in a public setting. Windows down and no worries. They enter the mall and start wondering around the mall for a ice cream shop since princess dearest claims KFC ice cream tastes like sugar cubes.

“Do you see any ice cream shop here, I don’t”, Nhlanzeko says. Asakhe yanks his arms and pulls him towards a certain direction.

“Ask baba, please”, Asakhe makes him think twice about having children of his own. He’s

not ready to be a father in all levels, hence he keeps leaving out the question of ‘Who is the father?’ from any encounter he has with Nokwazi. Finding out its his may fuck him up seriously.

“Sorry can you direct us to any ice cream shop here with all kinds of ice cream?”, Nhlanzeko asks the lady whose back is turned to him.

“Oh yes, go straight no turning you’ll see a wimpy and there next to wimpy is where you’ll find one...”, the lady turns at last and stops everything. She remembers him but clearly he had forgotten her. He eyes her body first, it comes natural to any man on those planet. Her thighs peak sexily out of that ruffle hem dress.

“Haaa Baba that’s her again, it’s mama. Hi mama, granny asked me when you are coming home we need you”, Asakhe blabbers.

Milani looks at this girl, shocked and feeling all kinds of weird. She doesn't even know this child!

"You look pretty, see I drew the both of you together. That's a baby in the middle", Asakhe shows milani the picture she drew at creche. It's scribbles milani can tell that's a woman and a man and a baby. This is weird for her but upsetting the child is the last thing she wants to do.

"Awww that's such a cute picture baby. You should be an artist and paint dead people like Rasta. They won't be there to see the shocking results", milani smiles.

"Mama when are you coming home, we need you", Asakhe looks down with a sad frown.

Jesus Christ!

"Um..."

Nhlanzeko snaps out the confusion and finally decides to pull milani out of this situation.

“Sorry we have to get going. Again I apologize for her behaviour ...”

“Milani, Milani Zwane”, milani says to Nhlanzeko and says bye to Asakhe.

“Keep it until you come back home”, Asakhe says when Mili gives her her paper back.

“Oh thank you princess”, Milani slides the paper in her bag and walks away.

“She’s nice baba and very pretty”, Asakhe cannot get over the lady’s beauty. From head to toe.

“Yes she is ... Milani Zwane? Milani Zwane... shit MILANI ZWANE, M.Z! “

“Baba where are running to?”, Asakhe asks trying to catch her breath.

“We have to find the woman”

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

“Call me crazy if you want Jeffe but I heard someone calling my name”, I say for the tenth time. He still thinks I’m being paranoid not sure where that derived from.

“How many people are named after your name? Millions”, he chuckles and takes some of my peanuts. I doubt there are that many people called Milani, mothers as lazy as mine are few. She couldn’t think of anything better, Buhlebendalo? Asenathi? Nokukhanya? Nothing to that affect. Baby girl wanted to stand out from the masses of the norm and name her first ever human being MILANI... GROW?

Which creative mother calls her child Grow?

I'm glad AF I wasn't one of the privileged that had an opportunity in one of those Model C schools, imagine being asked what is your name and you reply with overriding confidence because your bearer said your name was one of the most unique and meaningful name in the world!

'My name is Milani as in Grow'

And the teacher would probably look at me like some foolish schmuck trying to fill a basket with water. The class would be worse.

"I doubt it... do you hear that?", I swear I keep hearing someone calling my name. Fuck Jeffe I turn around and skim through the sweaty crowds, it's not that hot.

The sun is visible though and it's blocking my eyes with its shining rays. I cover the

illuminating light with my hand and continue looking ahead.

Ow, it's that schmuck and the cute annoying princess. She's very adorable with those missing teeth and confusing influent English, of only she could just SSSHHHH for some time.

“WTF”, I whisper to myself, appalled.

Poor Asakhe dangling over a shoulder as rocky as that one. Judging by the all smiles and excitement in her balls of sight she's enjoying it. Kids.

“Mili let's go I have places to be”, Jeffe shushes me again.

“Gosh fine let's go”, that schmuck annoys me anyway.

I find this weird, this holding of hands in public business going on between Jeffe and I. He's too

Touchy with me lately, not in an uncomfortable manner however it's still very much weird.

People will start speculating nonsense adding more drama to my Durban Gen life.

A cold hard hand tugs me back by my elbow. The force was so great my hand literally sprung out of Jeffe's grip immediately.

“Why are you ignoring me?”

Is he being serious right now? After grabbing me like that in front of people he's asking me this? I wait for him to put Asakhe down before slapping him across his fine face. I'm not a lose string for him to turn to a puppet and think he can get away with it. Nx these Hilton Rick kids and thinking they are our government.

“You don't grab me like that I'm not your child”, why is he frowning now? Am I talking Zunglish?

“Grab you like what?”, he’s over the slap I gave him. A second ago he was giving me firey vibes and now he looks more confused than educators marking Essays.

“Like I’m your kid, watch it with me. Just because you can pull these girls out here like puppets does not mean you can do the same with me.”, I feel bad for slapping him although it was well deserved but in front of people and the child. I feel bad.

“My apologies Pumpkin, I didn’t mean to hurt you I was just trying to get your attention”, there goes that nickname thing. Gosh I hate him.

“What do you need my attention for?”, my eyes are filled with fury just like my voice. I want him to see and hear my anger.

He rubs his hands together and blows air onto them then rubs them again and slides them inside his jean pockets. Deep inside.

“I... we – there’s something we need you talk about. Both you and I, it’s very important”, he’s a stranger what business do I have with a complete stranger?

I let him talk only because of this cute child staring at us. Otherwise I would long be gone.

“And what is that?”, I ask.

“Mili can we leave please like I said I have places to be”, Jeffe can be a fly in the nose honestly.

Before I can utter a single word Nhlanzeko, yeah I still remember his name, eyes him dearly. I don’t like that look this is my friend and he has every right to ask me to leave. What right does Nhlanzeko have to look at him like chappies stuck on a shoe.

“You’ll find me in the car. But quickly wrap this up”, he murmurs in my ear and walks away. At least he responded decently I was expecting him to start drama. The gentleman Nhlanzeko finally looks at me with softened eyes compared to what how he looked at Jeffe.

“Can we talk now. At a private place of course?”, erh??

I’m not sure how I feel about that request. Whatever it is he wants to get off his chest seems serious, however I cannot shake off this unsettling feeling I’m getting. Like knots in my stomach and lumps in my throat.

“I promise I won’t do anything to you, Asakhe will make sure of it. Please”, sigh.

Umuntu uzofela khona entabeni yamaNdzodza stru bob. I look around the area not sure what for but I do it either way.

“Okay, this must be snappy though I’m in a hurry”

He nods and paves the way for me. Great, we going to Rockamama’s and I’m flippen starving to death. He opens the chair for me and waits for me to sit then pushes it in again.

We sit like that, awkwardly looking at each other. I have no words, I stopped compiling questions and insults the second I sniffed a burger.

“Are you hungry?”, he asks generally but me being me I take offense to that.

“Why would you assume I’m hungry, is it because I’m fat?”, hunger does this to me. It gives me moods and tantrums.

“I didn’t say you fat, that was your own conclusion. Elephants are huge but they eat once in a while”, ohh he’s calling me an elephant now?

“Wow ngi ndlovu mina?”

“Figuratively, yes you are ...”

Okay boy bye. I’m gone. He holds the chair arm rest as I’m about to push it back. The audacity to laugh at a situation like this one gives me body creeps.

“Sit please”, he’s still laughing.

Stupid. I sit and watch him make me a joke. Can’t Asakhe wake up and help me sort him out.

“Are you not fat?”, hhaaa I’m gobsmacked!

It’s one thing to call yourself fat but it’s a completely different thing to be called fat. Nhlanzeko is skating on thin ice.

“I am but it doesn’t mean I’m any less beautiful”

“Who said anything about beauty? ... hehe yazi nina zidudla niyahlekisa”, he chuckles and

signals a waiter. And I thought this is a normal restaurant where you wait for service and not demand one.

“How are we funny?”, I’m leaning over the table and starring him dead in the eye. There’s a smirk on his face when I do that.

“You expect people to hail you and compliment you yet you cannot compliment or hail to yourself. Funny hey, you want acceptance from outsiders but you haven’t accepted yourself. Hmm kodwa-ke ma-baddies let’s leave you alone and when we do you say us men don’t value you guys. Mmm”, is this why he called me. To preach about body positivity?

“We have accepted ourselves...”

“If you still get all worked up and defensive about someone’s comment about your weight and if you still on high alert for underline insults that aren’t even there. Clearly you haven’t

accepted yourself as much as you think you have”,

OMG, he’s not that dumb! I thought it was empty in there.

“It’s you men that put us in the back burner because we can’t bend over properly during doggy style and and and”, I’m so fed up with this. Everyday it’s same issue different complainant.

“On a male perspective, it’s not that DEEP! The only reason we isolate from chubby huns is because you guys spend so much hating yourselves, bringing your esteem down, crying about who said what about you, inflicting us with your insecurities. Do you know what gents go through out there trying to make sure your esteem is stabilized? Ask me, I have a friend who has been there in fact he is there and it is not nice. It’s good to have a partner that is

secure with themselves, it feels good to have a hun that wakes you up with snaps of themselves without feeling obligated or looking for validation. Just send the picture to remind him how hot you are and not remind him how low your confidence is.”

This just turned to some MJOLO lesson. We forgot the waiter is standing next to us.

“Can I get you anything?”, he smiles welcomingly.

“I’ll have lemon water, the kid will have a burger with chips – takeaway please. As for the lady, what will you have?”, his question sounds like a dare. He’s daring me to prove him right.

“I’ll have 8 wings, a beef burger with cheese sauce and chips”

I hear a gasp from the waiter, which he quickly ended and acted professional. I don’t care

about what he thinks. Nhlanzuko seems impressed.

“So why did you want to speak to me so much, you want to ask me out?”, that’s the only logical explanation.

“If I did would you say yes?”

“No”, straight forward.

He looks dumbfounded. Was I that promising?

“I’m serious”

“I don’t think that’s a full truth though, I defiantly feel like you would have said yes”, his confidence is bliss but he must stop fooling himself. I don’t do those things they carry too much risks. You must really be a diamond for me to just accept you like that.

“Take my answer multiply it by ten to the power of infinity with a cute root of three...

what is your answer?”, a little smile forms on his face. I think he’s laughing silently at himself.

Good job Milani!

“N-O”, he says almost like he’s out of breath.

I’m glad we got that out the way.

Fantastic the food is here, I was beginning to feel very hungry to the point where my tummy makes illegal sounds. Hawu where is his plate?

“Aren’t you going to eat?”, I ask.

Nhlanzeko shakes his head and pushes the plate of wings I was offering. “I won’t be able to digest anything before getting this out of my chest”

Oh goodness now I’m sure he wants to ask me out. He sits and watches me eat. Asakhe is still sleeping on his arms. This child is such a daddy's girl!

“My great grandfather wants a wife”, he says absolutely out of nowhere. I didn’t expect him to turn this into a therapy session, I thought he wanted to say something about me. What business do I share with his great grandfather?

“Why?”, I’m afraid to eat. Nothing can pass through this oesophagus anymore.

“His wife died before they could get married. So basically he too died without having a wife”, shame.

“Ohhh ...”, do I say sorry or my condolences?

“That’s why he wants you to fill that void”

....

“Pumpkin wait, pumpkin! ... you watch the kid”, I’m not sure who he gave that instruction to and I don’t care about it. I want to leave this place right now.

That elbow tug again!!

“Aw you hurting me you idiot!”, he grabs my wrist as I was about to land my palm on his cheek. This time he’s looking at me deadly. I almost peed that Coke I was drinking.

“Don’t test me”, mxm.

This car is fucken hot and it’s burning my back worse I cannot push him away from me, I’m cornered by his body. I think he sees my struggle and pulls me back up from the bonnet he almost smashed me on.

“Let me go or I’ll scream rape and I’m not joking I will do it and you’ll see yourself flying to Old Prison”

“Prison is my second home. Now listen to me”, he orders me. His hands are still squeezing my waist painfully.

“I need your help Pumpkin, my family needs your help. We’ll continue going in circles of misfortune until the dead man gets what he

wants. The kids will keep on suffering because of this, the wives did nothing wrong but they'll also suffer for this..."

"I didn't do anything too and yet you want to sacrifice myself as if I'm JESUS!", I should have just left when Jeffe said we must leave.

"I won't tie you down on it. Just help me do this one thing and you can get back to your life", he's begging a brick wall I won't say yes to this shenanigans.

"Me marry a dead person? You will never see that happening. Now let go of me Nhlanzeko!"

"Don't make me do this, Pumpkin", his grip is getting lighter and lighter.

"Don't make you do what? I will NOT marry a man I do not know, worse ba I cannot see him. I'm sorry but find someone else", I walk away feeling somewhat heavy. Oh wait no my head feels heavy, some thing just hit me on my head

and before I can breathe I fall back and it's lights out.

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☆MZAYFANI NGCOBO☆

He rolls over hoping to meet with Nonhlanhla's boobs he loved resting on them. Instead he's met with a fluffy pillow on his face. Mzayfani shoots up in fear and searches for her all over the room. He's frantic, he always has been, the idea of losing Nonhlanhla terrifies him more than losing MaMthalane cause he knows she'd never leave him. Nonhlanhla gives him suspicions here and there.

The covers is thrown away to the side he walks around the room, she might be in the bathroom maybe surely.

“You awake? I thought you died in your nightmares”, Nonhlanhla laughs.

She's coming from the walk-in closet. Looking all crisp and elegant with her tie-dye tied front bodycon dress with flounce sleeves; clear chunky heels and a twilly scarf décor bag.

When did she get a weave? He didn't know she had one of these. She looks fucken out of this world, her edges just make her more sexy. His sexual member is flicking like a dog's tail.

“Morning”, she smiles, lips shining so bright.

“Did you apply oil on your lips?”, he just had to ask her.

Nonhlanhla giggles abit.

“No silly, it’s gloss. Please pass me the Range keys”

He snaps out of his day dream and passes the keys over to her.

“I’ll be back abit later, around 4pm. I got the job imagine, they said I’ll be paid a good R780 000 per month for now then after seeing my progress I can earn the million I deserve”, she beams. Mzi is stunned.

“A job?”

“Yes a job. You said I can do anything I want to do to make me happy, working makes me happy”, she shrugs.

“Oh... Have a great day at work”, he kisses her forehead and pulls her hand out the door.

He opens the door for her and makes sure she’s sitting comfortable. “Drive safe yezwa, ngiyakuthanda”, he kisses her again for the last

time. He doesn't want to let her go but if this is what she wants then its what she'll get.

"Byee", she waves at him and drives away.

As he steps inside the house, his phone rings.
Sigh what does Nhlanzeko want?

"Ya ufunani?", Mzayfani.

"Nxay wena you talking to me like that for ini?
I'm calling you out of love, greet me out of
love", Nhlanzeko.

"Okay, how are you love of my life", Mzi says.

"Nx Fokoff. Bafo I need you here, I did
something here. I kidnapped the girl"

"Kidnap what girl!? Are you stupid, is jail what
you want?", Mzi scolds him and rushes inside
the house to bath fast and go to him. Shit
MaMthalane has a scan today.

“I know I did a bad thing, she was being a thorn what was I suppose to do?”, Nhlanzeko shouts back.

“WAIT FOR MY FUCKEN INSTRUCTION”

“UKEPHI? IT WAS A SPUR OF THE MOMENT TYPE OF SHIT!”

“NX SLIMA, DON'T DO ANYTHING ELSE”, Mzi switched off the phone and goes to check on everyone. Tells MaMthalane he'll pick her up later and leaves. To do damage control.

Ugh always cleaning up after old men!

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

MZAYFANI NGCOBO

☆SPONSORED BY NELISIWE☆

He barges into the room Nhlanzeko said he was in. His eyes drop to the body covered with a grey fleece on the bed and then he dribbles them to his brother who is seated on the floor across the bed with. Mzi freaks.

“Did you...”

“No no I didn’t kill her. I just made her unconscious that’s all”, Nhlanzeko sighs and gets up from the floor, staring at Milani As well.

“Where is my baby?”, Mzi is fuming. How careless can Nhlanzeko flippen be, in front of his little girl? He wants to pin him against his

bathroom door and fist him till he's no longer breathing. Asakhe shouldn't be in the presence of such things, she's a baby and babies tend to attract auras easily.

"She didn't see anything", Nhlanzeko lifts his shoulders.

"That doesn't mean it's okay to do what you did. A few months out of prison and already you showing us why you were there in the first place nx", Mzi stomps out the room and heads to the kid's room. She's sleeping peacefully, some thing that doesn't happen often. Usually she keeps tossing and turning or speaking alone at night so one of them (Him or Nonhlanhla) have to keep a close eye on her since waking her up is near impossible. Mesuli advised them not to do so, let her have whatever conversation in her dreams, she'll wake up when the time is right. So it's good that she can sleep like this it means not all faith is gone.

Perhaps this Milani is the answer to their problems, in fact he's sure of it. What he is unsure about is how he'll go about breaking this down to her? Which perfectly sensible human would agree to what they are asking of her? Either way Milani has to agree, if it means holding her hostage until she accepts their request then so be it.

As he leans lays a tiny peck on Asakhe's chubby cheek his phone rings. It's the lovely Nombuso. He smiles before answering, "Yes my queen am I missed already?", he chuckles.

She usually calls him everyday, every time asking him to see her cause she misses him. Being the simp he is, Mzi would drop everything and make time for his sixth baby. Even if its just 30 minutes then heads back to work.

“My tummy is sore babakhe, I keep getting painful cramps”, Nombuso cries. Literally she keeps sniffing and groaning.

“Zotha bring me the warm water!”, she shouts over the phone.

“Imake mama ka-Asakhe have you eaten anything the doctor said stay away from?”, Mzayfani questions.

“No I haven’t eaten since you left, the pain is too much I’ve been rolling all over the bed”, she yelps.

If he didn’t know her any better he would say this was just another trick to get him to visit her for an hour but judging the frequent moans and how she cries he knows what she feels is sincere and severe.

“Do you want to go see the doctor or must I call Dr Naidoo to come to you?”, he’s marching up

and down the passage. He left the room to avoid waking Asakhe up.

"No it's fine for now it's like they are subsiding abit, I'll wait for you to return but I'll call if they get brutal again", Nombuso utters. Her breath is louder than her words which worries him. She isn't close to 7 months let alone 5 so why is she experiencing cramps he wonders.

"Are you sure you will be fine?", Mzi wants reassurance however the fear is still chewing him up like gum. The last thing he wants to experience the loss of another baby, it took him years to turn a new leaf to that past. Unlike Nonhlanhla, Nombuso is not strong emotionally. She breaks like glass that woman. Losing this baby will end her entirely and there's no time for that right now.

“I’ll call if I get those cramps again but I doubt it. I took two panados maybe they’ll make me sleep, I hope”, she sighs.

“Okay. No more medication, try to rest. I’ll call the helper to assist with the cleaning”, if only Nonhlanhla didn’t leave he thinks to himself.

Alright time for damage control now, he doesn’t know where to start and where to end. Milani seems crazy to him, like she’ll stab his eyes with a tooth pick and come out with it.

Why does Nhlanzeko have to ruin things all the time?

“What is this place heaven ?”, Milani squints her eyes to avoid being blinded by the sun.

The two share a quick look and turn their attention to the kidnappee.

“Yes you are in heaven”, Nhlanzeko rolls his eyes as he responds. She’s being dramatic that’s why.

“So then why are you here? Or did you kidnap God too and took over His place... YOU KIDNAPPED ME!”, she screams as though it’s something she just remembered a minute ago.

“And you have the balled up nerve to tie me up!?", her tone is loud ... very loud.

“Can you calm down?”, Nhlanzeko begs. Mzayfani gives him a look.

“What do you think you are going to achieve by keeping me here in chains? Don’t you know who I am? I can sit here and stare at this wall until it becomes shy and look away... I won’t give you what you want trust me”, Milani rasps.

“Mangethe that’s not ...”

“Wena don’t get me started with you. You come here acting like a wolf wrapped in sheep’s skin knowing very well you plotting against me with your brother!”, she screams the loudest even spits on the bed.

Believe it or not these two are more afraid of her than anything. Nhlanzeko for one doesn't have any words anymore, he's shocked and fearful at the same time. Mzayfani just looks clueless, this situation does not look mendable to him.

"That's not true, I really did help you out of a good heart Mangethe, I didn't even know he knows you", Mzi points to his brother.

"Rubbish! Pink is not green to me, I see everything clearly. Well I want you to know that you have messed with the wrong Zwane, the second I get freed from here I'm going straight to Nigeria I'm coming back fully equipped with witchcraft so you better watch It!", she flicks off the duvet and sees her ankles are cuffed to. Her red eyes rise up fast, they look pure evil. Nhlanzeko quickly searches for the key inside his jogger pockets and frees her ankles. He thinks of freeing her wrists too but hesitates.

She's still fiery he'll free her later, when she is calm and willing to listen to their request.

"Must I pee on your face?", Milani is still being snappy and speaking raspy. A certain snake twitches in the room.

"I need to fucken pee Slave Master", Milani rolls her eyes and waits for one of them to open the door for her and pull her panties down. Nhlanzeko jumps to the opportunity.

"Take off my thong or it will get wet and I'll have to walk around your house naked", she's orders. Nhlanzeko frowns and hesitates doing as told.

"You want to kidnap me right? Deal with the consequences of your stupid actions", her voice rises again. This woman means business both can hear that from her breathing to her evil eyes. They cannot keep her here for too long.

“I'm losing my bladder grip you know”, she looks at him. And lifts up her dress.

Nhlanzeko's body shuts down for a while there he couldn't move or speak. He keeps drooling and imagining the worst of what will never happen.

“I'M GOING TO PEE!!”, she shouts and swiftly Nhlanzeko pulls her thong down to her ankles. Jesus Christ it's white lace – his favourite.

However he's more impressed by the fact that it came out clean most women's underwear turn brownish white after such a hot day.

He watches her pee, awkwardly. Her eyes are stabbing his, she doesn't care remove them.

“I'll wipe myself!”, she snaps at him.

Nhlanzeko jumps out the bathroom and finally release the air he has held in. He never does this, watching a lady pee and pulling down their

underwear with no intention of devouring them.

“And?”, Mzi asks Nhlanzeko.

Nhlanzeko shrugs and wipes off his sweat. After a while they hear the toilet flush and then the tap and then the door. Both their heads turn to her.

Ever heard that kidnappers are afraid of their kidnappee? Similar situation this is.

She sits on the spot she woke up on, looking at them. She wants to cry but her anger is too great. Nhlanzeko nears her, touching her toe then the rest of her foot..

“DON'T!”, she yanks him off her.

“Pumpkin I apologize I did this to you, there was no other way...”

“Look at me, look me in the eye and listen very carefully”, Milani leans forward.

“Hamba ofa yezwa, go hang yourself”, she's speaking softly. After that she throws herself on the headboard and let's them roll down. The reality kicks in, she's not going anywhere. Out of everything she worries about her family, she was suppose to send them money today. As for her, she's not scared of death. It can gobble her at any time. But her loved ones? Yhoo.

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☆NONHLANHLA NGCOBO☆

I was welcomed well ... I think. My colleagues showed me great warmth some were fake yes but majority looked genuine to me. Best thing ever is already have a reserved parking space

by the dorm which is known as the TOP TIER PARKING LOT. Crazy right?

I'm just a newbee but I guess people have acknowledged the importance of Charted Accountants in this world. The office is beyond what I expected, I'm at the very top with my very own emergency closest, filled with shirts and blazers. The not wearing the same outfits for the different clients policy lives here to?

There's a brown leather couch of absolute high quality sitting near the entrance with a mini table in front of it. My desk is in front of the bird's eyview. It feels like a dream. I must call Nombuso.

“And why would you leave without telling me?”, she scolds me the second she answers the call. “I wanted to see you on your big day, wish you luck and prepare some lunch for you”.

Aww.

“I was in a hurry I’m sorry love. But I’ll take you with me tomorrow I promise”, I doubt she’ll come though. She has become lazy lately, I doubt she’d sit in a car for four hours. Two hours driving to Durban and two hours coming from Durban. Yes I work that far. I might move here someday, it’s way peaceful.

“Hmmm, Anyhoo how is everything going so far? Are they nice to you? Are they treating you well and not like dirt?”, lol Nombuso kodwa.

“It’s all good for now, I haven’t had any hassles with anything. Actually I’m treated very well. Wena how is baby no.3 treating you?”

“Don’t get me started. I feel massive already and this child is making me huger, it kicks a lot and I’ve been having cramps a lot”, she says.

“Try walking often, or call Ngcobo. Don’t strain yourself with those kids”, I laugh.

“I’m gearing up for when the big baby comes”, we both laugh.

I hear a knock on my door.

“Listen love can I call you later, I have visitors”

“No problem, bring me something nice lapho”, she giggles and drops the phone.

I wonder who is at my door now, I have so much to catch up on already. The financial records here are hideous and messed up AF! I wonder if I remember what to do, it’s been long.

“Heyyyyy girl”, three very loud women sing together. I’m awkwardly standing here and waving like a fool.

“Can we come in?”, one peaks over my shoulder.

Erh...

“Thanks”, the total slay queen enters first and the two follow her in. They have bottles in their hands, one is carrying a basket as well. Okay what is going on here?

“Let’s set it on this table”, the slay queen says. They lay a red cloth on the guest table, dish out all sorts of goodies from the basket and pit them on the table then start opening the bottle.

I’m so lost.

“Oh our manners, I’m Mihlali Pamla by the way, the audit manager”, she shakes my hand like those queens. This girl, I mean Mihlali looks nothing older than 27, how is she a audit MANAGER already? Am I that left behide with the change in rules?

Compared to these girls I’m absolutely not fitting.

“I’m Nomathalente Msane, Nomtha for short. The finance manager”, she waves.

“You can call me Lethu, the tax evaluator... it’s a for now thing of course”, this business must be honestly fucked up to need a tax ‘manager’ normally they hire separate accountant for things like inventory not tax management. I’ve never actually heard of that before but oh well...

They are looking at me. Why are they looking at me? Oh my name.

“Nonhlanhla Ngcobo”, I reach my hand out and they all hold it at once. Weird much.

“Great to meet you sis, so where are you from?”, Lethu asks. I notice the other two moving their long nails across their throats like that question bores them. It does for me too, I find it unnecessary.

“In KZN”, I leave it there if they want more they can scuffle it. I barely know them anyway.

“I want to know how you bagged the ring girl? Do you know how I’ve been waiting? Phof ndi cinga ba visiting a sangoma will do”, she’s laughing so I guess it was a joke.

“But honestly how did you do It cause hayi man xa ndi thetha naye u-hubby ngomtshato whoo”, Mihlali claps once. I didn’t expect her to have a man nor be so excited about marriage.

“What do you expect from uMAGEZA waseMazimtoti?”, Nomtha laughs.

“Oh shut up cause we both share the same story here”, Mihlali says.

Very active bunch I don’t see myself coping.

“I don’t know it just happened”, I whisper. I won’t tell them the truth, like I said I barely know them that well.

“Can’t it ‘just happen” to me too yho, I love that man shame you wouldn’t say I was that one girl on some Anti-Zulu men protest for my whole variety life”, she giggles.

“Why what happened?”, am I being forward?

“Nigga had another woman tucked in the rough edges of West Street, worse she was very dangerous one of those okap carriers. I use to sleep with a pen on my breasts for just in case”, her energy is so vibrant I enjoy it. She's not the holding back type I can see.

“Marriage will come on its due date don’t rush it”, Lethu preaches. .

“Don’t you look at Gadla and just wonder how life would be when you marry? I’ve been doing the same and I’m tired of imagining”

Okay I must ask something here.

“Y’all know each other’s partners?”, it’s very weird for me and does that mean they’ll have to know mine too?

“Yes, they practically grew up together, came from the same vagina and all that. Funny we didn’t plan it, things just turned that way. We best friends fell for brothers.”, Nomtha informs me. Interesting lives they live I must say.

“Aahhh hubby is calling”, Mihlali screams.

“My love”, she blushes until she’s red. Gosh when have I ever felt like that?

“Ya ntombi eshiya amadilozi ayo ekhumbini yami. Ubafo uyashanelia la, qhamthushu imisweswe ye mama...”

We are finished, I’m finished but we make sure we laugh in silence. Mihlali’s face drops.

“Zenzo kodwa kutheni ungxoka ka so”, she whines and stands up.

“Uthini kumina, angithethi mina NGIYAKHULUMA....”, she leaves the room without us hearing the rest. Either way we are rolling on the floor with laughter, literally.

“Is he always like that?”

“Always sis!”, Lethu and Nomtha reply at the same time. Gosh what a character.

“So how do things work around here?”, I ask once we have all calmed down.

“Normal procedure applies. Just you need to be fast cause you just never know with these people. The end of financial year is noted for already, the details everything is noted for you on that file we gave you”, I still cannot believe they hired me as acting CFO? A person with n It much experience... what a gamble. I haven’t thanked Dingani for the push he gave me and how well he connected me. I must do that sometime this week if and when I get time.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

☆NONHLANHLA NGCOBO☆

Long ass day it has been cannot wait to soak myself in a bubble bath with the bath salts these ladies gifted me. They are very nice... and nosy, loud too but I like them I think we can be good friends. Although something about them rubs me off the wrong way, I don't know their auras are too shady for me it's like there is another face to them that I don't know but yet to see. Or I'm just reading too much into things.

I fear Durban traffic on times like these, but there's no way I'm driving on an empty stomach. I'll grab some snack by the garage before driving back home.

Perchance ... I should begin looking for properties around this residence. This driving back and forth every day will be the death of me. I doubt Ngcobo will allow that, I am his wife at the end of the day he has rights to dictate me besides that the kids are too young for this shift. Lucky me the SHELL garage is not too far from my workplace in fact I could have walked there but then.

As I climb out my Range something catches my eye, it's an ongoing very heated argument between two taxi drivers. It looks like it can get physical at any given moment. Gosh these people will get a ton of us killed with their ongoing feuds. I saw on the news yesterday that the association is in shambles due to persisting feuds between the Ngcobo family and some other family I've never seen but I've heard about them on social media. I know the Ngcobo's are Dingani's family. A family of

stubborn men is bound to be the cause of such ridiculous things.

I pick steak n kidney pie as much as I hate it but I rather than dried biltong or chicken and mushroom. A can of Redbull will do for me as well.

“That’ll be R37. 90 mam”, the cashier pops her gum. Bad day at work?

“Where is my card?”, I whisper to myself. I’m sure I took it with me, my purse isn’t here either. The hell!

Okay maybe I have some change in my pocket... nothing? C’mon!

“Mam can you hurry up others want to buy”, her eyes tell me to fuck off if I’m broke and cannot pay. I look behind me and it’s a queue puffing in irritation. That makes the both of us people.

“I can’t find my card ...”

“It’s okay I’ll pay for you”, a sweet gentleman offers. Is he following me around now?

It can be a million things but not a coincidence, Durban is not that small. He flashed a smile for me when I looked at him like the crazy man he is.

“Hi”, he says.

“...hi”

A pop eludes me, the cashier!

Dingani pays for the snacks and takes the plastic packet with. I’m still unsure about how to feel about him being here and the possibility of him following me around Durban like this.

We get out the shop and head towards my car, he’s leading which means he knows my car too. This man. Dingani hands me the packet and leans on the car.

“Thanks ... I’ll pay you back soon as I get cash”, I say.

He shakes his head, “No there is no need for that. You look beautiful in this new you”, he says with a ghost smile.

“Ngiyabonga”

We continue with the silence. That’s before I break it.

“Aren’t you suppose to be at the rank or something?”, it’s the only way to chase him away from me. I have a home to be in.

“I’m heading there now”, he points to a purple quantum. What?

“That was you?”, I’m in awe. He looks confused.

“Me where?”

“Fighting that man, the taxi driver here?”

“Oh that, he stepped on the wrong turf that’s it. We were sorting it all out”, he seems over it. But he’s mad about it still.

“With fists? But any way if you claim all is good then okay. I have to leave now though, I’ll be late and traffic is horrible here”, I’m hoping he let’s me go with no hassle. The hesitant ‘errh’ makes me feel like I have no say.

“Can you move from the car”, I ask running thin of patience. He grabs my waist not so tightly though and pulls me back.

“Dingani I am a married woman!”, I don’t see him care about that though. He’s just staring ... wondrously at me.

“DINGANI!”

He slowly lets me go and apologizes for holding me like that. I don’t want to hear it at the moment, I take my packet and get inside my car. My phone vibrates on the passenger seat.

“Crap”, mzi has been calling me. He left three voicemails. I listen to them one by one: “I hope you are doing great at work. I missed you and your awkward silence”, that’s the first one.

“If you happen to need me... in case you scared to drive alone you can call me”, the second one which was made an hour ago.

“Nonhlanhla answer the phone you getting me worried here”, he’s authoritative tone is back. Gosh I better speed the hell up. I’m such a bad wife, ma would kill me if she found out I leave her son’s house till this late. 19:58 pm really!

If I’m fast enough I’ll arrive right about 21:45, Christ then there’s traffic.

I just arrived, five minutes left till the clock strikes 22:00. The lights are off, obviously it’s late as hell now and having to watch over kids

while pregnant must have knocked Nombuso out completely. My worry now is whether Mzayfani is asleep or not. I didn't want to sneak in cause it will seem like I'm being strange or hiding something. I enter the normal way, head held high and heels on. It's empty. Guess he's asleep.

"Good to know you found your way back home", by that hot air brushing my neck he's standing behide me. Like right behide me if I turn we'd bump heads. Nigga turns me anyway.

"I –"

I'm shut up by his warm lips dragging themselves on my neck. Directly below my chin and upwards. The Second I start cooperating, putting my hand behide his neck, Mzi stops kissing me. Our faces are still touching and his hands are still comfortably resting above my bums. We've never been in this position

before, I barely know how it feels. Does it tingle your clit or am I being a virgin Mary?

“Yini?”, I question in confusion.

“You smell of nicotine... and nivea men face wash”

WHAT? We weren’t even that close. I reprimanded him prior him going there. And – I don’t smell any cigarette on me, his smoke couldn’t have gotten that close to my skin.

I’m sniffing myself like a dog looking for its bone.

“I was joking, what got you so worried?”, mzi is unbelievable today. What’s with this new jealous lover behaviour?

“Nothing, I was not worried I just ... was wondering what you are talking about.”, I’m stuttering.

“Goodnight, go take a shower you stink of Dunhill”, he looks abit disappointed. That head shake he just gave me turned my insides out. I’m not use to disappointing him and I won’t start now. At some stage I need to clarify this to Dingani, I made vows whether out of love or not, I will honour those vows.

Sleeping is so hard without his ashy ass skin rubbing me irritatingly, the loud snores and leg dances. The bed is big that’s why, I would like to believe.

Eventually I get fed up of tossing and turning alone in this bed. The study, yeah I head there maybe I can get some work done. Prepare for tomorrow maybe. Then it hits me like a ton of bricks, a job in Durban out of all places?

I know a few firms around KZN, why would Dingani skip all those and take me to the one in Durban. Near him.

Could it be ... nah it can't he's been my friend for so long. He wouldn't do me like that.

