

DISCOVERING REAL LOVE
SEASON TWO



S2-INSERT 1

Nandipha wore a smile on her face as she watched her mother kneel in front of her to help her fasten her shoes. She could still remember the joy she felt when Yanda introduced Mahlubandile to her as his girlfriend. Hlubi had been a part of their lives for little over ten years and Nandipha woke up grateful everyday for the gift of a mother. Not once did she feel like a stepdaughter to Hlubi so much so that many people have told them how much she looked like her mother and

Nandi never felt the need to correct them by telling them that she was Hlubi's stepdaughter. Hlubi felt Nandi tap her shoulder and when she looked up she found her daughter pointing to the impatient Yanda who stood a distance from where the ladies were. The two of them could not help but let out a soft laugh. Hlubi: "Mbuzo, I think you'll be more comfortable in the car, my love" she suggested while looking at her husband before standing on her feet. They watched Yanda close the gap between them while

starring at his watch.

Yanda: "I don't understand why Nandipha is not wearing the shoes she bought last week, Lisakhanya" he said with frustration pointing at Nandi's feet. Hlubi loved it when he called her by her makoti name especially when he says Khanya she'd find herself melt "I can't go sit in the car because with the speed you two are going we will arrive at the graduation venue after the ceremony" he added. Nandi remained silent because she has come to learn that her mother

was best suited to calm her father.

Hlubi: "The dress that you made exclusively for her is best suited with these shoes, Sthandwa"

Nandipha nodded quickly to support her mother's statement.

Nandi: "I'm the first person to ever wear a female piece designed by thee Yanda Mbuzo so I need to stand out, Tata" she stood to parade on the carpet to show her father how perfect the shoes are for the dress he made for her.

Yanda: "Trying to soft soap me won't help. Give me the tag of

those shoes so I can go and pay because I'm sure even taking them off will be a mission" he reached his hand forward.

Nandipha loved the shoes so she ripped off what he wanted and watched him head to the counter to pay "Your husband though, Mama" she shook her head in disbelief and they both laughed.

Hlubi: "My baby is graduating" she let out a subtle scream of excitement and suddenly Nandipha did the same. Yanda looked back to where his ladies were and could not help but smile at the sight of

them. When Nandi's mother left him with a child, a girl child for that matter he prayed for a woman who would not only be a wife to him but a mother to his daughter and his prayer got answered. For the past years being married to Hlubi he has been the happiest man alive to have a strong and ambitious woman in his life. He paid for the shoes and soon they were out of the store to run other errands trying to make it to Nandi's graduation in time. Yanda thought his daughter would have

graduated long ago but Nandi took gap year to make up her mind about what she really wanted. After much consideration she decided that she wanted to follow in her mother's footsteps by having a law degree.

Congratulations messages kept on coming through from the extended family and Nandipha felt blessed to have them all. Hours went by and Nandipha Mbuze was finally a law graduate after years of not knowing what she wanted to do with her life. When she arrived home she found the

Elephant family and the Mbuzo family waiting for to congratulate her on person. The first thing she did was parade in front of everyone with her graduation attire while videos and pictures were taken.

Yanda: "Thank you for helping me raise such an amazing young woman" he whispered to Hlubi.

Hlubi: "Thank you for trusting me to be a mother to her, baby" they shared a kiss.

Bandile: "Wise move you made there, cuz by studying something that will guarantee you a place in

the family business" he smiled and winked.

Nandi: "That's not why I studied law. I fell in love with it through that beautiful woman" she looked at Hlubi "My mom kicks ass in the courtroom so I want to do the same" she said with confidence.

Bubele: "The more lawyers in the family the better for us so I'm happy" everyone laughed.

Mrs E: "This doesn't mean that you children have the green card to break the law. If necessary they will leave you to clean up your mess whether we have

lawyers in the family or not" she looked at all her grandchildren.

Bukhosi: "Tell them, Makhulu.

When I'm a lawyer I won't defend nonsense just because they are family" Mrs E nodded in agreement.

Liyema: "So many lawyers in this room. Tata would have been so proud of that. Hlubi is taking Elephant attorneys to greater heights and one day her partners will be her child and nephews" he smiled.

Bubele: "Nephew, Tata. Bukhosi is the only one who aspires to be a

lawyer" he looked at Liyema and watched his father nod while smiling.

Amahle: "I want to be a model"

Lakhiwe: "Yes but it's always best to have a qualification to lean back on, Nana" Amahle smiled and nodded "A fashion designer and model then" Amahle added.

Yanda: "Last time I checked this was a celebration and not a career Expo. So please family let us get to the business of the day" everyone laughed.

Hlubi: "That's his way of telling us that he's starving" she joked

and everyone laughed again.

Ma Mbuzo: "No man should announce that he's hungry while his wife is next to him" she said and everyone's smile faded. Mrs E was about to say something but Hlubi shook her head to tell her mother to not entertain Yanda's mother. Everyone knew that Ma Mbuzo was not a fan of Hlubi.

Hlubi: "Lakhiwe please come and help me with the platters"

Lakhiwe nodded and followed her sister in law "So dear bestie, have you considered my offer?" she added when they reached the

kitchen.

Lakhiwe: "You seriously want to be accused of nepotism?" she took a bite at one of the mini pies.

Hlubi: "This has nothing to do with me wanting to hire family but everything to do with me trying to recruit one of the country's best financial gurus"

Lakhiwe laughed out loud.

Lakhiwe: "So I'm a guru now?" she raised a brow.

Hlubi: "Oh please you know you are. Please Lala we have put you in our budget already because we know you won't come cheap. We

need a financial manager"

Lakhiwe: "Give me more time to think about it" Lakhiwe has earned her stripes in the financial industry and has awards to prove it. Elephant attorneys was not the first company to head hunt her but she felt a strong loyalty to the company she has been working for.

Hlubi: "Just don't forget that you are making another man's legacy strong when you could come to the family firm and strengthen your children's legacy" Lakhiwe could not help but burst out laughing.

Lakhiwe: "That's blackmail, Mrs Mbuzo. Preaching to me yet your own brother has a law degree he doesn't want to use"

Hlubi: "I want you, not Liyema. Please best of the best" she begged.

Lakhiwe: "Have you told Yanda the news?" she said trying to change the topic. Hlubi raised a brow before shaking her head

"The same energy you put into trying to recruit me is the same you should be using to tell your husband what's going on. I'm taking these to the dinning room

before your mother in law says you are starving her son" they both laughed "How lucky are some of us who have awesome mother in laws?" Hlubi gave Lakhawe a look before watching her sister in law walk away. She was about to follow when Ma Mbuzo asked for tea.

Hlubi: "Let me go put this in the front then I'll make it for you, Ma" she said with a polite smile. Hlubi was not one to beg for approval but she felt herself trying to do it with her mother in law.

Ma Mbuzo: "Let us pray that she is not going to want to sleep with men for money because she did law because she was following your footsteps" Hlubi felt her mother in law's words sting her as they always had. Ma Mbuzo always found a way to bring Hlubi's past up after she read about Hlubi's story in a woman's magazine. Nandipha knew about her mother's past before the article and it never bothered her instead she found herself more in awe of Hlubi's strength.

Hlubi: "I don't know how you can

sit in church every Sunday yet be so judgemental, Ma. My husband knew about my past from the day we met and he doesn't care so I don't know why it bothers you so much" she said politely.

Ma Mbuzo: "It bothers me that my son is married to someone who is washed up" Hlubi blinked away her tears "At least Rose was not like this. I am sure that she was a virgin before Yanda impregnated her"

Nandipha: "The same Rose who dumped me at my father's doorstep to go marry another

man, Makhulu?" she said while walking around the counter to stand next to her mother "I don't remember anything about Rose being a mother to me but I have many memories with my mother that you are insulting right now and I will not stand for it" she added while looking at her grandmother.

Ma Mbuzo: "Who taught you to disrespect me like this, Nandipha because it was not me?" she pointed at the young graduate.

Nandipha: "No one but I was taught that respect is earned,

Makhulu. You can not come in here and insult my mother in her own kitchen about a past that she didn't choose. Which child chooses to be trafficked?" she asked in a shaky voice. Hlubi couldn't believe that her young girl was standing up for her.

Hlubi: "This is not what I wanted to happen today. Go to the others, nunuberry please. Makhulu and I will sort this out. I don't want my mother in here to cause a scene" Yanda walked into the tense moment and demanded to know what was going on. When

Nandi saw no one was going to say anything she spilled the beans.

Yanda excused his daughter before looking at his mother.

Yanda: "This is the reason why I don't come with Lisakhanya to your house Mama. You and my sisters always seem to have a problem with her and you want to recruit me into this hate campaign you have against my wife. If you aren't here to celebrate your granddaughter but here to insult my wife then it's best that you not be here. I am tired of this. You promised the

Elephants that you'll accept Mahlubandile as your daughter but you've done the exact opposite. Talking about Rose as if Rose had any significant impact in my life. All she did was give me a beautiful child so don't act like she was a daughter in law to you. The same Rose that once stood by your gate shouting insults at you yet you make her sound like an angel." he said calmly. He was never one to raise his voice but one always knew when they struck a nerve and his mother struck a few.

Hlubi: "Mbuzo let us not forget that this is for our daughter. I don't want this, I don't need this please" she looked at her husband while brushing his upper arm. Ma Mbuzo didn't apologize but Hlubi was not about to ruin her day with whatever it was her mother in law was dealing with. Hours went by and Nandipha felt great about the moment with her family. She found Hlubi leaning over the sink and hugged her mother from behind.

Nandipha: "You know you are one of the strongest women that I

know. I don't care about this Rose woman who only carried me for nine months because I have you. I hear stepmom horror stories that I could never relate to. Thank you, Mama" Hlubi smiled.

Hlubi: "I love..." another vomiting episode interrupted her. It had been nearly all day long. Nandipha was so concerned that she ran like a headless chicken to get a glass to fill with water. "I'm not sick, I'm pregnant" she blurted out when she felt her daughter was fussing too much. Nandipha stood

frozen looking at Hlubi as she was rinsing her mouth. Once the shock of the moment passed Nandipha let out a loud scream making Liyema and Yanda run to where they were.

Nandi: "Spider...just a spider"

Yanda: "All that for a spider, Nandipha Mbuzo?" he shook his head. Once the men left Nandipha hugged Hlubi tightly before crying.

Hlubi: "Are you crying because you are happy or because you don't like the thought of sharing us?" they both laughed.

Nandipha: "Happy...so so happy"
she wiped her tears "Does Tata
know?" Hlubi shook her head.

Hlubi: "No and you won't tell him
because I have to do it"

Nandipha zipped her mouth with
her fingers.

Nandi: "I hope it's a girl. I
always wanted a sister. This is so
exciting" she jumped up and down.
"Buggy-buggy" she said in a baby
tone while tickling her mother's
belly.

Hlubi: "Pooky now you're just being
too weird" Nandi laughed "So
you're not freaked out at your

mom who is in her forties being pregnant?" Hlubi watched Nandipha breathe out and smile. Nandipha: "My mom got robbed of her young life so I can not find fault in her living it in her matured years. If it were up to me you'd have had like four of us" Hlubi laughed "I'm not ashamed of you, Mama. Even when you decided to do that article where you told your story to uplift other women I was not ashamed. In fact I told whoever wanted to hear that you're my mother. I know that Makhulu gets mean

but to me and Tata you're the best thing to ever happen to us. Screw society's age limits and just enjoy. They will judge always but here at home you don't have to worry" Hlubi hugged her.

Hlubi: "What did I do to deserve you though?"

Nandi: "You married that handsome guy in there" they both laughed "Let me get ready to go and have fun like other kids" she danced a bit. "I'm going to be an older sister" she said while sinking to the floor dancing making Hlubi laugh out loud. The Mbuzo elders

went to bed while Nandipha went out with friends to celebrate.

Hlubi came from the bathroom and gently laid herself on top of her husband. She planted a soft kiss on his lips and watched him take in the sweetness of the moment with closed eyes. They had plenty to celebrate and to celebrate in their own way behind closed doors was the cherry on top. After the beautiful love making Hlubi looked at Yanda who already had his eyes closed.

Yanda: "What is it?" he asked still with his eyes shut "You do that

when you want to tell me something and usually it's when you spent money recklessly so what did you buy that you shouldn't have, Lisakhanya wam?" Hlubi let out a soft laugh when he opened his eyes to look at her. Hlubi: "You smell good" she complimented.

Yanda: "Give it to me straight without trying to soften me" he laughed. "I bought shoes" she confessed.

Yanda: "I knew it!" he shouted before laughing "I'm the fashion designer yet you are the one

spending most on fashion
Did they cost us a month's
groceries?" they both laughed.
Hlubi reached for the drawer
beside her bed to take out a cute
pair of yellow baby boots. Yanda
widened his eyes to make sure
that he saw right "Are you going
to donate to a children's home?"
he asked confused.

Hlubi: "I'm pregnant" she said
before taking a deep breath. Her
words forcing Yanda to sit up
straight on their bed. He went to
switch the main light back on and
did a naked walk back to their

bed. They had been trying to have a baby but stopped after their sixth wedding anniversary. Physically they were both healthy but it never happened and Hlubi blamed it on the botched tube ties she was forced to have to prevent her from getting pregnant years ago. She was not sure how Yanda received the news but when she felt his lips on hers she could not help but smile making him kiss her teeth before he himself smiled.

Yanda: "This is the first reckless spending that has made me

happy. I love the shoes you bought so much and I love their owner even more" they both laughed before his hand rested on her belly "I noticed the body changes but I didn't want to say anything. I'm wise enough to know that a man shouldn't talk about a woman's weight" Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "Aren't we too old for this, baby?" she asked softly "Will my body even be strong enough to carry this baby to term? I'm so scared, Mbuzo" she asked doubtfully.

Yanda: "No we aren't too old and yes this beautiful body will carry our baby to term and deliver successfully" he kissed her "I'm so happy" he gently pulled her up and hugged her "Is it a girl or boy?" Hlubi shrugged while laughing "Are you happy?" he watched as a tear flew down her cheek before more came as she nodded while smiling.

Hlubi: "I have been wanting to give you a child since we got married. I just thought it would happen sooner, baby"

Yanda: "Time doesn't matter. I'm

so happy I want to shout out to the world. We'll run after this little one even when our backs are sore and bent" they both burst out laughing "I'm not looking forward to changing nappies so that will be your duty since I had to do it alone with Nandipha" Hlubi laughed "It's only fair" he added with a smile.

Hlubi: "There is like an actual person growing inside of me" she held her belly in disbelief "Will you be able to make an appointment for next week?" she looked at him.
Yanda: "I know I might look like

the perfect dad"

Hlubi: "Who said you looked like the perfect dad?" they both laughed.

Yanda: "Okay maybe not perfect but definitely trying. What I wanted to say is that I missed most of Rose's pregnancy because I was hustling strong back then having no time for the small stuff that matter. Maybe that's why she dumped me with Nandi because she felt alone during her pregnancy so I want to do things differently"

Hlubi: "I don't think it's enough reason to just leave a child and

not look back. She knew when she met you that you were hustling but it's also wrong of me to judge her. I'm glad that you'll be sharing the little moments with me though"

Yanda: "Ease up on the cases please, Khanya. I know how stressed you get when you are working on a difficult case so please give the cases to your partner and associates until such a time you can take on serious cases again. If it were up to me you'd stay home for good but I know better than to ask you to

be a stay at home mother so all I ask is that you take it ease please" he pleaded.