“What are you hiding yourself in here for?”, great now I can't function right.

“I just couldn't sleep, so I decided to get some work done but I'm almost done with it anyway so I can leave”, I'm packing anything my fingers touch.

“When will you stop being distant from me? ... is he the reason why, he gives you what I don't?”

TF. My fingers loosen the hold of these pens and papers. They fell, I don't know to where but they fell. His touch can be very tingly.

“There is no ‘He’ Ngcobo”

“That’s a lie Nonhlanhla”, it’s my word against his. He pinches my back which automatically means I need to stop tensing up. Over the years I’ve learnt the language he speaks with me, although I still have difficulties grasping some things. Like when he says he loves me. My mind so badly wants to welcome him with warm hands but the heart, the heart has seen too much to go through that phase again.

“I’m serious you the only man I’ve ever been with romantically. I would never cheat, I respect myself too much for that”, and I’m serious I won’t.

It grabs my cold bums and wrings it. He’s telling me to wrap myself around him, I do exactly that. Mzi swings us onto the book shelf two or three shelves broke. Nombuso is going to kill us!

My nightie gives him easy access to me, while I wanted him to search for it until he sweats. It's the only time I get to have power over him.

His hood slithers all over my coochie, smearing all that pre come over the coochie. I feel a string of sensibleness snap instantly. My toes keep curling inwards, my thighs squeeze him in. It has been that long huh, a thing as small as this drives me insane.

“As from now you’ll drop your orphan attitude...”, excuse me?

I don’t get a chance to ask he has me holding onto him tightly. Both for pleasure control and stability. The hood is struggling to get through, he keeps trying. Right I can review what he just said.

“Attitude ... aahhh!”, it’s in.

“Yes your little ‘distant attitude. I love you”, he pushes in in a slow pace and shags me like a total prostitute.

“Fu.... Fuze mmmm”, I moan lightly.

My chin is weighing on his shoulder, my body is completely under his spell.

I'm pulled away from the shelf and carried mid-air. Legs spread far apart to the sides and I'm being humped hard and fast. I feel the burn of my vagina, also the desire to squirt. A little rub over my numb can get me there but I'm literally flying on chandeliers if I remove my hand from his shoulders I don't know what will become of me.

“Call me that again”, he's growling behide me and I know he's not far off. Weird as it seems Mzi gets his orgasm from words that turn him on. If you keep quiet he can go all night humping you like a hamster.

“Fuze... ssshhh ah”, I’m all waters before he can put me down. Not only are my thighs trembling but my coochie is on FIRE. Must be the stretching. I’m not that young anymore.

We both trying to recollect our breathes after what just happened. The floor is freezing but I cannot get up, for the life in me I have no energy.

“I’ve never been smashed like a hooker before”, I giggle when I’ve inhaled enough.

Mzi laughs and lays his big head on my crossed thighs. “You are my hooker, one with a ring, house, car and a damn good looking husband”.

LOL! Mmmh okay sir.

“Right good looking husband”, I join in on the mirth. This is peaceful.

“Give us a chance, Nonhlanhla. I promise not to let you down like before”, how does he know?

“Nombuso told me. Let’s make a deal, if you feel like I’m not treating you well enough in this polygamy then ... then I’ll set you free to be with whoever your heart may yearn for. But first give me the chance to show how much I love you”, he pleads. I'm tongue tied.

“...Okay?”

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

☆SPONSORED BY ANDILE SHEZI ☆

Thank God he untied my hands, my wrists have red rings and dark circular marks on them. I flinch when I touch them gently. I swear he'll pay for this one day, I swear on my mental case mother and the mosquitoes in this room. I've been panning myself the whole night because of them, gosh it's still night time, what the fish!

An alarm? Really ...

What am I, a slave at work? It would have been more sensible of him to put a proper watch next to me so I can time my death. I'm actually starving right now and I smell I want to bath. Nice shower, too black for my liking but it's

cute. I didn't notice it the other day, I was fuming through my arse.

Whew, my body is so deserving of this shower, I'm a bath-aholic, water and me are best friends. If I go a few hours without taking a shower my body immediately itches inside out. Ma says I'm a mermaid – people who don't like water generally have this opinion about us the ones who live for water. I never tell it to her face though, I'm not armed with that kind of bravery.

“Wait a damn minute...”, I drop the soap I had in my hand and waltz out the room. I forgot to even put on my dress at least cause there is no sign of a towel around here nor a gown. I'll just drape myself in this sheet. Yeah it's good now.

I'm getting lost in this maze house, literally it is a maze. There are like five different staircases

that lead to one area – the sitting room. Dramatic much, does he enjoy the feeling of being a Cinderella?

Personally, this shit is exhausting. Five staircases yet zero elevators. How smart ... wow, wow clap your hands people what a genius this Nhlanzeko Tomfool Ngcobo is!

Eventually I find my way around the house, after passing a really awesome library. Cannot fathom the thought of this schmuck being a reader. I wonder what he reads, how to annoy the shit outta strangers? or how to kidnap innocent women foe his great grandfather. Sheesh what a live God gave me.

As I reach the middle part of this torture walk I catch a few deep laughs. Obviously male.

They are talking about women and how scary they are, also how they are 'lunatics' as they say.

Only if they knew we become crazies because of them and their careless mindless beings!

Men don't even have to speak to become idiots in front of us. Like this one, without saying a word to me I knew at school he must have been one of the slow learners.

Oouuuu, heniken cans; pizza boxes; soccer match and vibes all around. Hmm must be nice shame, must be nice.

“Hhayi marn noba yi party mos le”, nevermind the broken xhosa. We are about to break some legs!

They all end their joyous celebration. Their heads haven't turned to me though, including that idiot's huge mango head.

Oh, now he looks at me?

“Pumpkin ”, his lips are dry.

The squad joins him in starring at me as if I'm this alien newborn. They are standing up, why are they standing up?

Some of their looks make me feel uncomfortable, as if they are eying a piece of chicken. Fuck them though.

“I told you not to call me that word, I’m Milani Zwane not Pumpkin”, hopefully I made it clearly clear for him this time around. I can’t keep repeating everything for him.

“It’s late shouldn’t you be sleeping?”, he asks with the cooked audacity.

“Oh I’m sorry did my father die and reincarnate himself on you?”, my eyes pop out their sockets because what a because.

His chipmunks laugh at him, openly so. They are being forward really.

“I was just asking out of concern”, now he’s throwing fits at me?

“If you were ever concerned about me I wouldn’t be standing here in a house I don’t know, with a man I do not know... OUT OF FORCE!”, dammnit!

I was going to keep it cool but he just tests me that’s all he does is test me!

I expected him to shut up but noo, here he is loading an insult under that chuckle of his.

“Milani, how many times must I explain this to you? IT'S NOT OUT OF SELFISHNESS... THIS IS FOR YOU AS WELL！”, is he screaming at me?

“NONSENSE NHLANZEKO！”, I can shout too. I almost let go of the sheet but remembered we not alone. I don’t care about being naked in front of him, it’s his friends that put me off.

“When things don’t go your way in life and you end up in the gutter with nothing... don’t forget my words and how much I begged you for this”, he picks something from the couch and walks

away slamming the door afterwards. Ignoring his friends and their callouts. Why am I being looked at like this?

“I did nothing wrong your friend is the devil here”, all of a sudden the braveness dissolves. This isn’t Jackie Chan standing in front of them, this is Milani Zwane the scared little girl.

“He was only trying to help. Both you and his family”, one says.

I’ve seen him on a few pictures on the passages. His frame is the biggest, I assumed its his brother but they do not look alike or have any similarities so I guess it’s the best friend.

“You’re one to talk, have you ever been taken against your will?”, my wall of conscious is cracking if this ink man doesn’t stop giving me that look of shame it will break.

“I do not know what situation you come from but understand his. Over 6 years he has spent

in prison and more than half of his life he has spent without a family, this was his chance to be there for them and try close the huge gap he left. All he needs is a fair shot at it, you are that fair shot.”, the friend says.

Now it's all a funeral, their faces are dull and they look sad all of a sudden. Do they think that will change my mind? SHAME!

It's a sad story really sad awwe gimme a tissue!

What was he doing in prison in the first place. And their brotherhood looks fine to me and if this meant so damn much to Nhlanzeko he would have pulled his big boy pants on and do what is needed to be done without dragging me into the equation. I have a life, a whole entire family on my back but you'd never see me throw my baggage on other's shoulders in the name of ‘I've been through a lot’.

News flash, this is South Africa, we all are going through a lot!

The rhinos are also going through a lot!

Just like the rest of us he must suck it up and get a move on!

“Just by the way, I have a sick mother back home and three boys to raise as my own, I have no job thanks to some random ancestor and now I'm here chained as if I did something wrong instead of being out there hustling for my family. Today, my mother was suppose to go to the clinic and fetch her medication as well as do her usual check-ups yet she couldn't go because I didn't send her the money since I'm HERE! So do not think for once that this is me being dramatic or being difficult”, and just like I take my leave back to my prison. I wanna cry, yes that's what I'll do. Cry.

“Pumpkin!”

I look down ... It's him this thing.

He heard what I said, hmm.

I continue my walk and ignore him like the deaf! This is just exhausting and why is Jeffe not trying to find me. If when days a dark friends are few was a person!

“Milani open the door!”

“FOKOFF NHLANZEKO！”, curse that name!

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☆MASHELEMBE☆

She comes from the tarven to buy her everyday fix and a packet of cigarettes to complete the combo. People have gotten use to her now and

she has gotten use to their judgemental looks and soft gossips about her drinking ways. Not that she ever cared about them because only she knew what she knew and not them, not her sister wife and not anyone else. She had to find a coping mechanism that would be her fix for a short period of time, that was the plan for it to be a short period of time thing.

Of course life set south further than expected and alcohol just kept saving her the baggage. Till now, life without a dash of 1818 in her tea is not known.

On her way home comes along Khaphela, an old man who is hitting on her. He's a very good healer that's what everybody says. She doesn't see it though, she sees an old geezer who hides his womanizing personality under this 'gift' of his. There is no way she buys into the hear-says.

“Intombi enhle ethi mihamba kuvuleke umhlabo. MaShelembe wami madoda”, Khaphela turns crimson just by looking at her legs.

“MaShelembe wakho owamnikwa ubani? Stop wasting my time Khaphela I have better things to do in my life than hear you speak rubbish”, she swiftly pushes him aside and carries on walking.

Old wheel don’t give out so easily, so does Khaphela. He’s back in front of her, waving a packet of chocolate mint toppers.

“How about we watch the waters while feeding one another these delicious cakes ”, and that smile of his appears.

“Tell your ancestors to tell you to get away from me or else there will be trouble Khaphela, I’m not playing now get out of my way”, she’s

pointing the bottle on his face like she's threatening him to dare her.

"Thembisile why do you like being so difficult? We have something special you and I, don't you feel it", he's holding onto her hand and begging.

"See what we have is exactly like what you have down there ... NOTHING!", she pushes him away again and carries on walking.

Behide, Khaphela pulls out his cow tail and puts his hands on his hips.

"That boy of yours will get what's coming for him, do you think the elders have simply forgotten how you betrayed them?", Khaphela gets her attention immediately.

"Khaphela watch your words", she hisses between her teeth as a warning. Now she's walking back towards him, furious.

“Nsingizi paid for her sins, you haven’t done that. This month won’t end without us getting an invitation for yet again another funeral at the Ngcobo’s”, Khaphela laughs at MaShelembe’s fear. Not her son, it cannot be her son that’s all she’s saying. NOT MZAYFANI!

“Khaphela do not do this please, we made a deal didn’t we?”, MaShelembe.

“Deals expire we-Thembisile and they need to be remade, just like our deal. You want protection for your son, you do what I want you to do or else hhawu amagugu ku mfana omncane”, we shrugs.

The bottle in her hand could land on his head and she wouldn’t give a flying fuck, that’s how much she resents Khaphela. If she could she’d wake up Madoda and replace him with Khaphela.

“Come on, MaThemzana it’s just one night, I promise to make it worth your while”, nx.

There is it, the reason she started drinking. She’s visiting it again. Her mothering skills are not the best but she’d kill for that boy. She would do a whole lot of shit for him, including this.

“When?”, her heart bleeds having asked this question.

“Tonight my place at 20:00 pm”

Oh well. Now she has a real reason to drink!

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

☆MASHELEMBE☆

Alice Shelembe is the founder of all this mess!!

The witch was suppose to adhere to the given instructions, she was the one to mend their great grandfather's heart and fulfil his desire to also have a wife to introduce the beginning and end of his kraal. Apparently on the day they were suppose to get married, traditionally, she died that's what the people think. That she passed on due to a heart attack, the stories altered from generation to generation. I cannot remember what lie these kids were told by their father. But I know the sincere truth about what happened to my grandmother, she didn't die from a stroke nor did she die from a heart attack. Alice had done what she does best,

bopen her legs wide for every Tom Dick and Harry in Matsh'amhlophe only problem of hers was she messed with the wrong woman's husband. MaNjoko found out the disgusting acts her husband was doing clearly taking lessons of how to get him back. Till she made a decision to just end him, unfortunately the poison that was meant for her husband got to my grandmother first. She kept dying slowly and unnoticeably next morning we wake up to her cold body covered with a blanket in her room. I was very young at that time however back then age didn't matter if you were suppose to know something you would know and if you had a responsibility at whatever age you are at, you would have to take it on. That was the issue with me, my mother grabbed me by the ear and forced me to grow a pair from there. Ever since the day the Ngcobo's stepped in our yard demanding Alice's dead body so

that they could carry on with wedding them together and my mother on the side harshly refusing them that request and the uncle's being raw as ever with their words. I knew I was going to land up in that kraal paying for someone's sins.

The grandfather died and the mess started from there. Madoda being the eldest son with some sort of proper mental state had to take up a wife. I was going to be that wife, my aunt refused though so he took another wife for the mean time, her name was Gugulethu she was very ugly I won't lie. Hot headed too, when she was told they had to marry her off to an ancestor she told them that will never happen. And so she didn't go through all that, she stayed there with her two children ... who both died three years or so down the line. Then I came along, I wasn't about to marry that dead

man either. These things come with a lot of responsibility that I knew I wouldn't be able to handle. But unlike Gugu, I met with Khaphela and asked him to protect my son. Everyday I took Mzayfani there so he could put these muthis to protect him. It's been that mess ever since. Nsingizi came and was going to do the right thing but MaSbisi and her jealous ways got rid of Nsingizi and shortly after that Nhlanzeko's brother died. It's a mess that I now regret.

No other woman has been brought in this family and I don't think Bula would be fit. There is a high chance my son will get punished. Ignored ancestors become angry and when they are angry

“Ma, I’ve been calling you six times now. Are you fine?”, oh it’s Zimlindile.

“I’m old I have endless problems. Did you want to get something?”, I’ve forgotten why I’m here. Why was I here? ... oh gentle magic, I wanted gentle magic.

“Yes. Emmanuel asked me for a sleepover tonight so I came to ask permission from ma but I cannot find her so I’m asking from you”, this boyfriend of hers I do not trust him, I will never trust any man with this child.

“You’ll call every hour, send a message every 30 minutes and if he tries something funny tell me and I’ll come over with my merchant”, she can laugh but she knows I’m serious. I’ll kill anybody who harms her. Now where is that gentle magic?

“Yes magogo I will call every time. Thank you and I love you , take care”

She’s out before I could say bye back.

Wonder where her mother is, I can't leave this house unlocked. Whatever she'll call.

My tears pour hard when I reach the door. I should not be going back there, to that dark hole that brought me this everlasting heartache. But it's a mother's duty right? It's my responsibility. These kids do not understand the sacrifices we make for them.

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☆MILANI ZWANE☆

Mmmhhh why is it so cold? I shut the windows before climbing on bed. I cannot sleep in the cold, actually I didn't think I'd sleep at all. My mind is messed up big time, I've prayed like

three times already ... I miss my mommy and when we sing together our church tunes, well she does not sing she screeches I'm the one who sings – not to be a bragger but it's true. All she's good at is praying five hours or so at church, sometimes repeating one thing in two different ways and as if she hasn't belittled God's listening skills she adds those funny tongues. I respect my mother shame.

My body shivers as the shawl is pulled off my body out of nowhere. I spring up to pull the cover over me again, I can't though. Nhlanzeko is holding the bed sheet that I sleep with. His blankets are too hot!

“What is it now, am I not allowed to rest Nhlanzeko?”, I'm not even bothered with shouting at him. My body; mind and soul needs rest from his face and everything else.

“Get up”, he orders me with a tone laced in ice and darkness. Excuse me sirrrrr – is my expression at the moment.

“Get up and what?”, I ask, not letting go of the sheet like him. He’s the lion now I’m just a little kitten.

“Milani I said get out, here get a cab and get out of here. It’s what you want isn’t?”, oh my lord he’s serious. He pulls out a stack of hard cash and bashes it on the small table next to my bed ... well his bed.

“Nhlanzeko why you ...”

“I’m sorry I ever cared to fix what I had no business with, I’m sorry for trying to help you escape the hands of poverty, I’m sorry for kidnapping you and torturing you Milani Zwane”, he looks freaken scary.

His neck has visible veins popping through his ink. I’ve never seen eyes as bloodshot as these.

And I get the feeling that if I don't do as he says, I'll live to regret it. And – him calling me Milani Zwane does not sound right, it makes me feel like I did something naughty and he's about to give me a spank. Jeez.

"So you going to steal me then throw me out like a dog? ... wow", I leave a little chuckle at the end because yhooo.

"Kanti wena ufunani, what the HELL DO YOU WANT FROM ME? I ask for your help and you reject me; I try to make you see what I'm trying to say to you and you shut me down, and now I'm giving you what you want and you still getting angry. What must I do Milani, what?", why is he screaming like this?

If I'm no longer if any use its fine I'll walk out of here as if I didn't enter. He does not need to give me all this sass!

“You do not have to do a thing Nhlanzeko, move aside so I can get dressed and gladly leave your massive fipple story mansion and go to my Koo can house”, yes I know I’m being an unnecessary lunatic but whatever.

Just for extra drama I push him out the way.

Why am I being so petty?

“Milani...”, he’s calling for me now, what he came back to his senses?

“Yeah?”

“You forgot your watch”, he says, stretching his hand towards me. Okay, he won’t say bye or look at me. Shame.

I carry my huge behide down the steps of hell, thinking about the stories I will have to tell ma. The stack of cash in my hand, the disappearance. I call her everyday even for two

seconds but I always make sure to call and now...

I hear glass shatter and immediately I scream, I don't wait to hear it again. They get louder – these glass cracks and that's when I realize these are guns. I've heard a ton these both at home and here however they are always from miles away from me. Hearing them so close, so attentively, literally smelling the smoke coming from the muzzle sets a different feeling within one's heart.

The gunshots are getting more frequent and loud they panel through my ears like knives. My body is frozen I do not know what to do or if I should run and hide or just stand here and scream. I'm slowly losing it.

“Milani!”, judging by the shots fired he's coming from behide me.

“Come here”, he lets out his hand and pulls me up when I give him my hand. I’m still screaming.

Here he is brushing me gently and asking me to ssshhh, it’s hard to ssshhh when you trying to dodge a bullet from hitting your ass.

“I need you to trust me”, he says.

I nod, I’m nodding at everything he says right now.

“I’ll count to three and you will run to the kitchen okay. Wait for me there, alright?”, this house a kitchen. I’m about to ask when a bullet hits him. Okay I’m out, he can die alone.

But –

“will you be okay ...”

“Woman do you want us to die in this house, Move!”, he pushes me.

I watch him struggle to lift his arm up to defend himself. “God please save us”, I pray to myself.

I wait for him in the kitchen, snuggled under the counter. Ever seen death play dice in front of your eyes?

“Get up let’s go”, he pulls me out the back.

That was quick. He has a gate at the back? Talk about smooth criminals.

He opens my door and closes it for me then runs to his door and hops in. The gun is now on his lap. I look at him and he’s not even shaking, not breaking a single sweat. He looks too calm and seems as though he has things under control.

“Do you want to go home or must I book you into a hotel?”, who asks such questions after what just went down.

“Nhlanzeko what was that? Who were those people?”, my mouth is wet. That question was suppose to stay inside my head.

“Idiots who think they scare me. Where do you want to spend the night?”, he can barely drive with that injured arm of his.

“Home”, I respond.

“Will you be able to direct me?”, he asks.

“Yes I will, it’s in ...”

“Cato Ridge I know, after seeing how crazy you are I had to dig on who exactly you are. Never know if I was sitting with Terminator’s daughter”, jokes at times like these.

“Did they hurt you?”, his eyes are back to normal. And I see no veins on his neck. Whew.

“No they didn’t”

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He left me inside the gate and drove off, must say I felt bad for some odd reason. It felt wrong of me to just watch him leave and not go with him. To sort the mess.

Ah MaZikode, shouted at me as expected and then started treating me like I'm dying in the next 40 minutes.

She said she was about to report me missing and set out search groups all around town. Knowing my mother she would have done that for real. It feels good though to be back home, to safety and warmth although my mind still drives back to whether Nhlanzeko is safe or not. Poor man saved my life today. Ugh I feel so bad.

“You do not look good”, ma strokes my hair back to awaken my wild thoughts. I am far from okay.

“Yes I’m not good ma, I think I did something bad. He did not deserve my attitude”, I say.

“What he?”, here it goes.

“This guy came to me telling me about marrying his dead great grandfather something about a curse or whatever. I refused then he kid... then we fought and I said some things nje it was a mess”, if I told her about the kidnapping there would be hell to pay.

“Why would a stranger come to you and ask that nonsense?”

“I don’t know ma but before we fought he said something about this thing pulling me out of these bad lucks and poverty...”

“It sounds like what that prophet told me the other day. Remember he said you have a responsibility”

And the light bulb springs on! How could I forget that, okay I didn’t forget it but I was

trying my level best to ignore it. I don't know, it's scary to imagine your life being handed to an ancestor. Eish, where will I get Nhlanzuko now?

Oh wait I have Mzayfani's number on my phone let me try it. Am I ready for what I'm about to start though especially after tonight?

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

“Yah. Msunu. Kanyoko”, he utters one word at a time. With each utterance he combines a piece of his gun, wipes it, stares at it with admiration and cocks vigorously then lays it down the man’s lap.

All sorts of crazy thoughts whirl inside his mind and cringes his soul. What Pumpkin witnessed tonight angered him to the bone. The look of terror on her face, caused a tiny glitch in his sanity during what happened and now. It’s the possessiveness in him that fracture his sanity, yes he’ll admit it that over the two days that crazy woman has been in his house Nhlanzeko has grown possessive over her. Perhaps because it’s his great grandfather’s future wife.

On that note, he actually called Mesuli after hearing what Milani had to say about her situation and asked what could be done to save the situation. Obviously he got shouted at first and then Mesuli told him to let her go. This decision must come from her, that she is ready to do this because at the end of the day, impure intentions are not accepted at the alter. Nothing will go right. So that's what Mesuli did. Although he's sure she will never come back, what smart person would agree to sell themselves short like that?

Right, back to the idiot tied to the chair. His body is marked by deep cut scars and blood oozing out the wounds. The one eye is completely shut and his upper lip is busted. There was a fight between them two prior Nhlanzenko tying him up in the garage. He keeps

coughing blood some times choking on it and bringing it back out his mouth. Any other person would have puked watching this, Nhlanzeko on the other hand smiles at cherries and rainbows. Clearly he's satisfied with himself.

"H-e-l-p", the man coughs.

Beside the fact that Nhlanzeko's house is isolated from the rest of the neighbourhood, this garage is far from the front. You can yell your lungs out and not even people inside the house will hear you. All he's doing is awaking the scenes Nhlanzeko hates of hearing Milani scream for help once the gunshots broke out. All that is awaking his fast asleep beast. Like mentioned before, he has grown to be fairly protective of her.

"Save your breath, your cries cannot exceed this aluminium door. So now... where were

we?", Nhlanzeko springs into a crooked smile and polishes his cigar cutter. Instantly the chair rattles, the guy must probably know what is coming next. In every fight he puts in, one thing he just make sure of is that his fingers are put of reach.

"Right... what brings you here Jeffrey?", he questions, keeps quiet then laughs slowly.

"Oh so you want me to start with you tongue...", Nhlanzeko nears Jeffe with the cigar cutter in his hand ready to snap Jeffe's tongue into two equal halves. He is asking for it anyway.

"No no no, I'll talk Ngcobo my broda I'll talk", Jeffe bellows. The vibrating chair is caused by the jiggling legs. Death is nearing him with each breath he takes.

"Mmmh I'm listening", Nhlanzeko sits back down on his singular leather couch, book in one

hand and a cup of hot strong Jacobs coffee in the other. He is in his elements meaning whether Jeffe corporates or licks his toes or whatever. He will not be breathing when he comes out that door.

“She- I... we are friends Ngcobo really good friends. She was my girlfriend’s roommate and that is how we met, I do not have malicious intentions about her my broda I promise”, his lips continue to quiver.

Nhlanzeko spends a second or two studying Jeffe, trying to feel a pinch of sympathy or guilt. Nothing comes about. The book is left aside so is the coffee, his elbows meet his knees and his knuckles meet his chin.

“Do you know what Fyodor Dostoevsky once said about a lying man?”, Nhlanzeko asks.

Jeffe shakes his head to answer, speaking seems like a drag and only inflicts more pain to his wounds.

“He once said, ‘Lying is a man’s privilege over all other organisms. If you lie – you get to the truth. Lying is what makes a man. Not one truth has been reached without first lying about fourteen times or so that’s honourable in its own way; well, but we can’t even lie with our own minds. Lying in one's own way is better than telling the truth in someone else’s way, in the first case you are a man – in the second no better than a canary The truth cannot go away but life can be nailed shut. Do you understand that?”, He looks up at Jeffe after drilling his eyes on the bloody white tiles.

Jeffe is gawped, from all that he in my caught ‘life can be nailed shut’, the rest slipped through his mental grip.

“Okay I understand you do not want to be here anymore and quite frankly I do not either so what you say – we wrap this up with the truth and both flea our separate ways”, Nhlanzeko keeps on twirling that cutter around his index finger as a trigger warning to Jeffe.

“Let’s try it again. What was your plan with Milani, why did you blast my house for her?”, the cutter slowly slips around Jeffe’s exposed penis hood.

“I told you man, I wanted to save her”, Jeffe cries out loud. Nhlanzeko closes the cutter and watches the hood drop to the ground. Jeffe’s cry intensifies.

“Quit the blue murder! We both know you are fooling me Jeffery; since when do you own a SBR weapon? Speak the truth you wanted to ship her didn’t you? Jeffery let me tell you something: I grew up in the street corners I

know what shit goes down where; when and how. I know all these underground truck movements and all the know-it-all-thugs who think they have made it in life by being on the most wanted list. I know every operation that happens on this turf, so I know you bullshitting me Jeffery and the sad part is; I really admired you, I thought you were clean hustling and not like your fellow traffickers”, Nhlanzeko rises from the chair.

“What stopped you?”, he bespeaks.

Jeffe cannot utter a single word to save his life, excruciating is not a word that brings justice to describing the amount of pain he’s in. The two balls of wisdom has shrunk back inside their cave. Sweat particles form like floods on his face.

“Just kill me, Nhlanzeko”, Jeffe coughs up and cries further.

Nhlanzeko chokes down on his coffee,
astonished written on his face.

“Me kill you? No no no Jeffery my man I'm on a fast, I do not kill people when I'm fasting. I let them die on their own”, he smiles.

“I was never going to ... kill her ... or traffic her”, Jeffe spits out.

“Why?”, Nhlanzeko presses.

“I could not do it, there was something powerful about her ... I was not going to –”

Nhlanzeko agrees with Jeffe on that one, there is something resilient and impregnable about her, she has that feistiness that brings a man to his knees – yea his friends have seen it too. She can be forward and damn irritating as well.

“Bye Jeffery”, Nhlanzeko waves and goes straight to the game room. That is where he asked his brothers to wait for him.

He finds them sharing laughs, beer and snacks. Nhlanzeko shakes his head in disappointment.

“I have never seen this. Grown Zulu men eating cheese and grapes food platters with hundred percent fruit juice and beer, sies”, he chuckles after them.

“That is what happens when you have a woman in your life. You get to taste the finer things in life”, Scelo brags.

The fruits and cheese come from his lunchbox, Bruna prepares two portions for him. The one he eats and the one he either throws away or give to someone else. Being healthy is a woman's thing according to Scelo.

“I do not need one thank you”, Nhlanzeko sits on the table and throws a couple of peanuts down his throat.

“Ppssh what man does not need a woman? You fooling yourself”, Scelo says.

“Me, I am that man. This thing of coming back to a lunatic everyday and having to deal with these devil’s mood swings exhausts me. I rather live my life according to me my books without being controlled”, He opens one beer and chugs half at once.

“Then you end up drinking your salt away”, Scelo laughs.

“Who said I do not get pussy? I’m just over this committing to a female thing”, the wounds of what Nokwazi did to him rise like never before.

“It’s okay if you still love her, we all make mistakes man. You do not have to forgive her to be with her. Everybody deserves a second chance, right?”, Mzi bluffs.

The two frown, wondering where this is coming from.

“Just like that? ... You forget that girl hurt us deeply, played us and on top of that she is pregnant with one of our sperms”, Nhlanzeko.

“We should resent her with open chests!”, he adds.

“Do you hate her right now?”, Mzi asks him.

Is it not obvious?

“Exactly. Give her one more chance at it, I know you want to. As for the baby, whether it is mine or yours we'll work something out”, Mzi is like this in general. Always keeping people on their toes.

One minute he makes you cringe in his presence, next you so comfy you cannot get over him and next he just downright shocks you out of your bones, like now.

“Call her, get things sorted and maybe you might score a shot at happiness again. Life is too short”, Mzi shrugs.

And it's short for real, today he could have died. His arms still pains by the way.

"I'll think about it", he'll think about it for now. Consider it later.

"The house is quiet where is the crazy woman?", Mzi guffaws. Milani strikes him as a mental case PERIOD.

"I took her home today, Mesuli's instructions. Apparently she has to return on her own will for things to run smoothly", he sighs.

Honestly speaking his hope is gone. Milani is probably never going to come back.

"Maybe we can get somebody else to do it, pay them off for it", Scelo suggests.

"Nah, Mesuli strictly said it has to be Pumpkin. My mother picked her to fill her shoes so I guess nobody else can be slipped in", he's sad.

Having her around was enjoyable.

“Pumpkin?”, the brothers ask in unison.

Fudge he forgot they do not know that word. Great now they'll think he has feelings for her.

“I call her that because I find no sense in her real name. what in the fuckery is Milani? If I was to marry her I would force her to change both name and surname”, he says.

“Ah he is considering marriage as well?”, Scelo gasps. This is absolutely new to them, this Nhlanzeko.

“I’m speaking figuratively come one bro, that lady is crazy I would never last. Can you imagine she made me pull her underwear down”, till now Nhlanzeko has not recovered. That moment was beyond traumatic.

“What!? ... did you see the cookie?”, Scelo whisks his grin up.

“Yeah boi. Fresh and clean, I do not do tongue shit on vaginas but that one. Ahh bafo I would

dive in with no hesitation. Damn”, just thinking of it got his chief officer of sexual activities excited.

“How am I related to these idiots? I don’t know, there must have been a swap in heaven because it can’t be”, Mzi tickles himself in his corner.

“Do not act innocent. MaGumbi’s cookie drives you mad too”, Scelo interjects.

Mzi folds his lower lip in-between his teeth, “It’s so ... I do not know any word suitable. It wraps your head in a small little world far away, moves your blood in different directions type of cookie. And then there’s Matefa, the grip bafo, the grip!”, now he’s losing it?

“A man who gets his bread buttered in both sides ... must be nice”, Nhlanzuko says.

“It was not always nice. We had been through too much, I do not know how to show them

appreciation. Zimi is not picking her phone up”, they all cringe. Uh that split second thought of a man humping their sister pisses them off.

“Throw them a party or something like that. Invite their friends and colleagues”, Scelo suggests.

“That might work”, Mzi.

“Yeah it can. Get Bruna and Zimi to organize it”, Nhlanzeko adds on.

“And pumpkin, how can we forget her?”, Scelo and poking the snake in its hole.

“You will get out of my house Bob The Builder”, Nhlanzeko flings his index finger as a warning.

“They cannot find ma”, Mzi says to his brothers. Ruining their moment.

“Can’t find ma how?”, Scelo is the first to ready himself.

“I don’t know, Nombuso just sent me a text saying MaSbisi called saying she cannot find ma”

They need no further information. They must drive home right this second. Brining the wives and kids will just make the situation more tense, so leaving them behind is a better solution. Scelo sends Bruna a fast message informing her where he'll be.

“I won’t be home any time soon. Family emergency. I love you and take care of yourself, if you feel scared to sleep alone go over to my brother's house, Nombuso is there”.

Thereafter switches the phone. She will definitely call but he has nothing to say to her so better switch off the phone early.

They drive inside the yard, park anywhere. Hop out and rush to the main house. They are

welcomed by strange faces, two old women and one old man. He is the priest he can tell by the bible and purple cape. This must be the first time Nhlanzeko is face to face with the priest, hence he feels weird about the looks he's getting from him.

“Cover your tattoos”, Scelo whispers to him and hands him a jacket.

“This is my body nigga has no right to judge what’s on MY body unless I came out of his vagina!”, he’s not shy about calling the priest a nigga or saying he has a vagina. The women churn up and clap once.

“Where is my mother?”, Mzi daunts on MaSbisi.

“I don’t know ngane yami, I came here to the house empty. I tried calling her but her phone did not get through”, MaSbisi speaks like a

raped kitten when Nhlanzeko is around. Fear or guilt is the reason.

“Where were you this whole time kanti?”, Mzi loudens his voice.

MaSbisi is tongue-tied, she cannot mention her booty calls.

“Scelo stay with them, Nhlanzeko let’s go. Where is Zimi?”, Mzi asks for the last time.

MaSbisi shrugs her shoulders, avoiding meeting her eyes with Nhlanzeko’s and he notices.

“Nx”, that’s all Mzi has to say.

She is an adult, why isn’t she acting like one? Careless mothers kiss him off.

Nhlanzeko opted to take over the wheel, Mzi's state of mind is not at its best. Anything could happen.

This place is large, they have no idea where to start looking for her.

“Try her phone again”, Nhlanzeko.

Mzi does just that, “It’s not ringing at all”.

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The clock is heading to 23:00pm and nobody has walked through... spoke too early, MaShelembe walks in looking down and drained. She looks in pain, physically she can barely put a foot forward without precautions.

“Hawu MaShelembe”, MaBisi calls out first.

“Ma?”, Mzi wants to hug her, however gets rejected.

“I want to bath and get some rest”, she speaks softly, powerless and that’s not who she is. Mzi follows her, so does Nhlanzeko.

“People are worried sick about you and all you care about is taking a bath and getting rest?”, that’s the first thing he says soon as the bedroom door is shut.

“I had a long day, Mzayfani. I do not need this”, MaShelembe says.

“We also had long a long day searching all over for you, and here you are acting ...”

“MZAYFANI!”, she reprimands him. Mzi keeps quiet.

“Oh I still know how to tame my dog”, she sarcastically gasps.

“We worried about you”, Nhalnzeko.

“There is nothing to worry about. I was out doing what a mother must do to keep her own from danger regardless of how much what she does belittles her image”, she has said too much. All she wants now is a bottle and water.

“What do you mean?”,

“Mzayfani understand mfana wami some things
I cannot share with you. Please close the door
ok your way out I need to sleep”

The boys share a look then a sigh.

“If it’s what you want”, Mzi sighs and leaves her
to it.

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☆NOKWAZI ZONDO☆

If there was a pit to abandon parents, I would
be the one leading the pack. I hate her to
death, actually no I hate her more than that.
Woman always find a way to get me on my last

damn nerve. Curse Jeffe for doing me like this too!

Since he just disappeared I went homeless and so here I am back in HELL with this nightmare in heels.

“Nokwazi you think these dishes will form wings and wash themselves?”, she yells like a madman.

“And these pots too, sies uyinuku!”, whoooosa Nokwazi. Just breathe... in and out that’s what the doctor told me.

“Yewena!”, okay fuck this whooosa shit.

I drag myself out of my room and to the kitchen, where the devil is. She looks at me like a disgusting disease, as if she never fell pregnant.

And is that my ...

“You wearing my dress ma?”, I’m so hurt.

“It’s not like it would fit your whale behide anyway, besides who will you wear it for, all your boyfriends left your poison ass and probably out there finding better. Yazi I regret not listening to your father, I should have aborted you wena”, the words I grew up with still stagger my heart to bits. Sometimes I question whether she is my real mother or just a woman who picked me up from the streets cause that is what she makes me feel.

“This is not that Nigerian boy's house, you do not walk around like Queen. Wash these dishes and clean your sister's room and stop being useless”, she screams.

“Ma I am tired, I have been cleaning all day”, literally I do not think I can move a single foot and not faint.

“You should have kept your aids ridden legs closed then! Get!”, she points me to the sink

and continues puffing her face with MY make up. I never use it anymore, I always walk around looking like a zombie. Guess it's true hey, you never know what you have till its lost. I never knew Nhlanzuko meant so much to me till now.

“When I come back I better find this house clean”, she walks out. I wait till I hear the door banging and finally I can breathe. Forget me washing this, I’m tired and this baby is not going down any easier on me.

She’ll chew me when she comes back it’s fine. I’m use to it Anyhoo.

Immediately when I touch the pillow I zoom away ... damn the ringing phone.

“Pregnant woman are not to be disturbed in their sleep!”, I scream at the very top of my lungs to whomever this is.

“Can we meet up, somewhere private?”, that voice. I know it.

“Nhlanzeko...”

“Can we meet up?”, he does not sound fond of the idea of meeting me. But I’ll take whatever chance I have.

“Hello?”

“Yes, yes we can meet. Just give me the time and place”, I’m speaking in squabbles, my mind is racing and my heart is silent.

“Howick house, 14:30 sharp”

“Okay...”

He just hangs up like that? Maybe he just wants to kill me. Oh my gosh maybe he found out about Jeffe and I? crap!

It was nothing serious, I just had to leave this house because I knew this devil would harm my child. Jeffe was the only escape I had.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

I have the worst fever when I wake up, not the usual cold we get from staying up whole night sharing stories between siblings outside around a fire. No. This one I can feel it dragging me near the pits of hell, the polo neck underneath my pinafore worsen the thing!

I took grandpa already and made glucose mixture, normally it finishes the pain in two days if not one. See, my blood is not use to dusty rural environments anymore. I'm a lavish bish, even my ancestors are lost here.

“Sis’Milani khona okucelayo”, Soka runs in my room forgetting to remove his dirty shoes.

Ugh I applied dunk just yesterday and now this ... satellite dish ears child filths my floor.

Anyway, I'm sure it is one of the neighbours or Amanda ... maybe Sizwe. Whoever it is I have no interest in meeting them or forcing a conversation about missing goats and newly ordered muthis from the sangoma across the river. I just want to bury myself in food and sleep ... forever!

After I've put on my tommies and retied my pinafore I leave the room, headed towards the gate for whoever is calling me. I hate it when village people visit in the morning because they know it's like a custom that when a person visits you while there is food on the table you must share. Even if you have to share YOUR portion with somebody that is not your guest to begin with.

“I thought you would never come back”, he smiles. Great, it’s step daddy.

I’m not saying I have a Kardashian taste in men but ma's taste needs to be evaluated by the executive board members of looks.

“I wasn't gone for that long nje baba”, I smile back.

“We were used to having you around and now that you were gone we felt the void most”, he smiles wider. We can go whole day sharing smiles and meaningless conversations. He must just say it that he wants some tea and I will gladly spill. It is not like him and my mother do not set me as their cool down topic after doing their dishonourable things. Snake park tends to milk gossip out of women without a hassle.

“Haike, it’s good that I’m back permanently this time. Maybe I must just accept that town life is not for me, this ... is where my origin is. My

identity; my destiny. It's here, my beginning and end", I've thrown the towel shame.

For how long must I carry it on my shoulders?

"Let us take a walk ntombi yami", ntombi yami?

When did he graduate to calling me his little girl? I thought Amanda forces things, this grandpa does worse!

I look around the area to spot who I could scream for if he tries funny business with me.

Sigh.

I close the gate and begin the stroll with him. His hands are deep inside his knitted jersey, my mother gifted him that jersey on his birthday last year. I told her it was a weak gift, that was before I saw the madness he bought her. A make up set, who buys a 50 something years old a make up set? That too that olden days one, with dusty pink and yellow lime. Yikes.

However I love the respect they both have for one another, it freaks me out but gives me warmth at the same time. Knowing that even if I leave this world my mother will be in good loving hands.

“Your mother came into my house three hours prior giving birth to you, screaming at the top of her legs to get this big head out of her...”

My head is far from big, if anything her head is big. It looks like two portions of a full watermelon.

“...I did not know what to do, I am a man these things were never taught to me. Regardless of the fact that I was raised by a single mother. I freaked out Milani, not knowing what to put together or what to do next. Her yelling did not tenderize my situation either.”, geeks things we do for love hey.

“Hours and hours passed by like minutes with no action taken. If I asked her whether I should call a midwife for her or at least one of the church ladies she bluntly refused. Said it was not time, not according to the doctor's opinion. She said I had to help her because nobody else would, and so I did what any madman would do in such a situation. I contacted my mother who at that time was entering the last phase of her initiation. I asked her what to do, bring warm water and a clean towel but the after that what happens. My mother told me the opposite of what I wanted to know, she said burn her izinyamazana thereafter light the candles and call upon her elders.”, he stops walking, stares afar from where we are standing – over a huge rock in the middle of a stream I have never seen. The smell of its soil reels peace and happiness from deep within my heart.

“I did not know your forefathers, I had no idea where I would get that information. But she said I must forget about that, my main focus should be you. As for what to call out, they’ll guide me. And so I did exactly what my mother said, kneeled before your mother and started reciting Ngcobo clan names”, he lifts his hand up as I was about to chip in. mxm.

“I don’t know why but it just happened. Under normal circumstances babies who were born like you would have most probably died. I do not know if you have noticed but nobody messes with you Milani and if they do there is always hell for them to pay. You might not understand now but that ancestor marked his territory on you from birth”, he’s back to strolling. Faced down and in deep conscious.

“Marked his territory? What am I kanti baba some chosen queen?”, I only read about such

things but never believe them. It's fiction to me.

"Call it whatever you want to call it. Bottom line you have a duty ... A responsibility... to restore peace in that household. Restore what was there before whatever happened happened. You not there to romanticize since I can see how that bothers you", he chuckles.

"But you said I'm the chosen one", I say. Now I'm lost, completely took an off ramp and lost!!

"No, you said that I did not. You were not picked to go get married with their son and move to England with seven babies and feed each other strawberries.", hawu kanti what is the point of suffering if I will not be paid for it.

"You were chosen to take up the responsibility of the great grandmother of that household which means you are there as umakoti weThonga, you are there to be the one person

that intermediates the dead and the alive in that family – cousins; siblings and all. You are there to instil order in that home and re-welcome every wife into YOUR kraal. You are there to build what their great grandfather wanted from his wife. You are there to serve him ...”, ahhh and it gets worse.

Right when you think you have seen it in Nigerian movies, my ancestors think no man let’s give our child a taste of what she admires. “You and only you have the right to that kraal; that traditional beer and that alter or else that family will fall apart like the Egyptian walls and kids will die like flies. You ... you will however suffer the most ngane yami”, woow. I think African parents should quit pep talking, this is horrible. In movies talks like these consist of ‘Do you like that boy? Is he treating you right’ not this scary thing.

“There is no running away from this?”, as if ...

“No ngane yami. It is a long and very difficult journey do not for once thing it is going to sail smoothly. Accepting this is only the prologue of the book of the rest of your life. They did not pick you from a garden of flowers for nothing, they knew nobody will fit this position quite like you. It is just a matter of you believing in those words yourself”, he gives me a hug. More tender than what my mother gives me and now I understand why, why she is rather distant with me compared to my brothers. She knew this whole time, she knew I never belonged to her well not according to this old man that captured me. The being hard on me and pushing me to know things at an early age, she was preparing me for such. By the way I knew how to cook and brew the best beer at the age of 13 at that age most girls were interested in learning to how to slop their saliva all over

boy's faces. And the having to humble myself in front of my in-laws talk which i dreaded because I always made it clear I do not want marriage. She knew what she was training me for, not that I see myself humbling before a man who overrides his position on top of my head. If my so called husband thinks he will pull my nose around, oh well he has another 360 on his way. It will be two bulls in a kraal, jeez I'm kidding wouldn't want to wake up with half my hair gone.

"Lets go back home now before your cold gets worse", he brushes my back as we walk back home. I keep tapping my phone thinking if I should or should not. I mean I have already heard that it is out of my control anyway. I will accept it whether I want to or not so what is the point in denying what has been forcefully written for me.

'Please come fetch me. I think I'm ready to accept things... all of them with their heavy loads and ups and downs. I'm well prepared Nhlanzeko', sent.

Whooooooooooooo. Funny because I will be whoooosssa-ing my whole damn life!

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☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO ☆

She came earlier than I thought she would, I said 14:30pm and she chooses to arrive at 13:00 but anyway that was of great help to me. The faster we get this over with, the faster I can get a move on with my life because I could see how much this burden left me on a standstill.

I would hate to do what was done to me growing up.

“Do you want anything else?”, she finished my sandwich and left over mints. My helper prepares a meal for each day of the week not sure why that lady spoils me like this. I’m gaining weight.

“No thank you”, she shies away feeling embarrassed. Out of everything she has put me through, eating like a cow is what makes her feel embarrassed. I can never comprehend women. Ever.

“Okay can we talk now?”

She nods and pulls her bottled water closer. Oh she will need it!

“What has already transpired cannot be undone as we all know that, you had your reasons for doing what you did and no I do not want to know them. They are for you and your

demons to know. But, none of us can fully move on from anything until the entire truth has been laid on the table. What happened exactly Nokwazi ... from the very beginning till now”, I’ve battled figuring it out by myself. I need her to fill the void, answer my questions to close the gap inside me.

“I don’t know Nhlanzuko. I needed love, someone to love me recklessly and comfort me. You offered me that, love at its finest but Mzi offered me that father figure I have never had yet always longed for”, she’s crying... on my leather couch ... I cannot watch this. These couches are my babies, after my book shelf.

“How many times did I ask you if you want me to find your father for you and you said no. Or what you had already found one in my brother's penis?”, I’m not angry I swear to God I'm not angry. I'm livid, and I'm very calm.

“I know what you said Nhlanzuko I am sorry it’s just that ... When you want away to prison I felt lonely Nhlanzuko and worse my mother was abusing me again, I needed to be in someone’s arms. To feel safe and loved, baby please”

“ubaby?? Udzakiwe Nokwazi yezwa. We all have emotional baggage on us, I had a terrible past but for you I put it aside and focused on loving you only and you do... forget it. What else happened?”, I don’t think she’ll tell me. I’m sure she doesn’t even think I know.

“Nothing happened...”

Why did she just lie? I’m out of here this so useless.

“Wait Nhlanzuko, okay I will be honest. I met with a man named Jeffe, it was for financial support and plus my mother kicked me out of her house at that time. Nhlanzuko please try to understand me, it was a ...”, if I sit and listen to

this I will burst, it's better I take a drive. That's before I notice something on her neck and arms which she quickly hides.

“Remove your hand I saw that”

She removes slowly, flinching when I try to touch her.

“Your mother did that?”, I know it's her mother I just want to hear her say it.

“Yeah, she accused me of flirting with her blessers and ended up beating me up”, she covers it again.

“These look fresh, she hit while you were carrying my child... I mean the child...”

“It's yours, the baby is yours Nhlanzenko. I was 4 weeks and I hadn't had ... you know with Mzi for....”

“You keep the dates in my mind? Sometimes you disgust me. Go take a shower; we going to

the doctor afterwards. Those bruises must be checked out sooner than later”, I take my phone out to check if I have any plans for today not that I would not cancel them for my child’s sakes but I need to know.

I come across a number I do not know,
‘Please come fetch me... I think I’m ready to accept things’, Pumpkin?

“Nhalnzeko, thank you for this. Giving us a chance”, she must be high on space and nyaope!

“I’m doing this for my child. You and I are over with Nokwazi. We are never going back to where we were”, I actually have bigger problems than her sobs. I grab my key on the counter and run out ... oh wait I forgot my gun. I don’t know but being Pumpkin makes me feel like a gun is needed.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

☆BRUNA ADAMS☆

“Those files need to be checked and sent to the prison for the trial record processing. These as well, I’m not sure if they still need them or what but send them anyway. Bring me those records of that serial killer”, my head is rotating in circles. I need a break, two minutes break that’s all before I spin till my brain cells stop functioning.

“The Shaka Mngomezulu one?”, she asks a question she knows the answer to. This softening interns business is not on for me. Nobody went soft on us in fact there were days where you would hide inside a dead body’s sheet because you need a BREAK!

“Yes Fraizer, That file and set up a new day for his check up”, I’m so over this case.

Clearly there is nothing wrong with this man I do not understand what they think we can do about it. It’s been evaluation after evaluation I’m pretty sure the psychologists in charge of this case are stone cold angry now.

“Okay Dr Adams. Any thing else?”, she stretches a convincing fake smile and just for that I’ll add onto her frustration.

“Cold water please”, I say.

She blows up and rolls her eyes balls at me. Flapping her weave against my face too, sigh. The thought of hating another woman because of a fucken man who is a pest to ones life seems very ridiculous to me. Yes, the bitch hates me because Dr whatever his name is, is still courting and flirting with me. I've lost strength in telling him to back the fuck off

because I have a mad Zulu man from Richmond and lord knows to never mess with those.

“I would pop her eye out if I were you”

I do not need to turn around to know that is Nkabenhle, the good intern. The only reason people may dislike her is because she is verrry blunt probably because she knows how gangster her family is, those people built roadblocks on N3 because other taxi owners were interfering with their routes. Shaa – oh yes Zimu taught me the in-laws lingow.

“She is not worth it trust me”, I have a feeling no work will get done anymore might as well relax.

“A bitch that tramps over you will always be worth a fist on the face. This is south Africa baby girl, you must be on toes at all costs”, she

sits on the patient bed and sips her bev inside her flask.

“Is that alcohol?”

She looks at me briefly, “I have so many family problems Bruna mngee. I swear those people will make me strangle myself but at least Bhut'Zenzo will talk to baba for me to get my own house now. I need a break from them”, I know all about toxic family. I left when? Yet no phone call from anyone till now and then it's Selo's family and their endless issues.

“Well if you do not find a place soon you can always stay with me”, I doubt Selo would mind.

“Nah friend I don't want to step all over your boundaries like that. Finding the place is not the problem, convincing my family is the problem”, shame I feel sorry for her.

And this thing has been worrying her a lot, I see it all the time but keep to myself. Her life is not

my business, that's what Selo tells me when I tell him about her situation.

“What's with your fam sis?”, I want to laugh but I hold myself.

“Shit sis shit, regardless of that though I love them like hell.”

“How do you do that, love people who are emotionally draining you?”, that question was not meant to leave my mind. I didn't want it to.

“You do not choose family Brunz. I did not choose my family yes but I also know my family did not choose this life of violence. So it would be unfair of me to use that against them, everyone in there is facing demons. Never let darkness overcloud the happy moments and love between you guys”

How I wish I can do that with my family. Maybe not all, but just my aunt and grandmother.

Cannot believe they abandoned me because I chose to love a black South African man.

“Do you want to go smoke?”, she has them rolled already?

“You are such a star!”

“Tell me something I do know already”

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This is the best parking lot ever!

Not many cars but so much privacy for smokers; sexers and other thangs. From here you see half the city, it's a beautiful view and very helpful when it comes to calming yourself down after traumatic surgery. This is my sanctuary ... right after my man's arms. I should call him after this smoke session.

“This is real good”, I’ve been complimenting her weed, I cannot get enough.

“I know hey. Hope you do not get me into trouble with your husband. Does he know you smoke?”, this child..

“Do your brothers know you smoke?”

“Okay I get it. There is a housewarming next month at home, well actually after a long ass fight my brother finally purchased a golf estate so it’s a celebration of his blooming career as a real estate agent. You should come”, she gives me extra glistening eyes and pulls a pouted lip on me.

I laugh, “You look like my puppy when she wants sex...”, now we both laughing.

“A puppy?”

“Yes I have a puppy sis and I’m not crazy that girl can sulk for days if she hasn’t gotten her wiener”, I giggle. I see a lot of myself in Pukie.

“I’ll see. I might show up, with my girls maybe”, I shrug. I hope they tag along because going there alone is scary for me.

“Okay you’ll let me know then”

We enjoy the silence, the fresh air breezing through our noses and hitting against our skins gently. This has to be the best place in this...

“Hm-mm Bruna may I have a word with You?”, some gent calls for me.

The joint flies off my hand as he takes his glasses off. Oh God!

Shit, I choked on it.

“Here is some water”, he says handing me still water. I gobble as much as I can and then take a break. Nkabenhle is gone, bloody traitor!

“Thanks”, I cannot look him in the eye, I’m too embarrassed to do so.

“Your first time?”, he’s looking back at the joint I dropped on the floor when I saw him. I shake my head, and watch him chuckle.

“My brother knows?”, he asks.

I shake my head again. My head still bowed as we walk to his car I think.

“You should tell him, Scelo is a health freak so if you do not want problems in the future let him know now. He won’t control your decision but it’s good to be informative in a relationship”, can I be spared the guilt-trip advise. I know I shouldn’t be smoking but hey my work is tiring. Plus Selo knows how I cannot handle being in surgery.

“I had a request for you... Actually it is what brought me here”, he rubs his palms and leans on my boss’s car. I would not dare that crazy Sotho man, he’ll chop this fool if he finds him leaning on his car.

Wait did he greet me?

“A request like what?”, my tone is snappy. I get like that when I’m high.... Because ... why are you fucken talking to me?

Just STFU!

“I can find somebody else if you are busy or unavailable”, he says.

I wish he could.

“No it is fine I do not mind. I am free, anything for family”, am I forcing it too much?

Nah I think I’m convincing. But on the real side, I am willing to help.

“I do not know these things by the way, so I will leave it all to you. I just have a sense of what I want to do”, he’s all giddy and excited all of a sudden.

“I’m planning a surprise party for my wives, but I do not know what to do. I know what they like

but that's all hence I'm here to ask you plan this with me. I'll assist where I can assist but the overall will be done by you”, his smile is so wide I can barely hear what he is saying.

“That’s so cute. I will most definitely plan it with you Mzi I mean this is big. When are you planning on doing it?”, I ask.

He swipes his phone, smiling and blushing to himself. I feel like I’m a third wheel on virtual reality. Shaa hand me a packet of tissues.

“She kicked”, he says putting his phone back inside his pocket. Does Selo blush like this behide my back or I’m living a lie?

“Awww it is a girl?”, he nods.

“The date has not been set but I'm thinking before the chaos erupts so maybe by next week Saturday”, chaos?

“Alright I will start preparing right now”, I’m lying. I always leave things for last minute.

“Thank you MaAdams”, we hug, a brief and collected hug and then he leaves.

The witch returns.

“Gimme his numbers please”, she licks her lips.

“He has two wives...”

“I don’t mind being number 3”, Nkabenhle though.

“And six children”

Her face drops. I knew that would do the trick.
Nkabenhle resents the testicles out of babies.

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☆MILANI ZWANE☆

“How does cabbage brought by Milani Zwane taste? Nice isn’t?”

She jabs me a fatal look. Chews more then swallows and goes back to looking at her plate.

“It does not taste like rubber burnt in waste fires huh?”, I’m just really trying to piss her off. It’s fun watching her get mad and riled up. I will miss that part of her so much.

“And did you notice how white your teeth get when you brush with the Colgate I bought with my peanuts?”

“Take your food breadwinner ndini!”, she swings the plate towards me. I hold it and push it back to her. Laughing my behide off.

“I’m just playing with you old woman jeez”, I don’t even try wiping my tears because I know more are coming.

“When you done acting like a mad woman laughing at stupid jokes, go outside and fetch

my Enema from MaBhengu as well as iboza”, she orders, still annoyed by me.

“Is Soka still sick?”, I ask.

“No but you are”, the sass!

“Haibo, MaZwane I am a full grown woman I do not need to use an enema if I’m sick”, this woman is crazy.

“Whose roof are you under, Milani?”, ohh like mother like daughter I see.

“Yours”, I mumble.

“Exactly so what I say goes. MaBhengu njengamanje!”, her finger points me out her house. Gosh black parents are a scam shame.

I drag my feet to MaBhengu’s house which is not far from our house but it is quite a distance. Especially for a big woman. Oh no her filthy husband is there.

“Sanibonani ekhaya”, I greet by the gate.

“Ow sisi you back”, how does she know I left?

“Yes ma, I came back a few days ago”, I say.

“Come in sisi, you cannot be standing outside. Besides I just finished cooking sweet potatoes and mealies, I remember how much you love them”, gosh I cannot recall when last I ate those. I hate them with passion, I don’t get what the fuck got into me when I was younger.

“I’m in hurry for today, I left the pots at home. MaZikode sent me to fetch iboza. Oh and the enema”, I still cannot believe I’m getting abused at such a late age. Ugh.

“Are the boys giving her trouble?”, MaBhengu laughs. She knows her friend very well. Ma does not give us an enema for health reasons, nooo it is her way of punishing us.

“Yes as always”, I can never let the world know my shame! How will I face them ever again? I’m

too much of a hot head and a wet mouth to settle for such embarrassment.

She hands the things – I will not even call them their names. And adds two oranges. Who does this woman think I am? Oranges? R200 notes would have been better but okay I like oranges too.

I was kind of hoping I do not see this guy. Not any time soon and not with all that is about to happen in my life. He will make matters worse for me with his clingy self.

At least he is wearing proper clothes this time. Although I would get rid of that cap, and that ANC tee.

“Milkit”, he blushes.

Christ Jesus.

“Sizwe, how are you doing?”, I push a smile.

He holds my hand onto his chest and flaps his long lashes.

“Now that I have seen your beautiful face I am great. I love your hair”, this is my normal hair just did Bantu knots yesterday. I hate extensions and I cannot handle weaves so I chose to do Bantu knots.

“Thanks”

“We should go out some time, have lunch just the two of us”

“Were you watching that movie again?”, he laughs instead of replying.

“No silly I just really want to be with you, yazi ngiyakutha...”

“Pumpkin”, H-O-L-Y KAK!

What brings him here? Okay I called him but whyyy now, oh lord!

My throat dries up, oh my god. Do I run? Yeah I should probably run.

“Babe do you know this guy?”, SIZWE FOR FUCK SAKES!

“Can you not speak please or else we are dead”, I whisper to him.

Nhlanzeko nears us, slowly stepping towards me in particular.

“You talking?”, Nhlanzeko asks Sizwe.

“Yes I am talking. Who do you think you are calling my girlfriend stupid names like pumpkin?”, when we talk about me who don’t deserve voices we talking about Sizwe.

Nhlanzeko chuckles, not in a pleasant way. He looks at my hand resting on Sizwe’s chest and I see his jaw twitch. I immediately take my hand back to my chest and hinge my breath.

“Ndoda leave me and my girl alone see you making her scared”, sized clicks his tongue.

Hhha. I look at Nhlanzeko and notice his facial muscles relaxing. Whew.

But the eye raise! People I said the devil eye raise!

“Sizwe I think you need to go”, I pray he doesn’t act tough here because if shit goes south I will not hesitate leaving him here and running home.

“No he should go, we do not even know him. Coming here acting like the world’s God”, whose boyfriend is this?

“Sizwe I think its best you leave me alone. Go, please”, I’m saving him here.

“You heard what Pumpkin said.. leave or else in a matter of minutes you will be counting your teeth on this floor”, why do I sense he means every word?

“Leave my girl alone”, Sized kisses me on cheek and walks away leaving me with the monster.

Each time my eye meets his I turn them away. I cannot look at him.

It took everything in him to not beat the hell out of Sizwe. I saw that.

“You came so early”, that’s all I have.

“Did I disturb you and your Boy friend?”, oh c’mom.

“Stop acting like a mean girl, yes he was my boyfriend but we broke up”, I don’t remember breaking up with him verbally but sexually I long left his ass when he took four hundred hours to come.

“I’m not jealous or being a mean girl it’s just that you are a beautiful girl I expected something of your standards”, he knows of my standards now?

“You know I too never saw you as a guy that can be two timed by a girl so well”

It’s funny. I was joking. He was suppose to laugh but he’s not.

“Too soon?”

“Yeah. Let’s go”, he goes for my door first.

I didn’t mean to hurt him. Mara he also ticked me.

“I’m sorry I said that. I thought you know”

“It’s okay no need to explain. Nice hair, you look gorgeous”, he’s smiling again ... thank God.

“Ngiyabonga. Nhlanzuko, do you think we can make it work? All of it do you think we can survive it?”, that’s the only thing that bothers everyday. Me failing to do this. I may appear hard as rock but I crumble easily I just never show it because why would I when nobody can rebuild me expect me?

“To tell the truth I do not know Pumpkin. However, I know if we both stick to the assignment we can make it work. Although it will take time”, yeah well if he says so.

“Where is home?”, he asks.

Oh I forgot about that.

“There, the yellow house”, I forgot about this piece of embarrassment too. Crap!

“Some one has a constipation issue?”, he laughs.

“Shut your face, this is for my brothers not me!”, I take brooklets when I need them.

“You have brothers?”

I nod. That’s what I said right?

“How old?”, Nhlanzeko.

“Different ages. You have to come inside with me. My mother won’t let me go with you without seeing you”

He frowns.

Why is he frowning? What did he expect? I'm a girl after all I do not have the luxury of leaving my mother's house as I please.

"Come", I physically pull him out the damn car. The idiots are here, good. They'll ease his tension before he meets the gorilla.

"Look at that car Soka", I hear Thabiso shout from their ground. Oh gosh they won't stop. I know them.

"Yhoo boy whose is it and why is it parked in front of our gate?", that's Phiwe's voice.

These kids can't see us clearly.

"Aren't you going to greet him?"

They get a shock of their lives. And then it melts when the attention lingers on Nhlanzeko. I'm expecting him to say something to them, or

greet because clearly they are still judging him from within.

“You are my sister's boyfriend?”, Soka bombards us.

“Soka watch your tongue!”, I scold him.

“What is wrong with what he asked? We need to know who is warning sheets with our sister”, mmaye!

“Exactly, so that if they mess with you then we know who to deal with”, even Thabiso is for this mess?

Nhlanzeko chuckles softly behide me.

“To answer your question, no I am not her boyfriend”, Nhlanzeko just opened a conversation he should have never opened.

“Then what are you, her blesser?”, I give up. Soka truly took after me. I'm not sure how tricky that is but I'm not liking it so far.

“No”, he’s still laughing.

“Then what are you to our sister and why are you picking her up without our knowledge?”, Thabiso thins his eyes at Nhlanzeko.

“I’m a friend and we have somewhere to be so I’m here to fetch her”, he answers. I like these answers.

“You not planning funny business with her right, like shagging and all that nonsense”, Phiwe folds his arms after asking shit.

I hear Nhlanzeko chuckles and cough, “Man to man I mean you can see your sister and from that I’m sure you will know the answer. My arm never rests when she is around”, they all laugh together. Leaving me lost and confused. What happened to bad cop good cop interrogation?

“Wait until morning when she just woke up, we’ve seen a lot of arms rise up because of that”

Can they drop this arm talk!

“I personally welcome you to the family ...”

“...Nhlanzeko Ngcobo, call him
Malum'Nhlanzeko”, I say to them.

“Come on relax. I’m ankel to them”, he says.
Mxm.

“We welcome you ankel”, they all fist bump
and share more gent-jokes. I might as well go
back inside but ma is standing on the veranda
already so no need for that. What to say?

“I found the enema”, my smile so bright.

MaZikode is not paying me any attention. Her
eyes are set behide me. Can they please get
along.

“Sanibona ma”, he pulls his cap off and does a
little bow.

My mother remains silent. Taking her eyes from
the bottom of his pants to the top of his hair.

“Who is he?”, she asks.

I’m so afraid to tell her. I know this will hurt her so bad. Worse I haven’t told her I’m accepting my duties.

“I have decided to accept my duty ma, and the responsibilities I have. He ... he is the grandson I was brought to. His name is Nhlanzeko...”

“Hmm, and you did not see it fit to let me know as your mother? Or is it because I failed you as a parent that you could not see any need to let me know?”, she’s crying without a sound.

“No MaZikode it is not like that. I was scared to hurt you hence ...”

“Am I not hurt right now Milani?”, her voice rises up.

“I’ve been broken ever since the day I found out about this and now my daughter chooses to take decisions these serious without consulting me.”

“Ma please can you...”

“Ngikufisela inhlanhla empilweni oyikhethile ndodakazi yami”, she closes the door on my face. Shuts it actually, I feel my heart stop. My feet stagger into Nhalnzeko’s arms.

“I cannot lose my mother Nhalnzeko. I rather die than lose my mother”, my body is shivering and my voice is half gone.

“I don’t know how... Kodwa I will mend things. I will try help you mend things with your mother just ssshh Pumpkin”



PS: Ladies with experience nama Sotho gentle brothers meet me ko Inbox please.... Wait

Sotho's are the people with those blankets and
those hats right??

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

SPONSORED BY LERATO ♡

None of this feels right. None of it.

In fact it feels rushed; forced and unblessed. That is not how this journey should begin. It is not how it should feel. I know MaZikode can be a little over the top with drama and emotions especially where her children are concerned but this time around she had every right in the book to shut me out like that.

As a parent you do not grow a fucken baby from a meaningless seed stuck on your uterus into a full blown human with teeth; feet and working lungs in 9 months. Go through the pains of carrying that baby; suffer the

consequences of birthing that baby; torture yourself day and night to ensure that baby is straight with regards to food; health and comfort. You do not strain yourself working three jobs for three very mean farmers who exploit you without giving a rotten damn about your responsibilities and hardships as a mother. You do not suffer emotional and physical and psychological damage because once you bring that life onto this planet you become a none existing matter to yourself and that little soul you brought onto Earth becomes top priority. You just do not go through all that as a single parent for fun. You don't!

At some point you probably see yourself crossing the line of death but because you took upon the responsibility to carry those seeds you gave birth to until they are grey and old, you hold on. Hold on onto the thin faith God still has spared you, hold onto their faces that you

see everyday. At times you get to the part where you resent them for setting you so aback and deep down the dark alley but soon as you see their smiles and hear their appreciations you curse yourself for ever thinking darkness upon them. No matter who says what, no matter their ‘I’ll be fine as long as my children are fine’ or ‘I live for them, they come first to me’ – all those a charades. Scams.

They have hearts too. The very same hearts that raise us to be these strong; resilient beings are the very same hearts we deteriorated bit by bit. I do not know if MaZikode will forgive me but I know leaving as if nothing happened will not soothe the situation or my heart. That woman gave up too much for me, and today I disrespect her like that? Turn my back on her LIVE! What shameful daughter am I?

No!

“Nhlanzeko stop the car”, I blink the sense of my words away. We are in town now. A few minutes away from Hilton if I'm not mistaken. He claimed to have a meeting around 18:45 pm and right now the watch reads 16:30 pm. He'll be late if he takes me back home but fuck it, I need my mother.

“What? Can you see where we are Pumpkin?”, he sounds overly irritated or is he pissed. Idc really.

“Yes I can see where we are and that's just the problem, we are not where I want us to be”, I gather the audacity to flare my nose at him.

“I told you I have an appointment with a doc... Pumpkin, we'll go some other time. Tomorrow I promise”, he says.

This man is just –

“I do not want to go some other time, Fuze. I want to go now! I cannot disrespect my mother

like that and leave just like that; as if I'm innocent with my actions. I must fix this", I'm begging him. Literally my palms are kissing, pleading with him.

"Ngiyakucela Mashiya'amahle", I doubt smothering clan names will smooth his heart and make him listen to me but I do it anyway.

He puffs and reaches for his cigarettes on the dashboard. He has had six so far. I hate the smell, beggars however cannot be choosers.

"You owe me a full body massage today", he says sucking in the smoke and releasing it through his nostrils. He swerves the car into the next lane. Thank God I got through to him. Now my only hope is that I find my mother at the right time. Gosh this grandpa will be a fucken prrrroblem in my life. He's already been a thorn in my mother and I's relationship.

Good, baba is here. Still watering his plants at this time of the day? Boredom plays tricks on oldies seriously.

I don't wait for Nhlanzuko to switch the engine off. I'm already by the gate when he does. I told him to park a few houses away from home. My mother hates people parking their cars in front of her gate, mainly because she thinks they are just being flashy and throwing their wealth on our faces.

Poverty creates such delusional thoughts by the way.

"Baba", my breathing has escalated. The running is to thank.

His face screams disappointment.

"She's in your room. Ndodakazi, be gentle with her you know how she is when it comes to you", he gives me a reassuring smile and a nod.

I slowly walk towards my room. Still taking glances at baba. I wonder what he wants to say to Nhlanzko? We not even dating for Christ's sakes!

The door opens after just one effortless push, I let myself in and prepare for a meltdown. In my life ... whole 26 years of my life I have never made my mother cry. It's considered a bad thing, a curse upon your life to be the reason your parent sheds tears of pain.

“You forgot something?”, she says hiding her face and wiping away that mucus and tears with her apron.

Why won't she look at me? Just once and then go back to shunning me.

“Yes, I did”, I say.

“What did you forget? Call your brothers to come look for it for you, I need to start cooking”, her eyes bounce around aimlessly.

She stands up from my bed, with my teddy in her hand and attempts to walk past me like a stranger. That daggers my heart.

“MaZikode, Ngiyaxolisa ngamazwi ami. I’m sorry ma”, I’m holding her wrist, it’s sweaty so the grip keeps loosening.

“There is no need to apologize, you doing what you want to do right?”, the pain in her voice cripples me.