Hlubi: "I'm already ahead of you, Mbuzo. I have delegated the serious cases and I'm taking on those who aren't too heavy on the heart and soul" she smiled "I also want to enjoy this journey so I won't let work get in the way of that"

Yanda: "And you should also let me know when my mother acts up.

This thing of yours of keeping quiet is not good" Hlubi smiled and nodded "Also no more rough sex,

from now on we go slow and boring all the time"

Hlubi: "I'm sure we can carry on as usual, Mr Mbuzo. Please don't deprive your pregnant wife of happiness now. What your mother is doing is a reflection of her so I just need to remember that how she sees me is non of my business. So will you consider starting a female line since everyone was going on about Nandi's graduation dress?" Yanda took a deep breath.

Yanda: "I'll think about it but growth is always good right?"

Hlubi nodded.

Hlubi: "Yes like our family growing. I love being a mother to our daughter but I feel a bit more excited about this since I'll feel each pain and also each joy of being pregnant and giving birth. I hope my age doesn't mean complications, Mbuzo. I was afraid at first but now I really want this so much"

Yanda: "You're so beautiful" he smiled making her blush. They spent the rest of their night discussing the possible future

which included another person
they couldn't wait to meet 

S2-INSERT 2

Hlubi and Yanda decided to go see the doctor to talk about their concerns. Her initial appointment was the following week but she wanted to stop fearing what might happen. They also looked forward to knowing how far along she was. She sat the doctor's consultation room for her very first appointment since finding out that she was pregnant. She

kept on looking at her watch because Yanda promised to go with her.

Doc: "Mrs Mbuzo, may we begin?" she sat down opposite Hlubi after giving Yanda time to join his wife. Hlubi looked at the door.

Hlubi: "Please can we just wait five more minutes, Dr Shezi?" the doctor smiled and nodded.

Doc: "We could reschedule" she suggested but Hlubi shook her head quickly.

Hlubi: "No my husband and really need to ask a few important questions" She was anxious to see

what's going on in her womb.

Yanda ran inside the room out of breath followed by Nandipha.

Mahlubandile didn't expect their daughter to come. Had she known she'd have known why Yanda was late. Nandipha could never be punctual which made Hlubi fearful about whether she'll get to court on time or not.

Yanda: "I'm sorry, sthandwa sam" he kissed her lips quickly before pulling the extra chair out for Nandipha to sit on "Did we miss anything?" he looked at the doctor.

Doc: "As if your wife would have allowed that to happen" she smiled.

Nandipha: "Mama I hope you don't mind me being here. Tata said it's just an educational consultation but surely the doctor can do a scan right or is it really too soon?" she looked to her left where her mother sat "If there are confidential things that need to be discussed I can wait outside but please can I stay for the scan. I'm so excited about this" she smiled from ear to ear.

Hlubi: "will my daughter being

here be a problem?"

Doc: "Not to me. Let me go get an extra chair for Mr Mbuzo"

Yanda: "Oh no, doctor don't bother yourself. I'm on my feet most of the day so standing feels good" he smiled.

Doc: "Okay let us get to it. I'm certain that there isn't much to see at this stage but yes Mid Mbuzo a scan is possible but after that you'll have to excuse us" she looked at the Mbuzos who were all holding hands while nodding.

Nandipha: "What will we see

today? Will we see feet and hands?" she asked excitedly.

Doc: "It will depend on how far along Mrs Mbuzo is" Hlubi couldn't help but laugh at the over excited Nandi. One would have sworn that she was the pregnant one. The doctor did all that had to be done and soon Hlubi had a scan gliding over her abdomen. Yanda was barely there for Nandi's scans so to be able to experience it with Hlubi was great. They all waited with baited breath for the doctor to tell them what part of the grey

and black screen was their baby
"There is your baby" she added
with a smile.

Yanda: "Where exactly, doctor?" he
narrowed his eyes to check the
screen properly. The doctor
pointed at the screen and they all
looked at each other smiling.

Nandi: "Ah man this is so exciting"
she touched the screen "Hi" she
said to her little sibling. The
doctor revealed that Hlubi was
five weeks along. Yanda asked
Nandipha to excuse them because
he wanted to ask certain
questions he thought were too

grown up for Nandi.

Yanda: "My wife is concerned about her age, doctor. Will that have any impact on the pregnancy?" he looked at Hlubi who seemed pleased to hear him ask her.

Doc: "Many women in their forties have given birth to healthy babies. Obviously there might be more risks compared to a younger woman but I don't see why you can't have a healthy delivery" Hlubi felt herself breath.

Yanda: "And as far as sex is concerned. Is it wise to still be

physically intimate while she's pregnant?"

Doc: "Unless a complication arises but since none of that is happening I don't see why you two can't continue enjoying marital bliss" she said with a smile. More details were explained making Hlubi more at ease.

Yanda: "I'm sorry I was late, baby but this one who your daughter is just something else" the ladies laughed

Hlubi: "Will you come to every appointment?" she looked at Nandi.

Nandi: "No I'll let you two enjoy your special time from now on.

Tata will you be able to take..."

Yanda: "I can't give you a lift, Nandi. I'm late for a fitting appointment as is. Please take a taxi, mafungwashe. Baby, I'll see you at home. Thank you for making us a part of this. I love you two so much" he gave each a kiss on the forehead before rushing off.

Hlubi: "Let me give you that lift before my lunch date with your aunt" Nandi smiled. They started to walk to the car together "You

really need to put your fear of driving aside, Pooky" they stepped in the car.

Nandi: "I can drive and I'm okay on the road until a big druck drives close to me then I freak"

Hlubi: "we'll need to work on that because let's say Tata faints when I'm in labour. who'll drive me?" Nandi laughed.

Nandi: "Why do you always think about scenarios that never cross our minds" she shook her head.

Hlubi: "But imagine it, my baby really now" she laughed too

"Please don't let fear cripple you.

Being able to drive is liberating in a sense. So how was the graduation after party?" she looked at Nandi for a short while before looking ahead again.

Nandi: "I've been seeing someone" she looked at her mom. Hlubi smiled "And he has introduced me to his parents but I'm afraid do the same" she confessed.

Hlubi: "Reason being?"

Nandi: "Mama you know Tata. He told me to only introduce a boyfriend to him when that boy is bringing cows" Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "He's a bit old fashioned

but I'm sure he'll want to know who is dating our child"

Nandi: "But I also don't want to make introductions only to be dumped a week after. I don't want to introduce different men to you two"

Hlubi: "we'll respect whatever it is you want, Pooky but I at least want to see a picture of this boy. Actually I'd like to meet him. How long have you two been seeing each other?" They had a beautiful relationship of friendship so Nandi knew her mother was not just asking to

pass time but to know what's going on.

Nandi: "About a month. I also didn't like how he ambushed me into a meeting with his parents. They were just there and I didn't have a chance to say no"

Hlubi: "Talk to him. I'm kinda sad you kept it from me for such a long time" Hlubi parked where Nandi needed to be.

Nandi: "I wanted to first study him before getting all excited about it. I like him though. Let me get going because I still have to apply for those jobs" Hlubi

respected Nandi's choice to find a job independent from the family law firm. She also had to refrain from calling in favours from her associates for her daughter. She decided to allow Nandipha to job hunt for a while before stepping in to help.

Hlubi: "I love you and thanks for coming today. Should you decide to bring this boy to meet us then tell me so I can let your dad know. All the best with your job hunting. I'm proud of you" they shared a hug.

Nandi: "Say hi to Malumekazi

Lakhiwe for me. I'm going to cook tonight to thank you and Tata for the support. I love you too" she smiled and opened the door. She lost her balance a bit but sat back down quickly.

Hlubi: "Have you eaten, Nandipha?" she asked out of concern and Nandi nodded.

Nandipha: "Got up too quickly but I've recovered now" she left the car before her mother could fuss.

When Mrs E opened Liyema's office door the last thing she expected to find was him fixing his tie while one of his female

employees seemed to be hiding the fact that she had just buttoned up her blouse. The moment was awkward and Mrs E watched as Elaine walked pass her to exit the office.

Liyema: "My PA didn't let me know that you were coming, Mma" he said but his mother stood at the same spot just watching him try to cough the awkwardness away.

Elaine: "Mrs Elephant" she said with a polite smile but Mrs E gave her a cold glance before watching her walk out of the door.

Mrs E: "Will she be worth it, Liyema?" she asked in a low almost hurt tone.

Liyema: "Mma?" he pretended to not have heard her question.

Mrs E: "When your office fling blows up, will she be worth the distraction it'll sure bring to your family?"

Liyema: "I don't know what you are talking about" he sat down to keep himself occupied.

Mrs E: "I really hope so Liyema" she gave him a cold stare before sitting down opposite him. "I know what I have just walked in

on so don't make a fool out of me. I've caught your father multiple times in the same predicament so I know the signs" she added.

Liyema: "I don't know what it is that you think you know but don't involve me because I know it's something bad. So to what do I owe this pleasant surprise?" he smiled. Mrs E to keep the conversation to their usual mother son moments but her instincts told her he was hiding something. After the lunch visit Mrs E went to find Elaine and found her flirting with a man she

didn't know. Mrs E called her aside.

Mrs E: "He told me about this little thing going on between you" she lied but she got the reaction she dreaded from Elaine. The guilty reaction of a person who was shocked to have her secret out but at the same time was also glad that someone knew.

Elaine: "I don't.."

Mrs E: "I know your type so don't dare act as though this doesn't amuse you" Mrs E watched as Elaine's face went from pitiful to cunning.

Elaine: "Well if you know my type then surely you know that I am not going to stop until I feel I've had enough of him or when he tells me to back off" she said confidently making Mrs E's blood boil.

Mrs E: "Choose your battles, little girl" she warned.

Elaine: "Or what?" she challenged the middle aged lady "You got your perfect makoti. The one who makes the Elephant name proud and gave you grandsons. Allow your son to have the woman of his dreams then. It's like that

case where the child gets the law degree to please the parents but goes on to pursue his true passion in art or something" she said with a smirk before walking away. Mrs E couldn't strangle her as her instincts told her to because they were surrounded by people. She felt her blood boil as she couldn't believe Liyema's stupidity, not after all that they went through as a family due to his father's cheating ways. Mrs E didn't return to Liyema's office fearing what she might do out of anger so she made her way out of his

office block feeling hurt and disappointed at her son's poor choices. The same choices that his father made which resulted in their family being destroyed. "You forget how broken you were when Zingisa cheated on you. I can't believe that you are willing to break your beautiful wife the same way your ex wife broke you. I seriously can't believe that you of all people made the choice to be your father's son" read a text that came from Mrs E. If talking sense into him wouldn't prove affective, she hoped emotional

guilt would bring him back to his senses.

Hlubi drove to the cafe close to Lakhiwe's work since she took the day off. She found her sister in law seated already. Hlubi took the scan from her bag and flaunted it as she made her way to Lakhiwe. Lakhiwe stood with a smile waiting until the picture was in her hand.

Lakhiwe: "Little Mbuzo?" she gushed "After nearly eight years of trying you guys are here. God is amazing indeed" they sat down.

Hlubi: "He's so happy, bestie. We

were planning to going for a scan next week but we had questions and Nandi tagged with and asked for a scam. We want a healthy baby but goodness are we hoping for a boy" she crossed her fingers.

Lakhiwe: "Is he really feeding you organic food?" they both laughed.

Hlubi: "Even going as far as monitoring the bedroom actions to not "harm" the baby" laughter again. "Enough about me. How's you?" she smiled.

Lakhiwe: "I wish there was a better way to let you down but there isn't. I might be getting

promoted soon so I have to turn your offer down" she frowned waiting for a reaction.

Hlubi: "Well I can't stand in the way of what you want so as hurt as I am, I accept and respect your choice. When last have you seen your mother in law?"

Lakhiwe: "Yesterday but she emailed me brochures to a weekend getaway for Liyema and I"

Hlubi: "So are you guys going?"

Lakhiwe: "Liyema basically shut the idea down when I emailed him the brochures saying they are too

busy at work" she looked down to avoid eye contact "We sleep in the same bed but it feels like there is a barrier between us"

Hlubi: "More reason to pursued him to get away. I'll look after the kids"

Lakhiwe: "I feel like I can touch him but can't reach him. Does that make sense?" she looked at Hlubi. A waiter came to help them before leaving them again.

Hlubi: "You guys have so much going on so to drift apart a bit is normal but don't allow it to get any worse"

Lakhiwe: "I don't feel wanted by him, Hlubi especially sexually. So much so that I take my clothes to the bathroom to avoid getting dressed in his presence" Hlubi could see Lakhiwe was uncomfortable speaking about it but she needed an outlet.

Hlubi: "Liyema loves you and anyone with eyes can see. You guys just needs some electricity to bring the spark back. It's normal. Yanda and I have been there but we got passed it by taking time for ourselves"

Lakhiwe: "I miss the spontaneous

kisses and the stolen moments,
Hlubi but...nvm let's talk about
something else. I'm thinking
about taking my grandparents so
they can come live with us since
my gran is not well. I know it'll be
more responsibility meaning less of
me to my husband but my
grandfather is old too and can't
look after her alone"

Hlubi: "I hear you. I remember
how worried we were when
Makhulu Elephant was sick and to
have had the privilege to be by
her side when she took her last
breath was amazing. Not saying

yours is dying though"

Lakhiwe: "I hear you. I'll talk to Liyema about it. So when will we know if it's a boy or girl?" she said to change the topic from the marriage.

Hlubi: "Maybe on my next appointment. Oh I have a son in law again" they both smiled. The topic changed and soon the two had their usual laughter filled dates.

Liyema clenched his eyes tight after taking in the sight of the naked Elaine sleeping next to him. He was having an affair and the

guilt was eating at him whenever he looked at Lakhiwe. At first he managed to tell Elaine that he was not interested until he suddenly found himself feel a rush when in her presence. It started with an innocent hug, then a brief kiss to having quickies in the office and then it moved to bookings in B&B's to get the full experience of the moments. Elaine was petite with no curves what so ever compared to Lakhiwe. Two completely different women and after each passion filled moment guilt would sweep in. He

was a married man and had no business being in bed with another woman. Elaine opened her eyes to find Liyema deep in thought and she knew that he was thinking about his wife.

Liyema felt her move until she was on top of him and without warning she went down to please him orally. Suddenly the guilt faded and all that filled his mind was the pleasure until he had another climax.

Elaine: "Let's stay the night" she pleaded in a flirty tone.