“Ma I went about things the complete wrong way and I am sorry. I should have never disrespected you like that in the first place. I got so brainwashed about fulfilling my duties that I forgot about my first ever duty which is to be your daughter. Yes, I got on a high horse hearing now I’m about to be in charge of a whole household that I forgot under this one I’m under your wing. I’m sorry ma, for everything not just taking decisions without

your consent or barging in your house with a man you do not know claiming rights over your child. I'm also sorry you have to go through this much pain ma, I'm sorry they chose to hurt you because of me. You didn't have to go through all that but you did, hey if it were any other parent maybe they would have given up on loving me because they knew I didn't belong to them forever but wena ma wami gave me some of the best moments in my life. I can gladly say with am open chest, you reigned too tier even to good dick..."

Her face hardens when I mention that. It's a compliment in my defence so she should be happy right now.

"I want you to know how much I appreciate you for raising me the way you did. Not a lot of mothers would have stood firm like you did with me and I appreciate that. I love you so much mommy and I promise you that no

matter what happens I will always remain your little Milani Zwane, I will always come back for you in good and bad times ma.”, I think I am a simp for my mother shame.

“I love you so much more my baby, so much more”, she snuggles me on her boobs. Suffocating me while at it.

Gosh I’m no longer 14, I find zero comfort in her tits besides back then they were soft big pillows, now they are drooping sacs of water. No offense.

“You better take care of yourself there, Milani. Trust none of those people because you will never know their intention. Only listen to what your heart tells you and what I taught you. I put my faith in God, to pull through for you in my absence and remember sisi. I am a phone call away, if you need anything even if it’s just to yell and take out frustration. Okay?”, she asks. I

nod and go for round two of bear hugs. I was never going to be able to handle this journey if I did not have my mother's blessing.

"Soka, bring me the candles and the matches", she screams across the yard. Not this again, Nhlanzuko will murder me with a capital M!

"Ma we are in a rush..."

"Rush to what? You can have sex in the morning as well, it's late anyway. You will attract bad spirits", woow.

"We are not dating ma and we won't everrrrr date. Him and I two polar opposites", if she understands me she'll stop giving me that hmm look.

"Milani sisi, I raised you mntanam. I know when you feel a man and when you don't. comparing that devil with tattoos and Sizwe, I think the devil wins", she says. Oh my gosh this woman.

“First of all his name is Nhlanzuko Ngcobo and secondly, ma please stay out of my bag okay”, I laugh.

“He is the devil is he not? Who would ink their entire body including their face? Did you see his eyes, they look like the serpents”, she is sooo ... idk what to do with her.

“How do you know the body now?”, I ask.

She waves me off and perks her lips, “You and him better not get up to no good. I do not trust him actually”

“Which boy do you ever trust around me?”

“Once you are a mother you will understand. Yeyi wena Phiwe what did I ask you to get me, instead of busy chasing girls out of your league go fetch what I asked you!”, one thing about MaZikode, she will embarrass you till you understand it is her assignment.

"You didn't ask any thing from me ma", Phewe frowns.

"How will you know what I say when all that is ringing inside your ears are Nelisiwe's breasts and Khonzile's bums", MAZIKODE!

The girl Phewe was standing with long marched on the mention of Nelisiwe's breasts. Some parents will never see heaven even for a visit. I'm counting me as well because I know my child won't have it easy. Whether the father is Nhlanzeko or Sizwe, my kid will taste the harsh lessons kids these days were not taught.

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He first said we are going to stay in his house in Howick and then changed his mind later to a

farmhouse here in Albert Falls. It's like a lodge but with a farm at the back, it looks really nice and fancy from where I am but I have not toured it fully yet.

About the 'meeting' he had to cancel it because it was too late. After seeing his face melt I felt so bad, I knew I had to make it up to him. In the car he said something about a massage so that is what I'll give him after I have had a shower and wore clean clothes of course. It is going to be a hot night might as well wear my silk leopard print shorts and vest pj set.

I still remember his room number so it is not a forever trail to find it. It's at the very end of passage. Same row as mine.

I knock once and the door gets opened instantly. He is wrapped in a blue towel that he almost chopped the reception's head for, around the wait. Still trimming his beard.

“May I – ?”

He moves aside and allows me to enter. His room is neater than mine, I emptied half my suitcase on the floor looking for a good sexy underwear. I’m horny people obviously I want sex!

We stand in silence in the middle of the room, he’s looking at me with a smug across his face.

“My massage”, he eventually reminds me and I regret coming here immediately. I should have just stayed behide!

“That is why I’m here. Lie down on the bed”, I instruct. He does what I told him to do, excitedly so. He cannot stop grinning at me.

“I’m not an expert at this so be patient”, I say, fisting his stiff back with my tiny hands.

“Whoa slow down, you fighting me phela wena”, he laughs.

“I did say I’m not good at this”

Maybe if I use my elbows it will be better. I do as I have seen before in TV programs, making little circles with your elbow all over the most tense areas.

“Aw!”, he yelps.

Drama queen. I knead my fingers into his skin, trying to soften the force at least.

“Pumpkin no that is not how it is done”, he slides off bed and wraps his towel again. Hawu.

At least I tried for that two seconds.

“Nhlanzeko I seriously do not know what you want from me. You said you...”

“This is how you massage someone”, he starts working my shoulders.

“Be smooth and gentle with your fingers, take your time to tap into their space”, he says going for the back of my neck, kneading that hump

behind our necks. I feel my body relax entirely, I have no hold over it I've shut down.

"You like that?", he asks the obvious.

"Yessss", shoot that sounded like I'm moaning. I open my eyes and they meet his, thin and red they are. We still keeping the stare, however his hands have left my shoulders, he's rolling them down my back. Looking for a suitable place to place them.

"I want you inside of me", I'm not even shocked at my request. Salt has for ever been betraying me. I gave my virginity to Sizwe because of it so this is water under the bridge.

"Huh?", why is he making things hard for me?

"I want you to have me", before he asks more things I swoop his lips into my mouth. Taking turns in devouring them; one at a time. The bastard is tall, so I go on my toes. Resting my hand on the back of his neck, brushing that

small hair growing at the back of his head – Sma once said men go crazy over this.

In no time he has me clenched around his waist, sucking the face out of me. Gently though. With great attention to detail. It's like a routine he trained himself on. First slide your tongue in, pull the upper lip, do the same for the bottom lip and give a baby kiss. And worse his pace is another sexual pleasure on its own. He wonders around the room, with me adding weight but he seems to be handling me just fine.

He finds a chair that he has been looking for and sits down, spreading my legs more apart.

I hold onto his back as he marks hickeys on my neck and cheeks, he's sucking me and I'm loving it.

“Nhlanz...”

His tongue sweeps up my neck and flicks on my earlobe. I've never been so aroused. I want his ass now!

Seeing as there is nothing I can do other than sit on him, I decide to try twirling at first it was to ease my lust how ever he seems to like it when I do that to him. The chair keeps shifting each time he wants to move his waist along with mine.

“Mmmm pumpkin”, he goes straight for my cleavage. To make things better for him I take it off, the top and fling it away. His hands leave my back and grab my tits. I’m hoping he does not ruin it and start sucking my breasts I hate that.

Good, he does not do it. He licks the nipples instead. We both fidgeting. I’m trying to untie his towel and he wants a piece of my bums he

keeps rubbing it and cuffing it like it's candy that belongs to only him.

"Let's get on the bed", I murmur.

Nhlanzeko wastes no time in lifting up again and walking us to the bed, I'm thrown on top of it and undressed hurriedly. His eyes set on my thighs and cookie jar and a low grunt escapes his mouth.

We both have no time for foreplay. We want to devour the mad fuck out of one another.

However the headful folk down starts rubbing me off the wrong way. Forget the freakish length of the bloody cane snake. The thickness is the thing quenching my throat; it... it's so THICK.

I still have time to say no, I mean he's still searching for something in his pants on the floor. Why am I not stopping him?

“Fuze, I ...”, my throat is Sahara dry at the moment! No amount of spit swallowing wets my dryness.

“You don’t want it?”, he asks bending over to pick up a packet of some thing. He has a nice ass too.

“Don’t want What?”, I frown.

“Fuze”, his eyes drop to his crotch.

“When did I say I don’t want him?”, shit that reply was too fast. I should have waited awhile at least a few minutes. Now he probably thinks I’m some thirsty virgin freak from the village.

He rips a condom wrap; jerks his ‘Fuze’ – I will never see that clan name the same ever again. He jerks him up and then slips the condom on.

“I will be easy on you”, he smirks and walks towards the bed. I doubt there will any easing on one another here, it’s two very hungry bulls in a kraal, mess is the order of the day.

“Who said I want you to go easy? What if I want you to go hard it's not like I won't be able to handle it”, my mouth is on another shame Milani tip.

He smiles this time not smirk and gets on top of me slowly, kisses my neck, parts my thighs firmly grips my hip.

“Do it”, I whisper.

“Your wish is my command, Queen”

I shut my eyes as I feel it twitching on my inner thighs. The head makes contact with my nub, he's smearing all that come on my ...

“AWW!”, I thought I was not a virgin. That ‘qho' sound is not suppose to happen.

Shit, his waist is good at this. When he pounces there is rhythm in it. My toes curl up, dragging the sheet along. I'm gripping his arms for some sort of pain-pleasure control. My nails want to dig into his back and he allows me to.

Grrrrr Pumpkin”, ever heard a growl? Yeah I made the nigga growl. If it were up to me, I would shove him off me right this second and do a celebration dance. My cookie should be on a billboard. BHAA!

“You almost there?”, I moan.

“Yea”, he moans too.

And then the spring bursts into beautiful nature!

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My first morning routine is to roll over from one side of the bed to the other side, my hand lands on a hard body. My eyes squint.

OH MY LORD!

My fear is lifting this sheet but I do it anyway and gosh no. We are both naked, fully.

I have to go to my room and take a shower. I think I smell and I would hate for Nhlanzeko to wake up to a smelly me.

I pull the cover off him and wrap it around my body. Doing a little dance on my way to the door, I feel like I'm floating on clouds and rainbows.

“Erh... Pumpkin?”, he calls for me.

“Morningggg Mr Grrr”, I greet him.

He chuckles and holds his head. A frown creeps on him, “Wait, you not angry?”

What nonsense, why would I be angry at the great sex he gave me?

“No silly. That was sooo out of this world. My body hurts here and there, I’m red too but it

will go away after a few hours”, cons of being light as milk.

“You crazy”, he say, laughs abit and goes back to bed. I know I gave it to him that’s why he’s sleeping none stop. My mama would be so proud.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

SPONSORED BY

We left the lodge a while ago, after having to drag her out the canteen. No offense to her but she eats A LOT. I cannot remember the amount of cupcakes she stuffed in her mouth in fifteen mimutes, the two plates main course at 7:45 am shook me.

Are all women like this?

I'm use to the model types that eat carrots and drink water half the day. This kind is new to me, new and kinda exciting. I don't know about the depth of things in the long run but right now I'm enjoying what my great grandfather brought me. Well brought himself through me.

Pumpkin is a breath of fresh air and somehow enables me to bury the shitty life I live which probably has to come to an end, just do not know how to do that yet. Or if it's what I truly want to do. Nah called me earlier today to ask if I will make it to the shipment set for next week. We perform thorough checks on our drivers; security; authority in charge at that time and exactly what will be shipped. I can never forget the time I was falsely accused of trafficking women to Eastern regions. It took me three years to clear myself and prove myself innocent on that account, I wasted millions on foreign lawyers and criminal defence attorneys – Booth Maclaire was one of them. He got me out of that situation. I don't trust these South African chickens lawyers. One sold me out before, and from there I learnt not to trust a single soul with my life. Even my friends and brothers, i trust no one.

I'm an old dog, an old dog stuck in the new world and believe me when I say nobody truly gives a flying fuck about old dogs until their eyes are staring at the casket go down the grave. No one cares.

"Fuze...", she speaks so softly after sex? I might be banging her often just to bring her aggression down a tad.

"Usinekan?", she asks.

"How you succumb to dick", we not shy this side, I learnt that last night when she personally asked for it.

"No I did not! ... it was just nje a moment in time and things happened and by the flippin way you didn't mind smashing me did you?", there she goes with Miss Defence on my face.

"Why don't you just agree? Uyalithanda ipipi, I see no sin in that", I say. She whiffs.

“Focus on the driving please I’m tired and I would like to take a bath and sleep. Are we still going home tomorrow or plans changed?”, Milani.

“We still going, if you are okay with it of course”, Mesuli said the sooner the better. So for the mean time I just want her to slip in the family, get warm with everybody and built some connections. Another thing Mesuli said was this is not any easy thing especially for her so I guess she needs all the support she can get. Her mother won't be there all the time she needs a hand to hold.

“I am ready to do this, before going home we should pass by my husband's grave. I need to see it”, she's hell-bent on this husband idea.

All I can do is laugh it out and shut my mouth.

“I'm trying to convince myself, this is the beginning of the rest of my life. It hasn't sunk

in, I doubt it would but I mean with you next to me I'm pretty sure I can endure it”, her hand lands on my knee, communicating beyond physical touch, her eyes tell me she means it all.

“You sound so sure”, I chuckle.

This woman does not know me or my past. There is no way she means it ... Nokwazi taught me to never trust a woman ever again.

“Look, it’s not everyday that I walk around my kidnapper’s house half naked, scream at him like I’m mad and then offer my vagina to him. Clearly I trust you to a certain level”, she has a valid point. I just assumed that is how she is in general and quite frankly I’m right.

“Do you want something to eat? I didn’t cook and I’m pretty sure my fridge is empty”, if it’s not take away then I drive to the closest Kasi

shisa'nyama if not Hlophe. I'm not the cooking type.

"I want proper food anyway so I'll cook when we get to your house. Do you have ingredients?", eish.

"Gawd, pass by SuperSave so I can buy a few things for tonight only though. You can do your grocery shopping some other day", she directs me around with her finger. I haven't moved the car. My mind and pocket are still processing what we've just heard.

"SuperSave? Me and SuperSave?", I'd laugh if I didn't know her any better.

"Yes SuperSave is there a problem?", her arms tucked under her armpits. One eyebrow curved into an ark, she looks cute.

"There is nothing wrong with the store. However I prefer woolies products", I say.

Milani ppffs.

“Why would you prefer woolies if you have nothing against SuperSave?”, she flares at me.

“For one Woolies is clean from the floods to the shelves to the actual tills and trolleys”

“I’ve been shopping at SuperSave and I’m perfectly fine”, okay now she needs sex.

This is a stupid argument. I have my preferences that I choose to stick to, she has her own. This is my car though so my decision rules.

“SuperSave is there! Why are you going that side?”, she questions the obvious.

“We going to the mall, where we will find good quality foods”

I catch her roll her eyes and mime swear words at me. I know her that much.

I look at the time and pray to God Nokwazi has left the house. That is what I asked of her

yesterday, not to be a jerk but knowing Pumpkin and knowing Nokwazi it would not have ended well for anyone. Besides I don't want to stress a pregnant woman, that child is mine at the end of the day. I sent her money to book a place for now because I do not trust her mother until I have had a word with her.

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“You going to let me go alone?”, she asks.

“Yeah, you the woman you know these things. I don't. Call me when you need to pay ... actually take my card the pin is 2366”, I'd hand her the black card but that would be stupid, even I have never used it. Peer pressure got me to register for it in the first place.

“Ah! You want those women to call me a gold-digger?”, her huge eyes widen.

“You overthink things way too much, if anybody gives you a problem you will call me”, I go back to sleeping on the steering wheel. She really knocked me out last night, my entire body is drained and I have a terrible headache.

“I am not getting there alone besides, I cannot see properly at night time”

Lol!

“With those huge eyes surely you can see the entire mall inside while standing where you are right now”

“That was not funny stop laughing and come Nhlanzuko it is getting late and traf...”, she really is gogo. The way she whines and complains!

I pull myself up and get out the car, I’m even wearing slides. Ey women and their abuse.

Now what?

“You walk around with that?”, the ‘that’ she is referring to is my gun and yes I do. Protection has no time or place.

“Yea”

“I don’t like that though, you walking around with guns on your waist like police”, oh she’s being my wife now? Let me sit on the bonnet for this one.

“Why?”

“What do you mean Why? Have you heard how many lives get lost because of these things on your waist? And look at you, it makes you look like a hard-core criminal”, only if you knew me pumpkin. You would run for your life and never look back.

“It is for protection so that we do not become those statistics”

“I still don’t like it. You can keep it for yourself but I do not want it around me”, aw c’mom.

“Milani, what are we going to do if shit hits the fan and we in need of this?”, now I’m waving it on her face because I want her to get use to seeing it.

“Take it away from my face. If we need protection we will call the police to do their ...”

... NOW that was funny. Coming from a smart girl like her, that was very funny. Police in Pietermaritzburg are far more scarce than present fathers. By the time ten vans show up for a single robbery, the person would have long died.

“I’m not moving until you leave that behide”, once she does that little pout I see we are going absolutely nowhere. Every man bows at some stage neh?

“There, happy now?”

“Delighted”

Mkhulu you bought one hell of a woman in my life!

After a long tiring back and forth, down isle to isle, fighting over cabbages and long queues we finally done. I am never offering to push a woman's trolley ever again. I've learnt my lesson red and hot today. My gym sessions aren't this cruel to me.

“Next customer please”

That is us. I'm surprised at Milani's non-moving body. Doesn't she see we Next?

“Shoot, I forgot a spice that I will need. Hold the trolley let me go fetch it”, is she mad?

“Haibo pumpkin?”, my tone got of hand. I was planning to call her softly not alert the entire store.

“Next customer please sir”, the cashier.

I begin loading the grocery. Funny how ‘I’ll do a little grocery’ turned to a grocery for a month. We’ve spent two hours in here.

She comes back finally with a packet of ... I don’t know, soup?

“Sorry Mr Grrr don’t bite me. I found it”, and this Grrr joke what is it about?

“Husband?”, the cashier is asking the wrong person.

Milani makes that quick fake smile and asks: “Did you draw that eyebrow or God was unfair?”

I did say she asked the wrong woman. They finish with the petty starring contests, the cashier is obviously fumed. She's flaring at me.

“Card please”, she looks at Pumpkin. Pumpkin looks at me. Ohh the card is on me.

“Here, pay you will find me in the car”

Some girls start making comments behind their hands, some even have the audacity to point at her. I'll never understand this gender, what is so funny about me wanting to go ahead?

"I thought you said you going to the car?", even she saw them.

"Don't let them get to you", I whisper in her ear and kiss her cheek. She offers a smile and a nod. The giggles have died down.

"Your gender!"

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☆NOKWAZI ZONDO☆

I wonder where Nhlanzeko is right now? He was suppose to be here yesterday for the doctor's appointment but cancelled last minute and now he sends me text messages saying I must find a place to stay for while. I'm not leaving this house. He is my baby's father, I claim my rights to whatever it is that belongs to him.

His rowdy friends are here to worsen things for me. They don't want to leave, somehow they think this is their house. Setting up braais without Nhlanzeko's permission, bringing their booze here. The annoying deep house they are playing irritates the tits out of me and to add on to my problems I am dying of hunger.

I walk downstairs as an exercise almost every hour, the doctor said it's good for me to move frequently and also I don't want to get fat. I worked hard for my body and I'd be dammed if all that hard work goes to waste.

“Sbusiso can you tone that fucken music down, some of us are trying to get sleep”, I scream because – because they are just frustrating me.

He shares a brief look of confusion and then continues packing the spices into the cupboard.

“Sbusiso!”, I call him out louder.

“Ask me properly to turn the volume down instead of acting like the Queen of this house”, his attitude stinks more than that Ethan's attitude. Oh and he must not dare count his eggs before they hatch, I'm carrying Nhalnzeko's first ever baby. Son or daughter I know he'll love this baby like his life depends on it which secures me the comfy life I deserve after all I have been through in life.

“Can you please tone the music down like I said some of us are trying to sleep”; I use my hands for emphasis maybe then I will be understood better.

“I should have told my home boy to stay the fuck away from you because you don’t learn Nokwazi, awufundi”, he looks pissed all of a sudden.

“What nonsense are you talking about?”

“I saw what you did earlier and know that Nhlanzuko will find out soon, he is not stupid”, Sbusiso’s threats fall at the back of my mind when my ear catches Nhlanzuko and his friend's voices loudening outside.

Sbu goes out first and I follow behide him.

“MILANI!?", mh-hm my eyes are playing tricks on me. Milani with my Nhlanzuko? The plastics? The smiles? EXCUSE ME!

“Hello Nokwazi”, she's frowning which means she does not know why I'm here. Or what I'm carrying. Nhlanzuko is still angry at me behide that girl I see him.

“Was not expecting you to come marching in my house with the baby's father”, I know I should have kept it together but hey I'm not God nor am I Jesus. I crack when I crack!

She's shocked, but chooses to act cool.

“Oh that is good news for the both of you, first time parents?”

I nod proudly so.

“Congratulations to the both of you. Uhm, I have food to cook so please may I be excused”, she smiles at the guys and picks up a few plastics that Sosha decides to help her with.

“I can help you carry that”, he rubs her arm and takes the plastics inside. The bitch is not only coming for Nhlanzeko but the whole squad too?

“Nokwazi, can we talk”, He pulls me aside. Near the pool area and I already know he wants to

yell at me for what I did which was partially wrong I admit it but I cannot be blamed.

“I told you to leave”, he hisses angrily.

“I know”, I say pushing his arms off my arms.

“So why are you still here, you know how you can get and Milani is not cordial either. So what are you playing at right now?”

“Since when do you abandon me and your child for a bitch you met a few days or hours even”

“Watch it! You address her with respect Milani is not just any girl, she is a special woman with a special place in my life Nokwazi and do not dare sit here and play victim as if I did the damage to us”, for as long as he addresses him and I as us I will always be hopeful and keep on pushing.

“What is this special thing about her tell me? You shag her once and you head over heels?”,

I'm getting fumed now. Am I that invisible to this man?

"Who said anything about smashing? Lalela if jealousy is your problem then don't be jealous. There is nothing going on between her and I and there will never be, she belongs to somebody else. Just like how there is nothing going between you and I except that baby you carrying", I grab him by the belt before he fleas.

"Nokwazi", he warns me.

Fine, I drop the belt but I'm still holding his hand.

"Nhlanzeko what will it take for you to forgive me again?", I'm back to begging.

"I don't know Nokwazi, I don't know", and with that said he leaves. Probably to kiss her ass.

Nx bloody devil. Look at her giggling with the guys over stupid pap. I can cook pap as well, what's the big deal with her pap?

I wish to pop a fork inside her eye one night
and I swear one day I might strangle the bitch. I
worked hard to have Nhlanzeko. He cannot slip
through my fingers because of this fat woman.

“Why are you standing in the cold? Come inside
and eat, the baby must be hungry”, she says to
me when I approach where she is.

“No thank you. I do not trust thirsty little girls.
I’ll have my salad”

“Fine by me ntombi but remember whatever
beef you have with me must not affect the
baby Nokwazi”, she says. Pssh.

“As if you care”, I whisper.

“I’m a grandmother my grandkids come first”

What?? Before any of us can ask questions her
knight in shiny armour swoops her out the
kitchen. Saying something like “Do not freak
out, Mesuli said it’s normal” – whatever that
meant. I’m going to bed, apparently tomorrow

we are all summoned in Richmond. I know, kill
me!!

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

SPONSORED BY MEGAN ZULU 

“Morning grandmaaaa”, he waves his stupid hand on my face. I’m still like half asleep with a lazy eye on one side and a flat closed one on the other side but I can map out a bit of his face from the corner of my eye, I so badly want wipe that smug off his face. Good, there is a small pillow next to me.

“Aww, are you freaken insane?”, he gasps, his palm covering the eye I hit with the pillow. I can be very violent I know that but it all comes from a good place in my heart, so I hope he does not take it personally. It means I actually like him... and do not give me those eyes. I like everyone

frankly speaking, dogs; cats; witches; God I like all things.

“Forget the ta-da I brought you then”, he downs the juice meant for me and takes a mean bite of the sandwich. Sweet Jesus Christ what monster did You create here? To worsen things my stomach growls at the mere sight of food.

“Hhaaa Nhlanzeko just like that?”, I gasp. My heart peeling away.

“Just like what?”, he says with that stuffed mouth. The sandwich sauce drips down his fingers as he chows it.

“This is good”, he compliments my food. He’ll pay for doing me like this. Anyway it is time to wake up now, and get ready for the big moment. Meeting the family.

Somehow I am not afraid or nervous about meeting them, I just have that ‘Adhere to my

instructions or fuck off type of mentality of which I hope and pray we don't get to that. At the end of the day we all connected by one thing so them hating me or thinking they can bully me will be them wasting their precious time.

"You want?", he shoves the burnt toast on my face.

"Mx I will have cereal thank you. I don't want to get sick from Woolies burnt toast", I haven't forgotten that neither has he hence the wild laugh. I bet he's laughing at his stupidity.

"It is not burnt it is charred nutritious bread, Nokwazi made it. I heard it is good for pregnant women", I forgot about that one.

Oh my gosh I just remembered I blew up at her yesterday. In my opinion she was asking for it but again us people with right minds and pure hearts have to step down and allow the so

called bad bitches to rule us all in the name of 'I'm having a baby'. I won't lie that thing set me off, although I kept my cool and collected myself. Women don't entertain hoodrats.

"Is she awake?", I ask.

"Yes, why ask?", he has zero table manners ... well there is no table here but you catch my drift. We do not speak while eating, especially as an African child because apparently choking on a rice grain while dishing gossip might send you to your last home. Oh but the killer rule has to be rule number 12, the – no standing in front of the door rule because you will be blocking money from coming in. that one I never believed, I've never seen money in Nitrogen or Carbon dioxide or any other gas in the air. So how it is possible for it to just fly in through the door. I don't know, it bothers me that one, because of the little possibility.

“I want to go apologize for what I said yesterday, I was wrong to bite her head off like that regarding her baby.”, I say getting off bed and look for my gown on top of the bed, that’s where I left it yesterday.

“What did you do?”, he looks lost as if he wasn’t there when that grandma thing transpired.

“Hawu, remember when I –”

He shushes me with his index finger flat on my lips. His left foot keeps tapping on the floor, his eyes are shut and his head keeps moving left to right. It’s the song playing I guess.

“Nalu othando Iwami”, he sings that about six times, clearly he knows the song off by heart. He’s so deep into it.

“You know -”

“Sssh you hear that drop base, ‘Oko
wandifunda andiswelanga inyaniso
Undikhapha ngokwenyama
nangomphefumlo
Kwaye isandla sam awusiqinisanga
kwesakho
Undivulile, ndikukhethile
Kunaphakade”, he sings so well. Something
that does not suite him at all and his Xhosa is good.
“Did you hear that verse Pumpkin? I think not,
salani noBeyonce benu”, he says, and surprisingly I
take full offense to that.
“Who said I listen to Beyonce?”, look at me
betraying my girl for credits from this man.
Wherever the beehive is right now, I’m sure they
are turning their backs on me.
“I have seen your wallpaper and I heard you sing
her songs when you shower. Your voice is not so
pleasant by the way”, he’s one to talk!

“Neither is yours”

“I’m a man”, he shrugs.

He can sing so I’m guessing that is a disgrace to mankind?

“You see when I get married one day, I’ll need my bride to walk down the isle with this song”, he smiles looking through the window.

“You want to get married?”, I ask.

“Yeah, I did not steal shit; get arrested a thousand times; get shot a million times and almost died working hard to build myself this comfortable life for nothing. I want to have children one day, my own family and a beautiful as fuck wife. Or else if that was not the plan I would still be living in the streets, careless about material things and futures”, he sighs. Brushes his knees and stands up.

I cannot believe he, out of all people want to get married. I wonder who he will marry and what would be so special about her?

“Is there a girl you making plans with?”, I’m taking chances here. He’ll probably shut me out.

“... No, not yet but I do have a girl in mind”, I don’t trust that long pause.

“And then I’ll kick her out my house!”, I say ... half joking.

He laughs as well, “You will love her actually. She is a very nice girl, crazy like you but she is good. I think you will get along with her just fine”, hmmmm.

“If you say so. Can I bath now?”

“Hurry up not this thing of yours taking hours in the shower”, oh excuse me?

“Because some of us don’t sponge, we actually take the soap and towel and scrape our bodies off dirt”, I clap back.

“Yes and we do not do that because we are clean, there is no need to scrape our skin”

He always has a come back. Always.

I'm not completely sure what to wear?

I'm not trying to disrespect anybody, the older wives and then it's the present daughter in-laws. In the same token, it is my duty to straighten the crooks of that family. This calls for a mother-daughter phone call. I hope she picks up..

“What do you want child, I’m busy with my man over here”, she scolds me into a grin!

Yessssss MaZizi, I knew apples never fall too far from the tree.

“Are you doggystyling? Or you giving him a bj?”, I’m genuinely intrigued. I mean 50 years old is an interesting age, if I get to that age without having a crazy sex life then God please spare me the boring years on earth and kill me.

“What is that?”, she asks.

“Okay listen girl, I need you to listen very well. Go to him wherever he is and ask him to take a seat, and

then seduce your man girl! Brush his thighs abit you know to add some umf! Then get on your knees..."

"Milani I'm old, my knees are not fresh!", she says.

"Bore-whore! There is some thing called a pillow, place it under your knees and take out his crotch..."

"What is that now?", ugh this old lady and disturbing me.

"The thing ma, the man's thing"

"Ohh you mean the sugar cane?", eww I didn't need to know what she nicknamed my step-father's crotch sies.

"Right that, and slide it in your mouth and suck it like you sucking a lollipop. Lick it ma, and stroke it up and down with your hand. After he done screaming your name, come back and kiss your daughter on the cheek", I know she'll do it. See one thing about us bo-Mangethe we are a bunch of filthy little Marys!

"Ay, why did you call me at this hour?", okay we over the sex topic? Fine but I know she will do it.

“I cannot figure out what to wear to the family meeting. Do I go there as a makoti even though I am not married! Or do I just wear normally but with respect?”, I don’t know if she gets me.

“If you were the Mkhulu-bae would you want your ‘wife’ entering your yard for the first time in a dress; heels and fake make up?”, is there real make up?

“I don’t know MaZikode”

“Wear a dress, below the knee; proper shoes and put a scarf around your shoulders”, that’s it?

“No doek?”, I ask.

“Are you married?”, whose mother is This?

I say my goodbyes and remind her to try the trick I taught her, I’ll call later for updates. As for the outfit I feel like being simple but the heck for what?

I slip on my flounce sleeve ruffle hem dress; clear chunky heels, around my bun I tie a paisley print silk bandana and a cute very expensive scarf over my shoulders. I bought it from a friend's suitcase

without her knowledge, actually she had stole my comb too so it was fair and square.

“Nhlanzeko, I’m ready we can go now unless if Nokwazi is still getting ready, is there food in here?”, I pray I do not slip on these stairs. Glass on glass after all.

“You look”, his bottom lip is still wiggling on the bottom. Oh yes, it is I bitches!

“I look?”, I raise my eyebrow at him.

“Stunning”, he eventually spits it out.

“Fuze”, I bow a little and take my STUNNING behide elsewhere. In the kitchen, yep.

By the way Fuze is my new thank you, we leading new lives now aren’t we? So we become new people. Bye bye innocent Milani Zwane, we have become Milani Zwane The Future Ngcobo Wife. The husband does not please me seeing as he was old and.... Dead but when life gives you lemons put them in your porridge and enjoy!

This little transformation is scary a tad, I do not know what I am going to meet in the near future and it scared the shit out of me. But I can make it work, a whole 26 years old can make it work.

“Morning and I apologize for the thing I said yesterday, I was wrong”

“You were vele”, pregnancy is showing her bananas. From skin to attitude. Her nose looks like it inhales oxygen for this year next year and the year after that.

“Nokwazi ... last damn warning”, he’s still warning her?

Nokwazi shrugs and makes her way to the car outside. Leaving me and Nhlanzuko alone.

He looks crisp, solid seam detailed pants and a mock neck long sleeve tee. Suitable for my arm.

“Shall we?”, he paves the way for me.

No shade to his exes and future girlfriends but I do not think there is anybody who looks good next to the man more than me. He is dark and I’m light, we

both have a pink bottom lip, we both have honey colored eyes, he is fit and ripped, I'm chubby and sexy, he's handsome and I'm fucken Mercury on fire! Plus our sex is just straight AMAZING. His hand fits perfectly around my bums. We somehow hate and love each other's company. Honestly why does he not see that? Ohhh I know some pregnant bimbo is stuck in his vision.

“Nx”, ooops that slipped.

“Are you okay?”, he asks. Aww man see he cares for me too.

“Yes I am perfectly fine”, of which is true before you start thinking I'm sad.

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The car ride was rather fast, maybe because I have been trying to figure out what to say and how to

word my sentences right. I'm afraid of being snappy and end up being rude or offending someone.

"We are here", he chuckles at my sweaty forehead.

"Relax gogo and plus I thought you said nothing scares you", he's going to use my lies against me?

"Haha Mr Grrrrr Pumpkin", that will shut him up.

"Carry on with that and you will live to regret it", he chuckles.

"God kill me, can we just go and get this over with", we already know who that came from.

Any way the house is beautiful, I like its modern day structure. Most rondavels have thatch or tin, this house has our normal tiles – very clean tiles I must say. The aluminium window and door touch is also nice, it lessens the feel of being in a village.

Grass greener than trees, evenly trimmed yet not completely cut off, the fence is cute although I would bring those bricks down and make a new proper wall that caves the entire yard not half. The garden is very pretty but makes no sense for it to be

in the middle of the yard where we park and where the children play it would be better if they set it at the far end of the last rondavel, it seems like nobody ever goes there. It's not even painted grey like the others and that does not settle with me. These flippen chickens pooping everywhere don't tickle my fancy either.

I spot a mini tree near that isolated rondavel, it draws me more and more to it I don't know why.

“She's here, she's here!!”, Aww the little brat.

“Hey you dollface”, I pinch her cheeks knowing very well how irritating that is but Asakhe seems to be loving it.

“Goog will happy and at least now that you are here mommy”, okay whoa!! I'm mommy, granny and great granny? Gee.

“She will be super happy baby”, I say kissing her cheek.

I look up once and see a brood of little humans running to me. No, gosh I am not good with kids. I

only like this one because she shoved herself up my nostrils.

“Sawubona ma”, the two boys greet. At least they have smiles on their faces and I would like to believe they are genuine. This one wearing glasses decides to engulf me in a tight hug. Ouch!

“I cannot breathe”, I wiz that out.

“oh Sorry ma”, creep!

“Hello mama”, a cute girl waves.

“Hello ... babies. So what are your names?”, I’m warming up aren’t I?

“I’m Olwethu and these are my brothers Zothani and Sisekelo and these three are our cousins, Minenhle; Siphosethu and Alondwe. They come from bab'mncane. He is inside there with baba”, she points to where Nhlanzeko disappeared with Nokwazi to. Well, she was following him like a lost dog.

“Nice to meet you all. Well, I am your....”

“Our mommy, everyone’s mommy that is what granny said”, Asakhe sparks again.

“She is younger than ma”, that is ... either Siphosethu or Minenhle I forgot the name.

“But granny said she is our mother Alondwe!!”, so much sass in this little human.

“Gee don’t bite ...”

“Okay end the fight right now. I am your ...”, what am I?

“Yeah go play and do not fight or argue with each other or else ... no junk food for a week”, I remember how I use to act like an angel if ma said no fatty foods and it seems to work with this bunch too.

“I’m sorry Alo”, Asakhe hugs the other brat.

“I’m sorry too Asa”, Alo says.

“Good, go play then”, they run off with each other's hands locked. Cute.

Okay and these two?

“Are you not going to play with them?”, I ask.

“No, we old now ma”, Zothani chuckles. Hmm like uncle like nephew.

“who said you are ever too old to play with other kids? Come here”

They whine. Dragging their feet and making faces. Shame.

“Where are we going?”, The nerdo asks.

“Our mother does not want to play outside the gate”, Zothani.

“that is fine. Hey boys, do you mind sharing your soccer ball with these two? You can play here inside the yard”, thank God one kid listened.

“We don’t mind ma, we can share”, this one says.

Soon after that they are all sharing jokes and making funny handshakes, discussing soccer stuff. Whew I thought they would act like Sandton kids.

Now, the meeting.

I enter the rowdy house. Two steps in and utter silence falls upon the room. It's all eyes on me, and frankly speaking I do not feel scared of them. Including the eyes these grown men are giving me. It's like they are trying to intimidate me but are fumbling dismally. I notice Nhalnzeko standing up probably to introduce me but I can do it myself.

“Sanibona kwaPholoba”, I do that zulu girl bow of respect and immediately see some of the men relaxing. Oh they thought I was the Goli type? Shame.

“And she is finally home”, some guy with white and blue beads on his wrists says. Smiling and relieved... I guess. It's quiet and then commotion!

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PART 2 WILL COME NEXT....

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

PART TWO

SPONSORED BY

They are silent again. Starring at me like a fish out of water, I can sense the tension and attitude from the air. My soul is not at ease, too many things in this house, this family, this place that set me off. Maybe it's the great grandfather trying to express himself through me. I don't know, but it urges me to speak the fuck up. And I will.

“My name is Milani Zwane-Ngcobo, to be of course. I would love to sit and get to know everybody here on a personal level, get to understand you all in greater depths but for that to happen we need to get to the end of the dark tunnel. I know some of you are seated here, probably out of force but you are anyway, asking yourselves who am I and what is the need for all this chaos just for me well...”, I pause because I see a few hard rocks that will fight me along the way.

“I am the picked woman to look over ikhaya lakwaNgcobo...”, they do not give me the chance to further explain and I’m already being choke slammed by the uncles and his sons.

“Is there a problem with that, bab’omncane?”, I look at the uncle screaming the most. Over the women and his sons.

“You are a woman!”, he says loudly and on my face, I caught his spit on my left cheek to be exact. And the man sitting next to me did not like that, there’s a scary frown on his face. Dammnit, I’m a loveable girl if I’m being honest. Look at him... look at him all riled up for me?

DEAR FUCKEN GOD if I do not end up his wife, I’m taking a trip to a traditional healer. His eyebrows are so... I want to brush them with my lips right now.

“Look at her not even paying attention to us!”, one of the uncle's sons speak.

“That is because I was still waiting for you to elaborate to me exactly what the problem is. Because my being a woman is not an issue I know that for a fact.”, good comeback. I honestly got lost for a minute there.

“Women cannot take charge of a whole household, that is not what our culture is

about. As the men of this family it is our duty to shelter the family and carry its name”, the uncle again. Why is he sweating and protesting like this?

“Okay men of the family, what have you contributed to this family so far? What have you done to at least mend whatever got broken in this household? His tree died and none of you cared enough to take care of it and you here spewing shi.... With all due respect, the little respect I have left for you that is, you have done Nothing for this family except milking their inheritance”, as to where I got this info? I have no cooking clue.

“Inheritance?”, Mzi asks.

“Pholoba Holdings ... pinetown.... Ring any bell?”, I wish to know however he won’t say a thing.

“We are being cordial now, aren’t we?”, I remind them. If they want to be bad bitches they must clarify with me so I can step up to their level of aggression. I can make out some of their mumbles but whatever it is not like they are a core factor here even if they leave. So be it.

“Almost every single woman sitting in this room had this responsibility and yet chose to shun it. I am not here because I enjoy it, my life was peaceful without this chaos on me but I refuse to let my family go down the drain, I refuse to watch children suffer consequences that belong to their parents! This cold wall of nothingness in this family must end. When Zakhele (The great grandfather) demands something it must be done because that is what leads to this curse in this family! You filth my yard with your muthi from Sangomas I do not know and you do not even bother cleansing my house!”, she knows

I'm speaking to her so I do not see the need of her acting like she is shocked all of a sudden.

"Look at the daughter in-laws wearing fish nets revealing chests and shoulders in my house!

Where did the respect go?", I'm legit fuming and I cannot control myself.

"Excuse me, you speaking to me?", oh she has a voice?

"Are you wearing appropriately?", I ask.

I feel Nhlanzuko holding my wrist and immediately know I'm getting too high, something I never notice until its too late.

"It's hot in case you haven't noticed and I'm pregnant", she yells getting all teary. Tears might work in Mzayfani's bedroom but not in my lounge. I see the older wife snuggle her to her chest. Whew okay I need to calm the fuck down.

“I see that but this house has rules and those rules are meant to be followed. You chose to get married, where was all this when they smeared gall all over you? Did you say it was too bitter so you won't taste it? No, what is the difference now?”, these people are making me an animal I am not. Can't they just simply listen to me so we can get this over with. Now I wanna cry.

“All I am asking for is corporation here. No one is a saint sitting in this room we all faulted Zakhele one way or another, me being here is for all that to be rectified”, I'm sitting back down. Legs crossed and face straightened. I'm not here to play hopscotch and that must be known and respected, am I asking for an arm and a hand.

“Mzi you will let her control me?”, she scolds.

“Nombuso, tone your voice down and respect her that is all she asks”, Mzayfani says, patting his kitty on the back.

Nombuso gives me an angry face, puffing her cheeks at me as if I did something bad. Nokwazi is enjoying this I bet.

“Anyone else wish to swear and yell at me?”, I ask.

“We-ngane, this is my husband’s house. All this is his hard work and his property, you have no rights over this or any of us. And we are older than you so watch your tongue when addressing us”, I know her, she is MaSbisi. They have been warning her ever since I stepped in the room. And I can see her hatred for me from just the way she looks at me.

“ with all the respect your husband was handed this house because he is the eldest son. He was expected to deliver on the duties of an older

son and yet he failed. I would not be sitting here if MaShelembe; Nsingizi or Nonhlanhla accepted this responsibility. As for that older part, do you forget your actions after time? The men you bring to my yard every single day, the filth you leave in Zakhele's rondavel. We forgot that huh? Is that something mature and old people do in their marital homes”, they are making me do things I was not planning on doing.

“Ma”, I don’t where that came from but it is one of the men.

“Ma is that true?”, it’s her son maybe. I’m not sure, they look alike though.

MaSbisi has not replied the kid, her anger is directed towards me. If she was given the chance she would have long bit my head off and threw me to the wolves.

Every one in the room is tense or annoyed except Nhlanzeko and the beads guy.

“What I do with my life Scelokuhle has nothing to do with you”, She puffs and looks away. Out the door where Nombuso disappeared to.

“Wow, you degrade my woman yet you have degraded yourself?”, whoa he needs to calm down. He is already on his feet next to me.

“Scelo this has nothing to do with your Bruna, hlala phansi”, she yells.

He still hasn’t moved. He looks ready to kill.

“Scelo sit... please”

Okay he eyes me dirty but eventually listens to me and sits down.

“Nx”

Ooops

“So you are our God, we should bow down at your feet? Kiss your toes and hail down to

you?", this guy has non-stop questions. It us still that uncle's son.

"Am I God? Nope. Should you bow down to me? If you please to do so. Kiss my toes? I prefer a certain gentleman to do that for me and it's not you. Hail down on me? If it is what you desire ... It's okay by me", simply how a Queen answers.

"Anyone else?", I ask for the last time. I see no one's hand in air and no one seems to have attitude to spew over me.

"Thank you for your ears and your time. One more thing, that room at the back needs to be revamped and can someone show me the grave", they all stare back at me like I'm a fool.

"I will show you, let's go", it's the beaded guy. He is a gentlemen, holding my hand while lifting me off the couch. That is so cute, I hope Fuze is taking notes.

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This is bad. The grass is as high as my waist, it's dirty – the grave itself that is. I saw a frog climb out of this place, there is no tombstone and tears are at the beginning of my eye. No man people this is sad, this is not on.

“It’s okay, he’s communicating with you let him”, he says brushing my shoulder and allowing me to burst until I’ve calmed down.

“Am I allowed to touch this? Or clean it before the marriage?”, I ask.

“It seems as if he has connected with you already, I don’t see a challenge in that. You can do whatever you want with what is his. You did well in there”, his smile is creepy.

“I doubt that, everybody in there hates me. So there is no ‘well done’ I’m deserving of”, I stand my ground in terms of not regretting what I did.

“You did what you were suppose to do and that’s that whether the people didn’t receive it well or whatnot it’s not your fault. My wife always says – when people order shit serve them shit!”, he does a little hip whip I guess imitating his wife, it’s kind of funny to watch him do that.

“And then she acts like Madia and threatens to burn your whole entire family. Dogs; cats and all. You know she threatened one of our old Indian neighbours and said, I quote “My husband is a very dangerous man, we'll send halal lightening accompanied by Lord Krishna you’ll see, I love my wife”, he says laughing his lungs out. Yhooo his voice!

And on that loving his wife part, he really does. I see it when he smiles about her and in his eyes. Ever seen love through a person's eyes, feel it radiate through his soul when he says It?

"She sounds like a crazy woman", I join in the laugh circus.

"She is crazy just like you, only difference is she does not have any remorse. The sorries you were saying back there Bayede would have demanded for herself. I love her crazy ass, if I could I would marry her all over again", he blushes.

"You two should meet up, have a drink and talk about whatever you crazy women talk about. Plus it will give her someone else to understand her tantrums", he says.

"I love her already, can I have her number?", I am in joy right now. I need a friend, if I have to stand against this family cause it seems that is

where they are pushing me. I need a Bayede. Lol.

“Speak of the maniac, she is calling. Sthandwa sempilo yami yonke”, he greets her softly.

“My baby love, I miss you like crazy I’m bored here actually. I’ve counted my toes, fixed your closet and bought 50 lingeries of which I want to try on for you tonight, buy Redbull on your way because you will need it”, I can’t believe he’s putting this on loudspeaker.

“I thought we are resting today …”, he frown-smiles slightly.

“Resting for what? I am perfectly fine, I don’t need energy for any thing I am energized enough.”, she says in high speed.

I laugh a little.

“What about me mkami?”, Mesuli gasps.

“What about you my love? Oh being tired? You can sit like a frozen Woolies chicken babe it is fine I will do the work”

This girl is mad.

“You embarrassing my game in front of a girl here”, Haibo Mesuli must not throw me in the pit of fire like this.

“A girl? Who is the bitch? Oh my god Mesuli I swear I am about to cook up a lightening bolt, who is she? Is it that cross-eyed Lisa? That bitch needs Vibs I swear.... Ooouuu Mesuli!”, I thought I was crazy kanti no no darling we have not met Bayede. I’m finished with laughter.

“Want to speak to her? Here hold on”, he gives me the phone. Okay what the heck dude?

“He.... Hello”, wow someone makes me nervous?

“Hey girl relax, I know that man would never cheat on me. I was just acting crazy. How did the meeting go?”, errrhhhhh???

“He tells me everything, we tell each other everything. So, how did it go?”, she's nosy damn, just like me.

“It went okay on my end but they didn't receive it well. I was literally chewed and spat like gum but then it's fine I guess they will come around”, I shrug.

“Noooooo baby, that is not how it should go. You are their fucken water you hear me, without you they are most probably fucked so if I were them I would be kissing your feet and if they are not then that is something to fix as well. Break it down to them softly first if they bark at you then bite them back ...”

“Okay enough violence bye Brock Lesner”, Mesuli says taking the phone from my hand.

“We are talking Mesuli ...”

“You will talk in your own time. Bye, kiss my children for me”, and just like that he hangs up. I love his wife, we should chill often.

“Let's go back inside before Mr somebody goes insane”, he chuckles. I hope that somebody is Fuze.

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Great I'm in the kitchen with the woman who hates my gall. Nonhlanhla is smiling at me and offering water so I guess she doesn't hate me much or is she pretending me? Either way I am good with her. Oh here comes Nombuso, angry at me once again.

“You let my children play outside the gate with strangers?”, she flares her nostrils at me and folds her arms.

“I didn’t think it would be a problem for them to socialize with young boys their age”, honestly speaking.

“They are my children which means whatever you do you have to go through Nonhlanhla and I”, she hits her chest.

“Nombuso calm down”, Nonhlanhla brushes the baby bump almost like she is begging me to understand why I’m being yelled at.

I immediately remember Bayede’s words.

“I was just trying to get the children to be open and comfortable around other kids. These boys will be running this household soon, they will be men of society it only makes sense for them to be social right now that is all I was trying to do. However they are your children and I

apologize for what I did”, in harmony I end there.

She looks at me once and tells the boys to get out the kitchen and go play with their sisters which is odd for me because... these are boys for Christ’s sakes!

“Nombuso I agree with Sis’Milani, these are boys or at least let us make them decide?”, Nonhlanhla speaks some wisdom into her sisterwife and she looks at the boys.

“What do you want?”, she asks them.

Aren’t these Nonhlanhla’s children?

“Can we please go play with other boys outside ma, we’ll behave I swear and we won’t be far”, Zothani begs her.

“Yes ma, it is nice for once to play with other boys instead of babysitting our sisters ... not that we mind but”, this one has even took off his specs, he looks like a normal gent now.

“Do what you want to do ... but I want no one coming at me with knee injuries”, Nombuso is not even done with the talking and the boys have left the house already. Excited I hope.

“You can shut a house down mommy I yes you!”, Someone whispers in my ear and giggles. I turn my back to a cute dark beauty type of girl. Slim thick with short hair and a nose ring.

“I’m Zimlindile by the way, can I call you mama ? I prefer it over Sis’Milani”, she giggles again.

“Oho you dissing me? You don’t mind me calling you Sis’Milani right?”, Nonhlanhla asks.

“You can call me Milani it is fine. And you ... yes you can call me mama”, it’s odd because she is old but it’s fine.

“Yeppy! So you and my brother yeah?”, she beams.

“Nothing is going on”, I say. Is there something going on between Fuze and I?

“Lies. I could spot the sexual hypertension between you too from a mile away mate”, her English flies out her nostrils, I swear.

“Have you tried the stoney and halls mixture? There is no way you two are this tense for nothing and I saw that hand movement during that meeting. Tell me, cinnamon and milk or stoney and halls?”, she leans on the counter and drools over me.

I’m still stuck on her English.

“Okay I see we have to pass the stranger stage. I’m Bruna Adams, Selo’s girlfriend. I’m from Manchester by the way and it is so nice meeting you Queen”, she hisses my hand. I like her and no it’s not about the queen part, it is about her truthfulness regarding the queen part.

“Manchester in Joburg?”

They look at me for a second, did I say something wrong? I knew to never listen to my Geography teacher. Now I'm a laughingstock!

"You so funny. Manchester in the U.K", what creature is U.K?

I nod and laugh to escape further embarrassment. I've done enough of that.

"Answer me, shaaa", she yanks me.

"I should have never taught you the lingow"

We have a laugh, while burning in the pots. These girls and I get along quite well and it is nice to chill with them but I miss Fuze now. That man put some korobela for me in all honesty, I don't sbwl people, I sbwl money.

"Ladies ladies", one of the uncle's puppets enter the kitchen and walks straight to me. To fry me for the hundredth time.

“Beautiful lady”, he holds my hand with his itchy yeast infected hands.

“Can you let me go please?”, squiggling my hand out of his grip.

“I just came to greet you and tell you how powerful your speech was back...”

“if I needed credentials from you I would have asked but I didn’t so let me go please!”

“I’m only trying to have a chat with you like a man that is all, I would love to get to know you better”, he’s tripping. First off he smells of a can spray; his beard is barely forming, I see no veins on his neck or arms, his eyes are just ... meh and oh wait his name is not Nhlanzeko.

“Eyy the men are outside”, my face lights up instantly. Why is this dude not letting me go?

“I was just trying...” , he tries to talk but Fuze shuts him up with his eyes.

“I said outside”

He let's go of my hand and walks out,
Nhlanzeko follows him after making sure he is
away away from me.

“Mmmm God I see what you trying to do and I
RECEIVE!”

“She receives Lord!”, these crazy girls and their
high pitch mirth.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

I'm happy we are finally freaken home.

I was getting tired of dogging bullets from Nombuso and MaSbisi, yes they still resent me of which is a worthless sport because I'm stuck in their lives forever. The uncle, recall the fool who practically said I have no backbone to hold that house? I'm talking about the idiot who backstabbed his whole family: his brother;

nieces and nephews – Yes that man, came to me on some “Makoti, let us forget what transpired today and focus on building a better tomorrow for the next generation. This thing of fighting like cats and dogs is embarrassing marn more especially to us heads of the family”.

I saw it coming though. The way he kept jabbing me whenever we crossed paths around the yard, and the stunt he tried pulling on me. Sending his satellite dish ears son to smother me with that cheap level 2 English and that track pants and vest nonsense. Do not get me started on the candy bar teeth. Later on I found out actually, Nonhlanhla and Dingani are an item ... well, were an item. Back then when Nonhlanhla was still a fool and basically half blind. what's so attractive about that guy?

Anyway, I advised that woman to not even think about messing around with Dingani. Neverminding what it will do to Mzayfani or the

family, I am more worried about the kids. Those kids are so sheltered if I were to take them to a township they would get lost on their way to the STOP. That specs one especially.

I don't know how but I will have to get to know those kids more to be able to make them open up to people and socialize better. If not for me and their futures well then for the future of their father's name. As it stands, none of them will be able to handle a knife when it comes to ceremonial slaughtering it is good to involve children here and there. And the Olwethu princess is very cute but tf!

Make up and nails on a high school girl? Grade 8? I think that is a little bit too much privilege and besides the kid is at home. Where her roots and umbilical cord is buried, she has to comprehend that when she is there it is either she is in the kitchen helping the women with the chopping or she around the house checking

if any adults need anything and then go play with the others.

I find it better to note things down on my TO DO LIST, that way I do not forget anything. Because there is a ton of things I need to do. Such as:

- . Putting some respect on their great grandfather's name.
- . Instilling valuable teachings into those kids.
- . Cleansing that house back to its fresh state.
- . I don't know what to do about that tree but it must be planted again. It needs to grow back to what it was when Zakhele was still alive.
- . Oh, the grave. I have to clean it up and make sure we put his tombstone

. His rondavel is where the alter should be placed. Not that double story hut they made there.

These are things to do right now. Before the marriage and before the real hardships. I have a reason to believe it will not be as terrible as I have anticipated thanks to Mesuli and his encouraging words. Apparently, Zakhele connects more with Nhlanzeko like how he used to connect with his mother when she was still alive. Mesuli said that is why she kept going, trying to mend it off for Zakhele. She felt him and his cries loudest. None of us have established how these women are chosen – the women to honour his dead wife's place.

Back to Nsingizi, the woman picked me to run the show on her behalf. Yet he said this whole thing has nothing to do with the connection I have with Nhlanzeko. I tell you, Mesuli is a confusing man but somehow you just learn to

trust him blindly. He even said I have two duties one from an Adam and one from an Eve. I laugh thinking about how Fuze and I cracked our skulls trying to make something of what we were told. And the thing I do, those grandma episodes, they are normal. Spirits control a large portion of our minds. Those outbursts it's not my being crazy, well I have grown custom to being crazy because of him. Zakhele Ndukenhle Ngcobo. Sometimes I wonder if he gets jealous when he sees me with other men? Or if I become a whore of a wife on the other side. Meh, he should be happy I'm only cheating with his great grandson and not screwing the rest of Africa. Isende elinye leli, they cannot possibly say I'm a bad wife.

Two days in and I still get miserably lost in this house. Reminds me of the time I got lost in Galleria and I had to now ask for directions out

of there without embarrassing myself. So i pretended to be on a call with a niece from Mandeni who came over to my expensive house in Mhlanga. Not that I knew anything about that place, but I always heard of it. To my unfortunate bad luck, the security I was asking saw the whole thing. My panic, my phone screen which was playing a stupid video!

“Okay wait no, we’ve been here before child. The fuck”, grrrr by the way I talk to myself when I’m frustrated and feeling stupid. I feel like it rectifies the fact that I even thought something dumb. Me correcting myself makes me feel like I’m not dumb, the inner me is dumb because the decision came from within myself and not verbally from me.

“I’m not even hungry anymore”, that is still me talking to me.

“What brings you to my room?”, yea that ain’t me. What is this girl trying to do? Wearing lingerie nighties and long weaves? Hmm. She looks good though.

“I was not coming to your room. I was ...”, I cannot figure out what to say. The cinema is this side right?

“I was watching a movie and now I’m going to grab some food. Want some?”, I’m offering myself here. Her attitude is sincerely not necessary.

“No thanks I will make them myself”, she says flicking her hair aback and striding past me. what's with the bruises on her neck?

DON'T TELL ME...

“Nokwazi, the bruises on your neck and back where do they come from?”, I try to touch them but she quickly moves away from me and pulls her weave over them. They look very

aggressive and a part of me is itching to find out who did this. I want clarity actually, whether or not Nhlanzeko is to blame for them.

“Who did that to you? Was it Nhlanzeko?”, curiosity killed a cat hey.

“Wouldn’t you like to know”, she does not even look at me. Just psshhh's away.

“What does that mean?”

“Nothing”, she’s walking faster now. Down those scary swirling steps.

“C’mon Nokwazi just tell me!”, I say grabbing her elbow and she flinches, I drop it same time.

“Why do you care Milani? Nhlanzeko is not into you for Christ's sakes. He is into pretty girls like me so if I were you I wouldn’t be hovering over him like this”, oh she has not seen a thing. I will keep hovering over him like a blind bumble bee around honey! I will be up his ass until I’m told

to back off. I will be there sniffing his nostrils and watching him take a piss.

“Establish one thing hun. You not prettier than me Nokwazi, you are thinner”, she most probably didn’t notice the difference.

“Yazi Milani”, she chortles. Feeling proud of what she is about to do.

“Nhlanzeko is not called a cold hearted book reading monster for nothing. If I were you I would learn from people's mistakes and move the heck on. Find other men your league, Nhlanzeko is not”

The door bangs and seals our fears in a packet of ‘FUCK’. He is back earlier than he said he would maybe that is why she is so shocked and scared, I choose to believe that than her being scared at something he could do to her.

First he disappears into the kitchen and comes back again, looking ... blank. I can't read his face.

"Your food is in the kitchen", he's looking at both of us.

"Thanks", we say together and watch him rush up the stairs. He takes a left, I know the left leads to his library.

"Great, now he's reading books", which means he's angry. I've learnt that much so far. He gets angry her easily tjo.

It's a takeaway, the thing he came to leave in the kitchen. Sushi for Miss America and pizza for me. When last did I ever eat pizza?

Maybe he's hungry. Or he ate on his way back from the trip he took. No, let me take food to him. I cooked when I arrived, out of boredom of course. I'll dish that up for him and bring him his beer after eating.

I knock once and push myself in with my ass.
Normally after sex asses deflate, mine though
seems to have grown three more pounds.

His face leaves that book once I place the tray
with his plate and a small glass bowl with soap
water to wash his hands.

“I thought you might be hungry”, I take a seat
on the table hoping this is not cheap wood.

“Ngiyabonga”

I stare at him washing his hands. Wiping them.
Saying grace and then diving into the plate like
a shark who hasn’t eaten anything in a decade.
Then I remember he lives alone and he is a man
and he is a thug. And the fact that him being a
possible thug doesn’t move me, leaves me with
a question mark about my own sanity. Am I
really losing strings in my head? There is a light
bulb in there that is suffering from

loadshedding because one day I feel like a fool for looking his way twice and other days I smile like a fool in love. Can't help it at this point. He draws me in too much. Like a crush ... but with feelings. Proper ones.

"I haven't tasted a home cooked meal this good ever since my mother past away", he says showing me mashed rice and beetroot and shredded pieces of beef. It's gross even on him.

"Good thing I'm not dying anytime soon so you have a lot of years to enjoy my food", I say.

His eating patterns are alarming. Six consecutive full spoons and a large sip of whiskey. Who does that?

"Alcohol should be at the end of your eating period ... It's like a reward for finishing your vegetables"

We laugh.

“I’m not five and two alcohol helps me grind food better so I don’t end up like my brother with a potbelly and all that”, he ravages the meat.

“Grind food only or emotions too?”

“Nhlanzeko why do you read books?”, watch me dig a whole for myself. I always wanted a challenge for myself, one that I could actually win. And this man, this man might be that challenge. Only thing is, I see no coming back once I’ve left.

“Books are knowledge. A man is a wise man once he acknowledges the power of this in his life”, he says waving some life therapeutic book probably written by some wiz nerdo who lives in a condo in the forests. I don’t trust books.

“Is that all?”

“Yes ... oh and books tend to equip us with this ...”, he puts his plate aside and pushes the tray

to the edge of the table. He swoops my butt towards me more, holding my tummy rolls gently tightening around me.

He's giving butterfly kisses on my chest and breasts.

"Are you trying to knock me up?", I ask, opening my legs wide. HOE IS WHAT I AM RIGHT NOW.

"Would you mind being a whale? I have about 26 babies in this sac that I could release in you", he lifts his... sac weirdly.

"On second thoughts ... move brother. Move off me. You will paralyze me wena"

"Kame kancane, stove siku-6 already. Let's just bake this cake yangthola?"

My clit felt that yangthola!!



☆

WE-MEGAN ZULU waze wangiqhatha noMfana
wakwaMyeza sisi waze wangiqhatha!! 😊💔

Nigga is on some: “Go kiss your darling readers
hlukane ne-side piece eyi mina” 😊

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

♤NONHLANHLA NGCOBO♤

“You know maybe you should just delete all the negative images and perceptions you have for her and learn to get along with her more”, this is my solicit advise. One that will give everyone a chance to breathe and her a chance to relax and enjoy her birth because aboveboard I do not see that girl leaving anytime soon. Her statement conformed her stay.

“Ugh! She wrecks my nerves! Who does she think she is really, Nonhlanhla? We came first

than her why doesn't she seem to get that? Our word is above hers", she yells. Convinced by her own white lies.

"No it's not and the sooner you put that in your head the better", I was so wrapped up in Nombuso's unnecessary drama that I lost track of time. Today there are three across-town meetings Mihlali and I have to attend. Pretty sure I am 40 minutes late already.

"You picking her side now?", the drama of a pregos woman frightens me.

"I'm not pickings sides. Not yours not hers. Why do you have Milani so much? She seems nice and besides all this is none of her fault", where did my shoe go? I'll wear sneakers it's fine.

"Nonhlanhla wake up and smell the coffee", there is no coffee to smell here, she is being paranoid for absolutely no reason.

“That girl thinks she will come here and act like some Queen, bossing us around and telling us what to wear and how to act in a house that does not belong to her. I don’t like that girl”, she really doesn’t.

She has been ignoring Ngcobo ever since we got home last night. Apparently he took Milani's side and that ticked her off. She exploded like never before yesterday, and me poor me Miss Therapist had to babysit a 37 years old man the whole night instead of finishing off my financial reports.

“And did you see how Mzi was looking at her. Like he’s looking at his next wife and world. Aren’t you afraid of that? Being moved by another woman?”, she is a fine one to talk like that. How does she think I felt when she came barging in my marriage.

“You chose a polygamous man didn’t you?”

“But-”

“So deal with that babe. I must go now or else I will be late and can you please talk to Ngcobo before the man dies on us”, I kiss her on the cheek and flea off in search of my husband and the kids.

“Bye babe”, I say waving at him and trailing back to my AMG. Yes, I brought a new car that actually fits my status.

“Wait, wait. You going to leave without kissing me?”, he’s fast. Already wrapped around my waist.

“Haibo Ngcobo ingane ziyabuka”, I gasp.

“Let them watch they are old enough now aren’t they? One day they’ll have to know where they come from”, and just like that I become senseless and horny as fuck as he deepens the kiss and tightens his grab on my

bums. Pulling me more towards his warm body till his erected penis grazes my thigh.

“In front of the world early in the cracks of dawn, you two are dangerous mos”

Mzi and I freeze for a while, absorbing the embarrassment. Especially for me.

“Milani...”

“There is no need for explaining, you two are married after all and this is your private space. I should have announced and just by the way, you can do a really good quickie behide that bush near the garage you know. There is no sin in not being formal and every thing”, she laughs.

“Are the kids still here or they are gone? I came to see them, I brought them some snacks as well”, she lifts up a three packets of goodies. Those little scoundrels will praise her feet after this treat, they live for junk.

“We were in our way to work, but Nombuso is still inside. The kids are waiting for their transport for now, I think it arrives around 7:00am.”, Ngcobo becomes so well-mannered around her, I saw it again that time at the office when that whole chaotic scene broke out. I still feel guilty about that.

“Nombuso, that is exactly whom I came here for, after the kids that is”, she says. That’s strange what could she want from Nombuso after their boiling water meet-up at the meeting.

“Okay, we can go inside. Bye babe”, I kiss his chin since I’m wearing sneakers today I cannot reach his lips without tip-toeing which was going to come off abit disrespectful in front of Milani.

“Babe huh?”, she rounds her eyebrow up and folds her arms on her chest. Some day I must give compliments to her boobs, the girl has beautiful breasts.

“Honeymoon phase is back I guess”, I blushed I’m sure I blushed.

“As it should be! Honeymoon shouldn’t be an ending phase in a marriage, maybe a relationship but not a marriage”, please not the lecture, please.

“Milani life has ...”, she closes me up with a pretzel shoved into my mouth harshly.

“Hey monkey you”, ow I was dropped like a hot potatoes for Asakhe. I feel so loved. After chewing the pretzel down, I follow Milani to the kitchen , where she's handing the kids their goodies. Apart from Asakhe bullying everyone into giving her a piece of their goodies, I see smiles all round. Hmm, maybe this girl is the

change we needed in this family. I get where Nombuso's paranoia derives from trust me I do more than anybody, nevertheless, you just cannot fault this girl. She is a loving ball of cuteness. Zothani and Sisekelo could not stop ranting about how they are excited to have her as a mother – every woman in this family is their mother including Bruna. Although she has not seen that yet I noticed.

It's a refreshing thing to have a person doing the disciplining on your behalf. I was getting tired of nursing Nombuso's feelings regarding these kids. They are overly spoilt.

"Thank you ma", the boys thank her with a grand smile across their faces.

"You welcome. Before you leave, you guys do know that mommy is pregnant right, and the least thing we want is for to get all worked up because of dirty dishes. So, you being the lovey

bunch you are should do some of the work for her. Like washing your dishes once you are done with eating and sweeping the floors if you see dirt”, she says wasting her breath. These brats do not listen. For how long have I preached the same thing and yet none of them adhere.

Zothani finishes with his juice and places the glass in the sink right after being told not to. I did say they do not listen.

“My boy I was addressing you as well, washing dishes is everyone’s job okay?”

All of them nod with long faces and pouted lips. That trick won’t work with Milani they might as well forget it.

“You are very good with kids”, I’m a bit ashamed of the fact that I cannot rule my children and teach them general values,

however credits should be given when credits are due.

“Thanks to Google of course. Truth be told I am not fond of children, but I love yours”, she does a wide smile on me and brushes my back gently. Not too sure if that last line and smile is genuine.

“I tried my mother first because that is my GO-TO, to my surprise I was taken straight to voicemail. Oldies get crazy over dick I tell you”, she walks out the kitchen for a while and comes back with a gift bag, two of them. I see flowers and a red cap that I am overly familiar with.

“And these?”, I take the one handed to me.

“We are done washing dishes ma, can we go now?”, Olwethu hates washing dishes, I'm shocked she hasn't thrown a fit as yet.

Like I said SPOILT.

“Yes you can go. Have a good day at school”, she waves at them.

“Bye mommy”

“Bye baby”, she kisses me on the forehead and runs out. She will forever be a mommy’s girl.

“Whew, you guys do this all the time? All morning? Sheesh, I would die. Love your shoes”, I have picked up on how random her sentences are. Wonder what mark she use to get in English Comprehension.

“Thank you”

Silence follows that – Thank You. We standing close to each other, leaning on the countertop. She’s drinking the shake I prepared for breakfast.

“Who is Nhlanzuko?”

Her tone is more stone cold now with a lacing of chest pains. The question is still replaying in

my head, over and over and over I'm struggling to grasp the reason behide her asking me this.

"A troubled soul", I shrug because really, who is Nhlanzeko? Nobody gets that man not even his brothers or his best friends.

"Has he ever laid his hands on a woman?", she asks again in the same tone.

Now I'm hundred percent sure she knows something, probably that canary Nokwazi said something. Nhlanzeko and I are not twins or birds of the same feathers but we talk ... often if not always. He pours himself out to me every black Xmas Eve only problem was I never understood him. But I've always been in his corner. Always. So that is why Milani's question puzzles me.

To answer it truthfully, yes he has. Once and he never did it again. Mainly because it was a mistake, it was never meant to happen. He

loved that woman to I don't know what planet. Onikha knew better than to betray him the way she did. She took a few punches here and there, a few kicks and next thing he has her by the neck begging for air to breathe. I don't think I'll ever forget the way he cried to over the phone that day, explaining what had transpired. I could say that was the main switch that turned off power in his heart but nah, Nhlanzeko has been fucked up way before that. And I don't see that changing anytime soon.

"Nhlanhlo?", she nudges me back to reality. I went away for a while over there.

"Yeah.... I mean no. No he has never laid his hands on a woman before, he would never", I half lie. Yes he has beaten her up and killed her however he swore never to do it again.

One thing about that guy, his good side is enough to warm and capture your heart in one

go. The darkness in him though, can send shivers straight to the devil. Nhlanzeko is just another DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH.

“Why are you asking?”, I’ve long forgotten the meeting. I will reschedule or set up a zoom this afternoon.

“I think I’m in-love with him”

HUH!?!?

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☆NHLANZKO NGCOBO☆

He comes from yet another truck deal in Port Shepstone, gun smuggling shit using his trucks. Majority of the illegal workers use his

transportation to ship their goods because they are the most effective. A truck with his number plate will never get pulled over around the narrow borders because he pays people to make such obstacles disappear. His clients only deal with one stress and that stress is whether it will be received on time or not.

Ethan stayed behind to seal everything and watch how the operations occur. Nhlanzeko too would have stayed but he has two crazy women stuck in his house and anything could happen to anyone of them at any given time.

... Ow and he has a bloody rat to kill.

He parks his car in front of the backyard garage, along with him he took a box of tools in one hand and a book in the other.

It is a little bit psychotic... very psychotic actually the fact that whenever he kills it is

almost as if he's in a therapy session. He never just pulls out a weapon and cocks the barrel and pulls the trigger then watch the bullet splatter a man's life on the floor.

No no not Nhlanzeko.

He first has a seat with you, get to release tension, read you a book while drinking some whiskey or green tea. Educates you about life before making everything about you again only to kill you at the end. His murders are more therapeutic for him than vengeful.