Liyema: "I can't. I've got a

parent meeting to attend later"

Elaine: "Let the other parent do it, baby"

Liyema: "Let's not talk about my family unless you want me to go home"

Elaine: "I don't want to bring them up either. You are the one who always does that. Can our meetings just be about us please? Talking about another woman turns me off and I know you like me on. You like me hot and steamy and rough" she giggled making Liyema smile. He loved her hot indeed because hot was not what

he felt he got at home anymore
"Thank you for the flowers and
perfume" she added with a smile.
Liyema: "You're welcome" he let
his finger glide down her spine
causing shivers down her body.
Elaine: "Yesterday it was flowers
and that private lunch. You spoil
me so much. I like a man who
knows how to make his woman
glow" she kissed his neck
seductively and he turned her
around so she'd be below him. A
naughty giggle filled the room as
they touched and kissed each
other's bodies like love sick

teenagers.

Liyema: "Next month I'm taking you away for a long weekend"

Elaine smiled.

Elaine: "So I'll finally get to be with you openly?" she asked excitedly "I can't wait. You'll need to give me money for shopping though because I can't be looking all pale next to you" Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "Not that you'll need any clothes for that trip since I prefer you naked most of the time but okay I'll let you spoil yourself but spoil me by getting a

few lacy numbers"

Elaine: "I saw one that reveals the behind. Apparently they call it the quicky undies" she laughed.

Lakhiwe would be going to the Eastern Cape with the kids that long weekend to check on her sick grandmother so Liyema thought it would be perfect to take Elaine out. He hated the man he had become but each time he told himself he was done he found himself ripping off Elaine's clothes again. He's been avoiding Mrs E's calls and messages because he was avoiding her voice of reason.

He had feelings for Elaine but it was difficult to differentiate between love and lust amidst all the excitement. 

S2-INSERT 3

The quadruples sat under a tree and the **other** three looked at Bukhosi as his crush Iviwe walked by.

Bandile: "Go to her, Khosi and ask her out for cool drink or something" he elbowed his brother who looked like he had just seen a glimpse of magic.

Bubele: "He's too chicken to approach girls. Why do you think he's the only one amongst us who has never had a girlfriend?" they all laughed.

Bukhosi: "Says the guy who just got dumped" laughter again.

Banele: "She said he can't kiss" they laughed even more. They had their individual friends in the individual sports teams they belonged to but they were inseparable.

Bubele: "Shut up, Anele. Pamela knows that I can kiss all her lips both visible and private until her

toes curl" the others made a look of disgust looking at him.

Bandile: "Way, way too much information. I hope you use protection because if you get a girl pregnant the parents won't be happy and trust me you won't either"

Bubele: "I'm no fool. No girl can trap me because I carry my own armor" he took out a condom from his wallet to show his brothers.

Bukhosi: "Pamela and Iviwe are two different type of girls. So I can't take advice from you on how to approach Iviwe when you've

never been with "a Iviwe" before. Those type of girls don't just let anyone in"

Banele: "Well let me go and greet my girl because I see too much of you suckers on a daily basis" he stood to go to where Hlumelo his girlfriend stood waiting for him. His brothers watched Banele give his girlfriend a tight hug before they walked across the school field.

Bandile: "Lucky you guys who have girlfriends close. I gotta wait for Bathandiwe to come home during school holidays"

Bubele: "Nothing stopping you from finding another one right here. Let me love and leave you boys. I'm a man who just got dumped so I gotta find myself a rebound to cry to and I have just spotted one" he stood and walked away leaving his brothers laughing while shaking their heads.

Bandile: "Don't hold your breath on Iviwe. Such innocent girls get corrupted by the likes of Pamela soon enough and she ends up going for the likes of Bubele Elephant instead of the likes of Bukhosi

Elephant. Let's go get a cold drink before the bell rings" he helped his brother up and they walked to the tuck shop. Bandile's words echoed in Bukhosi's mind and he couldn't picture Iviwe with a skirt as short as Pamela's but he knew it was possible because he'd seen a few learners change themselves to fit in.

Liyema watched as Elaine placed the beautiful picture of Lakhwiwe and the children upside down because she knew he felt guilty whenever his eyes fell on it. Their affair was fairly new but the

flirting from Elaine had started since the day she joined the company as marketing assistant. Her persistence made him finally give in and it all started with a supposed innocent kiss on the cheek until it became secret meetings in the office. Liyema felt her soft lips trace kisses down the side of his neck as they were about to have one of their late night "brainstorming" sessions. He was tired from the date they had during lunch but he wanted to keep up with his mistress to keep her happy. The

thrill of the moment excited Liyema but his mother's words from the earlier text lingered in his mind. He remembered exactly how he felt when Zingisa cheated on him and he couldn't believe that he risked doing the exact same thing to Lakhiwe but there was something intoxicating about his mistress that he seemed to be greedy for. He was also confident that he'd put a stop to the affair before Lakhiwe could find out.

Elaine: "Baby, we already have limited time together so don't

ruin it by not being present in the moment" she said while unbuckling Liyema's belt but she felt his strong grip stop her from undoing his pants.

Liyema: "I can't do this" he stood to fasten his belt once again. "My mother suspects something and it's only a matter of time before my wife does to. I don't even know how the hell I allowed myself to get to this damn point to begin with" he clenched his jaw. Elaine closed the gap between them before wrapping her arms around him to take a good look at

him.

Elaine: "I don't dispute the fact that you love your wife but it's me you are in love with. You are with her because you feel you owe her for being your surrogate so you overcompensated by marrying her but with me..." she kissed him "with me you don't feel obligated to be with me because you don't feel like you owe me anything. You love her but you're in love with me" she added. Liyema looked at the woman before him who was the exact opposite of Lakhiwe. Part of Elaine reminded him of

Zingisa and he wondered if that type of woman was what he truly wanted. The type of woman who lived for today not having any worries about tomorrow. The type who would rather go on a shopping spree with the rent money not thinking about the possibility of ending up in the streets. He was clearly attracted to Elaine's type and he hated that a good woman such as Lakiwe had to be in the middle of it all.

Liyema: "I have to go" Elaine's hand traveled down the front of

his pants and his body betrayed him just as it had the first time the affair began. The mind knew that it was wrong but a touch from Elaine silenced the mind as the body demanded more of what she had to offer. As they started to kiss and undress he wondered what exactly it was that his heart wanted. Elaine was wrong, he was in love with Lakhiwe but also in love with whatever it was he was doing with his employee. They shared another of their steamy and erotic office sexual moments before collapsing on the

floor feeling satisfied.

Elaine: "Please go away with me this weekend too" was the first words that escaped her small mouth after she could breath normal again after the steamy sexual moment they shared.

Liyema: "My weekends are for my family. It's the only time I get to really spend time with my kids. You know that and said you've got no problem with it" he reminded her of the conditions of their relationship.

Elaine: "And spend it with the wife too" she got up to get

dressed. Sharing Liyema proved to get harder each day as she felt she got the short end of the deal. A deal she started but it was his terms that she had to follow.

Elaine had always been a flirt and it was not the first time she had something with a married man.

Liyema: "Lakhiwe and the kids will be going to her grandfather's next month because they want to go visit for the long weekend so we can do whatever you want then. I told you this earlier on" he felt himself wanting to keep Elaine happy too. For years he

promised he'd never be like his father yet there he was doing what his father used to. Elaine couldn't help but smile to herself but that was not what she wanted. She wanted Liyema to choose her over Lakhiwe and spending a weekend with her when she demanded it when he could spend it with his wife was what she wanted.

Elaine: "But I have commitments that weekend. You can tell her that you are away with work because it won't be a first anyway so it won't raise

suspicious"

Liyema: "No and that's it" he said while getting dressed. He watched Elaine pick up the rest of her stuff and left his office clearly upset "Elaine" he called out but she banged the door behind her. Liyema closed his eyes for a second before he continued getting decent.

Lakhiwe sat in the parent meeting at Amahle's school and for the first time she was attending without Liyema. The meeting took a little over an hour and Lakhiwe was in her car

before some of the parents could call her for socializing. After the day she had she was in no mood for small talk.

Bukhosi: "The Queen mother" he said with a smile "we made pasta for dinner. I hope it's cool" he shouted when he saw his mother walk through the door.

Lakhiwe: "It's perfect. Thanks guys" she faked a smile. Work was not great so for Liyema to not pitch made the day even worse but she felt as a parent she needed to keep a straight face for her children. When she heard

from the kids that Liyema was not home she wasn't surprised at all because he had been having late night work hours for the past few weeks.

Amahle: "Mommy please come help me with my maths homework because I have been struggling"

Bandile: "We have offered to help but you didn't accept our help" he looked at his sister in disbelief and watched Amahle stick her tongue out.

Amahle: "I understand better when mom does it"

Lakhiwe: "I'll help you now, Nana.

Once you're done with homework you all tidy up because this is my dinning table. Why don't you guys ever make use of the study desks in your rooms?"

Bubele: "We like doing it together because it gives us time to just chill together too" Laksiwe closed her mouth after that answer.

She couldn't fault them for wanting to bond. She kicked her heels aside because it was clear Liyema was not home yet so no use going to their room to look for him. She helped Amahle with her homework and made her way to

the kitchen to inspect the dinner her kids cooked afterwards. It was a lump of macaroni and watery mince sauce but it was the thought that counted. The kids cleared the table so their mother could serve their imperfect food. The taste was not so bad but it wasn't the greatest meal Lakiwe had. Everything about that day seemed to be off. The door flung open and Liyema walked in avoiding eye contact with Lakiwe because he remembered when it was already too late that

he had to meet her at the school. His only mission was to go shower to get any trace of Elaine off him but his kids didn't allow it.

Liyema: "I'm sorry I missed the parent meeting" he looked at his wife and then Amahle "Things were so hectic that it completely slipped my mind" he said casually.

Lakhiwe: "But I reminded you about it this morning, Liyema and you said you would attend" she said softly.

Liyema: "Next time remind me an hour before then" he snapped and even the kids who sat at a

distance could hear him. They all looked down except for Bukhosi. He looked at his mother to check her facial expression which was neutral. Lakhwe nodded a few times before looking over to where the kid's sat making Bukhosi look away too. She told them that she was going to go take a shower but she first stood at an isolated area watching Liyema engage with the kids. He was his usual playful self around him but when he was with her she couldn't help but feel he became angry. She remembered a

time when he'd come home and she'd feel him tickle her before holding her from behind. She remembered the smiles on their children's faces when they watched daddy show love to mommy but that all seemed to be nothing but memories. She walked to their room and took the much needed shower. Part of her wishing that Liyema would join her as he used to but she knew it wouldn't happen. Her nightdress hung behind the bathroom door because going out naked to a room she shared with him was not

what she liked doing anymore. She got dressed and made her way to the bedroom once again. There was no love in it anymore. It was just a place where she felt she's sleeping next to a stranger. When she wanted to cuddle he'd complain about the heat so she stopped trying to. They had sex but it was awkward and cold well at least to get it was.

Lakhiwe: "Where were you tonight?" she asked when Liyema finally decided to join her in their room. He was hoping to find her asleep already. There was no way

she could miss the sweet and overpowering scent of perfume on him but she knew better than to just assume he was with another woman. There was a lot of hugging between Liyema and his employees when they gain another client so she thought the perfume was from one of those moments.

Liyema: "At the office, Lakhiwe" he said walking past her to the bathroom but she followed behind.

Lakhiwe: "So you couldn't pick up the phone to let me know,

Liyema? I looked like a fool

waiting for you to join me. I kept telling the other parents you'd make it but you didn't bother to even send a text"

Lakhiwe: "My battery died and if they had anything important to announce you'd have told me about it the second I stepped foot in the door so I'm sure they spoke about the uniform issue" he said hoping to brush her off "I don't know what the fuss is about because Amahle is going to high school next year" he added.

Lakhiwe: "What was so important at the office that you had to

miss a meeting you promised to attend?"

Liyema: "Please let's drop this" he pleaded "I am sorry Lakhiwe" he turned to face her. They both felt they were drifting apart but Lakhiwe told herself that it was normal for a couple with kids and other responsibilities who had been married for so long or at least that's what the magazines read. Many saying that couples needed to work on the spark to keep the marriage alive.

Lakhiwe: "Apology accepted"
there was something frustrating

about someone apologizing when you intended to give them a piece of your mind that made you numb but Lakhiwe was in no mood to fight "I've decided to take Hlubi up on the job offer" she said with a nervous smile.

Liyema: "If you feel it's best" he said coldly which was not the reaction Lakhiwe expected.

Usually Liyema would give her the pros and cons of such a huge change.

Lakhiwe: "Yeah" there was suddenly nothing else to say as the uncomfortable silence lingered

between them "I thought we could perhaps go out tomorrow night. Just the two of us, we haven't done that in weeks" she suggested to try and bring back the spark that had clearly faded. Liyema: "Okay" he said softly. He hated doing that to her but he wanted to get away as soon as possible in case Elaine left her scent on him. Lakhiwe hated awkward silence so Liyema knew that was the fastest way he could get away from her.

Lakhiwe: "Let me leave you to shower then" her words sounding

like music to Liyema's ears but he knew her well so the faint tone of sadness in her voice made him realize that he was being a jerk. Liyema: "Why did you suddenly decide to take Hlubi up on her offer?" he said hoping to make her feel better. Lakhiwe smiled at the sudden interest that he showed.

Lakhiwe: "There is this lady who recently started as my junior but they gave her the promotion instead of me who has been there for years" Liyema's mind wandered off while she was

speaking and he wondered if he'd always been so bored when with her. Lakiwe explained how a junior got promoted to a post that she had more potential and qualifications for. Office gossip had it that Katie Sanders got the promotion because she was married to the nephew of the boss. When Lakiwe realized she'd never grow in her current job she resigned and started working off her month's notice. "So do you think I was being petty?" she looked at Liyema who wore a blank stare. "Nevermind, Liyema

go shower" she said when she noticed that he was not listening. Liyema: "Sometimes it's not about qualification or experience but about attitude, Lala" he said trying to give a satisfying answer.

Lakhiwe: "I've just told you how bad my day was because some junior got promoted due to nepotism yet you come tell me that?" she raised her voice "Wow, Liyema" she took the extra pillows off the bed.

Liyema: "Well Hlubi wants to do the same with you so why are you

shocked that another man hires his family?" he became frustrated.

Lakhiwe: "Hlubi wants me based on merit not family favours. If you weren't so absent from us you'd know that I've been approach by Elephant Attorneys and another company" she put the pillows aside "They announced a daddy daughter dance at the meeting. Should I dress in a suit and pretend to be you or will you be able to make it?" she asked sarcastically.

Liyema: "I missed one meeting,

Lakhiwe" he shouted "Why are you making such a fuss when you could just brief me on what was discussed?" Lakhiwe chose to keep quiet "I'm sorry" he was not sure if he meant it or if he just said it to put an end to the argument that seemed to be brewing.

Lakhiwe: "Please borrow me your laptop because mine is slow lately. I want to finish up as much work as possible since I'm serving my month's notice" She wanted him to get excited with her for the change in her career as the old Liyema would but he just didn't

seem to care.

Liyema: "You know the password, Lala" he said before disappearing into the bathroom. Liyema had his forehead against the door as soon as he closed it feeling like the scum of the world. Lakhiwe and Liyema don't just touch each other's stuff especially things such as laptops since they usually have confidential work documents so she had to asked permission before use for those reasons as he did too. His cool reaction to her news dampened her mood somewhat but she thought it

might be the work stress he mentioned a few days ago. She connected her USB drive to the PC and finished the rest of the work she couldn't get to earlier on before reading her emails. She picked up her phone to dial Hlubi's number. After a few family discussions and inside jokes Lakhiwe told her sister in law about the decision to resign and the reason why.

Hlubi: "I'm so glad that you noticed that you were wasted there. You should have held a senior position long ago. Honestl

we want you based on your professional merit not because of the surname you hold. Plus I'd rest better knowing you are in charge of our finances rather than the last guy who tried to fraud us. I'm so excited about this. I'll have my secretary call you to set up a meeting with the rest of the team to discuss a way forward"

Lakhiwe: "I'll wait to hear from your office then"

Hlubi: "You okay? You sound off"

Lakhiwe: "It's the fear of changing companies"

Hlubi: "Nonsense, at Elephant Attorneys we are a big family and you'll see for yourself. Kiss the kids for me. Nandi is not feeling well so I can't talk long"

Lakhiwe: "Love you and kiss her goodnight for me and say hi to Sbali"

Hlubi: "Will do and love you" they hung up. Lakhiwe smiled while looking at the screen. Hlubi was more than a sister in law. She was also a best friend. Lakhiwe was about to switch the laptop off when a text came through iMessage which meant he could

send and receive texts on his laptop. She usually had no need to go through his messages but for some reason her curiosity got the better of her. She was about to click on the text when she heard a sound come from the bathroom making her pause to check if the door would open but that didn't happen. "Hey babe I'm sorry about earlier on. We can go away on the weekend you'll be a free man it's cool. I am lying naked and wish you were here xoxo" read the text that made Lakshmi feel like her entire life

was crumbling around her. She thought they'd be more messages but Liyema always made sure to delete after reading. Elaine broke a rule, the rule of never texting him when he's home so Liyema didn't have to fear letting Lakhiwe use his laptop. Tears flew down without her control. Each time she wiped one another would flow right after. She couldn't explain the heartache though she'd had a few in her lifetime but to find her husband was cheating was worse. She didn't bother reading the name of

the person who sent the text but when she did she knew it was the Elaine who worked for Liyema and that made her feel like an even bigger fool.

Liyema: "I was thinking we could go bowling. We haven't done that in a while" he suggested as soon as he appeared from the bathroom to make up for being rude earlier on. He noticed her red eyes as he stepped closer and he got worried "Is your grandmother okay?" Lakhiwe's grandmother had been in and out of hospital for the past three months so Liyema

thought the worst had happened. He was about to get closer but Lakhiwe slapped his hands away before pushing him away from her while crying. Liyema backed away with a confused expression on his face.

Lakhiwe: "Your girlfriend said she's naked and wished that you were with her so go and be with her" she said in a cold pain filled tone making Liyema's gaze fall on his laptop while breathing loudly.

Liyema: "Baby" he said calmly to not add fuel to the fire.

Lakhiwe: "Are you cheating,

Ndlovu?" she asked between sobbing "Don't you dare lie to me" she added while pointing at him. Liyema: "Lakhiwe" he said softly. Liyema: "Don't try to make a fool out of me" she shouted before throwing his laptop across the room out of anger. Shocked at the sudden violent nature Liyema just stood and watched his wife fall back on their bed crying. He clenched his jaw a few times while blinking. A part of him angry because should that laptop be broken he'd lose work he didn't have back up to but he was not

about to show just how upset he was. He felt he had no right to dictate to her how she should react to finding out that he was cheating.

Liyema: "You need time to calm down so I'm going to give you that"

Lakhiwe: "How long?" she asked in a whisper after a while.

Liyema: "Lala" he looked at her. Suddenly no other words but her name escaped his mouth hoping she'd calm down.

Lakhiwe: "I asked how long, Liyema?" Liyema took a deep

breath

Liyema: "A couple of months" his words made Lakhiwe's heart skip a beat. She felt like her chest was set on fire. He didn't feel the need to deny it.

Lakhiwe: "Do you love her?" she dreaded the answer to that question but she wanted to know what it was that drove him to Elaine.

Liyema: "This was a stupid mistake I made when you and I had that huge argument" he tried justifying the cheating. In a way it was true because when he

finally gave into Elaine's advances it was during a low moment in his marriage. He needed a shoulder to cry on and Elaine was there but it went on long after he made peace with Lakhiwe.

Lakhiwe: "A mistake is made once" she raised her voice "Once, Liyema" she held up one finger as her pain turned into rage "You kept on doing it so don't you dare make a fool of me by thinking I'll believe the mistake crap"

Liyema: "You are going to wake up the kids. There is absolutely no reason why we can't talk like

civilized adults"

Lakhiwe: "I don't want to be civilized!" she shouted "would you have done this had you thought that you were still HIV positive?"

Liyema: "That's a low blow and you know it"

Lakhiwe: "You know you wouldn't because you know that your whore wouldn't have wanted you had she thought you were HIV positive" Lakhiwe hated bringing up the past especially one that wasn't pleasant but she knew Elaine wouldn't have given Liyema a glance had she met him when

he thought he was positive "Go and warm up her damn bed. She's naked already and so are you so go and continue doing what you have been doing behind my back for who knows how long" Liyema didn't move a muscle but instead just looked at her "Go!" she said while pushing him out of the door.

Liyema: "I'm sorry" he said softly. To avoid a fight he voluntarily walked out of the room and down the stairs as quietly as possible. "At least give me my clothes and wallet" he looked up at her but Lakhiwe blocked the way to the

bedroom.

Lakhiwe: "Please go before I do something I'll regret" she looked at him through blurry eyes. She didn't know what to make of the situation all she knew was that she didn't want to be anywhere where he was. Liyema fixed the towel wrapped around his waist and took his phone before walking to the front door. Lakhiwe kept a strong persona until she heard the front door open and close. Her knees failed her so she crumbled to the stairs holding on to the wooden handle for support. She'd

been cheated on by Bonga over and over again so she vowed to not let herself be disrespected like that again by staying in such a relationship but she never imagined that her "good" husband would be the one who did the exact same to her. The same man who promised he was different. The thought that he might be going to Elaine's hurt her even more. She heard footsteps down the passage where the kid's rooms were so she placed her hand over her mouth to block any sobbing sounds from coming from

it. Her chest burning and her tears flowing down over her hand she placed her other hand over her mouth as she couldn't silence the sobbing. She walked down the rest of the stairs to lock the front door before heading upstairs to find Bukhosi on his way to the bathroom. She was able to make her way to her bedroom without alerting him of her presence because she was not in the mood to answer their questions.

Lungile was shocked to find his older brother standing in his front

door without any clothes.

Liyema: "Please pay the cab" he pointed to the car outside. Lungile hurried to get his wallet and paid the driver quickly so he'd know the reason for Liyema's late night visit in nothing but a towel.

Lungs: "The fuck?" he looked at Liyema from head to toe.

Liyema: "I'm not in the mood to talk about it. Can I please spend the night?" he looked at his brother.

Lungs: "Yes but you first have to tell me why" Liyema rubbed his face before looking at his young

brother again.

Liyema: "I've been having an affair and Lakhawe found out about it" even a blind man could not miss the shocked expression on Lungile face.

Lungs: "Since when do you cheat? Men like you don't cheat" he looked at his brother who kept silent "This is why I used to tell you to have your hoe phase back when you were unmarried and without kids, now you want to do it when you are married with kids which will end up hurting them" he looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "Should I leave?"

Lungs: "Where the hell will you get money for accommodation when you didn't have any for a damn cab? Do you want to be with this woman?" Liyema sat down and brushed his head like a confused man.

Liyema: "I think I do" he confessed for the very first time since the affair "I feel bad for hurting Lakhiwe but a part of me is glad she knows" he added.

Lungs: "Shit, Liyema" he sat down too "Don't you know that you cheat with your body and not

heart? So what now?" Liyema shrugged "Is the other woman even worth it?" he asked the same question their mother asked.

Liyema: "I don't know but what I do know is that I don't want to stop seeing her. I feel like shit for it but it's how it is"

Lungs: "So you are divorcing your wife to be with your mistress?" he put his hand over his mouth out of shock.

Liyema: "I didn't say that I want to divorce my wife"

Lungs: "You want to be with the

mistress so unless you convince Laksiwe to agree bless your choice to have another wife you can't have them both"

Liyema: "Things have not been the same and then Elaine came and she just made me feel...alive I guess. Laksiwe and I have been stuck in a rut"

Lungs: "So you're after the excitement of the new woman? Is the grass greener on the other side?"

Liyema: "I need to be alone. I can already feel you taking Laksiwe's side. Laksiwe is now like my sister

because you guys go on as though
Mma gave birth to us both and
it's too much"

Lungs: "Your words or the side
chick's? It never used to bother
you that we love her too much"

Liyema didn't answer so Lungile
dropped the topic to show his
brother to the spare room. Alu,
Lungile's wife had heard the
conversation and felt her heart
break for Lakhawe. She herself
had to deal with cheating while
dating Lungile but Lungi stopped
when she promised to leave him.
To hear that Liyema might

actually love Elaine made her heart bleed for her sister in law. A part of her wanting to tell Lungi to tell Liyema he was not welcome but she couldn't expect her husband to do that so she went to bed to wait for Lungile. Lungi and Liyema were almost the same size so Lungi borrowed his brother pijamas. Elaine drew him like a magnet but he felt a responsibility towards Lakhiwe because she was the mother of his kids. 

S2-INSERT 4

Lakhiwe was woken up by the loud sound of her alarm. Her headache became even worse so she quickly silenced it. She cried herself to sleep last night and the discomfort in her entire body indicated that she fell asleep only recently. She wished that she could stay in bed but if she cooped herself up in her room she'd have five teenagers miss school because of it. Suddenly she regretted not agreeing with Liyema to make Aunt V a stay in helper. She sat up with a head as

heavy as though her brain was replaced with a giant rock.

Liyema's empty side and the smashed laptop on the other side of the room serving as a reminder of last night. She had 30min to get up and make herself seem as normal as possible to her children because she was not ready to tell them that their marriage was sinking.

Lakhiwe: "You look like hell, La... Ntombikayise" she laughed at her reflection in the mirror but soon frowned again making her look crazy. Lakhiwe was a name that

she received after she got married to Liyema but since she wanted nothing to do with Liyema in that moment she decided to call herself by the name given to her by her parents. After brushing her teeth she washed her face and put on foundation to hide the dark marks underneath her eyes. The make up hid the circle but it couldn't hide the red eyes. Her 30 minutes to look like herself for the two hours she'd spend helping her kids get ready was over so she went to the boys room to wake up the seventeen year olds

before going to wake the thirteen year old rose amongst thorns.

Amahle was the one who gave most problems when it came to waking up. Usually Liyema would pick her up from the bed and put her down by the bathroom door giving her no choice but to go shower but he was not there so Lakiwe had to pull at the blankets until she stood up sulking all the way to the bathroom. Her aim was to avoid as much eye contact as possible but since the house was chaotic during the get ready rush she didn't have to put

in much effort.

Bukhosi: "Queen mother" he said softly behind his mother. Of them all he was the most observant so Laksiwe pretended to be too busy to look at him.

Laksiwe: "You had better be ready, Khosi" she said while dusting a drawer with her fingers.

Bukhosi: "You know I'm always the first to be ready. Are you okay?" he stood closer. As observant as he was compared to his siblings he was also the most sensitive but he hid it well behind

that tough guy exterior.

Lakhiwe: "I'm having one of those migraines again" she brushed him off. She was prone to migraines so it was the perfect excuse and it was not a lie because her head was pounding.

Bukhosi: "Call in sick. You know you can't focus on much when you have one. Where are your pills?"

Lakhiwe: "I can't take one on an empty stomach, boy"

Bukhosi: "I'll go grab you an apple"

Lakhiwe: "Bukhosi" Bukhosi stopped walking just as he was

about to walk down the stairs
"Please get ready for school,
Mntanam please because you know
they lock the gate for late
comers. I'll eat and drink the pill
later" Bukhosi walked back up
nodding.

Bandile: "Mom, where dad?" he
said while wiping his head with a
towel "My teacher suggested
that I study agricultural science
after matric so I want dad to
give me a spot in the garden for
planting veggies. Wanna see if my
heart is in it" he added. Lakiwe
felt her heart grow heavier.

Bubele: "The landless farmer" he joked and laughed.

Amahle: "Mommy did daddy oversleep because I don't get the usual smell of his Thursday flapjacks?" she leaned over the stairs to look down. Something fell and broke in the main bedroom. Lakhwe clenched her eyes shut wishing she didn't have to deal with it all, not that morning.

Banele: "Sorry, Ma" he shouted from the bathroom "I broke something" he confessed.

Bukhosi: "Doing what, Anele?" he went to inspect and the others

followed.

Amahle: "Daddy, Banele broke that green perfume of yours" she shouted thinking her father was in the house and suddenly Lakhiwe got the overpowering scent of Liyema's cologne. Usually she loved it but that morning it made her sick. She was not sure if it was because too much of it hit her nose or if the thought of its owner was what made her sick.

Bubele: "Why do you like snitching, Amahle?" he sounded frustrated.

Lakhiwe: "Leave it!" she shouted
"All of you get back to getting

ready for school please" she asked in a stern voice.

Bukhosi: "This is what happens when you try to use things that aren't yours. You had no business using the parents bathroom nxa" he said to his brother as they walked to their room. Lakiwe went downstairs promising herself that she'd clean up the mess later on. Usually whoever made a mess had to clean up but they were already late for school. Lakiwe dialed her manager's number to call in sick. She couldn't imagine facing her colleagues

when she could barely wait for her kids to leave for school. Soon they were all down packing school bags they should have done last night.

Amahle: "So no pancakes today?" she said in a sad voice. Lakiwe realized that being without Liyema at home would come with great readjustment. There were certain things he did with the kids that she had no business in as it was their bonding moment. Bandile: "Once my veggie garden is good we'll eat from it" he said proudly "So isn't dad joining us?"

he looked up the stairs.

Lakhiwe: "He left early today" she lied.

Amahle: "But he never leaves without making pancakes on a Thursday" she looked at her mother.

Bubele: "Stop whining" he looked at Amahle "Mom can you please make us omelette?"

Amahle: "I don't eat eggs"

Banele: "I'm not going to get full on omelette" he shook his head.

Bukhosi: "We all eat cereal and we all usually have our fill so that's what we'll have. Mom isn't feeling

well" suddenly the others toned it down and looked at Lakhiwe concerned.

Lakhiwe: "Just a headache. So please have the cereal today" she looked at Amahle. She watched her daughter go take the milk out of the fridge and they served themselves breakfast. The school transport was soon there and Lakhiwe breathed a sigh of relief. After saying goodbye they all vacated the house. Lakhiwe put her hands on the kitchen counter and took a deep breath. An unexpected hug from the side

startled her. She looked to her right and found Bukhosi smiling. For a moment Lakhiwe saw Liyema in their son due to the strong resemblance.

Bukhosi: "Go away headache" he kissed the side of Lakhiwe's forehead. As joyless as she felt she couldn't help but smile. She watched him rush out once again leaving her feeling a tad better. Aunt V would be coming in soon so Lakhiwe went back to her room where she stayed for almost the entire morning. She could hear aunt V moving about in the house.