“Sup buddy”, he greets Joey – the man strapped on a steel electric chair.

“Missed me?”, he says placing his toolbox on the table next to Joey and opening it to search for the tool his heart desires.

Joey rattles under those belts tying him on bed, screaming for help even with the tape over his mouth and covering his vocal cords.

“Aww I missed you more buddy. You know I was not going to kill you Joey, I really was not because I knew those fools had done something to manipulate you to hate me and want to kill me”, he stops and turns around looking rather pissed at Joey.

“That piece of shit you call a puppy pooped on my shoe, my fucken expensive German shoe that I was planning on wearing when I marry my wife”, he puffs and shakes his head. Yanking the poop off his expensive German shoe and sitting on a bench across the stainless steel bed.

“Why did you screw me over Jo-Jo?”, he asks looking a tad disappointed in him.

“Please – Please man don’t hurt me man please”, Joey coughs up. Rainfalls of salt water pouring out his eyes, the man is excruciating

pain with those nails piercing through his thighs and hands.

“Hurt you? No I would never Jo – I’m going to kill you. You know why Jo-Jo?”, his attitude is comical yet filled with anger.

Joey shakes his head – No.

“Because you think you are Jesus Jo-Jo! You think your mother is Virgin Maria, how do you let another man give you the cross of his sins Jo-Jo? What Emmanuel and I have going on has nothing to do with you Jo-Jo yet you let him use you to get to me. Are you Jesus Jo?”, he asks with eyes blunt like sharp knives.

“Are you Jesus Christ Jo ANSWER ME!”

“No I’m not no I’m not Jesus... Please man bro let me go”, he begs the wall because Nhlanzeko ain’t doing that crap.

“I wasn’t planning on killing you Joey. I wasn’t because I am a changed man now, I have a new

girl that I really really care for Joey. I like her a lot, I see my whole future in her eyes Joey, this woman means a lot to me and I barely know her but See there is a problem here Jo-Jo”, he gets up and walks up and down near the bed with the glass of whiskey in his hand.

“I have this bad luck of getting fucked up by women, now you see I find it hard to trust women Joey. Do you trust women?”

Jo shakes his head.

“I don’t trust them too my brother. But I really like her Jo-Jo man, but see I have this fear bro. This fear of one day hurting her by mistake because there is a side of me I cannot control. What if I kill her Jo-Jo? What if I cause her too much pain the she wants to leave me at the end of the day. I won’t let her leave that part I know very well”, Nhlanzeko stops, sips his whiskey and sits back down on the bench.

“What do I do Joey?”

“Let her go”, Jo coughs again.

“Stupid answer Jo, very stupid answer. You keep disappointing me ndoda c’mon!”, Nhlanzeko swings his gun around.

“Don’t kill me man I have kids”

“I could have had one too. On a lighter note I won’t kill you Jo, I told her I will come back soon I’m going to grab lunch. I can’t afford to show up with blood splatters. However I have this very good close friend that has been on a hunger strike for a couple of weeks”, he blows a whistle and a bark fills the room. Joey is rattling on the bed like a madman, scared to death of those sharp teeth spiking through the mouth.

“Have fun and thank you for your advise”

He nods and takes his stuff and leaves. The screams are so loud, they are audible from the

lawn in the front. His worry is Milani hearing them, that's another story all together.

“I prepared sandwiches”, Nokwazi says bumping into him by the door. Nhlanzuko passes her without giving her much attention.

“You are my baby mama ... stick to that and quit the stories you keep telling Pumpkin”, he says.

“What is this thing you and that girl have vele? I’m carrying your child Nhlanzuko!!”

“That’s the thing. You carrying my child but she carries my life”

Nokwazi blinks trying to comprehend his words. Life? In what way does he means this thing?

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

¤ BRUNA ADAMS ¤

I cannot believe Selo is still Gorilla-snoring in bed at this time knowing very well what special day today is!

I've worked my butt off to make this day as glamour as it is about to be, a whole week of chaos and regular operations and then coming back to nanny this man and having issues with my Visa while planning a huge fancy party for two very posh and opinionated women, it was

not easy. Selo should be hailing me and pampering me right now as we speak not snoring as if he's the one whose back was broken for two weeks.

I'm grateful for that Milani saga, she helped me a ton with the décor and food. Her being there made everything flow much more easily for me. Whenever people would try fuck with me because well... I'm not south African she would put them in their place. Like the cake lady, she started charging way too much, too much off our original agreement. Milani shut that old lady down the con artist ended up giving us the cake on a 50% discount and to top it off three boxes of delicious cupcakes. Sheesh I hail that woman.

The last time I spoke to her was two hours ago and she sounded busy, something about moaning Fuze a thousand times and then she dropped the call on me. Nonhlanhla and

Nombuso have to be fetched, I thought Milani would do that but clearly –

RIGHT! I HAVE A BOYFRIEND!

“Baby wake up”, I yank his leg til he kicks me off, the kick was so hard it sent me straight to the floor. Did I not cry!!

“Baby...Bruna what's wrong?”, he's still in a bit of a daze, rubbing his eyes and yawning. Did he not just Bruce Lee me? Did he not see that?

“You hit me with your foot!”, I bellow even harder when I think of the fall. You know the moment you actually slip and fall you do not necessarily cry but the minute you digest what just happened, they roll out on their own accord.

He cradles me in his arms, holding my head close to his chest and I'm still storming.

“Where did I hurt you, Baby?”, he asks.

“Everywhere. I can’t feel my body”, I move to sniffing part of crying, where you start getting weird hiccups.

“Come let’s put an ice pack on your forehead”, he picks me up and walks me to my bathroom where I keep the first aid. Although I do not trust Selo with any of this I still let him be.

He cleans the wound on my forehead with savlon and then puts a thin plaster over it. Cleans up his mess and lifts me off the counter putting me on my feet imagine! He just beat me up a second ago.

“I can’t walk Selo”, I snivel.

“What? You can stand nje”, he looks gobsmacked somehow.

“I’m sorry buddy did you forget what you did to me just now? You pulled a Jackie Chan on me and I’m just a tiny little girl”, I throw fits for days. He won’t get away with this. Nope, never.

“It was a mistake Bruna”, he’s using hands which states he’s annoyed and feeling guilty.

“Mistakes have consequences. What if I lost a tooth because of your kick. See I have a plaster because of you”, I point to it.

“It is a tiny scratch”, tiny scratch my left eye!

“I have a plaster on my forehead, my whole face is ruined, I will become a laughing stock. You ruined my make up routine ...”

I don’t know what is going on with my crying cycle, I cry every day. Ever since I was a baby.

Nowadays I cry for a living. He picks me up again and takes me to the closet, good he’s going to dress me. Tears always work charms on these men. No matter how hard as rock they act but we see through those puffed muscles of theirs, they are just tiny babies.

He places me on one of the chairs in the closet.

“Where are you going, aren’t you going to dress me?”, I ask.

“Dress you? No”, he chuckles, shaking his head.

“So why was I brought here then? Time is ticking Selo and we are not even half way done. I need to do my hair and then get dressed, actually you must dress me because I cannot dress myself since you hurt me”

“You are here because you want to be treated like a baby don’t you?”, whaaaat?

“When did I want that?”

“You throw tantrums like a child so I will treat you like a child. I’m locking you in here to think about what you’ve done”

This monk!

“No Selo wait!”, I jump up fast but I don’t reach it fast enough. By the time I’m fighting with the door handle its already locked.

“Selo!!”, I scream at the top of my lungs.

“Ohh you can walk and stand now”, he’s such a bitch at times.

“Open up the door Selo”, I want to cry again.

“I can’t hear you properly I think your screaming blocked my eardrums”

Mx!

I can stay here whole day if he wants me to, I don’t mind. Hell I might hang myself with this scarf too!

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☆MILANI ZWANE☆

I've never had such a good shower in a long time, I feel like walking around naked just soaking in the good atmosphere, actually I should speak to Nhlanzeko about adding mirrors all over the house so I can enjoy the only real decoration in this huge empty mansion.

After applying lotion all over my body, I put on a white towel and venture off to find Fuze. Judging by the laughter and the conversations coming from the outside I'm guessing his friends slept over. I thought they would leave at night, with Nokwazi. Fuck I do not like that girl one bit, though I try to be cordial and friendly but she just – I don't know rubs me off a wrong fucken way. Oh I should stop swearing so much, my mother is coming over for the weekend

because that is when I'm getting married to Zakhele whom has been a thorn in my arse during sleep. She thinks it's way too soon for me to be shoved into this, frankly speaking so do I, however I prefer finalizing all this and moving on with my life. Besides the longer we wait the more aggressive he will become so it's better we finish this.

Do men ever get tired of eating meat; drinking beer and talking about shit the entire day?

“Morning”, he wave at the gents.

I receive energetic hellos back, winks here and there and a very uncomfortable stare-down from one of them. It's that creep that helped me with the grocery the night I arrived here. Dude shakes my body.

“Can I please talk to you”, I secretly point inside the house with my head and he jumps up

immediately thinking I want to smash. Boys will always be boys no matter how grown they are by age. His hand lands on my butt, gently pushing me inside quicker.

“Round two?”, he asks gripping his bottom lip between his teeth and slowly releasing it and then squeezing my butt cheek in his hand.

“No pervert! Please apply this lotion on my back, I’m planning on wearing a backless dress for the party”, I hand it to him.

“Can’t wait to rip it off later”, he leaves arousing kisses on my shoulder and back neck that leave your mouth dry and throat uttering little devil moans!

“You have to stop doing that you know unless you want baby mama number two”, I joke around.

“I wouldn’t mind knocking you up, in fact I’m planning on doing that very soon”, hhaa the nerve! The flippin nerve.

“Remember I told you Bayede and Bruna are forcing me into opening an Instagram account?”

“Yeah”, I don’t think he’s hearing me, his focus is on my body.

“I did two weeks ago and guess what? Sis has over 5k followers already. I don’t know how I did that but... Put some respect on my name”, in fact I would like to thank my momma, my dada and my parents. My man and my boyfriend thank you amen!

“That’s great, I told you, you worry to much about nothing”, he’s done and now he’s acting like the kid he is. After candy already.

“Babe stop it, not my toes”, I’m blushing like hell while at it. And he goes ahead with licking

them and sucking them. What can I say he has weird fetishes. I'm all giggly and high right now he's in his own planet – Planet Toemery.

LMAO!

“You must change your lock screen”, I say when he’s finally done with eating my toes.

“Why?”

“What if the kids borrow your phone and see this?”, totally inappropriate.

“C’mon it’s not that clear, they won’t know”, is he serious?

“My legs are in the air apart asf and your head is between my thigh. How can they not put two and two together and get four?”

“... I don’t know but I’m not changing that wallpaper in a million years. Let’s go make more pictures”

“My guy no ... plus you will dirty your clothes”, I laugh and push him off trying to escape his damn lips and hands.

“No I won't, I'm no child after all. I watch myself when I'm eating”, geez so much charm in one thing.

I still haven't digested the fact that he's going to wear jeans and a tee and sneakers for such a formal event. If I had woken up earlier than him then I would have picked him an outfit for the day instead of what he's wearing regardless of how it suits him.

“I have to get ready, see ya”, and just like that I slip through his fingers and run upstairs go get ready.

“Draped collar satin dress?? Yea”

I have cute sneakers to wear it with, not a fan of heels or sandals.

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“You look cute”, he says, touching my afro for the sixth time after I warned him thrice!

“Thank you!”

“Are you mad?”, he frowns.

“No!”, I’m low-key mad though.

“Why do you look cross then? And why are your arms folded and your cheeks are bloated too”, he pokes my cheek until I stop blowing them out.

“Because you keep messing my hair, when I get to the party I will probably be looking like a racoon that just lost a fight to a cat”, how does he not understand?

“Aww I’m sorry baby, ngibheke phela. Milani, look at me”

That thing of tapping me with his finger is irritating and painful, I end up looking at him. The fool is taking a video over here.

“#Wifie”, he smiles. I know stupid right?

“Whatever, just hurry up!”

He laughs and takes my hand, holding so tight I end up thinking he wants me to hold his back so I do and then he loosens the grip. Such a baby.

“I love you”, he says after a long comfortable piece of silence. Kissing my hand two times. I’m still furious and my pride won’t let me lower my anger. We just sit in that silence until we arrive at the venue. I wonder what Bruna was thinking choosing a Casino out of everything. Such a stuffy place but everything looks good.

“You outdone yourself here Miss Adams”, we hug, a side hug because fellow over here is not

letting my hand go anytime soon and neither am I.

“We outdid ourselves you mean, you also helped”, honestly I was nodding at anything given to me.

“You look cute by the way, love the dress matched with sneakers. And the hair ... the hands too”, she winks. Gosh I knew it was going there.

“Ah my two favs, MaZwane”

“Hello Scelo”, we share a brief hug before he fist bumps with his brother next to me.

“You guys are ready to come out I'm guessing”, what makes him guess such a thing?

“N...”

“Yeah, yeah we are and whoever is against it can go fuck themselves”

No no no he must not say that bull and kiss my ear and think this is okay. We said we won't tell anybody till further notice. He knows this is not over, he can look at me like a shmuck all he wants.

"I like that, what everyone else thinks ain't important", Bruna cheers him on.

"Where is everyone?", I need a tall glass of any alcohol.

"Inside by the hall, let's go. Mzi said they are on their way now"

Thank gawd because I want to leave now. I heard the kids are stashed inside the casino with their oldies. I must say hi before I leave, although we spoke yesterday. Our relationship is really great, they are good respectful kids, not the devils I saw when I first arrived.

I notice a few faces I don't know, must be their close friends and relatives that I do not know yet. Even the Dingani boy is here, such a thorn. Nhlanhlo told me he follows her to and from work, maniac disorder is what the man's name sounds like to me. She's happy in her marriage he should get that straight.

I'd kill a fool that tries to interfere with Fuze and I!

“They are here”, he taps me with his foot that he just dumped on my thigh. I should have went with a long dress.

“SURPRISE!!!!”, we scream loudly.

“Pooopoooopoooo”, I had to, I just had to.

The girls look so pretty, their husband is okay. Laid back like the brothers no suit or tie, so this was a planned thing or us girls are just forward?

They look like they are coming towards us and this man doesn't let my hand go.

“Nhlanzuko...”

“Bafo, job well done. Usebenzile”, they shake hands and then he greets the wives.

“You two look beautiful by the way. How is my niece?”, he asks Nombuso.

“How do you know it’s a girl?”

“I want a girl now, boys are too much”

They all laugh. I’m here praying none of them notice our hands.

“How are you girl haven’t seen you in so long”, Nonhlanhla hugs me.

“Planning your party. You know how picky you are”

“Tell me about it”, Bruna joins.

“Lies I'm not that hard to impress”

True. The one whose face always changes around me is the picky one.

“Let’s go to the ladies”, Bruna says pulling my hand knowing very well it’s locked.

“Babe please”, I whisper to him.

He steals a kiss nobody noticed and then let’s me go. Sengiyajola guys!

“Girls, this is my friend slash sister wife Milani, Milani these are my friends. Mihlali; Lethu and Nomtha”, Nonhlanhla is the worst introducer ever. Sister wife what?

“Hi ladies thank you for coming by the way. We know it was last minute”, I smile trying my best to be professional. I can be the presidents secretary after this event I swear. I’ve been twanging since!

“I have one question for you Milani girl, how do you do It?”, this is Nomtha by the way.

“do what?”, I ask.

“Ah-ha don’t ask do what. You know what you doing to that man girl. We saw him opening the door you and tying your laces for you, since you entered he has not let your hand go. Haibo thetha mfondini intoni le oyenzayo? Pink worra?”, Mihlali is louuuuud I must say. Very fucken gorgeous, she looks like those Instagram models.

“It grips”, I whisper and drink my juice waiting for the hype to die down.

“Yessss girl”, Bruna.

“I need one that grips too because whoooooa, am I ready for a ring!”, she sighs and finishes the entire glass of wine in one sip. Real life problems.

“Give him time, Mihlali”, Nonhlanhla.

“Xesha la nton? He acts like he needs to dive into an elephants ass to get a ring. We are well-off, a ring and a wedding is nothing”

“Consult baby girl”, Nomtha laughs.

“You laugh but I might consult for real”, and she looks serious.

“Why are you so eager though?”, Bruna.

“I love that man with my whole life, I just want security you know. A promise to always be his forever until death does its part”, mmh I felt that.

“Zenzo loves you, relax. He will pop the question in no time”

“The main man is speaking”, Nonhlanhla hushes them. I love seeing her act like this giddy girl. It suits her.

“Firstly, thank you all for showing up. I know it was a last minute thing. Secondly, the reason we are all here, the reason why I’m here fit and fulfilled. My two queens...”

Two queens? Could never be me. I'd scratch the other's eye out. I can't share and call me names but I sense more depth in what he has with Nhlanhlo than Nombuso.

"Thank you so much for the sacrifices both of you have done for me, the depths of love and respect you two show me is undeniable. I'm everything that I am today because you two built me from foundation up, I hear a lot of people say polygamy is fake and whatnot. But you two never adhered to the naysayers...", ohhh uyang'gudla?

"I'll forget love the both you, in your own special ways. You both know what you mean to me, and I hope it stays like that. I hope we stay like this, close; warm and protected by the strong pillars – being you two. I'm bad at this, excuse me for my jumbled words it's just I get nervous confessing myself because not a lot of people understand my words or actions except

these two souls. I just wanted to say that and show you a little bit of appreciation. I haven't forgotten my vows on either end and I'm hoping I have this whole lifetime to fulfil them with you. Hope you love your gifts", he smiles bringing two black boxes towards them.

Is he going to marry them again?

We hear very loud engines raving outside and the entire hall rushes outside. Oh my god no!

Nombuso screams so loud I think baby girl forgot about the baby, she's busy jumping around. While the other one is humbly crying on her man's chest. This is so cute.

"What car is this?", I ask him once the scent has filled my nostrils enough.

"Range Rover SVAutobiography", he's uniting our hands again.

"Its so pretty"

The night is young but I'm not, I want to go sleep now. I'm so tired. The main party is over now anyway so we can leave I'm sure.

We say our goodbyes to the adults and then the kids then we leave soon after that.

My feet are so sore, those sneakers aren't that comfy, next time I'll wear his. Huge as they are.

“Your feet are tense”, he says rubbing them gently.

“When have you ever heard of tense feet?”, I laugh. I could stay like this forever, my legs on his lap, I'm watching him drive while giving me the best massages ever. I could live like this.

“I have heard of it here and there, it's caused by sex deficiency”

LMAO!

“You should be a comedian babe because your jokes!”

“Have you spoken to Zimi?”

“No, her phone is off and she didn’t show up at the party”, I shrug.

I feel like sleeping but the sudden halt wakes me up. Why are we stopping and why are there red lights flickering everywhere?

Before I could ask one thing a bang on my window alerts me. What the heck!

“Nhlanzeko what is this?”, I ask.

He seems calm yet angry so maybe he knows why police are hunting on us like vultures.

“You still remember how to drive right?”, he asks.

“No I don’t remember, what is going on?”, I get up and look him dead in the eyes.

“I’ll be back by tomorrow night the latest. I love you, I will call before you sleep. When you get home lock the doors and do not open for anybody but my brothers and Ethan”

“Okay but why”

“I love you”, he kisses my feet and opens the door. I see a peak of a huge ass gun being pointed at him and I absolutely lose my mind. Not at the that he did something wrong hence he’s being arrested but at this cock handling him so violently.

“Don’t grab him like that!”, I say following them to the van behide us. He turns, both of them.

“Milani get back inside the car, Ethan is on his way”

“What are you going to do if I don’t little girly? Nothing！”, he laughs.

“How about end your career in a press of a button. I’m a black woman remember and that

is a black man, you are white and social media is not cordial towards racist cops. Do you want to act like a bitch from high School and end up getting stoned in the middle of the road or you will listen to this little girly and handle him with care”, my phone flash is on but I’m not taking any video of him. Funnily he seems convinced and let’s Nhlanzeko off.

“Stay in your lane before you get hurt”, he says.

“Stay in yours before you get crushed!”

He steps back abit shocked. We keep the stare until he gives up and walks back to his van in fury.

“Dammnnit!”, I smash the tire with my foot.

What the hell is going on.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

☆ZIMLINDILE NGCOBO☆

“Babe, why are you not speaking to me? What did I do Emma?”, I walk around to sit with him on the couch but I’m pushed aside aggressively I almost land ontop of the glass table in front of us. WTF!

“Hello Emmanuel!”, this boy is skating on thin ice with me. First of all I was suppose to be with my family celebrating with them in the party but he blocked me from going, he took my phone and my car keys without telling me any

thing and now he's sucking face and throwing tantrums at me for no good reason. I'm at a loss of words, I don't get what I did because we were fine all along until about a week or two ago, which is when he come back furious.

Emmanuel has weird mood swings so I thought it was one of those days and I let it go but now I see it's more than just a mood swing. It's deeper but he does not want to share it with me.

Sigh.

"Is it me and something I did maybe that you did not like? Speak to me, Emma so I can fix my mistake if there was one that I made", can't believe I'm begging him to communicate.

I've done this before and I ended up slicing my wrists for the duration of the relationship. I told myself after that relationship that I will never allow a man to weaken me to this point and yet

here we are not even three years later. Doing the same thing. I'd like to believe Emma is different from Kagiso though.

“Babe ...”

“Piss off Zimi”, he storms out the room after dropping that bombshell on me. I’m still seated trying to understand what was said to me a second ago, where it came from and just ... why.

“Yho ngazilinga Jesu”, my white wine is running out. I should call Bongiwe to shop some for me because if this is how I’ll be living with this man then I do need wine, tons of it.

I wonder where he run off now? To his barber shop hoes? He loves them after all I can’t give him like how they give him. I’m little Miss Virgin. Ugh men make me puke inside sometimes.

I search for his brandy until I've found it and take a long sip then pour some in a glass and sip bit by bit. What a piece of shit.

I walk around the house until I'm tired, stand by the balcony and soak in all that fresh air, then walk around again until I land in our bedroom. My face lights up with a smile remembering the sweet good memories we had in here, this was my happy place. Still is, regardless of this little hiccup we are facing for I don't know what reason.

His leather jacket is on the bed, my first instinct is to throw it across the room but I end up slipping it on and hugging it close to me. My hand touches something, oh thank God it's my phone.

Three missed calls from mommy?? I think of calling her back later but decide against it. She's probably worried to death.

“Hello Mommy”

“Hello Mommy my left foot Zimlindile where have you been and why are you not answering calls? We've been dead worried about you. Are you okay?”, I did say she'd be dead worried.

“I'm fine I promise. Emma and I have been having issues lately and I'm drained that's all”

“That doesn't mean GO AWOL on us like this. Why didn't you come to the party?”, I can sense something is up with her as well. Her sniffs tell me she has been crying and that's something unusual.

“I had bad cramps and ... how is it? Do send me pictures please”

The car is back, I can see the lights from up here. He's not even alone, his friend is with

him. It looks like a heated argument going on between them both. Gosh I'm over Emma for today, I really am.

“Zimi ... Zimi hello?”, oh ma?

“I’m still here, I just saw something right now. Anyway can I call you later?”, I’m rushing down the stairs waiting for him to come through that flippin door so I can give him a piece of my mind.

“No you can’t drop the call on me I’m still talking to you”, she's fuming.

“I’m so sorry ma but I have to do this. Bye, love you guys”, I hope she doesn’t tell my brother because he'll open up a search team.

“Glad you found your way back home and not got lost in your skank's vagina”

He does not say anything to me, just gobbles up his drink and locks the door. I'm getting uneasy feels all over my body as he stares at me. I'm not sure if he's angry at me or someone else, but he's angry alright.

"Emmanuel kahle kahle yini vele ngawe? I'm talking to you and I'm being ignored, I'm asking questions and getting zero replies. Yini ikinga yakho?", I'm up his face ready to spit on his face the minute he turns around.

He turns around and flings a glass at my face of which I was able to duck in the nick of time.

He's breathing fire while stomping towards me and my slow ass does not even move, I'm too confused; too thrown off; too ... empty. A slap delivers me onto the ground I feel my jaw weaken by the hinges. That's when I realize my name is about to be part of the victims of abuse list. Something I had never set for myself ever.

“Emmanuel...”, I’m crawling my way away from him but he grabs my ankle and swings me back to his leg, I bang my head on the edge of the table leg and I feel my brain ooze blood. He picks me up by my hair and punches me four times on my abdomen till I bleed out my mouth. Still not saying a word.

“What ...what did I do Emma? I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry please”, I’m pushing him back with the little energy I have stored in me.

“Your brother wants to kill my brother right? It’s fine, I’ll kill his sister too and after that his little girlfriend is next”, he spits on me and marches out somewhere around the house but he left his phone here with me. It’s a battle but I get to it quick enough and dial the first number that pops in my head. Mommy's number.

“Milani speaking hello ?”

“Ma, ma I need you please come fetch me please ma. He’s going to kill me and then kill you too, please hurry up ma”, he tugs me before I could finish speak and a painful slap on the face sends me to sleep.

I wake up to a jug of cold water being poured over me.

“Emma...”

“I should have dealt with that piece of shit you call a brother, I should have taken him out long time ago and yet I felt sorry for you so I forgave him and moved on. Look at where the love I had for you got me? Today I don’t have a brother because of him! I don’t have a family because of him. Do you understand my pain Zimi?”

I nod, crying and shivering in pain and cold.

“Exactly I want him to feel it too, for him to feel what he made me feel”, and just like that he throws that belt on me and it lands on my bare thighs. I’ve never felt so much pain – inside out my body is giving up. There is no way out of this, I have no energy to fight him off I end up lying there still and dead. Why would be punish me for sins I don’t know?

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☆MILANI ZWANE☆

...COUPLE OF HOURS LATER, STILL MIDNIGHT.

I bring her a dish of warm water and salt to clean and blot her wounds and wipe out the dry blood. My hands have been shaking ever since

that phone call, when I heard her cry and scream for help. And the second Ethan walked with her inside that door I completely shut down, anger and no other feeling but anger. I have not said a word and I won't because I'll lose it. Zimi does not need that right now, she needs a pillar; a mother; warmth.

"It's still sore there mom", she flinches when I touch he face. I actually cannot stand watching her like this but I contain myself and clean her up quickly so I can get out of here and burst the fuck out.

"Sorry baby", those are the only words strong enough to push through my lips.

"Where is Bhuti?", that's another person I want to bury right now. She told me everything the minute she arrived. My mind was not focusing on her words much, I was overwhelmed by the

scars. Who the hell thinks they have a right to dare me?

“Get some rest, I’ll check on you later”, I kiss the top of her head and walk out her room.

When I get inside our room the glass frame is the first thing I fling across the room, the mirror follows. I don’t know, I’m throwing everything around I want to scream, I want to cry. Hell I want to kill somebody. I want swear and punch something. What the heck has become of me?

Is this my new life? Heck no, I shouldn’t be the one accommodating shit.

My door opens slightly, he peaks in. looks around in shock before proceeding in. why did he have to show his face here? I want him far away from me.

“Why are you not asleep?”, the ball and nerve to ask me that crap!

“Why are you here? You should have stayed in prison where you belong because you are an animal Nhlanzeko”, my mother taught me to never raise my voice at a man whose heart I own and that is purely the only reason I have not barked.

“Huh?”

“Zimi was beaten up by that dog because of you, Nhlanzeko”

“What? They did what to Zimi?”, he’s in search for her. I kind of feel guilty about telling him this, he’ll do something stupid I know him.

“Don’t wake her up!”, I say pulling back from touching her cheek. His eyes are bloodshot he’s baying for blood as much as I am.

Now I’m over that little episode I’m all about him now.

“Have you eaten? Are you cold?”, I’m pulling him to the other room since I ruined our room.

“He’ll pay for this pumpkin I promise you”

“No leave that to me”

I take a headwrap and cover my head then a scarf for my shoulders. Mesuli said Zakhele is always with me so I guess he understand what I’m feeling right now. I don’t have incense but I have yellow and white candles.

He said I can light them when I want to communicate.

After kneeling and lighting them up, I calm myself down and set my tone on par. Calling his clan names like I’m speaking tongues.

“You’ve missed out on a lot of things when it comes to your grandkid’s lives Ngcobo, this is your chance, I am that chance you have to correct your mistakes. That man, that man that messed with your granddaughter I want him to suffer Zakhele. I want him to suffer till he begs

for God to take his life, make him pay for what he did to her Pholoba. I know you can do this for me, break that boy little by little! He must die while he's alive. Please mnyeni wami”

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☆ZIMI NGCOBO☆

“Do you have a minute?”, he’s here?

I thought mom said he won’t be back till next day afternoon. I don’t want to be seen by anyone else but mom, she’s the only one I trust with this. My brothers are short-fused and not to mention I’m in this situation I’m in right now because of him.

“Yes, I have a minute”, getting up is so hard and sore. My lower back is numb as well as my face I can hardly feel any thing.

I so badly want to hate him for what he's done to me but I can't, he looks so pained. More pained than me. He has his reasons foe doing what he did I'm sure, he sits on the bed and runs his hands over his thighs. He does not know what to say.

“Is it painful? Pff I know it's painful baby, it looks painful. I'm sorry Zimi, I don't know why I put your life in danger like that”, he covers his face with his hands.

“Its okay Bhuti, I'm sure you had your valid reasons. Emmanuel did not have any right to hit me though. It's his fault, he's the animal bhuti”, won't you look at me telling myself pure white lies.

“No Zimi it’s me. If I hadn’t killed Jeffe then he wouldn’t have touched you and I acknowledge my mistake but I promise you my love I will kill him”, I see his jaw twitching.

“Bhuti mh-mm. I know you and mom are you know, she loves you a lot, imagine her seeing you go to prison for this? I don’t think she would survive it. Emmanuel will get what’s coming his way”, I’m legit pleading with him, I need this from him. I can’t have the burden of ruining people’s happiness on my shoulder I won’t survive it. Besides I think my brother deserves some love and happiness in his life.

“I don’t want you sacrificing yourself for others. He’ll get what he deserves. Nobody messes with my girls and gets a chance to roam around”, I don’t see myself getting through to him....

“Fuze, let it go. Or what you want another blood bath before the wedding? you want him to come back and finish Zimi or kill me just to prove a point”, I’ve never seen her so raw and stone cold. she’s always the crazy teddy.

“Don’t speak like that, you know I will never survive without you”, he’s serious.

“Then drop it, that life drop it before you lose it all”, her arms are crossed on her chest I know that pout is fake she wants to smile.

“I love you”, he kisses her lips.

“I love you more”

These two are cute. I can’t help but think of the time I was this inlove, and it all just ended in front of my eyes just like that. Damn.

“The doctor is on his way baby, can you get up? Let’s go bath you”

“Thank you mommy, for everything”

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

SEASON FINALE

SPONSORED BY LELETHU ♡

“Alright the results are in, would you like to have a look at them or must I break them down to you ma'am?”, the doctor enquires.

I can hardly read a patient document how on earth an I expected to comprehend a whole

report? However that whole embarrassment in front of the nurse I scolded by the passage cannot happen. I'm sure I can put two and two together.

"Yes please", he gives the report to the nurse to give to me. I share a little smile when I open that thing, it's a bunch of presidential words none of which I know or understand. It's Physical Science paper 1 all over again, blink AF.

Where are the fucken pictures on this thing!?

I jab Zimi with an alerting eye, she should know this it is her generation that know these things, mine don't. She's low-key laughing at me I know. Kids will be the death of us 90s.

"How long will it take for her to fully recover?", I'm done with trying to read something I cannot even pronounce.

"Because of the internal bruises she suffered on the head and lower back I cannot necessarily

state the exact period of time her recovery will take. I do, however guarantee a speedy recovery for her just as long as she sticks to my advise. You know walking less, resting more, takes her medication and is just gentle on herself. Next week there I want to book her in for therapy session. Miss Ngcobo would you like that?", the doctor asks.

I doubt she will take it, I've seen how much she is still in denial about everything. Reality is still out of reach to her and frankly I want it to stay like that. I don't wish to see her fall apart because of a nutless arsehole.

She looks at me and shrugs, "Mom?".

"It's your decision my love. If you are ready to face it then go for it but if you need time to gather your thoughts then do so as well. This is for your health care", I offer my words of comfort the best way I know how. Sometimes it

feels as though this is me, the real me. This hands on woman is who I am truly meant to be and then some days I just feel like I'm being a mad woman who does insensible things all in the name of being 'Mkhulu's wife'.

It's a real slippery slope out here.

"I'm not ready ... yet. Can I have some time to consider it though", she speaks so softly compared to the loud machine she was before this incident.

"Sure baby. Doc, can we have this week to think about it. I will ensure she gets back to you soon afterwards", hear me out I can twaaang!

"I will be waiting. Once again my sincerest apologies for the bad encounter with my nurse earlier on", mhhhh.

"No problem just teach her manners for next time. Thank you for your time, doc"

“No, no thank you Ms Zwane. Zimi, get well soon dear okay?”

Zimi nods and snuggles back to me as we walk out the door, with that Sosha creep behind us.

I still can't figure out why Fuze sent him to walk us around like a statue. The man is irritating with his pointless conversations and lame compliments. I told Fuze I don't mind being driven by him but this? This is just a pain in the arse period.

“S-dudla, mu-u-st I hol-old that for you?”, he's referring to my bag. Why would I give him my bag?

“Call me sdudla again and I will sss-ssla-ap you nx”, yerrrr blerry bleksem!

“And you, what's so funny?”, I ask Zimi.

“Ah mom you so wrong. Man's loves you hawu and you are making fun of his speech?”, she laughs again.

“Loves who? Please don’t make me laugh. Look at him, he looks like a thug hobo, he’s pants are kissing his ankles, his teeth are gold bars by nature and you think I would ever give him a shot? Child please, a whole Sss-sso-sha?”, I don’t make fun of people’s disabilities but the dude just annoys me.

“Haibo, you will never know. Maybe God sent him your way nje awazi”, I will put her in ICU if she continues.

“God will never do me like that. Do you know how many times I brought Him good gossip?”, everything I use to hear around the area I would tell it all to God with a tall glass of Halls juice. I found it fun to gossip with Him because I knew I wouldn’t get an ass whooping if news broke out. Back then I didn’t have this backbone, I was a shy kid.

“On a serious note though, Sosha likes you I mean the way he checks you out through the rear view mirror”

“Pain killers are making you drowsy. Will you join Bayede and I over some lunch nyana?”, I hope she says yes. This always indoor thing is not healthy.

“I would love that, I do need to refresh my mind and just unwind a little bit. And I need alcohol sheesh”, isn’t she too young for alcohol? And I don’t think alcohol is available in Nandos.

“Drop us off at Nandos... please”

Zimi is right, he does look at me creepily.

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Where is she?

“I was about to start planning a baby shower!”, oh there she is. Looking dazzling as always, isn’t she a mom? Where does she get time go apply make up?

“You look gorgeous”, I send a compliment and ready myself for an insult.

“Thank you for coming here looking like a racoon, really appreciate it Milani”, her sarcasm is not sarcastic. Just by the way I was going to puff myself as well but I had to rush because doctor's charge for being kept waiting for nothing.

“Whatever. This is Zimi ...”

“How dare that bastard do this to you? Oh my god look at you poor thing. I hope you dealt with him, Milani”, she says to me.