Since she wanted no one in their room she had to get up to clean the nauseating cologne that her son spilt. His scent lingered even long after she cleaned the floor with disinfectant making Lakhiwe cry again. Soon she pulled out bags and roughly packed Liyema's clothes so she'd throw it out.

Some out of range, she even torn but packed in the bags non the less until his side of the closet was completely empty. She got inside the empty closet and sat down to weep again.

Elaine stood behind Liyema acting

remorseful after the text that left Liyema out in the streets. In her mind she convinced herself that if Lakhiwe kicked him out of her bed she sent him straight to hers.

Liyema: "What part of don't contact me when I'm home didn't you get, Elaine?" he shouted.

Elaine: "What were the odds that she'd have your laptop on the day that I decided to bend a rule, baby?" she said in a low tone.

Liyema: "I can't believe that I have hurt her so much" he felt his chest tighten "This is the

mother of my children" he added.
Elaine: "And that's all that she is"
she tried to convince him

"Instead of going home to beg
her to take you back you started
here. That alone tells you that
you want me" she added in a
soothing voice.

Liyema: "I wanted to tell you how
stupid you were by sending that
text" he looked at her. Elaine
decided not to shoot back because
she wanted to be the opposite of
everything he complained about in
Lakhiwe. She wanted to be his
calm because she heard that a

man goes where there is peace
and since Liyema felt no peace at
home she was going to give it to
him.

Elaine: "It was stupid of me and
to make up for it I will say I
sent it to the wrong number"

Liyema: "What's the use when I
confessed?"

Elaine: "And that to me says that
you wanted her to know because
here is where you want to be. A
man who doesn't want to leave
his wife denies everything and
makes sure that the side chick
also lies with him" she'd know

because that's what happened with her previous boyfriend. He chose the wife over her "Go take your stuff and live here. We can get a bigger place once the divorce is finalized" Liyema's heart beat faster at the mention of a divorce. He thought that his current marriage was his last but it seemed he was wrong. He wanted to be happy again and he had that with Elaine so she had a good point. When he should be begging Lakhawe he went to Elaine to tell her something he could have over the phone. Elaine

held his strong jaw line in her hands so he'd look at her "Your kids are old enough to know that life happens so don't stay for their sake. You'll still see them. You love me and you know it. This goes beyond sex" she added.

Liyema: "I have to go speak to Lakhiwe. I owe her that much. I don't think I'll be at the office today" he went to the door.

Elaine: "Do you need me to make you forget" Liyema knew she was talking about sex and that was the last thing that he wanted to do. He shook his head before

leaving her apartment. Elaine wanted Lakiwe to find out so she was not sorry that the affair came out because she felt it would make being with Liyema easier.

The drive home was slow because Liyema was not sure what he'd find at home. He wouldn't be surprised if he found the entire Elephant family waiting to give them a piece of their minds. They adored Lakiwe and made no secret of it. He knew the kids would be at school already and he was happy to see aunt V leaving

the house too. When the doorbell rang after a few rings Lakhiwe opened looking like a train had hit her. She didn't say anything but instead proceeded to put his bags outside one by one.

Liyema: "Lakhiwe" he held her wrist but she yanked it out of his grip "Don't do this. I'm sure we don't need to be so childish about it" he looked at her.

Lakhiwe: "You don't get to pile up filth and then come here to dictate to me on how I should clean it up" she pointed at him "I packed everything so you should

find all your things there. What's not there is at your side chick's place most probably" she threw another bag out. Liyema lifted her inside kicking and closed the door behind them "Will you beat the pain out of me?" she asked and Liyema felt his heart sink. He was a lot of things but a abuser was sure not.

Liyema: "Please let us talk about this properly. I'm not here to fight, Lakhiwe" he pleaded "I know that I have hurt you and I'm sorry but things just got out of control. You got to admit that

we rushed into this" he pointed at the two of them. Lakhiwe laughed out in disbelief.

Lakhiwe: "I was a witness to a wedding when you...you, Liyema decided to turn me into a bride right there and then. You rushed us into this and because I love you I agreed to it. You rushed us" she shouted "Don't ask me to welcome you back again when I only found out about this yesterday" she looked at him.

Liyema: "I'm not here for that"
Lakhiwe felt her heart break into a little more extra pieces.

Lakhiwe: "Is that your way of telling me that you've chosen her over me?"

Liyema: "I'm staying at Lungile's not with her"

Lakhiwe: "You know what I mean" she charged forward trying to push him but he stood firm to let her get her rage out until he felt her get tired of trying to push him "You're not even willing to fight for our marriage?" she cried.

Liyema: "Sometimes holding on hurts more. It'll hurt you and the kids even more. Our marriage is

not the same anymore, Lakhiwe. We no longer get each other. Our sex life is pretty much dead and I feel you try too much to make it seem alive making it feel like a chore. You've put everything else above and let yourself go in the process. You stopped going to gym even" he blurted out.

Lakhiwe: "Okay" was all she could say as she listened to him blame her for having an affair.

Liyema: "If I stay then you and I will become worse because you'll never trust me after this. I chose to go about the wrong way

to make you realize that our marriage is not the same and I'm truly sorry for that"

Lakhiwe: "At least tell me that you still have a bit of respect for me to protect me against deceased, Liyema" she used the table to lean back on "The sex might not have been thrilling to you but we had it so please tell me you used a condom" she pleaded sadly.

Liyema: "I do" he watched Lakhiwe look a bit relieved as she nodded over and over again. He used protection with Elaine. He

was not going to risk the HIV scare again.

Lakhiwe: "Since you choose her it's only right that you tell the kids yourself"

Liyema: "Don't tell them about Elaine yet. Let's just say that we have decided to separate. Please don't poison my kids against me, Lakhiwe"

Lakhiwe: "Wow" she couldn't believe that he thought she'd use the children to fight her battle "Wow" she repeated before proceeding to take his last bags outside. There was nothing left

to say because he chose Elaine and she couldn't compete with a woman who had the man's heart. Mahlubandile felt like a queen when Yanda brought her breakfast in bed with a single red rose with it. She inspected the tray and found greens mostly. Hlubi: "Where is the beacon?" she sulked.

Yanda: "Is that your pregnancy cravings speaking or your bad eating habits?" Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "Your baby wants it" Yanda shook his head before sitting behind her to help her with her

food

Yanda: "Which baby exactly?" Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "Thank you for the rabbit breakfast though" she kissed him "Morning by the way" she smiled.

There were years Hlubi dreamt about the kind of love her husband gave her. She never thought a man would love her so much knowing her past yet Yanda did it like it was a part of breathing.

Yanda: "I still have to pinch myself after the pregnancy news. Please put your appointments in

my diary, Wakwam because I have celebrities coming in for outfits for an event in a few weeks so I want to be free for doctor's visits" Hlubi held his bearded cheek and nodded.

Hlubi: "Did you check on Nandi? If she's not better by tonight I'm taking her to the ER"

Yanda: "I just hope she's not pregnant" Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "She'd have told me so it's not that. If there's something she's unaware of it as well.

Hopefully it's just fatigue from the graduation after party"

Yanda: "Hmmm she better not make me a grandfather when I'm about to be a dad again"

Hlubi: "You do know that her age is the group to have kids right not ours?" they both laughed.

Yanda: "When she's married and is out of my pocket yes" he held her from behind "Finish up so I can help you shower. I'll even endure the steam that will make me feel like I paid satan a visit in hell for you"

Hlubi: "You're so considerate. Willing to burn for me" they laughed. "If I knew you'd bath

me and feed me in bed I'd have gotten pregnant sooner" she joked "Please let's tell everyone about this after my first trimester" she looked at him.

Yanda: "Fine by me as long as I get to know the gender before birth" Yanda gave Hlubi the promised shower after eating. She stood and giggled while he washed every inch of her body. To stay and do more would have been great but Yanda had to rush off to buy material. Hlubi went to make breakfast for Nandi and took it to her room. They still

lived in an apartment but Hlubi was thinking it was time to buy a house instead. She found Nandi looking a tad bit pale for a melanated girl.

Nandi: "I swear my hangover isn't ending, Ma" she sat up to eat her oats.

Hlubi: "Let's go see a doctor" she suggested but Nandi declined "Tata thinks you're pregnant" Nandi's eyes shot open before laughing.

Nandi: "No way yho" she assured her mother "I'm hung over don't worry about it"

Hlubi: "Rather weird that you weren't hung over yesterday though. This started late last night"

Nandi: "Different bodies, different reactions, Mama. I think the job hunting stress is getting to me"

Hlubi: "Need help?" Nandipha shook her head "We unfortunately live in a time where connections speak louder than qualifications, Pooky but okay just take it easy though"

Nandi: "I just need a nap. That is all I get in, Mama thank you" she gave Hlubi the bowl.

Hlubi: "If you're not better later I'm taking you in" she kissed Nandi before she covered her head with the duvet.

Nandi: "I love you" she said beneath the covers.

Hlubi: "I love you too" she left the room. Hlubi's secretary called saying she can't get hold of Lakhiwe and her work said she called in sick. It was when Liyema didn't answer her calls did Hlubi get worried. She left Nandipha with their help and went to the Elephants. After knocking her knuckles off she opened the door.

The house was clean and quiet so she thought no one is home. She called out aunt V's name but no answer came from inside. It's only as she went deeper in the house did she see Lakhiwe on the floor looking at the void.

Hlubi: "I know you love your work but damn you don't have to mourn it this much" she joked but when Lakhiwe looked at her with red swollen eyes she knew it was no time for jokes. Hlubi asked what's going on but Lakhiwe just looked at her with empty eyes. Hlubi inspected the house to check if

there was anything off but everything was good.

"Ntombikayise" she called Laksiwe on her maiden name in a sense of urgency.

Laksiwe: "He is having an affair"
Hlubi sunk down next to her shocked "He's also leaving me for her" Laksiwe's words stung her heart "And yes I'm sure because he told me so" Hlubi closed her mouth because she was about to ask Laksiwe if she was sure.

Hlubi: "Son of a bi....oh wait we have the same mother" usually Laksiwe would have laughed but

there was no joy in her. Even the glimpse of joy she felt after Bukhosi told the headache to go away was taken away by Liyema's visit "Bastard... I'll skin Liyema alive" she promised.

Lakhiwe: "It's my fault too, Hlubi. Instead of keeping my weight in check I bought bigger size clothes instead. I can't remember the last time I wore matching undies. He's always agitated by my presence" she cried again just as she thought no more could come out. Her eyes feeling like hot coal had been put

in them.

Hlubi: "Nonsense! We have kids to look after, we have them to look after, extended family to look after, work to look after and then our own homes too. These men leave 95% of those duties to us yet expect us to parade around in sexy lingerie. If he thinks it'll be better with this woman he is wrong. She'll have kids too and she'll see that she can't be a sex goddess to him all day long" she became angry.

Lakhiwe: "I can't lose myself again, bestie. God I can't lose

myself again especially not for a man not even Liyema. I love him so much. Even after finding out I laid in bed last night urging myself to go tell this woman to leave my man alone and try to make it work with Liyema but after his visit I realized that I've lost him. I can't compete with her... I don't want to" she sobbed "I gave him every inche of me yet I'm not enough" her lips started to shake uncontrollably and Hlubi knew that Lakhawe was trying to keep strong.

Hlubi: "You're enough" she said

knowing Lakhiwe wouldn't believe it in that moment but she would once she's started her healing process "You're so enough" she repeated. Hlubi had to learn to not take on other people's emotions while pregnant to avoid stress but how could she not when her best friend was hurt by her own brother? A part of her wanted to say Liyema was bewitched but she couldn't shy away from the fact that he too was capable of bad things.

Lakhiwe and Liyema served couple goals for many so Hlubi was still in

denial. She hoped Yanda would shake her awake to tell her she's dreaming. That her brother didn't just run off into the sunset with a stranger leaving his home behind. A home that had children who would be crushed by the news. The Elephants loved Lakhiwe so Hlubi knew the family would make divorce difficult for the couple. Lakhiwe wiped her tears to act strong for her sister in law who didn't need the stress. She got up to go take a tub of ice cream for them to eat. Hlubi acted along but she couldn't help

but wonder if Lakiwe would break down after trying too hard to stay strong in front of them. ❤️

S2-INSERT 5

Hlubi sat at home waiting for Nandipha to return home. Had it been up to her she'd have accompanied her daughter to her doctor's visit but Nandi preferred to go alone. Yanda went to a funeral and because he held the belief that a pregnant woman shouldn't go to funerals she had

no choice but to stay in for the Saturday. She had gone to see Liyema but realized when she talked to him that she couldn't tell him what he could and couldn't do with his life. Mr Dudumashe who was Mr Elephant's best friend and partner knocked and let himself in when he found the door open. A weekend visit from him was not unusual because he was a family friend. He discussed a few cases with Hlubi and Hlubi confided in him about why she wouldn't take on much load. He congratulated his younger partner

and told her that he understood.
Mr Dudumashe: "I hear that Lakiwe can't be reached. Do you by any chance know why?"

Hlubi: "She's going through some personal issues at the moment"

Dudumashe: "Then it is time to go with the other candidate. Mr Luvata is willing to start as soon as possible providing that what we offer him is good of course"

Hlubi: "She'll come around please, Tat'Dudumashe. She's just having too much to deal with"

Dudumashe: "I'm sorry, ntombam but this position has been vacant

for too long. I'm saddened to hear that she's dealing with so much that she can't even pick up her phone to schedule a meeting but we are running a business here. We can't focus on cases as we should be doing when we are concerned about our financial department" Hlubi knew that he had a point.

Hlubi: "Please let me go talk to her. She's put in her notice at her current work that's how serious she is about working for us but then Liye...but then unforeseen circumstances arose". Mr

Dudumashe knew Laksiwe well so for that he decided to give her more time but if she was not going to come through, they would go with plan B. Hlubi didn't want another male in the company so she was going to convince Laksiwe to take the job.

It was a Saturday and Liyema's uncle and aunt asked to see him and Laksiwe after hearing about the talk of divorce. Mrs E also went to the meeting and as she sat opposite Liyema she felt like slapping him. She watched as Laksiwe made tea for the family

of a man who spat her out and wondered how much more women had to endure in the name of culture. She wouldn't have been surprised if Lakhiwe told them all to go to hell but she knew her daughter in law was too good and respected elders too much to do so. Mrs E knew how crushed Lakhiwe was and when Lakhiwe left Liyema's tea on the tray after serving everyone else theirs Mrs E knew that to have that meeting was torture for Lakhiwe. Liyema stood to take his cup and pour his own sugar making his

uncle shake his head in disapproval. Laksiwe sat at a distance from them because they were all Liyema's family. With her father having died five years ago from his lung complications and her grandmother being sick it meant she had no representation because her grandfather couldn't leave his wife to fight on her behalf. Laksiwe felt alone but she tried to stay strong. Mrs E stood and walked over to sit next to her daughter on law. Laksiwe blinked the tears away looking at her mother in law who held her hands

in hers. Mrs E had been there before so she was not about to let Lakhiwe go through it alone. Liyema was asked to tell the elders what happened. Mrs E felt Lakhiwe squeeze her hands painfully in some moments and she knew it were moments when Lakhiwe was at war with her own tears.

Tamci: "Do you love this other girl?" the old man asked. Liyema looked at Lakhiwe who was looking down.

Liyema: "Yes, Tamci" he said in an almost shameful whisper. The

pink skirt Laksiwe wore suddenly had dark spots and Mrs E knew her tears won the battle. They could no longer stay hidden. To admit to loving another woman in the presence of his wife felt foreign to Liyema and he hated the feeling that came with it. Ma Nomvula: "We do not do these things of divorce. Those are things for white people not us" she said while looking at Liyema "Then if you love her, take her as a second wife" Laksiwe suddenly grasped for air loudly as one who had just come up for air after

swimming in deep water. She expected another woman to at least speak on her behalf but Liyema's aunt clearly had their son's interest at heart.

Mrs E: "I respect polygamy"
Lakhiwe wanted to take her hands from her mother in law's but Mrs E held them firmly in place "But when Lakhiwe married Liyema, she was not told that she would possibly have to welcome another woman into her home. Had Liyema told her from the beginning that he was a polygamist he'd have given her a

chance to choose if she wants to be a part of that. To just expect her to say yes to that to keep him home is unfair on her. It's unfair of us to make her do something that might make her even more pained just because we want to see our son's bread buttered on both sides. You want to give him the good wife who'll look after him and you want to give him the street walker to keep his pants on fire". This was no war but to hear someone, an elder speak up for her felt warming to Lakhiwe.

Tamci: "So what do you think is best, makoti? He can't leave his home empty without the protection of a man because those boys aren't men and the day they become men will be the day they go out to build homes of their own. You heard that he said that he loved this other woman but he has a responsibility as a man to look after the woman he took from her maiden home to bring her here. Polygamy is the only option"

Ma Nomvula: "I agree with my husband. A man is not made to

eat from the same bowl so we can't expect that of Liyema.

Usually they go out, eat where they eat and return but Liyema says that he not only found food there but a home too so what other solution do we have?

Liyema are you up for having two wives?" That was a question no one ever asked him so he never had a prepared answer.

Tamci: "You have the money to take care of two wives so I say go for it"

Liyema: "What does Lakhiwe say?" Lakhiwe looked up and Mrs

E wiped her tears off "I don't think that Elaine would mind but Lakiwe has to answer" Mrs E laughed softly not because she was amused but because she felt her son was stupid.

Mrs E: "Which hold digger wouldn't agree?" she shook her head "Tell them what you want, Lakiwe" she added.

Lakiwe: "Even if I wanted to get married to a polygamist, it wouldn't be with Liyema because I know that he wouldn't look after his first home as he should because he'll be too focussed on

the second. I don't want to be a first wife, I want to be the only wife. So I don't agree to it" she said softly. Liyema expected it so he was not shocked.

Aunt Nomvula: "So you'd rather be the laughing stock of the community? Being left by a man rather than welcome a second wife and keep your dignity?" she clapped once. In that moment Lakiwe saw that Liyema's family were only good to her because their son still wanted her or at least it's how she felt. Ma Nomvula suddenly spoke so

harshly that Lakhiwe had to look at her to see that it's the same woman that she knew.

Mrs E: "If culture oppresses a woman then it shouldn't be forced nor guilt tripped into her. Clearly Lakhiwe will feel unhappy in a polygamous marriage so let us not force the matter and end up making her feel oppressed. I respect polygamy but your son chose the wrong way to bring this other woman into our lives. I myself want nothing to do with her nor their relationship and he knows it. It is our son that

messed up, not the Photi daughter just remember that before you ask her to break herself to make him comfortable"

Liyema: "See what else bothers me, Tamci. I don't know if Lakhawe is my sister or wife anymore because Mma doesn't have boundaries"

Mrs E: "You hate their wives they have a problem. You love their wives yet they still have problem. What do you want us to do as mother in laws exactly, Liyema?" she looked at her son "Lakhawe's father died, her grandmother is

sick and her grandfather is looking after her sick grandmother. You have people in your corner who want to let you get away with this by spoiling you with another wife. So allow me who was cheated on by your father to be in your wife's corner because it seems I'm the only one who can empathise with her. You hurt her so you don't come to tell her to bless a second marriage when it's been only a week since you left her. I know I raised you guys to be spoiled brats but sympathize with the mother of

your children for godsake. If you can't respect her as a wife at least grant her respect as the mother of your children. Four children who cost her her uterus and another one you convinced her to adopt" she pointed at Liyema "Lakhiwe doesn't want to share a husband, Tamci and your son has made his choice so accept that these two children have come to the end of their journey. I hate this... I hate it so much" she started to shed a tear "But it's life I guess so let us not prolong Lakhiwe's healing by asking too

much of her. Liyema made his choice so let us wish him well so he can be on his way" she rubbed her hands together to indicate that she's washing her hands off the situation.

Liyema: "Is my happiness not important, Mma?" he raised his voice "I apologize to Lakhawe and the family but why is no one hearing me? I did Lakhawe wrong and it'll forever consume me but had I stayed then I'd have made her hate me more. She wasn't happy on this marriage either and I have to do this not for my sake

but for the sake of her happiness too. Tamci I'll continue to look after her and the children. We married in community of property and I have no intention on going against that contract. I'll be the father that I need to be to our kids and I know that once Lakiwe sees that we haven't been happy she'll agree to us co-parenting well. I love you, Khiwe a lot and as much as it doesn't seem like it, I respect you. Being honest about my feelings is part of showing you that respect. You're the mother of my children

and a woman I've been through so much with but we can't stay married based on memories of the past when our present is filled with unhappiness. This is not easy on me. I'm not staying with the other woman but with Lungile because I want to respect you"

Lakhiwe: "Pity you couldn't stay away from her from the beginning. Respect is communicating your unhappiness, Liyema. It's telling me that you no longer want this so we can discuss it and together decide on

a way forward. Respect would have been leaving me and then going to pursue other women. What you did is not respect but the actions of a coward of a man" Ma Nomvula: "If that is how you talk to your husband then I'm not surprised that he chose to leave" she said softly.

Lakhiwe: "And I wish him well wherever he is going, Ma. May what his heart, body and soul seek be where he is going" as hurt as she was she meant it "I'm not saying that I forgive you but I won't put a curse on

your name" she looked at Liyema. Aunt Nomvula: "Let's hope you don't look back and regret letting a husband go just because you couldn't accept that he was not a monogamous person. We wasted our time even coming here. I'm not surprised because how you got married indicated the marriage wouldn't last. Getting married without the blessings of the family"

Tamci: "What a waste of a beautiful family" he shook his head "Lakhiwe, I want you to know that you will always be our

daughter because even if you sign those papers we won't recognize the divorce. You are the mother of our grandchildren and we didn't make a mistake by giving you the name Lakhiwe. You built us, my child not just your house but is as the extended family. The walls you built are firm and that's why no divorce will make us turn our backs on you" he took out a cloth to wipe his tears. Liyema bowed his head to take in the emotional moment. Up until then he hadn't allowed himself to show emotions but he shed a tear or two after

his uncle spoke. He was mourning the loss of his marriage too and he couldn't believe how quickly it was all happening. Suddenly the happiness he was chasing seemed too expensive. Part of him hoped Lakhiwe would change her mind about having a sister wife.

Perhaps that's what he wanted deep down. To have two women with different qualities that fulfilled his soul but he knew Lakhiwe wouldn't. He'd joked about it to Elaine and she admitted to not having a problem with being a second wife so that's

how he knew she wouldn't mind.
Mrs E went to the kitchen where
Lakhiwe was busy drinking water.
She wasn't thirsty but she
needed to get away from the
people in her living room.

Lakhiwe: "Thank you, Ma" she
said softly.

Mrs E: "I'll take those two away
so they won't bother you further.
I know your pain, Khiwe and I
wouldn't wish it on my worst
enemy but I want you to be
strong. If you could come out
victorious from that abuser then
this will be a walk in the park. It

hurts now but it'll get better. You'll someday smile again and your kids will glow with you. I'm glad you didn't put yourself in a situation just to keep him. He's my son and I love him but the day he brought you to us he gave me a daughter and I love you also. So please go to Elephant Attorneys and sign that contract. You deserve it and many other good thing that you deserve will come. I know you'll be telling the kids today so when you need me call me please"

Lakhiwe: "Thanks, Ma" they

hugged. Mrs E took the uncle and aunt out of Lakhiwe's hair. She wanted to throw Liyema out but they couldn't stall at letting the children know. They already knew something is wrong because their dad hadn't slept home for over a week.

Lakhiwe: "I would have tried harder you know" he looked at Lakhiwe "At being a man who has two wives. I'd have divided my time evenly" he added.

Lakhiwe: "You'd have been in my bed wishing you were at the other wife's. I heard you, Liyema.

I'm fat and you hate sleeping with me"

Liyema: "I didn't say you're fat. I just meant you let yourself go a bit. This isn't even about the sex because you know I don't like a skinny woman yet I'm with Elaine"

Lakhiwe: "Please shut up. Do you think I care about that? I'm worried about how my kids will react to this"

Liyema: "Me too but it'll pass and soon I believe we'll be good at co parenting" he said hopefully. The children walked in from their mall

outing sponsored by Mrs E after a long while. The look of excitement of seeing their parents home together was indescribable.

Liyema caught up on a few things and Bandile asked about his piece of land but soon it was time to sit down to talk. Lakhawe stood up and leaned against a wall having a clear view of them all. She wanted to exit and come after the bomb blast but she was one of the adults so she had to act it too.

Liyema: "You guys know that Mom and I love you a lot right?" he

looked at all of them. Bukhosi sat backward expecting bad news "We also love each other very much" Lakhawe folded her arms and looked down. She wasn't certain that he loved her but she still loved him very much "Mom and I have been having more sad moments than good and that's not good for us especially not for you"

Banele: "You're getting divorced" he blurted out "I've seen such in movies so I know... I know" he said the second I know in a whisper.

Amahle: "Don't say that, Banele"
she became upset.

Liyema: "Your brother is right" all
the children bowed their heads
except for Amahle and Bukhosi.

Amahle looked at her mother
with pleading eyes and Bukhosi at
his dad with a mind filled with
questions.

Bandile: "But why?" he let out a
few sniffs clearly hiding tears by
keeping his head bowed. Liyema
looked at Lakhawe but she still
stood with folded arms looking
down.

Liyema: "You'll understand when

you are older that people grow apart. Mom and I are one of them but we will still continue to raise you kids as best as possible"

Bubele: "The best way to raise us is together not apart, Dad" he clenched his fist.

Amahle: "Does that mean that I have to go away now that you will not be together? I'm adopted so who will I go with?" Lakhawe's heart tore to pieces. They were advised to be open to Amahle about her adoption so she knew her story.

Liyema: "You're our child so you

won't be taken away by anyone. You'll stay here with mom like your brothers but I'll see you all the time" Bubule let out a sarcastic laugh.

Bubele: "Yeah right... you'll see us once a month. I have also seen the movies" he blinked the tears away.

Liyema: "You'll see me often than that. I'll come visit and take you out as I usually do"

Amahle: "Daddy please don't go" she pleaded with shiny eyes "I don't like not having you home" she started to cry. Both parents

knew that it wouldn't be easy but they could never prepare themselves for the emotions in the room.

Liyema: "Once I have a home, you'll come visit. I know that it hurts now but someday you'll understand" The talk lasted over an hour because the children, especially Amahle didn't want to accept the news.

Amahle: "So what about my father daughter dance?" she sobbed. Liyema moved to sit next to her before comforting her.

Liyema: "I will be there. I know

the date and all other details of it. I won't miss my only daughter's primary school exit dance" he kissed her forehead though she hid her face in her hands.

Banele: "Why such a drastic move though? You can go see someone. The Pastor or someone" he looked at both his parents "What is so bad that made you decide to just split?" Liyema looked at Lakhiwe who still stood with her gaze on the floor.

Liyema: "Like I've said we just grew apart. I'm sure you aren't

friends with some of your primary school friends because you grew apart and realized you no longer have anything in common. That is what happened with me and your mom" Bukhosi let out a sarcastic laugh before shaking his head like one who knew what was going on. The kids asked many questions, some that Liyema could answer but some he couldn't. Lakhawe felt like a bad mother for not saying anything but she didn't have the answers because it was not her that wanted to leave. Its though the kids kept the

conversation going to stop him from leaving again "I'm living with Tamci Lungile so you guys can come visit anytime but call first to check if I'm home" he smiled but everyone around him were too sad to see that as a little light in the darkness.

Lakhiwe didn't tell the kids about Elaine not because she was protecting Liyema but because she was trying to save the kids the heartbreak of hearing that that he chose another woman. Time for Liyema to leave came but Amahle held onto him.

Bubele: "So you're really leaving, man?" he sobbed "You're just leaving us?" he added.

Liyema: "I'm not leaving you. I'll always be here just not as Mom's husband but I'll always be your father" Banele ran upstairs quickly to avoid seeing his father walk out because he knew that it would forever be engraved in his mind. Bandile followed but he went out of the front door.

Lakhiwe: "Bandile!" she shouted but the door shut behind him.

Liyema clenched his eyes shut as the guilt flew through him. He

knew that they would all heal someday but he wished that he had the means to fast forward to that day.

Liyema: "I'll go after him and bring him back" he looked at Lakhawe who stood by the door looking out. Bubele peeled Amahle from their father and held her in his arms and just like that they watched Liyema walk out. A sight they would never forget.

Amahle: "Mom why are you just standing there? Do something please" she pleaded.

Bukhosi: "Hey...hey which parent

walked out and which one stayed?" he shouted at Amahle and watched her run to her room. He'd been quiet all along because he felt nothing he said, no amount of begging would stop what was happening.

Lakhiwe: "Amahle!" she called out .
Bubele: "I'll go check on her" he made his way up to his sister's bedroom. Loud music came from their bedroom and it was Banele's way of telling everyone that he didn't want to talk. Lakhiwe held her hands up at Bukhosi in surrender to show him that she

had no idea on how to fix the mess. Bukhosi himself felt like running but when he looked at his mother he couldn't because he didn't want to leave her alone. He slowly walked towards her and hugged her. Lakiwe knew that she was the one who'll have to deal with the aftermath of the divorce more than Liyema and for that reason she decided to put her feelings aside to focus on her children's feelings.

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Mrs E went to pay Elaine a visit after finding out where she lived.

The look of shock on Elaine's face was evident but she tried to hide it. Elaine looked behind Mrs E.

Mrs E: "She's not the type" she raised a brow.

Elaine: "What are you talking about?"

Mrs E: "You are looking behind me to check if my daughter in law isn't behind me holding a gun to shoot you dead...well she's not the type. Why do you think she didn't come to tell you to stay away from her man as cheated women typically do? Oh that one is complete all on her own. Liyema

just added to what was already there but he didn't complete her. She's every powerful women, they are all in her. You dented her but trust me women like us don't break" she let herself in "And judging by your expectation I take it it's not a first time you've been with a married man. A woman or two have already come to threaten you to stay away from their men hence you think Lakhiwe will do the same" she looked at the apartment in disgust.