I hope I did. What can I say? I trust Zakhele, he'll do something soon enough.

“It's still a sensitive topic so maybe we should you know excuse her a little”

“Yeah you are right. Let's order mina I'm hungry, in all areas girl. When was the last damn time I had some doggystyle?”, she sighs and rolls her eyes.

“I haven't seen the amazement in doggystyling yet or is it because I have a natural baby bump?”, honestly I thought that position was meant to drive me insane. It really doesn't, I find it uncomfortable. Especially since Fuze tends to turn into some beast on a hunt.

“That's because you doing it wrong, chubby huns don't arch their backs, you do lower it sort of like a frog”, she says. I catch Zimi giggle at my offended face. Me, frog? Ngaze ngalufela ucansi.

“I'm so young for this”, Zimi chuckles.

“We are teaching you stuff here, if I were you I would be busy taking notes. Anyway, you sounded fed up over the phone”, she’s back to me.

“I am fed up with him”, already imagine.

“Why what has he done now?”, she has to make me sound like a nag huh?

“Nhlanzeko thinks I’m a little princess I swear to God, he doesn’t want to share anything with me. He is never in the house and when he is, he’s all wary and guarded of where I am.

This other night he went to jail and never told me anything about it or why he even went there or how he left so early. I feel like I don’t know anything about him and it worries the crap out of me. What if he kills me?”

I’m flippin serious as a heartattck and they are laughing. Nhlanzeko is an all in one you can never be too sure with a man like that one.

“You don’t know him vele, yet you are ready to jump fires for him. Or I’m lying?”, I didn’t expect to be fried for falling inlove so early.

“You living a fairy tale and there is nothing wrong with that but Milani do understand not all fairy tales have happy endings girl and if they do then they certainly did not have a good start. It’s still new, there is no way he will open up about everything at the moment and you know that. Men are not like us women who drop our secrets along with our draws. Men hold stuff in until you’ve shut them in a no escape corner then they decide to sing”, I hear her talking but fail to accept that. This darkness we are living in must end, I did not leave being Milani Zwane for this.

“Bayede, I get that trust me but for how long must I wait for him to decide to open up to me? What if I die next morning?”; I shrug.

“You so dramatic Milani I can’t wait to see you pregnant”, haha very funny, mxm.

“Can I ask some thing Mom?”, I forgot she existed for a second there.

“Yes you can”

“If you find out the truth as it is about who bhuti really is and what he does and all the other questions in your mind about his identity or fidelity. Would you leave him if it’s too much for you to bear?”

That’s a tricky question that I somehow find useless because the answer is so clear in my heart.

“No, I would not leave him. I don’t see myself leaving him for anything so far, even if he were a killer I would always hold him dear to my heart and chest”, and that is the pure truth.

“Then it’s obvious what to do here. See men are like babies you need to be in control of

them without them even knowing, Nhlanzeko needs that kind of a woman. Give him an ultimate, a run for your love ... that man had it too easy and that is why he's so chilled and laid back. The only thing he worries about is your safety not your power so show him that side. Show him you not there to dig his nose. Trust me men flunk under pressure, he'll come to you singing everything you need to know”, Bayede.

“You two are gangster shame!”, Zimi.
“Singadlala amadzodza phela hha”, honestly!
Too bad I cannot call my mother, she would know what to do and how to straighten a man up but then she'd faint if I told her about Nhlanzeko. In her mind I'm still baby Jesus.

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☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

This is his third power nap since Milani left.
Without her around minutes seem like long
doubled decades!

He has ate five times already, tried watching a movie and ended up falling asleep, waltzed around the yard for a while and saw no point in it then went back inside for a sandwich, finished that and hit the gym to burn off fat. Still, he's bored out of his mind – another thing that scares him about loving a woman. He goes hard, easy fall and hard to pick himself up afterwards. It's not everyday that Nhlanzeko develops feelings for anybody, it's always head before heart. With Milani however things took a dangerous 360. Only Onikha made him feel

like this, like a teenager in love for the first time and then she went onto betraying him.

Milani is different though, at least that's what he tried to feed himself the entire day.

Apparently, it's a must that Milani gets married to the old man in a few days time so they have to leave soon. That has been bothering him as well, having to share the love of his life with a dead man is not soothing to know regardless of knowing the valid reasons behind it. Will everything change?

“Anyone home?”, that's her voice, he hears and takes a painful fall off the couch from the excitement.

“What the hell was that about? You fighting ghosts now?”, she laughs. Her laugh, one of his favourite things these days, after her eyes.

“I thought I was being robbed, you have a manly voice”, he says picking himself up.

“I do not have a manly voice Mr Beyonce. The doctor said Zimi will be good after a while but for now she needs to rest. I’ve put her in bed for now”

“Ah mfazi wami, what would we be without you?”, he has his arms around her lower back and he’s bringing her inwards more.

“You are just a side nigga, Zakhele is my main remember that”, she winks.

His heart sinks, “Ouch. But anyway, at least I get to smash”

“Who said Zakhele does not smash? I don’t wake up wet down there in the morning for nothing, my old man makes me squirt!”, she says with sass and admiration.

Nhlanzuko stops and looks at her with a broken hearted facial expression, does she understand how much that hurts him? Lol.

“C’mon big baby it’s just a joke but as for when I’m getting married, wedding night nton nton you never know”

“Stop that talk Milani”

“Hhha okay before you hang yourself. Let’s talk about something”, she sighs and pulls his hand all the way to the couch to sit.

“Do you trust me?”, she smiles.

“Yes I do”, he answers. Faster than normal.

“How much do you trust me exactly, Fuze?”

The question is unsettling and the tone makes it even worse. He replies either way.

“With my life. Is there a problem?”

“No no problem. It’s just that it baffles me how my own partner does not tell me anything about himself, it’s always about me and my past. Don’t you find that little off honey?”

Sigh.

“Okay, I see what is going on here. Milani, some things are better off not known by anyone other than me.”

“Ohhh and why is that? Why huh? You ask for a forever with me, you ask for loyalty from me yet you fail to show the same to me?”, Milani.

“I am loyal to you. Me not sharing my life with you is to protect you pumpkin”, Nhlanzeko.

“I don’t want to be protected from knowing the truth because I know you would never let anything happen to me Nhlanzeko. Would You?”

He shakes his and delivers a low “No”.

“My point exactly so why am I being kept in the dark?”, Milani.

“Because I love you, I care about you. I don’t want anything to worry you, pumpkin can you please understand that”, he begs.

“I understand perfect... Nokwazi means more to you than me, she knows more about you than me. What am I to you? A dumb housewife or something? I’m a grown woman that can handle her own dirty linen that includes yours so what is the real reason you are not being front with me?”

“Ngoba ngiyakuthanda MaZwane, more than I ever loved Nokwazi or Onikha. I can’t hurt you”

“You think lying to me is not hurting me? Gosh!”

“I never lied I just never told you anything and I won’t do that. Not anytime soon, I’m afraid of losing you due to past mistakes”

“Who said anything about losing me? ... yho you know what screw you and your secrets Nhlanzeko”, she stands up and walks away.

“Uyaphi?”, he asks.

“My bedroom... you enjoy your nights on the couch from now on. I locked all the spare bedrooms and dare me and sneak out to other places, Nhlanzeko”, she's fuming as she stomps on each step.

“Milani come on, we can resolve this without being crazy”, he says following after her.

“You have not seen the definition of crazy yet. Stay the hell away from me until you learn how to value my existence in your life”, and just like that she bangs the door on his face. It's official he's not getting through to her any time soon.

“Fine, can I get a pillow?”, he sighs.

She opens the door slightly and throws a pillow for him then locks it again.

“An orgasm too”, he asks.

Milani throws him a lube and shuts the door again.

“What should I do this?”

“USE YOUR HAND!”, she yells.

“Out of all women, You had to give me the craziest of them all”, he sighs and chuckles all the way down the stairs to his new bedroom.
The lounge.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

SPONSORED BY ANONZ

SEASON FINALE...

The air is so different, it tastes like home. Like the place to unwind and let go. Of everything, baggage and hardships and past mistakes. We aren't in Emadadeni yet but we are close, that is where we are headed because well ... that's home. Right now judging by the board we just drove pass, we are still driving through Richmond Farmhouse. Beautiful area I must

say, abit more balungus here than I'm comfortable with but it will do.

My mother, yes the crazy old horny woman, is coming tomorrow with the rest of my family because they need to be here since the ceremony is not just a ‘marriage’ thing but also a ceremony of combining two families. So the little dusty brats must attend, as well as my mother and her ugly uneducated alcoholic sister whose hairline is as far as her saggy breasts. I don’t like that woman particularly because she feels like she is the SHIT! With her uneven purple razor cuts and match box earrings from 1959. For some reason she believes my mother is responsible for her misfortunes and state of poverty as if my mother said: “Hey my sister, go to the corner by the river where all the chicken dusts of Richmond chill and smoke weed all day. When you get there, go open your legs for them and

better yet while you at it fall pregnant with twins". My mother didn't do that shit, in fact she picked her navy grey dirty ass up from the ashes and looked after her with tender; love and care. Today she decides to thank her with a tray full of dog shit just because her damn daughter is doing well in life unlike me Oh my mistake, that was weeks ago, I'm a millionaire house-girlfriend now. I earn money for sitting around and doing nothing but opening my legs, and it's only now that I regret judging those with blessers, this ain't so bad. I've counted down actually the among of times he has been chowing my pussy, and I discovered he is three chows away from paying his house bond. Ladies, never allow a man to sex you free of charge. Never.

"Are you hungry?", he says squeezing my inner thighs which he forcefully shoved between them. He says he cannot drive without touching

me or holding my hand and I asked why is that so? And he told me some stupid story about being sure I'm safe but all I see is a horny old man that's all.

"No I'm not hungry", it's a fast reply and ignore situation. I am dead hungry, but I won't give him that satisfaction of a being a breadwinner over me. No, Bayede said I must claim my power so I will do just that.

"Okay. Zimi, you want anything?", he's not going to force me to eat? What kind of man is this?

"Uhm... sure anything is fine by me"

We are in the middle of the rurals, where are they planning on getting food honestly, sugar cane or mealies. Is that what they are going to eat? Psh.

He parks opposite some mud house, it looks like a spaza though. He unhooks his belt and

then mine, afterwards he looks at me with that 'duuh' glare of his. I don't think I've ever seen a man that's a two in one like this. One second he's all I AM A MAN WITH BALLS and next I feel like I'm chilling with my gay best friend.

"What?", I breathe out and ready myself for foolishness.

My guy continues starring at me... okay I see what it means. I should get out the car along with him because he's a big child that cannot walk without me holding its hand!

"Grrr", I grunt and step out the car. Zimi at the back is enjoying the show, if only this girl knew.

"What are you going to buy in that shop?", I see sugary stuff, stuff he does not dare eat. I doubt he'd buy flyers or spookies.

"Who said anything about buying stuff?", he widens up his eyebrow. I hate and love how he mimics me sometimes, I love it because it

shows how much he is so attentive to me when I speak and I hate it because ... it's stupid.

“Then why are we walking towards the spaza shop?”, I ask however I’m left on read. His attention has flew to the kids busy admiring him and his car ... and the woman in his arms, I’m a gem who wouldn’t admire a piece of me?

“Ntwanaz”, he greets them with a wide smile across his handsome face.

“Miner”, they greet back, hands over their heads to show respect.

“Messi or Lorch?”, he asks the boy in a pair of unpleasant shorts and a number 10 tee. His shoes are peeling even.

“Mbappe”, the boy smirks in response and does a little poise pose. That got me giggling over there and all of a sudden I’m the new ornament on a Christmas tree.

“Don’t stare at her like that, she’s taken already unfortunately”, the idiot arises from idiocy.

“Umuhle”, the two ones who look the younger than the other three compliment me.

“Thank you, awww that was so sweet”, I offer them tight hugs and the whole lot start demanding hugs.

“One at a time or you’ll tip her over. she’s fragile this one, more fragile than the World Cup Trophy”, I see what he’s trying to do. Draw attention to him again.

“What do you know about soccer miner?”, the number ten boy asks.

“A lot more than you”, Nhlanzeko says.

“Ahh never. A man like you miner?”, they laugh.

“A man like me?”, Nhlanzeko frowns.

“Look at your fancy clothes; flashy sport car and a hot wife. You don’t know soccer our way”, it’s the number ten kid again. I’ve noticed he’s the one who does most of the talking around here. The rest either nod or laugh at whatever he says.

“I grew up playing on the very same spot you are standing on. Want to see?”, he smirks.

They all shout in agreement. “Please hold here my love”, he places his jacket over my shoulder and his keys too.

I watch him dribble the ball like one of these boys, he looks in his element. Passing and doing very impressive moves on these kids, I think I might have started falling for him all over again.

They play till he gets tired of running around after a ball and calls it quits.

“Hawu, the match isn’t over”, the young one gasps.

“I’m old ntwana, my bones cannot handle such movements. Plus I’m saving energy for tonight”, he winks. I just won’t ...

“Ouuuu”, they do air-smooches and blast.

LMAO.

“You not that bad, old age must have weakened your game but you not bad miner”, the number ten again.

“You sharp yazi, with skills like that you can do very well in a professional football club”, Nhlanzeko says.

“Really?”, the boys lights up. Oh shame my man is so tired he can’t even speak so he nods instead.

“I can see what I can do, I have a few friends that can help you fit in there”, he says after

catching his breath. The boy's friends are celebrating him, throwing words of encouragement here and there. It's good to see them uplift him.

"Nahh I can't take it", he says. Huh?

"Why is that?", we both ask in unison. I'm a nosy girlfriend, there fry me!

"I have a family to look after, khulu is getting sick and my little brothers are looking up to me for guidance", he says it with a full chest. Not like it's some burden in his life, that's the first step of becoming a man.

"Where are your little brothers?", Nhlanzeko asks him, crouching before the kid.

"Here. Amkela and Keletso", he says pointing to the two young boys I was talking about earlier. Now that he mentions it I see so much resemblance. Pointy noses and big foreheads.

“Amkela has random panic attacks whenever I am not around for long, so I cannot afford to leave my family behind”

“Playing for a club might secure your family's future”

“Financially yes but their lives matter more than money. We aren't poor just less fortunate, if I leave who will look after khulu? What will happen to my brothers? Amkela's mental health will be in jeopardy. I cannot afford that. I rather stay here and make money from the little piece jobs I get from farmers and herders”, okay no I'm going to cry. I've never been so touched by a little boy ever!

I can tell Nhlanzuko shares the same sentiments.

“Hmm tell you what, I know of an old man around here his name is Bab'Khaphela, he owns a few cows that need to be taken out to graze

brought back home by 17:00, do you think you and your friends can handle that?", he's back on his feet, arms around me tighter than usual. He is probably telling me to stop crying.

"Yes we would", you can see the excitement in their eyes it's so bright and fulfilling.

"Okay, I'll have a word with him with him today and then I'll tell you boys later", he rubs their heads and pulls out his wallet, taking out a huge sum of money.

"For making my wife smile", he says giving each R200 notes. I've blocked his empty headed comments long time ago.

"Siyabonga miner", they choir.

"Oh and if you boys are willing, there is a ceremony at home this Saturday. Do come by to grab a piece or two", I say.

"Thank you MkaNgcobo", it's the number ten, smirking at me.

“How did you ...”

“I have seen you around the yard before wearing a nice dress and a doek so I guessed you are a new wife and now it’s been confirmed, we know Malum’Nhlanzeko Ngcobo”, this kid ... I just can’t.

“You do your spying very well boy. And remember no girls or funny smoking or drinking business right? Behave yourselves and you might just score a good woman like me when you are older.”

“Don’t ever go for a woman like her, take it from me. Never”

What is this nimrod doing painting me bad in front of kids? I pull his hand to the spaza, scolding him under my breath. Weren’t we suppose to be on the same team? Look at the kids laughing at us.

“Sanibona ma”, I greet the old lady.

She looks super old and tired, she has red and white beads on her ankles and her wrists. I take it she is a Gobela by now or an initiator, things like this happen you know. People wait till their knees start shaking then they go initiate.

“Uyibambe iqina ntombazane yami”, she says to me handing me two plastics. I check inside and see two vetkoeks with russians and cheese. It’s not what I was going to order but okay.

“Uzidonsela amanzi ngomsele kepha sunikelile ngo bambo lwakho, kaku naku buyela emuva”, she takes the R50 in my hand that I have completely forgotten about and then brings back the change. I want to say something but no words escape my mouth, I’m at a loss for words which does not happen often.

“May I know what gogo is saying to me maybe?”

Nhlanzeko is standing a bit far but she can see him, she keeps jabbing his way and looking at me more distressed.

“O-Hlongwane bazo nicekela phansi. Don’t trust anyone, young lady. The tree is not dead by mistake”, she looks scary, her warning sends shivers and cold stabs on my spine. She holds my hand very tightly, “Ibambe iqine ngane yami other than that, your seeds will live to pay for your sins”, and with that she let’s me go and tells me to leave, very hastily she tells me. Nevertheless I say my goodbyes and walk back to the car.

“Hello... we are talking to you. Are you sure you are Okay?”, he taps me. Both of them do.

“Erh... yes I am fine babe. Just remembered something”, I lie.

“What something?”, they ask.

“Nothing just the ceremony that’s all. Here are your vetkoeks.”, I give them each one bag and search for a bottle of water because I am beyond dry.

Why did she say I must be strong? Ngizidonsela amanzi ngomsele, How? And when she said that she was staring exactly at Nhlanzeko... for what? Who is this Hlongwane out to destroy us and why. Gosh I’m going to burst right now!

“Baby, are you sure you good?”, he brushes my knee gently.

“Yes baby I’m good I promise you”, I kiss his hand to reassure him there is nothing to worry about.

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The yard is super full, more full than I had anticipated, what's the use of this big fuss? My lord the neighbor's are here, I can tell by the million kids walking in and out the yard. We have a whole damn week for this, five damn days why is it hectic mania already?

Goodness they are brewing beer. Beer is suppose to be made by me and me alone, not them. What's with the men sitting around Zakhele's tree?

“Milani where are you-”, I’m long gone by the time he opens his door.

“Who gave you permission to camp around this tree?”, I’m snapping attitude; brows and tone.

They look at me as if I’m crazy.

“I asked a question who gave you permission to do this? Do you know whose tree this is?”

“Okahle-ke, and you are?”, some dusty old man asks.

“It's not your business to know who I am, your business is to get the hell away from this tree, don't even look at it in your sleep”

He sneers, continuing with his beer as if nothing happened. Am I speaking Chinese?

“Away from my tree!”, I point him to the direction leading to the gate, I hope he pays heed to that. He looks at me once, angered and decides to spare me the drama and leave. His friends follow on.

I don't know him but I don't want him in my yard, he's presence gives me restlessness.

“Yeyi wena ntombazane, what do you think you are doing chasing him away from here like that?”, it's MaShelembe. The woman I kind of admired throwing me off.

“Ma they are not suppose to ...”

“Shut up, what do you know about anything around here. You came just yesterday and you

think you are the air we breathe”, she's grabbing my elbow very tightly. Pinching me in painfully.

“You are hurting me ...”

“I will do more than hurt you if you don't watch where you tread. Nx, nansi ingulube inginonela bo”, she pushes me off and goes back inside the house. I'm going to get fed up of letting people walk all over me.

By the time I reach the car, there is a huge circle surrounding Zimi. Mothers inspecting her and some praying for her in tongues even.

“She said she got in a car accident”, he says standing next to me.

Her face does not match the statement but okay.

“I love you”, he says kissing the top of my head and locking his arms around my neck.

I love you too but that is at the back of my mind. Finding this Hlongwane is first.

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

☆MaZikode☆

SEASON FINALE

Three days till the ceremony ...

“Hurry up you three or must I come in there and pull you out myself?”, I yell outside the boy's room. I'm forever shouting when it comes to them, speaking in a moderate tone seems like such a waste of time because I know they will not listen to me.

“We are coming ma!”, they shout back, walking through the door one by one. Faces shining like diamonds, Soka for one looks like a fresh vetkoek. The boys aren't use to applying lotion because they rarely ever leave the boundaries of this village since Milani was always there to

do everything on their behalf and now that I look at it it was very unfair of me to do so. Yes I was preparing her for this day, however in the process I taught these three laziness. Can you believe I have to tip off my own children in order for them to go to the shop for me, they say it's walking fee. Hhe, they forget that without me they wouldn't even have legs to walk, they would not be breathing even so they must not come here and try act smart with me. My standard two certificate was not for nothing, I have an IQ.

The car sent to pick us up has not arrived yet, I'm guessing they got stuck in traffic because I was told early to wake up and get ready to be fetched. Oh man I forgot to put on my ponds. Milani thinks it's ridiculous for me at my age to apply ponds, which is not true. See with us back in the day we had no puffing powders, so ponds became our puff. I cannot show up over there

looking normal, no way I must show them whose mother I am.

“Phiwesande fetch my ponds and gentle magic from my drawer, hurry up please or you’ll be left behind if the car arrives and you are not back in time”, I’m not kidding, I’ll leave him here with his step father.

“Ma, who is Sis’Milani marrying? Is it Ankel’Nhlanzeko?”, Thabiso and questions, you can tell he was given labour to in a hospital unlike the others. He’s the bookworm who fails dismally at almost every subject. I told him clearly, this term if he gets anything below a 40% he’s dropping out with immediate effect and working on the fields like every other phara here. I pay too much to for the results he produces and worse part is he does not care one bit. I’ve spoken to him more than enough that I ended up beating him up and still

nothing, my peaches tree is branchless because of him.

And as for that Nhlanzuko boy I pray he has not done a single thing to my baby or else I'll walk down th streets naked!

I don't trust him, have you ever seen a person with ink on their face? I tell you the devil is brewing something through that boy and my baby is too innocent to see.

"No she is not getting married to him", at long last of trying to reduce the amount of shine on each of their faces, I respond to Thabiso.

"But aren't they dating?", he rolls his eyes at me and looks away instantly.

"Yey! Must I close your eye? Because I will do so if it gives you trouble like that, I will shut it forever mina mfana angibhenywa uyezwa, if you think I'm that weed you smoke every afterschool then think again because that is not

the case. I will klap you once and you'll see stars”, mmaye imihlola kaJames.

“Mama, is that not the car?”, Soka calls out from the veranda. He ran inside the house after I slapped his brother for being forward with me. Phiwe is following behind him with my gentle magic and ponds in his hand. They are gossiping, I don’t wish to know any of it.

“Is that Malum’Nhlanzeko’s car?”, Phiwe questions the same. How are they so familiar with stranger's cars yet can’t separate their pairs of socks?

“It is him”, Thabiso jumps for the skies and runs to his sister by the gate. They all want hugs you would never guess they once were annoyed by her existence.

I stand back and wait for the show to end, the little devils never rest trust me. Where we are going I will be embarrassed by them somehow,

that I know. Wait, and then the woman behind my daughter?

She looks as pale as SaveHyper's mixed portions, her eyes are so blue and small. Her body is the size of my leg $\div 2$. Nkosi, HIV will be the death of children or is it cancer?

“Mommy”, I’m jumped on unexpectedly and squeezed in her arms. I missed her three times more than she missed me, my days are not the same without her. But then it’s life, she was going to get married at some stage in life, whether by force or willingly. It’s just painful having to watch your one and only daughter slip through your fingers while you are watching.

“Unjani sisi”

“Don’t cry ma or else you will make me cry. The way I missed you MaZikode!”, she engulfs me tighter.

“Suka lapha wena, if you missed me why don’t you call me then?”, when last has she called me? I cannot remember.

“It has been a hectic period ma, some things slip my mind but whenever I remembered I did call”, well... that is true.

Arranging everything for a marriage you don’t even want is a tough load to give to a child.

“Hey, I’m proud of you Zikode elimhlophe. You have gotten this far and it was not by mistake, you pushed yourself till here, continue doing so”

Although I am not happy about how much weight she is putting off, it’s good seeing her smile.

“Ma I want you to meet my new bestie/sister-wife, Bruna Adams”, she looks at the pale woman I was talking about earlier.

“Hello Ma”, it’s cute and awkward, the girl.

“Hello MaAdams sisi, are you good?”

She nods at me after the uncomfortable hug.

I don’t like the way she is looking at my face, yes I’m not rainbow nation on my face like her but at least I put in some effort.

“Ponds ma again? How many times must I warn you about ponds. You will burn, your face will burn”, there it goes. The part of her I never missed.

“Oh I’m sorry am I suppose to be taking instructions from you? Shame I thought I am the one who went to the labour ward and gave birth to you not the other way around, don’t you agree?”, I ask.

“Nevermind you look stunning. Let us go or we will be stuck in traffic, we still need to do some grocery in town”, Milani has truly changed. I’ve never seen her so uptight with her dress code.

Such a fancy pinafore, is it Ramaposa's wedding?

"We also must buy KFC", the pale... Bruna chirps in. KFC for What? Will they serve KFC on the day?

Seeing that I am confused Milani fills me in, "It is her turn to cook and she can't cook".

Who can ever cook with those chicken feet hands? Nails as long and sharp as bird claws. How does she brew beer?

Do washing?

Chop onions or apply dunk in the rondavels?

Haibo! Where did the boys go? I was so wrapped up in the conversations here that I think we might have left them behind.

“Milani your brothers”, I’m going to faint, how can I miss them like that?

“Relax they in Nhlanzeko’s car with him. We will take long in town and I think he needs to be home for the cleansing of the yard and I also think he has to be cleansed since...”, she does not continue after that.

“Don’t you have to be home so the Ngcobo's can come and fetch you from here and bring you into their kraal?”, that’s how it is done in my understanding, especially if no lobola was paid.

“No, Mesuli said it’s a small thing. Zakhele had a kraal not so far from the homestead, that is where I am going to be taken I guess then brought to the homestead with a goat, put in the new kraal inside the homestead and gall and all that stuff must be smeared on me. It could have went the normal way where I marry

him through one of his children but the soul purpose was to give him what he wants, the connection. That is what this is technically. Combining me and him”, she makes it sound like it’s nothing. Combining your spirit with the dead means having to live by their rules till thy kingdom come. Milani does not see that.

However I won’t burden her with this information, she has adapted to the situation let me not ruin it for her.

“So I won’t be getting my lobola?”, I’m shifting this topic, it makes my heart sore.

“Your lobola will come from Nhlanzeko”, she smiles.

“Ini!?” , probably I never heard well.

“You should see how they are together, like little kittens playing in the rain. You have yourself a good son in-law”, Bruna glees.

“good Son in-law unyoko! We-Milani uthini kahle kahle”, I’m not one to choose a partner for the kids but this one, this one I do not like at all.

“Bruna is right we are happy ma. Nhlanzeko makes me happy and alive”

“You are breathing and well is that not enough to indicate to you that you are alive and lucky to be alive when many could not have this chance, that does not make you happy?”, I’m getting to the part of wanting to slap Milani back to her senses. What potion did they mix on her for her to be so gullible?

“He puts me on a high, on cloud 9”, is she losing wires up there?

“If it’s being high you want, there are plenty shops selling weed. Splurge on them”

“You know what I meant MaZikode. I love him and he loves me as well, I see it in his eyes and

when he says It I feel it within me.

Siyathandana noNhlanzeko”, kuyanda.

“What do you know about love, Milani? Young as you are, you think you know love”

“My father left when I was still in your belly, clearly I know more than you know about love ...”, she stops and sighs, “I’m sorry I brought him up after so many years of trying to bury him for what he did to you. I’m so sorry ma”.

I long went pass the stage of breaking down at the mention of his name. As for her outburst I have nothing to say about it, I always knew she was harboring anger regarding his whereabouts. It was only a matter of time before she exploded, nevertheless, words are words and they always find a way to shatter you. But she's right I did fail to keep a man, only because I did not want to end up like my sister who lived bitterly ever after.

“Ma”, she shakes my arm till my attention is brought back to her.

“Ma I said I’m sorry, I truly am. I don’t know how that slipped through my lips like that”

“It’s okay to take out whatever it is pounding your chest I just was not expecting that from you out of all people. Yazi, I want you to know this one thing before jumping into an open fire you do not know: you can never know a man for what he truly is my child, want to know why?”

She nods blankly.

“Because a man is not what he shows you, a man is what he hides. You can never know a man until he peels himself in front of you and very few ever do that until its too late. Kodwa ngoba uyamthanda, I have no say in that”, I hope she heard me loud and clear.

There is nothing in this world that breaks women much like men, other things we are able to bounce back from like it was nothing.

"I know. I promise I will take good care of myself, I won't let a man do me bad. That's not what you taught me, ma", it's easier said than done but it is my child and I believe her. I raised her after all.

"Aww you two are the cutest. If it was me and my mother, these seats would have paw scratches by now. The woman is maal, kind of like you Mrs Z", Bruna.

"It's Miss Z hun", Milani corrects her.

I wonder on which finger she saw a ring shining for her to call me Mrs Z?

We are entering the Liberty Mall gate now, can't remember when was the last time I was here. What are we doing here?

“Milani why are we here, did you not say we are going grocery shopping?”, I’m walking behind her with confusion all over my face.

“That is why we are here, bululu type of family. They prefer Woolies or checkers not SuperSave or SaveHyper.”, she waves me off.

“Hmmm, in that case we are short of rice; soups and ice cream at home”

They laugh. I’m serious, if I am not getting any lobola from them then at least buy my grocery. It’s not that much anyway.

“You can buy the entire store wena Mama they will pay habe”

As we walk in the mall, Milani gets a phone call from someone. Bruna and I continue till her “WHAT?” brings us to a halt.

“When did that happen? How? Um... you know what nevermind, my mother is here I’m sure she can help somehow, we are in our way right

now as we speak”, she's running back to the car.

“Just put her in bed and give her some warm water to drink, I'm on my way right now”, she drops the call and hurries us inside.

“What is it?”, Bruna asks.

“They said Nombuso fainted after suffering from harsh cramps. No one knows what's wrong”, Milani.

“Oh my gosh, is she giving birth?”, Bruna is driving like a madman, switching lanes as if this is a movie.

“Hey Buna... Bruna I mean, watch it man my hips are fragile. And I don't have insurance”, I'm yelling for nothing, none of these people hear me.

“She is not even on her last month yet, not even second to last. It can't be, it shouldn't be”

Ohh this is bad, very bad.

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☆MILANI ZWANE☆

We came in here breathing at the top of our lungs in fear, barging in hoping we are not too late yet. We notice Mzi's room is surrounded by a lot of people, the family is inside already.

“What is this chaos?”, my mother keeps asking the same thing, I have no sense to explain things to her at the moment.

I push through the neighbors and thankfully Nhlanzeko meets me half way and pulls me towards them.

“She is inside there”, he states what I already know. I move inwards slowly, hearing the loud cries as I near the room. I feel dizzy the moment I step into the room. Seeing her sleeping on her back on the cold floor, screaming and sweating like a pig.

“Get her out of here, I don’t want to see her! Mzayfani get her out”, she screams at me.

“Babe, she is just trying to help. Calm down please, think about the baby”, he’s calming her down, I think.

Why does she hate me so much? I’m only trying to assist where I can.

“Is there anything or anyone that can help us?”, I’m asking everyone and yet none are answering me.

“What about Bab’Khaphela?”, That’s Scelo.

“Forget about him helping us, this woman angered him yesterday”, MaShelembe flares her nostrils at me.

“Me?”

“Yes you don’t give me that look! Isn’t you were proud as a peacock yesterday when you were chasing him away from the yard with his friends!”, she yells.

“He was sitting around Zakhele’s tree, I was not going to let him sit there.”

“Nhlanzeko I swear I didn’t chase any man away with bad intentions.... I didn’t even know this Khaphela, who is he?”, I’m the only one who is lost, everyone knows this man but me.

“Khaphela Hlongwane, the man I was talking about with the kids. He is the greatest sangoma around the area”, my ear rings double.

“Hlongwane? The same Hlongwane destroying this family”, I just made sense of this.

“Uyadakwa! Hlongwane has been there for us in this family, my son is alive today because of him”

“What?”, Mzi gasps.

“Ma, that man is bad I don’t know how but he is bad news to this family. He wants to destroy us, can’t you see”

“Nonsense!”

I will not argue with them, I know what I was told and I choose to believe it. Who can I....

Mesuli!!

It rings once and it gets answered immediately.

“Go at the back of the house, by the grave, dig something up... take it and burn it. She will be fine after that”, he answers a question I have not asked.

“Why? What is that?”

**“Ask MaShelembe about the man she brings to
that house”**

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

☆MILANI ZWANE ☆

SEASON FINALE

“We need men and a few shovels, do we have shovels?”, my mind is in shambles, I cannot build up any sensible thing to say however I know my duty right now is look for any thing buried in my yard right now.

“Yes we have a few shovels. Why do you need them?”, I didn’t see him when I barged in the room. I was all over the place anyway.

“Uh... we need to dig up for something, behind the house”, I swear I’m losing my marbles that Dingani realized and held me before falling back on the ground, scoring an evil look from Nhlanzeko, he even pulls Dingani back by his

belt and clicks his tongue. Hopefully nobody saw that and anyway I have no time to nurse this man's tantrums. We have greater problems.

"Never touch her again", he whispers in Dingani's ear. whoo-saaa.

"Each man in this room must grab a shovel and follow Me, I'll show you where to dig and what to look for", I say finally back to reality.

Scelokuhle leaves first, followed by Mzi and the rest. I'm at the back waiting for Bruna to pass by me so I can tell her something.

"Hey", I call out for her as she waltz by me.

"Hey girl. Are you good? Sorry about what happened here", this woman is too soft for her own good. In this family I've learnt one thing: Get a backbone because you will need it to survive otherwise they will drive you straight to the grave unprovoked.

“Yes I’m fine. Can you do me a favour and take the kids inside. Make them watch t.v and give them snacks, none of them should see what is going on outside okay?”, it would be hectic if they knew what is going on. Kids sense things very fast so I’m hoping we don’t take long to find these things that were buried here. And I’m guessing seeing their mother lying on the floor completely knocked out will make things worse. Mesuli said we must just put her to sleep with incense and since it was done by me it worked. I don’t understand how they do not realize I am their fucken God!

“Sure thing. But wait, what is really going on here Mils?”, she asks, crossing her arms and squinting her eyes. Hmm what can I say?

“Witchcraft, that is what is happening here. But don’t worry I’ll end it”, I convince myself enough to motivate myself to not give up. At least not now.

“Shaa! I’ll tell Zimi to gather the kids for me then, where are your brother I have not seen them yet”, neither have I.

“I’m not sure, perhaps the kids know though. I have to go, please distract them, especially Asakhe”, although I feel like she knows a few things because of the connection she has with her deceased grandmother (Nsingizi) but I do not want to be the one awakening all that in her.

“Okay. Good luck out there”, she hugs me very tightly and rushes out, calling out the kids one by one. She won’t find them with that screech voice.

When I get behind the house the men already have their shovels in hand, even Nhlanzeko surprisingly I thought he wouldn’t bother himself.

“This is ridiculous if you ask me, who would bury anything in here and for what? Nidlala le ntombazane nina”, MaShelembe’s mumbling does not move me anymore. It’s been insult after insult.