Elaine: "So are you here on her

behalf? Should I expect you to pull out a gun?" she stood next to the emergency button.

Mrs E: "Oh please you wouldn't even see me coming so rest assured that I'm not here to kill you" she said with a smirk "Should I come for you you'll have no time to react" she smiled.

Elaine: "Then why are you here?" If you kill me he'll go to another woman. Will you kill us all?" Mrs E laughed.

Mrs E: "Why are you shaking?" she looked at Elaine's hands "I won't hurt you. I'm like a poisonous

spider but I'm not here to bite"
she smiled.

Elaine: "I'm not going to take
money from you to stay away
from him. Believe it or not I
actually love your son" she stood
closer "Please Mrs Elephant
accept that he's with me for his
sake" she pleaded.

Mrs E: "That's why I'm here"
Elaine smiled "To tell you that I
will make life hell for you in the
family should he marry you. I
have a daughter in law so you are
not and will never be recognized"

Elaine: "Okay you don't like me but

at least respect that I'm the one he chose. You are quick to defend your daughter in law but you're blind to her part in this. She is a miserable woman so he was bound to be unhappy. Had he not come to me it would have been another woman. Luckily it's me so accept that you are looking at the next Mrs Liyema Elephant" Mrs E laughed.

Mrs E: "You think he'll always be as excited to be with you in five years time?. Well darling he won't because his father never was with. Cheating is in the DNA of

Elephant men. Ask any woman who has been with one"

Elaine: "Is it my fault that you two can't keep men happy? Maybe that's why you like her so much you're both miserable old cows who drive men aw..." a hard slap landed on her face before she could finish. Liyema froze by the door not believing what he had just witnessed.

Liyema: "Leave, Mma" he ordered when the shock subsided "Leave now before I call the cops. You have no right to come here and slap my girlfriend" he shouted

making Mrs E laugh before clapping her hands.

Mrs E: "So you chose to run here instead of comfort your children after hearing the devastating news? May non of my grandsons be so stupid" she looked up as though it were a prayer "Your father did the exact same thing, you know. He was a good husband until one day he just changed and I hope that it's not a family curse because I'd hate to see my grandsons do the same someday. Let me go before I do more than just slapping" she looked at Elaine

"Oh your..." she looked at Elaine
"Whatever this is to you" her look
turned to disgust "She thought
Lakhiwe would barge in here
fighting but I told her she's got
way to much class for that. The
same class that polished you at
business events. The same class
that gave you dignity during
family gatherings. So I hope you
can milk some class out of this"
she looked at Elaine again.

Liyema: "Please leave, Mma" he
asked nicely.

Elaine: "She can have all the class
that she wants but he still chose

me" she said confidently.

Liyema: "Don't talk to my mother like that" he reprimanded her.

Mrs E: "All the best to you two.

May you get what you deserve"

she smiled "I love you" she kissed Liyema's cheek before heading to

the door "That terrible smell of mold irritates his sinuses" she looked at Elaine before walking out.

Elaine: "My house doesn't smell"

she shut the door "So when are we moving in together?" she

looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "You don't even ask how it

went with my kids"

Elaine: "Gosh how can I be so selfish. How did it go?" she say down and told him to sit. Liyema told her how it went and how he couldn't find Bandile after he stormed out of the house. Elaine was the perfect partner next to him listening to him and giving a few nods and hugs when needed but deep down she wanted to know when they could be together.

Liyema: "Now that the kids know we can start the divorce process. It should be short unless

Lakhiwe makes it difficult to make me pay"

Elaine: "I doubt it. You have the money not she so she can't afford to drag this because lawyers are expensive"

Liyema: "Not if Hlubi takes on her case pro bono"

Elaine: "What is it with your family and their obsession with her? You must tell your sister to choose because she can't be representing her and not you"

Liyema: "I don't care. I'm going to continue living with my brother until after the divorce but after

that I'll be all yours" they both smiled before kissing "My mother is right though your house smells of mold. That's why I don't spend the night here when I visit" Elaine sniffed her home.

Elaine: "Why didn't you say something sooner? Now your snobbish mother has something to talk about" Liyema laughed

Liyema: "You'll get used to her. Once she gets to know you she'll love you" he smiled.

Elaine: "So we're really making this exclusive?" she asked excitedly and screamed when

Liyema nodded with a smile.

Liyema: "We've got to be decreet though until I'm completely a free man" Elaine nodded quickly before kissing him.

Elaine: "I love you"

Liyema: "I love you too" he said for the very first time after months of trying to determine his feelings for her. He loved Lakhiwe but not enough to still want to be married to her. The new journey terrified him but he felt he was making the right choice and hoped his kids and Lakhiwe would someday forgive him. He dialed

Bandile's number again but it went straight to voicemail making him more concerned.

Nandipha found her parents having dinner already. She'd been away from the house all day to process the news that the doctor gave her. Hlubi stood to go get her plate and quickly returned to hear what the doctor said.

Yanda: "So you just decided to switch your phone off Nandipha and stay away from home the entire day? Isn't that a bit selfish because you know we've

been worried and would want to hear what the doctor said" he said in a stern voice. Yanda was strict and Nandi knew it that's why she loved having an easy going mother.

Hlubi: "Mbuzo" she looked at him "Things happen so she must have her reasons. Let us not forget that this is an adult" she said in a soothing voice. "But, Nana your father is right, you had us worried" she looked at Nandi.

Yanda: "She's pregnant that's why she was afraid to return" he said with certainty.

Nandi: "I'm not pregnant, Tata haibo" she looked at her father "He said that I have diabetes" both parents expressed shock. "I thought only old people got it" she added.

Yanda: "I'm sorry for jumping to conclusions, Mafungwashe" he held her hand. As strict as Yanda was Nandi always loved that he could humble himself when he was wrong.

Hlubi: "Okay this is the last thing that I expected but we can manage it. With a change in lifestyle we can do this" she said

optimistically.

Nandi: "But the doctor said it could get ugly, Mama"

Hlubi: "We won't allow that to happen and thanks to your father we already are well on our way of a lifestyle change because she's been buying only healthy stuff"

Nandi couldn't help but laugh.

Nandi: "I've got old person's decease" they all laughed.

Yanda: "So that's why you stayed away and switched your phone off? You wanted to deal with it alone?"

Nandi: "I wasn't alone, Tata" she

said softly.

Yanda: "A boyfriend?" he looked at Nandi who looked like she wanted to hide "A girlfriend?" Hlubi couldn't help but laugh a bit.

Nandi: "A friend" she said not wanting to talk about her boyfriend with her dad.

Hlubi: "So what did he say the way forward is?"

Nandi: "Mashudu? she looked at her mom thinking she's talking about her boyfriend.

Hlubi: "The doctor, Pooky"

Nandi: "Oh him...he gave me these. He said they'd monitor it

and hopefully I won't need insulin"

Hlubi: "How do you feel?" she looked at the pills Nandi gave her.

Nandi: "I hate that I'll have limits, Mama but I'm dealing with it as best as I can. I just want to eat right now" she helped herself to the food.

Hlubi: "Baby does your family have a history of diabetes?"

Yanda: "No, Sthandwa Sam but it's not always inherited. We'll do as much research about this as possible. We've got this" he held both hands out and his ladies did a high five.

Nandi: "So if it's genetic I got it from Rose... Great she left me and left her family deceases too" she said sarcastically. She saw the look of concern on her parents faces "I'm just venting my frustrations and shock don't mind me. With you two by my side I'll definitely adjust to this. At least it's not stage 4 cancer or something" A loud knock interrupted her. It was a fist knock which only angered Yanda as he went to the door.

Yanda: "Bandile!" he said when he opened the door. Yanda held

Bandile's shoulder so he'd come inside.

Hlubi: "Andile?" she stood from her seat quickly to go to the door. She knew they had finally heard the news.

Bandile: "Dabs... please can I stay here tonight?" he asked softly. Hlubi hugged him.

Yanda: "Of course you can stay, Nyana" Yanda and Liyema weren't best friends like their wives but he looked up to Liyema and the news of his cheating hit hard.

Hlubi: "Come eat" she led him to the table. Nandi heard about the

possible divorce but to see Bandile looking the way that he did made it all real. She stood to give her cousin a long hug before they all sat down. Yanda was glad that his house was chosen by Bandile instead of some drug joint. They tried to make him feel welcome without it coming across as fussy. Bandile didn't talk as he ate and a part of him ran to the Mbuzo household because he wanted to feel the complete family that he lost at home.

Nandi: "So my sweet tooth finally got me dude. I have diabetes"

she joked about her condition and Bandile gave a faint laugh.

Bandile: "I read somewhere that it could be reversed. We must look into that but you must give up the things that make you sick like meat, sugar and dairy" he looked at her.

Yanda: "Good luck with making her do that"

Nandi: "Let me eat my final piece of meat tonight then tomorrow we can look into that. I honestly don't see myself taking medicine and injecting myself all my life"

Bandile spoke about the natural

remedies that he read up on and felt his heart feel warm because it was something he seemed passionate about but no one knew because he never mentions it.

Yanda: "This is all so interesting" he smiled. Hlubi excused herself to call Lakhiwe and tell her that Bandile was with them.

Lakhiwe: "I'm coming to get him" she said with relief.

Hlubi: "No he's fine here for now. Let him cool off first and I'll bring him tomorrow"

Lakhiwe: "You're right. I'm so glad that he ran there. Thank

you for keeping him safe, Hlubi and thank Yanda too. Please give him the phone" Hlubi walked to the table and told Bandile his mother was on the phone.

Bandile: "Ma" he said when he placed the phone on his ear.

Lakhiwe: "I love you" she decided to not go at him on how dangerous it was for him to roam outside at night. What mattered was that he was safe.

Bandile: "I love you too, Mom" he said before giving Hlubi back her phone. He was not ready to talk about going home yet. He wanted

to talk more about the natural healing because it made him forget. Hlubi dialed Liyema's number to tell him that Bandile was safe with her. She wanted to let him suffer for his actions but she could imagine how difficult it was on him to not know where his child was. None of the kids were ready to talk yet and both parents gave them their space so they could process the news. 

S2-INSERT 6

NOT EDITED

The weekend had been hell for Lakiwe with having to deal with five teenage individual who had to deal with the divorce of their parents. Liyema had been concerned about his children too and called everyday but it was Lakiwe who felt each emotion. The sadness and outbursts were all aimed at her. She noticed that each dealt with it in their own way. Banele preferred to lock himself up in the room while Amahle made it sound like her mother was to blame. Bandile spent the weekend at he's aunt's

place meaning he preferred not being where all the reminders were. Bubele just drifted between emotions while Bukhosi tried to take his place as the new man of the house. None of them felt like going to school but neither of them wanted to stay at the depressing home environment either. A car hooted outside and Bubele went to see whose it was. Bubele: "It's dad!" he shouted in excitement as though Liyema was returning back home. Amahle ran to the door and was out before Lakiwe couldn't even respond.

Liyema walked in and greeted those he found inside.

Liyema: "I hope that you don't mind me just coming without telling you first" he looked at his soon to be ex wife "I thought I'd take the kids to school today" he smiled.

Bubele: "Mom, can we go with dad?" he asked. He felt torn between the two parents. It suddenly felt they had to take sides and Bubele hated it.

Lakhiwe just nodded because she promised to not drag them further into the battle. Banele

came down with headsets hanging around his neck.

Liyema: "I hope that you intended on leaving those in the kitchen because they are not going to be taken to school" he looked at his son while pointing at the gadget.

Banele ignored his father as he made his way outside. Liyema stopped his son in his tracks before he could reach the door.

Banele: "You no longer live here, Dad and the person who does didn't complain about me having my headphones" he gave his father a cold stare.

Liyema: "Banele" he warned.
Banele ripped himself from his father's grip and walked out.
They got pocket money so that day he intended on taking public transport to school.

Amahle: "I'll go with you, Dad. Please could you also pick me up"
Liyema took a breath to calm himself. He looked at Amahle and nodded. Bandile was not home because he took his uniform yesterday when he went home to get extra clothes so Liyema stood and looked at Bukhosi who continued to eat his breakfast

like no one was looking at him even going as far as reading the world's on the box of cereal.

Bubele: "Bukhosi are you coming?"

Bukhosi raised a brow.

Bukhosi: "Nope" he said casually

"You already paid for the school transport so I might as well get your money's worth" he looked at Liyema before taking his bowl upstairs with him. Liyema asked Amahle and Bubele to wait in the car for him and they said goodbye to Lakhawe before leaving.

Liyema: "Why did you allow Banele to just disrespect me like that,

Lakhiwe? You could have backed me by telling him to leave those things at home"

Lakhiwe: "Since you told them you're leaving, his music has been his best friend. I think it's his escape so allow him to escape reality until he gets to school. He'll put them away when he gets there because he knows he risks it being confiscated if he doesn't" she looked at Liyema and he nodded after a long while.

Liyema: "I see they are taking sides. Can we please sit down with them and tell them it's not

necessary? I don't want Amahle having a bad relationship with her mother"

Lakhiwe: "She blames me because she thinks I should have stopped you from leaving but yes we must talk to them"

Liyema: "Thanks for not telling them about Elaine"

Lakhiwe: "I didn't do it for you and next time call before you come. You don't live here anymore so stop coming and going as if you do"

Liyema: "My kids live here" he said "But you've got a point, I'll call next time. I have to go"

Lakhiwe: "Sure"

Liyema: "What's the issue with Bandile?"

Lakhiwe: "Go to Hlubi's house and ask him yourself, Liyema. I've got to get ready for work"

Liyema: "You're going to work?"

Lakhiwe: "Were you hoping I'd cry the entire day?" she asked sarcastically.

Liyema: "I was just making small talk" the school transport arrived and Bukhosi hurried down the stairs.

Bukhosi: "Bye, Mom" he said before rushing out of the door.

Liyema followed behind and the house was quiet. Laksiwe went to finish getting dressed for work. Staying home was going to be hell so she decided to keep busy instead. Alunamda, Lungile's wife went to see Laksiwe during lunch. They weren't close but they could always keep conversation. The look of pity on Alu's face made Laksiwe wish that she didn't come but she also appreciated the visit.

Alu: "You know what I recommend you do?" she said as she stood to go. Laksiwe shook her head "I

suggest that you go out and have a drink after work to just unwind" she suggested.

Lakhiwe: "I have children to get back to" she laughed "My aim now is to be there for them as best as possible. Mrs Bam gave me a number for a good therapist who is apparently great with dealing with teenagers. If I can get my five to agree to it as soon as possible we'll bounce back sooner"

Alu: "So you won't go to the Elephant gatherings anymore? You were the only senior makoti who was patient enough to teach

me how things work there. So now that you're gone it'll be so lonely"

Lakhiwe: "I'm no longer their makoti as much as they say I'll always be. You'll be fine. Please kiss little Cwenga for me" she said referring to Lungile's four year old son. Alu smiled and nodded "Thank you for checking on me, Alu" Lakhiwe stood to hug Alu.

Alu: "You're so strong. I once burnt all of Lungile's clothes" they both laughed "what do these men think we're made off though, steel?" Lakhiwe lifted her

shoulders.