“Lalelani-ke, angimfebanga mina uMilani, ngamuteta ngedwa vo e-labour ward. None of you have done a single thing for me or my daughter, not wiped her snot; not wiped her poop; not breastfed her NOTHING. Hence there will be no one speaking to my child with such a disgusting tone. She is not here for the fun of it, she's here because of her duties. She is your boss and you are her employer, if you think you will address her any how because she's respectful and young then think again because this chic has a very dangerous mother hen hovering over her and I'm not afraid of jail. Watch your tone ntombi endala ngoba uzokuthola loku okufunayo”, my mother just

shut down the entire show in a 6 seconds speech. MASHELEMBE is swallowing her spit right now, no words to say.

Thank you mommy!

“You may resume sisi”; she opens a way for me to step in the middle of the semi circle formed by the people. Literally everyone is here: the uninvited neighbors; nosy relatives and curious family members, peaking over each other’s shoulders. After what my mother had said a racket of whispers and gasps, if she gives a damn about their useless comments.

Nhlanzeko for one seems happy my mother said what she said, his face immediately lit up when she said “Lalelani-ke”.

That moment my mother resents him to hell and back. I haven’t figured out how I will make things work between them, one is stubborn

and the other is stone cold. Oil and water type of shit but I'll figure things out ... I always do.

I clear my throat once the noises die down, "Hlongwane buried something here, something that is dangerous to all of us in this house so we must find it ... and then find him", I already know MaShelembe is cocking an insult.

"Whatever it is you are trying here is futile, Khaphela is innocent", she blabbers.

You know I can't help but just think there is something deeper than what she is leading me on. It's the way her eyes float all over the place whenever she mentions his name that sends me off.

"Please start digging for it and please do not touch it if you find it", I step back and watch them dig. I kind of wish I never said they must not touch it, now thinking about it I wish Dingani could find it and touch it so that his skin

dries and turns yellow and he dies! The shit he is doing is going to cause issues for Mzi and Nonhlanhla, look at how he's looking at her and licking his lips as if my girl is just some Italian dish. Nx bloody scumbag!

“You are such a blessing, we appreciate you being here. That I want you to know”, Nonhlanhla whispers in my ear and gives me a tight hug.

“Thank you baby. I just hope all this does not go down the drain”, honestly this is the only thing that stresses me. Failing.

“By the way your dress has arrived, it’s so lovely and sexy. We went for a mermaid dress, you are going to love it！”, she beams and jumps around a little. Sigh, I’m not looking forward to that.

“It’s not that big of a deal really, I’m just doing what I have to do. If it was up to me there

wouldn't be all this stuff. The food; the party whatnot none of that. Just the private ceremony and that is it", simple. I still don't know why they did not allow me to do things my way.

"Come on cheer up Milani, you and Nhlanzeko have a lifetime together", these people are annoying with this sticking their nose in my business.

"I think I found it", Nhlanzeko shouts, so unsure he sounds.

We all rush over to where he is, and peak a bit. It's a bottle – a brown nameless bottle. I bend down and attempt to touch it, open the bottle actually to see what is inside however I'm aggressively pulled back. What love potion have I fed him?

“Are you crazy, you don’t know what is in there”, he yells at me. Literally yells at me like I’m Asakhe stealing a cup cake.

“Don’t scream at me phela”, I whisper back and step aside.

He picks up two sticks and tries to open it, he fails a couple of attempts but eventually finds his way around it. The stench!

He turns the bottle upside down and some sort of liquid oozes out. Nhlanzeko sniffs it from the stick and turns to us with shock written all over his face.

“It’s blood”, he says.

I hear gasps for a moment and next moment it’s loud talks all over. MaShelembe herself looks shocked out of her mind. Odd.

“Kwakukhulu”, my mother claps once and covers her mouth. It’s only a matter of minutes before she starts praying.

“You see ma, you see what chasing a penis results in? entlek did you know about this, you both are in it?”, First time seeing Mzayfani this angry. Nhlanhlo cannot even get through to him. He’s angry and demanding answers.

“Wh-what-tt, my son I would never bewitch my own family I am not that cruel. I had no idea Khaphela stored those here, I’ve never let him this far inside the yard”, she gasps and shakes her head a thousand times. Her hands tremble on top of her chest, eyes pulsing red and green veins.

“Ow really. Look at what we found? Shit planted by the very same man you were defending a second ago ma”, they are toe to toe.

“I was – I ...I. Mzayfani please believe me I know nothing of this. I’m just as shocked as you are”, she's crying so bad I feel it wreck my

chest. Her words might have hurt me but seeing a woman as old as my mother break down like this because of an imbecile man, I just cringe!

“Stop lying dammnit!”, Mzi explodes instantly. His brothers have taken over Nhlanhlo's job of trying to calm him down.

“I'm serious ngane yami I swear”, she's on her knees in front of his begging for forgiveness. Something in me just can not bear seeing that, I pull her up but she refuses to get up. She keeps begging for forgiveness.

“Ma what brought you to that man, what relationship did you have with him?”, Scelo asks. The only sane one. Mzayfani is angered by the betrayal, Nhlanzeko is angered by the way she treated me.

“I had to protect what's mine, Mzayfani is all I live for if I lost him then I...”, she stops and

continues crying. We outchea wondering where the hell this comes from? And where is it going?

“Protect me from what?”, Mzi asks in a raspy tone.

“From death. You were next on the line because I refused to marry Zakhele. You were going to die just like how Nhlanzeko’s brother passed away, the same Nonhlanhla had an unexplainable miscarriage. I had to protect you from that, Khaphela is whom I went to.

Mzayfani, I was a desperate mother what else could have I done”, she is done crying but still on the floor.

“Ma I am not a fool, you do not work nor do you pension. How the hell did you pay him?”, Mzi’s attitude is on another level.

“I did not pay him money, I paid with my dignity”, she murmurs but I catch it. For once in

my life I have zero words, I don't know what to do with my body, my mind, anything I cannot figure out what to say. What the hell is happening in this house? So many demons lurking right in front of us. I'm trembling like crazy. If there is one thing I resent the most, it's this. Why can't men just leave us alone for once huh? We die each day of every hour because of them. What have we done to them?

"Ini? ... wait wait wait, he forced himself on you or you went there willingly?", Mzi asks.

"Are you mad Mzi, didn't you hear what she just said. He raped her end of story. Whether she went there or not, giving up your honor as a woman in exchange for assistance is rape. And I want that bastard to pay niyezwa, I want him to pay. No one has a right to devalue a woman because of her weak period, and it won't start now. Fix him, I don't know how but fix him", I'm breathing over my lungs. I cannot

control it or my hands. My eyes creep over to my mother and her tears are falling out, it's a wound that never closes. Being taken advantage of by someone you trust, it's not easy to move on afterwards.

Before I could take another breath Nhlanzeko is in front of me whispering: "I'll make him kiss the ground pumpkin I promise". He understands the depth of the situation. It hits home for me.

We don't need people right now. I ask Nhlanhlo to dismiss everyone and ask for them to excuse us until the day of the ceremony. We don't need this.

I hope they kill him but the human in me does not think that deep, he's a sangoma after all.

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... FEW HOURS LATER ...

We are sitting in the rondavel where MaShelembe and Nombuso are sleeping. MaSbisi is sitting on a mat on the floor reading the bible with my mother next to her. Nhlanhlo has gone to make food for us though I doubt any of us will eat, we have zero appetite. I'm just sitting on the dressing table praying Nombuso and her baby are fine and that MaShelembe wakes up and allows me to help her heal. Just heal. What she went through is not light stuff.

Bruna is the blankest one, none of us have told her the rape issue because she is fragile. She'll freak out and run away. Cannot afford losing each other.

We hear the car roaring outside, it's them at least they are back safe I was getting worried over there.

It's a matter of five minutes that they walk in with heavy hearts and sour faces. Mzi has blood splatters on his shirt and Nhlanzuko too. My throat dries up... NO!

"He's still alive", Scelo says and sticks to Bruna again.

Whew!

"Not for long. He's alive right now because we need his help with ending all the shit he started. We are still going back to him tonight", Nhlanzuko says. Normal as it sounds to me, I would have preferred him not saying it out loud in front of my mother.

"How is she?", Mzi asks.

"She will be fine physically... not sure about emotionally though"

His jaw twitches as I say that. I feel so bad for being an ass towards her, only if I knew

“Mama, gogo said mkhulu want a baby”, how did Asakhe escape the house?

“Baby go back inside the house”

“But gogo said I must tell you and daddy to give mkhulu a baby”, she's throwing a tantrum at me now. Yho this child.

“Daddy?”, I ask. My heart beat is racing fast!

“Yes daddy”, she points at Mzi and I feel my intestines lock in a tight knot.

Nhlanzeko's grip on my hand is getting painful by the second.

“I'm going now, bye”, she hops out not realizing what she has started. Shit!! I was hoping Nhlanzeko would not find out till ... I don't know.

“Excuse us”, I say and push him out the room all the way to our rondavel.

Okay how do I explain this?

“Nhlanzeko don’t think of it like that. It’s just a baby nothing serious, I’m ... I was going to tell you...”

“You knew!?” , he unravels. He keeps pacing around the room and it’s making matters worse.

“Yes ...no ... I did know but it was confirmed. It was just a dream, a once off dream that I did not look at. It has to be done Nhlanzeko...”

He turns around in speed and chokes me with me his one hand so tightly, he’s not tightening it but I am struggling to breathe.

“Aww Nhlanzeko uyangilimaza”, I’m coughing and digging my nails on his arm and hand so

that he let's me go but he doesn't. instead he looks at me with evil eyes.

"You are mine and mine only Pumpkin you get that, you cannot hurt me you get that. You can not belong to anybody else but me, you hear that?", his eyes are red ... he's crying.

Nhlanzeko does not cry tears, once his eyes become very red with puffy eye lids I know he's crying.

But Did I ever say I'm not his? And where the hell is this coming from?

Anyway I nod over and over until he decides to let me go. I fall to the ground, not faint just slid down with so much going on in my head. Did he just trying to kill me??

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

CHAPTER FOURTY

☆MILANI ZWANE☆

I keep tossing around the bed, looking for sleeping positions that will comfort me enough to drive me to far away sleep but none are working gosh!

I almost masturbated however stopped myself because I am a spiritual person now and masturbation ain't it for me since it filths one's spiritual being. I can't believe I can never hump my pillows ever again. TF!

I took two beta-sleep tablets and still nothing came to me to send me to lala land. I'm worried and pissed at the very same time. Pissed that I was a fool again and blindly loved a man that is no different from my father. Pissed that

although I know his true colours now, I'm not planning on leaving him anytime soon and then there is the dumb me that always gets defeated by a male-given orgasm. It's telling me to be worried about the imbecile, look for him even because apparently his tears are of concern to my heart than my own life. But I'm not that woman that succumbs easily to a MAN, indoda!

Nhlanzeko will pay a hefty price for what he did to me. Put aside the fact that as we speak I'm putting on a gown to go look for him, serve him some food and get him warm for the chilly night. Last time I saw him was when he choked me and left the room looking terrified of his own actions. Two hours later, he came here to shower I'm guessing he came back from killing Khaphela after he said he rather die than help us. The nigga forgets we have Mesuli.

Anyway, he finished taking a shower spent three hours staring at me thinking I am

sleeping maybe and then kissed me and left.
What a psychotic... ugh!

Outside it's raining cats and dogs you wouldn't say it's 4:00 am. My heart starts pounding thinking Nhlanzeko either went to some rural bitch for comfort but then he's not like that, but where the hell could he be? I have searched around the yard, searched the extra room and the car but there is nobody there.

"Hayi wena, do you want flu? Go back inside your room hawu"

I get a shock of a lifetime thinking it's one of Khaphela's tikoloshe so much that I drop the phone in my hand right in the puddle of mad before me. My iPhone!!

"MaShelembe, what are you doing here?", I ask in return.

"I needed a quick smoke. I can't sleep either way and there is no bottle here", she shrugs

and lights her cigarette, taking a seat on the bench under my room's stoep.

I join her, on the smoking too.

"This is not for kids, you'll choke to death on this one", she laughs. Choke to death huh?

"It tastes horrible. Why do you smoke vele ma?", we cozy aren't we? Thanks to the only thing that can bring women so apart and also so close. Men!

"When you have nobody in your corner, alcohol and cigarettes become your pillar of strength. Even in my marriage I had no one in my corner, I've been alone since I stepped foot in this house", she chuckles softly and does a long pull before continuing, "My husband killed we-Milani. Killed me and buried me while I was still alive and showed absolutely no remorse about it. But I had to stay strong for my son, for all of them", she sniffs.

I noticed the love and warmth they share for her over MaSbisi. Scelo too.

“It’s chilly here let us go inside”, I say.

She’s not sure about that, her straight face says so.

“Nhlanzeko?”, she asks.

“Forget him. Come in you will get sick outside”

We enter the room, with soggy clothes and stuff. I regret giving all my blankets to my mother, phela I thought oh well I have a man to warm me in the middle of the night. That was a pipe dream.

I pull out Roberts wine under the bed and two glasses from my drawer. I knew I was going to need this at some point, here is that point.

“I totally misread you”, she laughs abit, excited by the bottle I guess.

“is that why you hated me?”, I’m testing her I really don’t care to know why she did.

“I did not hate you, I just envied you. Everyone gave you what I wanted in a matter of minutes, things that I wanted for years and years”, she drinks up, starting to loosen up.

“What things?”

“Respect and importance. I wanted that for myself but then it’s nothing to me anymore, I just want inner peace”

Everybody in this house wants inner peace, nothing but inner peace so odd hey? Out of everything, too bad others want to choke it out of someone.

“Why didn’t you tell me what he did to you ma? Or tell someone what was happening instead of hiding it all, look where it got you?”, I point to the cigarette in her hands.

“It’s not as easy as one two three this thing. As a woman some things it’s better you keep them inside your chest until they find their way out for themselves. This was one of those things”, she sighs. I understand where she is coming, I don’t see myself sharing what Nhlanzuko did to me with anybody. Not even my mother.

It was no mistake but I prefer telling myself it was one, although I’ll ensure he regrets holding me like that. I’m not like others aboNokwazi, you don’t just put your hands on me and expect to Johnny Walk away. Hell NO!

I haven’t figured out what I’m going to do yet, call the cops on him when we get back home? Kick him out? Ignore him? I don’t know yet.

“So, how are you feeling now that all is out in the open?”

“Relief and a sense of lightness in my heart, I might stop drinking now”, she’s lying. There is

no way she will quit alcohol anymore and I think I love her like this.

“Oh so I guess I can sip this for you then”

She hits my hand as I reach for her glass, we are having a jol I have forgotten there is a bastard called Nhlanzeko.

“Not yet! Maybe next year”, she giggles softly.

“You will finish God's wine wena I can see it”

We laugh. Highly enjoying the moment, it's less tense and very fulfilling, away from the heaviness of this family's problems. I never thought I would have a bedtime date sipping wine and eating stolen grapes with a 50 years old woman but it's so fun.

“I'm sorry about the way I treated you. You are one warm and beautiful girl, I hope we treat you with the same affection you treat us”, she is so nice and always knew she was.

“Dish me some money girl and I will be all good”

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☆NHLANZEKO NGCOBO☆

He drove to a church nearby, the same church his mother took him to every Sunday. It's always opened early, around 3 am thanks to the new pastor. Actually he was planning on going on a long nameless drive, however the steering wheel got him here. His feet carried him inside the church, his faith in the love he has for Milani carried his knees to the ground in front of the alter and his fear of losing her got him

praying to God for the first time since he lost his mother.

He sighs heavily and sits on his butt on the first step, he's facing the cross sign behind the podium.

“You've never loved me ntwana I know that much: you first took my mother then my brother then my happiness and my future and then you took my father. You took my entire life away from while I was still breathing before Your eyes but hey in the name of You being God I let it be and then ... and then You decided to give me a whole new life filled with smiles; love and laughter ...”, he chortles to himself, shaking his hanging head.

“And again You take that away from me, I don't know what to do anymore. What should I give for You to show mercy on me? Must I pray?

Because I will, In fact ...”, he goes on his knees and bows his head with his eyes shut.

“Please don’t take Milani away from me brah, I will lose my brains if she leaves me. I know I am a bad person, can’t You work Your magic on me and make me a better man for that woman? A man she deserves, strengthen me to be able to fight myself from hurting again. I can’t do life without her ndoda. Eish, amen.”, he’s in his elements, if he did not miss her he could carry on begging God the whole morning. But he has to get back to reality and try to mend the few pieces of glass lying on th floor. As to where he will begin? Even he does not know but he is not losing her!

Coming here he was half way to being tipsy, now that he's driving back his vision decides to

get blurry, he can not see anything hidden behind the mist however he can distinctively hear a car hooting at him. Out of curiosity he decides to stop and roll down the window, he peaks at the side mirror and sees a very pissed off taxi driver approaching him with a stick in his hand.

“Yewena msunu uphuze imbhoza noma udakwe ibele lika nyoko!?", the taxi driver shouts loud for the whole village to hear.

Nhlanzeko frowns and gets out his car. The man is taller than him, more masculine and looks ready to chop his head off.

“Is there a problem?", Nhlanzeko burps on his face earning a slap from the taxi brother.

“Watch your tone with me mfana usasemncane", the guy warns him with a finger.

“Yobe”, Nhlanzeko lifts his hands up in an apology and then leans against his car. Arms crossed.

“How do you apologize to a woman?”, he asks, obviously drunk.

“If you carry on driving the way you do you won’t have to do any apologizing. Are you going to be able to drive? I can lift you”, the taxi driver say.

Nhlanzeko looks at him blankly, it feels weird to him.

“You not sexy ndoda nor are you my type, I’m just being a Samaritan here”, the taxi driver shrugs.

“Sure”, Nhlanzeko.

“So what did you do again?”

“What’s your name first off?”, Nhlanzeko asks, getting comfortable on the seat.

The man looks at him for a while, “Bambhatha, Bambhatha Hlomuka”, he eventually says.

“Mh are you not going to ask for mine?”, the drunkard.

“Why do I need your name?”, Bambhatha frowns.

“My name is Nhlanzeko Ngcobo”, he says it anyway.

“Well, I did something bad, I hurt her by mistake, I didn’t mean to do that. You know I really love her I cannot live without her ...”

“You don’t love her, you depend on her. Which means you don’t show her love because you dependent on hers, a mistake you cheese boys do”, Bambhatha.

“That’s not true”, Nhlanzeko gasps.

“Have you ever done anything for her?
Showered her with more than just words? Not
that I see any importance in that but women
do”

Nhlanzeko remains quiet, thinking how he has never done any of the above. But he loves her hawu, he loves her period!

“Where do I turn?”, Bambhatha asks.

Nhlanzeko points to his home, which is a few miles away from where they are at the moment. How come he has never done anything for her?

“Right, get out of my taxi and bring my R16”, Bambhatha demands as he parks in front of the lawn.

“come on, good Samaritan?”

“This is south Africa ndoda, khokha”

Nhlanzuko sighs and looks around the taxi, it's clean and also smells good. He looks at the rear view mirror and sees a very familiar picture. Mh so this guy is Shembe? Those are not to be messed with so he pays R50 and opens the door to jump out.

“Take your change I am no charity case. That woman that drives you crazy ... mulobole, very few women are worthy these days”, and with that Bambhatha drives off. He has a point, that's what he should have done long time ago. Marry her!

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☆☆☆☆☆ THE F*CKEN END ☆☆☆☆☆

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

☆EPILOGUE☆

Ever heard of Murphy's law? That myth of everything that can go wrong actually goes wrong? That thing of bad luck after bad luck? Stone after stone? Yeah that, we have had a lot of it, in fact our lives for the past 12 months have been a Murphy's law. I'm talking about my so called husband and I, the law husband.

First off he lost his daughter, Nokwazi suffered a miscarriage out of nowhere we received a call from her saying she is in hospital going crazy with her stillborn next to her bed. I don't like that girl period, I'm a woman and a mother though, hearing those news got me fearing that traumatic experience happening to me. As if that did not break Nhlanzuko enough, I had to now give Zakhele what he wanted, a baby. And unfortunately for me everything had to be done traditionally which means penis in vagina had to happen. Worst time of my life, having to walk around your man's house with a baby

bump that belongs to his brother is rough, more than I thought. You know I could not understand why Mzayfani out of people!

The same man Nhlanzeko feels like he has to always compete with in life, always challenge and always fight for everything. But then culture says it must be done this way. It was either Zakhele's older brother of which he does not have or his eldest son and he has none that are alive so it had to be his eldest grandson, being Mzi. I don't know how many times I've been fighting myself when it comes to the mere thoughts of killing this baby I'm carrying right now, irrational and evil right I know. Love does that to you, you go crazy and start thinking delusional things. I'm not even sure if Nhlanzeko is worth it any more.

It's always the same case, wake up to an empty bed, shower and go prepare some food then by luck bump into him on the passage, greet and

move forward with my life. What is the point in trying to explain myself to someone so blinded by whatever shit he is blinded by, I'm done begging him to be transparent with me if in his eyes I'm not worth the truth. I don't wear the pants in this relationship but you would never guess that, it's like I'm Noah and he is one of the monkeys I must carry on my back inside the ship through all the storms. Pff, I've had so much self pleasure going on my back has broken into segments there is no way I'm carrying this marriage on me anymore. He must forget it.

Ow, today is graceful. He is even watching T.V in the same space as me? Shocking, did that muthi I gave him yesterday shit his madness down the drain?

Prior jumping to any conclusion, no I never poisoned him. I just asked Bayede to hand me the best muthi to make a person visit the toilet every second and she did, I did not sleep last night enjoying the man's cries in the toilet. Maybe that is why he is, Nokwazi won't tolerate a shitting man so he can't go hide wherever she is.

“Morning”, I greet softly and walk pass as I don't care about getting a replay. Not that I do, I don't.

I have two doctor's appointments this week and I am not looking forward to any of them. Mzayfani is though, it's like he's the pregnant one here and not me. He beams each time I mention “He kicked”. Yeahhh it is a boy, funny, that is what Nhlanzenko wanted. A boy.

He asked to join me in tomorrow's appointment and I said yes knowing very well

Mr Grumpy will want to choke me again, I'm not joking this time I will get him arrested for more than three weeks. He must not try me like that.

I prepare an egg and berries omelet with three croissants and freshly squeezed orange juice I brought yesterday morning. Place it all on a tray and take it outside by the veranda, across a peaceful waterfall. When we got married secretly in the High Court we decided to move from Hilton back to a brand new mansion in Howick Falls thinking we were going to get a brand new fresh start. Rubbish of me to assume that!

Just look at me, heavily pregnant baby mama with a marriage worse than mjolo. I should have listened to my mother when she said I must go back home with her, at least I would be happy even with my tin house and peanut earning jobs. A small house filled with love is

greater than a big house filled with emptiness. Thanks Bayede; Bruna and Nonhlanhla I have not hung myself. Nombuso still hates me, more now than before forget that I saved her child for her. Ungrateful twits!

“Good morning”

Nx!

“How are you feeling?”, he asks with the last ball he has left.

“As if you care how I feel, get the hell out of my sight you blocking my beautiful view”, I tap his leg with my foot. That is what you do to dogs when you chase them away, you shuu them with your foot. Same goes for him.

He draws in air and dumps it out, helping his eyes on me. After some time I shift my eyes elsewhere away from him, his remain on me.

“Your pregnancy is doing a lot of good to you, you look gorgeous”, he yaps.

He's been paying attention?? Mhh.

Why is he sitting? I want him far away from me like he's been doing. I'm a parasite to him aren't i? so he must keep away from me then.

"How is the baby? Have you went to scans?", yes I have, all alone. With nobody to hold my hand or giggle with me at the sound of a stupid heart beat, no one to wipe my tears at the joy of realizing I'm carrying a little human. No one to smile at me because they are happy for me.

"Pumpkin ngiyaxolisa", and there goes the anthem.

"Hhe, you should hook up with Kabza Da Small maybe you might make a hit with that ridiculous song you keep singing everytime you mess up", iced and aggravated as my voice sounds he continues poking me in my cage by holding my hand like this.

“I mean this time, pumpkin I made a mistake ...”, ERH?

“MISTAKE? Mistake Nhalnzeko is sleeping through the morning alarm, a mistake is stepping on someone's toe that is a mistake not constantly stabbing someone you claim to love in the gut. Nooo, that is no mistake”, and he knows this. He would have never avoided me if he didn't and that is his weakness, he never takes accountability for his dumb actions and he never cares to listen when he's in pain. I get what we did hurt him but man it was not a picnic date!

“I know that too. Okay pumpkin what must I do to make things right between us then? Because I would do anything. I miss loving you”, he buries his face on my thighs for some time then picks himself up again. I must say, he does look like he's falling apart. From head to toe, he looks like a dead piece of... I don't know what.

As for me no matter how much I am go thru-ing but I ensure I don't show it. A lady must remain the flower she is no matter what.

"Ngifuna ukuk'thanda pumpkin", he soothes me with those eyes doing the begging for him.

"You just saying that because you cannot handle the heat any longer. You mean none of what you are saying ..."

He swiftly moves his head from my thighs and locks eyes with me, "I do mean it I promise you", he says.

"I'm not convinced", and that's that.

"To show you how serious I am, I even called a marriage counselor to come help us mend things. Just give me that chance", he looks like a hobo in those baggy sweats of his.

"Nhlanzeko it will not work, you clearly showed me how you feel already, enough is enough. Can't you see how much you have broken me

down in the past year? I'm empty because of you, much to my despair I agreed to sleep with a man I don't even love to keep your great grandfather happy and now you acting as though nga feba! I begged and pleaded with you to forgive me for something that isn't my fault. I lived alone and did things by myself regardless of my condition... I am nine months pregnant for fuck sakes, show me some mercy! And now because you've grown an extra inch on your penis you think you all will go your way?", I'm yelling like I'm mad, some Gardners are looking over at us and I don't give a damn.

"I made a big mistake... not a mistake but I regret it all pumpkin. All of it, I regret not setting up the bubble bath for you with all your favorite salts and bath foams, I regret not massaging your feet when you complained about them paining you. I regret not waking you up with a tray of food and a fresh flower

just to thank you for all you've done for me. I regret wasting time feeding my angry instead of being happy with you and cherishing the moments we share, I'm mad I missed all those. All I'm asking for is one more shot at making you happy, this time it will all be about you not me no more trying to fix Nhlanzeko, it's just about you", this is the first time he is pouring himself to me like this. Normally he says sorry and hugs me then sexes me and I forgive him. I wish I could chop off his penis whenever he messes up.

"How do I believe you after all you have done to me, Nhlanzeko?", can he please enlighten me? One knife is enough why would I want more?

"Because I've dusted myself up, I'm not a little broken boy anymore. I'm a grown ass man who handles things differently, no amount of running is worth losing the woman of my

dreams. Ngikhulile Milani", his bush-beard attests to that fully.

"Please come join the session with me", he begs.

"I can't walk around I am pregnant and Doctor Molefe said I must be careful since I had a few complications along the way that is why I do regular check ups", I can't believe I'm betraying myself like this yet again.

"Complications?", he doesn't even know that!

"Yes I have subchronionic hematoma", I found out after the first miscarriage scare. I woke up damp as hell, blood everywhere thinking I had lost the baby I called Bruna to hurry me to the hospital because Nhlanzeko hated my guts that time. That was when the doctor diagnosed me with SH, but claimed it was no threat to the unborn baby as long as I follow his instructions

and come for regular check ups. That is why I cannot afford travelling, it's still a risk.

He kisses my hands and holds me tighter, "I'm sorry", I know where the apology comes from. Guilt.

"It's fine and in the past"

"The counselor is waiting inside, can we please just give it a try"

I'm not about sharing my business with people I hardly know but oh well if it makes him happy then so be it.

He carefully lifts me up from the couch carrying me bridal style back inside the house.

"I said I am not allowed to travel long distance not that I cannot walk", honestly.

"I prefer carrying you, the floor can be slippery", he chuckles.

“It has always been slippery, what makes you care now?”, I won’t stop until I’m satisfied. He must feel what I felt.

“Francine”, he says as we enter the lounge.

The lady turns around, a very cute slim Indian lady with a sari on.

“Namaste”, she bows.

I thought these things only occurred in ZeeWorld not real life.

“Hi”, I greet her. It feels awkward to me.

“My name is Francine Bimalkumar and I will be your counselor for the duration of your sessions. Lovely to meet you Mr and Mrs Ngcobo”, she smiles reassuringly.

“Now what I would like us to do is vent, release it all before we go any further. We breaking down these walls and building new ones from

now on. Okay, Mam would you go first?", she's so soft spoken. I'm calm already.

"Well right now I want to kill my husband because of the shit he did to me, he was the last person on earth I expected pain from. You were suppose to shield me from it not bring it to me every day. You probably do not know but some nights I just wanted to kill myself because I saw no light in my life however I clinged onto faith and your vows. I've been so angry and sad over the past year that I've gotten tired of it. I'm tired of being sad and empty, being down and broken. It's not what you promised me", Francine hands me the box of tissues. Thank God she has a pack.

"Mr Ngcobo it's your turn", she says after noting down a few things.

"I took my past and my pain and turned it to a priority which was the worst decision ever. I

fumble before you and you know that, I rely on you for everything which is unfair of me pumpkin and I see it now. It's up whether I stay in my past and die alone and cold or I focus on the future with you ... pumpkin I choose you now, tomorrow and always. I'll right my wrongs in every kind of way possible. Polish my acts and brighten up your day as promised before. I won't be that little boy stuck in his past, I'll be the man I should have been from the start. From now on I live for you, your happiness comes before anything. I love you so much", for the first time he places his hand over my baby bump and oddly I feel a shift which brings me to tears of mixed emotions.

"Mrs Ngcobo what do you feel after hearing your husband's words?", Francine asks.

"...I don't know yet it's a wild hurricane of emotions going on inside of me but uhm I'm ready to move on and give us a chance again, it

won't be the same I know but I just want to try again you know”

He wipes my tears while kissing my neck and then my nose, “It won't be the same. It will be better than before”, he whispers in my ear.

“Awwe it's evident you both are not willing to cut the chord anytime soon. Marriage is hard, because it is just like growth. You never know how you will grow as an individual or how your growth will impact you, it's a new thing you won't know how to handle it without making errors here and there. It is okay to go through things in a marriage because it's new, you do not have any experience about it so you won't be perfect all the time. The only thing is, you have to navigate through everything together. Rings and love don't make a marriage, unity and respect does. Unify your relationship and watch how you both grow as individuals and as a unity”, she says.

“I have a task for the both of you, I want you to fill this sheet in for me. One side is for the positives and the other for the negatives, jot them down and analyze them. If the positives are more then that is good keep working on them but if the negatives are more go back to the drawing board and peel everything before your eyes. Sit down together as a unit and find a way forward, okay”

We nod. I hope this is the breakthrough I have been praying for this whole time. It's so evident, we still love each other.

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I just woke three minutes ago from the urge to pee, usually I just sleep it away but this time I

seriously cannot hold it. It feels like I have peed myself already ... wait oh my god my water!!

Now I'm running to the guest room Nhlanzeko was sleeping in, shouting I'm giving birth I'm giving birth and the idiot keeps snoring. Ugh!

F*CK THIS BABY IS PAINFUL!

“Wake up Fuze”, I scream, grabbing the book from his face and slapping him with it not caring about the fact that I almost took his eye out.

“Ouch ...”

“The baby is coming, the baby is coming My water broke”, I’m breathing in and out because I was told to so but the shit helps with nothing.

“The baby? How? Now? Okay shit, where do I take you, what do I do?”, he asks jumping out of bed and putting his cloths on.

“hmm I don’t know take me to Mercury for a candle light dinner for two, it’s not like I’m about TO GO INTO LABOUR!!”, the contractions go from okay to freaken insanity to calm to get this baby out of me.

“The hospital okay, can you walk or will it slip out? Should I carry you ...”

“Take me to the damn hospital or else I’ll shoot you Fuze”, I have his gun in my hand, it makes me feel better holding it because I know if someone acts stupid I can shoot them.

“Whoa easy tigger, I have not done this before pumpkin I'm freaking out”, he is, he’s sweating more than me and I don’t CARE.

“1, 2, 3 whooooosaaaaaa. Get the car, I’ll drag myself down stairs and HURRY UP”

He sprints past me, I’ve never seen him run that fast which is good because I feel the head down my uterus or something. They say walking is

good but this shit is painful and hard, if I look down I feel like I'll fall so I just guess each step and hold onto the railing.

"Hurry up baby the car is ready"

"Don't tell me to hurry up!! Have you taken my things?"

He looks unsure all of a sudden, "... yes I took them"

"Aahhhh dammnit!", I'm losing it with these contractions. They feel like hell on earth!

And Nhlanzeko's driving is scary.

"Are trying to kill us all? Watch it! ...
ooooouuuuuuuuuu Jesus Christ!", I need to bite something or whatever, I need to handle these.
Just breathe. Yes there it is.

"Are you breathing? You should be breathing right", he's dumb ass should be driving.

“Are you a doctor? Did you study medicine huh? Usuwaba udokotela? If not then shut up and drive or I’ll shoot you in your testis”, I’m yelling and groaning as the contractions grow.

“We are almost there baby hold on for daddy okay”

“keep talking and there will be no daddy ... aaaahhhhhh God”, my energy is deteriorating. I can’t keep screaming and breathing. As my eyelids are about to shut down my door open, there’s a lot of chaos going on I can’t see any of it because my head cannot lift up but I hear a loud and clear, “She's bleeding!”

My stress levels shoot up from there, “No, please save him. Save my baby please”

“Shhh love, take it easy, they’ll save him I promise you shh”, he holds my hand and I hold his back with the little energy I have. I’m still

contracting regardless of the bleeding, there is hope right?

“Mam please keep your eyes open, Mam are you still with us?”, I want to reply but end up zoning out completely.

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“Wakey wakey new mommy”

I open my eyes to the sound a baby crying, the light coming from the curtains blind me but I swiftly recover.

Is this a nurse? ... oh wait no is Nhlanzeko.

“Scrubs really?”, I’m laughing softly because I don’t want to rattle the baby.

“Tell me about it. You want to hold him?”, he brings it to but I reject him. I feel guilty for the

hatred I once had for him, wanting to kill him I feel horrible I cannot bear having to cradle him as if I loved him when he was still a seed.

Children absorb feelings from their mothers apparently, what if he grows up to hate me?

“Why are you crying?”, he asks brushing my hair back.

“I was a bad mother, Nhlanzeko. What if...”

“No more living in the past, that’s what we said right. So don’t go there. Take him”, he offers the child to me. The little man spreads his arms out to me and I more than willingly take him in.

“He's so tiny and cute like mommy, yes you are fat cheeks”, I rub his pointy nose.

“He’s cute like her alright”, Nhlanzeko chuckles.

“Zakhele, his name is Zakhele” , I say.

“Beautiful name for a beautiful boy”

“So how do you feel about it all? You going to accept..”

“You are all I have, the both of you and I love you both with my whole heart. This is our fresh start, me you and Zakhele”, he kisses Zakhele on the cheek and me on the forehead.

“It feels good. To be here after everything”, I smile.

Nhlanzuko looks at and smiles.

“What?”, I ask.

“You are a precious stone through any hardship, a true DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH”

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THE END.