Lakhiwe: "Maybe" she walked Alu out. Mrs E called to also check up on Lakhiwe and Lakhiwe felt blessed to have the support.

Lakhiwe took a few hours from work to go meet with Mahlubandile and Mr Dudumashe about the job they offered her. Hlubi told her that Mr Dudumashe was getting worried about leaving their finance department without any real supervision so Lakhiwe knew that if she didn't go she'd miss out on the opportunity. She always loved

the vibe at Elephant Attorneys so she could picture herself working there. She also appreciated the professionalism of the meeting. Not once did it feel like she was sitting with her sister in law and family friend. They discussed the terms of their offer and Lakhiwe was so happy to hear that she'd be getting a better package. The meeting was adjourned but Lakhiwe asked to have a word with them.

Lakhiwe: "I'd like for Elephant Attorneys to handle my divorce"
Mr Dudumashe sat back looking a

bit taken aback by the news. He heard that Lakiwe was going through a lot but divorce was not what he thought about "Unless Liyema already asked to be represented by you guys" Hlubi looked at Mr Dudumashe.

Mr Dudumashe: "You and I can set up another meeting so we can discuss that"

Lakiwe: "I could try to find another firm if it'll cause conflict between you and Liyema, Hlubi"

Hlubi: "No...no it's not that. You getting a lawyer just made it all so real. Like real real" she blinked

a few times.

Mr Dudumashe: "I know that this is not easy, Lakiwe but we've handled many divorce cases so I guarantee you that we'll treat this with the utmost dignity. Knowing you and Liyema you'll both try to make it less messy for the kids. I'm saddened to hear that you guys chose divorce but it's life. Please tell my secretary when you're free so that we can discuss things properly and in private"

Lakiwe: "Thank you,

Tat'Dudumashe" she smiled. Mr

Dudumashe made his way out the boardroom leaving the ladies alone "How is Nandi?" she looked at Hlubi.

Hlubi: "Making all kinds of jokes about her diagnosis. It hasn't sunk in yet. She tried going without meat like Bandile advised but failed but overall she's okay"

Lakhiwe: "I'm glad to hear that. Will Bandile be coming home today?"

Hlubi: "Give him time, Khiwe. How are the others?" Lakhiwe gave her the update on how the other kids are "They will come around

hopefully with as little fallouts as possible"

Lakhiwe: "I'm sorry for dumping so much on you when you don't need stress"

Hlubi: "You'd have done the exact same thing and even go beyond" they laughed "Come over for dinner tonight with the kids and that way you can talk to Bandile and ask him to go home"

Lakhiwe: "If they'll agree"

Hlubi: "we'll have the games out and it'll be so much fun. I'll have Nandipha go ask them because she's very persuasive. You will get

through this and so will they"

Lakhiwe: "A night away from home is what we need. So get the games out and let's just unwind"

Hlubi: "Yes" she put her hands up.

Lakhiwe had to rush so she was on her way back to her office

soon. The dinner sounded like a great idea so she looked forward

to it.

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Liyema was shocked to find Amahle arriving at his office unexpectedly. She knew how to use the taxi system to get around but she was always too afraid to

get into a taxi by herself.

Liyema: "Does your mom know that you are here, Amahle?" he stood to go to her.

Amahle: "I waited for you to come pick me up but you didn't pitch so I told Sis Bee that she could leave me because I'm waiting for you. It got too late and you didn't come so I got a taxi" she explained herself quickly not even taking a breath "I'm sorry, Dad" she said softly.

Liyema: "No... I'm the one who is sorry. I'm not used to picking you guys up so I forgot I promised to

do so today"

Amahle: "It's okay I'm not angry at you" she smiled. Two clients walked in with Liyema's PA.

Liyema: "Mahle, dad had a very important meeting with these people. Do you mind waiting for me with sis Zinzi?" he looked at his PA "You don't mind right?" He asked Zinzile.

Zinzi: "Not at all, sir" she smiled "Come, Amahle. I'm sure you have a lot of homework so while I work you do that" she took Amahle's hand. Mahle went with Zinzi to her work station and they got

along well.

Elaine: "Amahle" she said with a wife smile "Look at you getting more beautiful by day" she sat down next to Amahle.

Amahle: "Hi" she said looking confused about the sudden friendliness from a stranger.

Zinzi: "Mr Elephant is in a meeting so he asked me to look after her" she said with a smile.

Elaine: "And when will you get to do your work when you are babysitting? I've got time to kill so I can take her"

Zinzi: "Thank you so much. I need

to go get something from the post office so you are a lifesaver, Miss Elaine" she smiled "Amahle this is Elaine and she works here. Will you mind staying with her until I'm back?" she looked at the teen.

Amahle: "No I don't, sis Zinzi" she said politely. Zinzi thanked Elaine again before going to run her work errands. Elaine let Amahle follow her to her little office. She planned on befriending Liyema's kids so that they would be more welcoming of her the day Liyema introduced her. After a few ice

breakers Elaine allowed Amahle to finish her homework.

Elaine: "Well since you are done I figured we could have some girly pampering" she went over to Amahle holding a pink bag. She took out nude nail polish.

Amahle: "You want to put that on my nails?" Elaine nodded "My mom is not going to be happy about it" she added.

Elaine: "You look sad. What's the matter?" Amahle looked around to see if anyone was close.

Amahle: "My mom and dad are getting a divorce but please do

not tell my dad that I told you"
she said in a whisper.

Elaine: "I won't say a word" she
promised though it was old news
to her.

Amahle: "My dad just left and my
brothers are angry. It all just
makes me sad"

Elaine: "What about your
mother?"

Amahle: "She just let him go
without saying anything" she
shook her head.

Elaine: "Maybe your dad left
because of her. Maybe she made
him unhappy" Amahle shrugged.

"But this will cheer you up. Hold out your hands" Amahle looked hesitant. "Oh come on you will look pretty" Elaine added. Amahle always wanted to try make up so she held her hands out. Amahle smiled when she saw how pretty her nails looked.

Amahle: "It almost look like my skin" she smiled

Elaine: "So how would you feel if your father met someone special?"

Amahle gave Elaine a cold stare so Elaine knew she struck a nerve

"Is your mom kind to you now that your dad is not home?" she

changed the subject.

Amahle: "She's my mom she's as she was before he left just a bit sad" she blew her nails dry.

Elaine: "Sometimes when a woman is not your real mother she just shouts at you more when your daddy is not around"

Amahle: "My mom shouts at all of us when we are wrong and she is my brothers real mother"

Elaine: "Okay" she smiled. Liyema joined them after a long while.

Liyema: "I've got to take you home, Amahle so come on"

Elaine: "Why don't we take her

out?"

Liyema: "It's too soon for such, Elaine and her mother asked that I take her to her aunt's as they already have plans. Go and take your blazer in my office" he said to Amahle. She hid her nails because she knew her father would also not like that she's painted them. "Don't make any dinner plans with my children" he looked at Elaine "I asked that you wait on me for such until after the divorce. I don't want to overwhelm them with a divorce and a new relationship. They

already have too much to deal with"

Elaine: "Is wanting to know them so bad?"

Liyema: "Not but not yet. When the time is right I'll introduce them to you. I have to talk to Lakiwe about it first"

Elaine: "They are your kids too. Had you not married her she wouldn't even have been in their lives" she reminded Liyema about the surrogacy.

Liyema: "Well she is in their lives and honestly it's the best decision I ever made. She's a great

mother. I'm taking my daughter home" he walked out before an argument could erupt. Elaine felt herself get angry at the realization of how Lakhiwe would always be in their lives. She knew that she had to take Liyema with his package and her aim was to get close to the kids to impress Liyema and she decided that she'd start with Amahle.

Lakhiwe was driving home from work after a day of trying to be normal. Hlubi told her that her children were at their house and

Lakhiwe hoped the night away from home would do them all good. She prayed that the children would agree to therapy so they could speak to someone since they refused to speak to her. She drove pass a little bar and decided to go have that drink that Alu suggested. She felt she needed a glass of wine and a few moments to herself. She was soon sitting at the bar holding a glass of wine. She stopped drinking after varsity but the glass of wine tasted good. "You look as terrible as I feel" said a voice to her left.

Lakhiwe looked to see who was speaking to her as if he knew her. She scanned the gentleman from head to toe before looking ahead once again.

Lakhiwe: "You look as terrible as you feel too" the stranger laughed.

Stranger: "Daluxolo" he held his hand out to Lakhiwe. All that she wanted to do was enjoy her drink in peace but she couldn't bring herself to be rude. .

Lakhiwe: "Lakh... Ntombikayise" she shook his hand.

Dali: "Nice to meet you, Kayise"

Lakhiwe: "Nice to meet you too, Xolo" he laughed softly.

Dali: "No one calls me Xolo"

Lakhiwe: "No one calls me Kayise anymore" she looked at him. "Can you just sit and not talk because I really, really came here to escape the noise and you talking makes it worse" she said honestly without sounding too rude.

Dali: "I won't say anything ever again" he promised. He ordered his drink and silently sat next to Lakhiwe.

Barman: "Would you like a refill, mam?" he asked.

Lakhiwe: "No thank you. I'm driving" she smiled.

Barman: "Sir?" he looked at Dali.

Dali: "What the lady said" the barman went about his business.

Lakhiwe: "Are you from around here?" Dali looked around before pointing to himself. Lakhiwe nodded.

Dali: "Yeah I guess you could say so and you?"

Lakhiwe: "I guess you could say so" Dali laughed. They made small talk and it actually felt good to talk to someone who didn't know about her divorce so Lakhiwe

stayed longer than expected but she still kept at one glass of wine and kept checking the time to see if she could still talk to the stranger. She took a deep breath when it was time to leave before standing. Dali stood at the same time and somehow they ended up in a predicament that had them facing each other and too close for comfort. Lakhiwe knew that she had to break whatever it was that was happening but she went against her own logic. She kissed him and once the shock of the moment faded he kissed her

back. Soon she found herself crossing the road with a stranger to a backpackers across the road to do what she knew she would possibly regret. She had time to change her mind when he was busy booking a room, she had time to change her mind when they made their way to the room given but she didn't. He made her feel wanted. His kisses making her feel like he was hungry for her so she allowed herself to feel wanted by a complete stranger. He had protection as though he came prepared to pick a woman up at

the bar. The body that took a knock when Liyema said it wasn't good enough wanted to be touched to feel validated but everything else seemed to be rejecting the sudden hook up. Lakhiwe decided to ignore her mind and heart and allow her body to feel wanted.

Lakhiwe: "I love you, Ndlovu" her mouth said that which her heart was screaming when the moment was over. In her mind she was making love to her husband and it felt good because Dali touched her with meaning. To pretend it was

Liyema made the guilt faded but when the moment was over and she remembered that she just had sex with a man she didn't know the guilt swept into each part of her body. Her vision became blurry and she knew that it was too late to hold the tears back so she closed her eyes and sobbed.

Dali: "Kayise" he said not knowing if he should touch her or not. He himself regretted what happened when he watched Lakhiwe turn to burry her face in the pillow sobbing. She stood when she

remembered that she had somewhere to be and took her clothes and went to the bathroom with them. She was disappointed to find Dali sitting on the bed waiting.

Lakhiwe: "I'm sorry" she could barely look at him "I don't usually do this" she added.

Dali: "I don't either and don't apologize. Are you okay?"

Lakhiwe: "This was not some I'll call you later thing, Daluxolo. It was a moment of foolishness. Bye" she rushed out before he could say something. She did the walk

of shame feeling like everyone knew that she was in a room with a man that's not her husband. She drove to Hlubi's house and the dinner was not bad. Bandile agreed to go home with her and that made her happy. Amahle hid the nail polish well and Laksiwe was too absent minded to notice. Yanda and Nandi took out the games and Laksiwe heard some laughter from the kids. Hlubi: "Are you okay?" Laksiwe: "I slept with someone, Hlubi. I feel like such filth for sleeping with another man while

I'm still married. Sick thing is I was imagining Liyema throughout it all. I wanted to feel wanted by him again, Hlubi" she broke down. Hlubi closed the door behind them and comforted Lakhawe. She was not angry at Lakhawe for what happened but instead she was angry at Liyema. It was clear that Lakhawe still had a long way to go. ❤️

S2-INSERT 7

Nandipha struggled to stay disciplined for the attempt at

reversing her diabetes but she finally managed to keep to the detox program that Bandile gave her. It was all organic food, too expensive for her but luckily her parents helped her. She at first experienced a rash on her chest and neck but Bandile assured her that it was normal as it was the body's way of getting rid of years of toxins. The rash went away after a few days and after that she felt great. She saw her skin start to glow and she felt energized. Cutting out all her favourites especially sugar was not easy but she was determined

to keep at it.

Mashudu: "So you're really following something that a boy advised instead of your own doctor?" he looked at his girlfriend. They met a few weeks ago at a party and have been inseparable since.

Nandi: "I'm feeling much better now actually. No more fatigue and I don't remember feeling this great even before the diabetes. Clean eating is really good but requires discipline"

Mashudu: "But you lost weight"

Nandi: "Because I stopped eating meat and dairy. I live on fruit,

veggies and water now. Please support me on this rather than put me down"

Mashudu: "I am sorry and you're right you are looking amazing. So any luck with the job hunting?"

Nandi shook her head.

Nandi: "Graduates have it hard out there" she drank her water.

Mashudu: "You're lucky enough to have a mother who is boss at a law firm. Go and shadow one of her associates if you don't want to work there permanently. It'll be good experience"

Nandi: "If I go work there it'll be because my mother created a

position for me. I want to be respected at work. I want to prove to them both that I can do well without them. I've got this" Mashudu nodded.

Mashudu: "So what did your parents say about meeting me?"

Nandi: "I didn't bring it up to my dad"

Mashudu: "Are you ashamed of me? Is it because I'm not Xhosa??"

Nandi: "I'm not ashamed of you and I can't believe that you think so low of me. I don't want my father finding out I'm dating"

Mashudu: "You're twenty three,

Nandi. Surely the man knows that you're not his little girl anymore" Nandi laughed.

Nandi: "He doesn't trust me. For years it was just us against the world until my mom came along so my father and I have a bond but there are boundaries. I'm too afraid to talk to him about men" she said softly "I know I'm no child but there are certain things I would rather not do out of respect for him. Plus should he find out that you are ten years my senior he'll flip"

Mashudu: "So it's my age you're worried about? Okay I will let you

go about this as you see best.

Please come to Venda with me for the weekend of my sister's wedding"

Nandi: "You won't talk about us getting married right?" Mashudu laughed.

Mashudu: "Maybe"

Nandi: "I want to first work and be independent before I can get married. I don't want to depend on you because let's face it, life is expensive"

Mashudu: "Nothing wrong with starting a career while married. I also don't mind taking care of you. My mother has always been a

housewife yet my father never complained so why would I?"

Nandi: "I mind. Give me time to short my life out and then we can talk about such"

Mashudu: "Okay" he kissed her hands. He was truly hoping that Nandi would tell him that she'd introduce him to get parents.

When he first laid eyes on her he fell in love with her so talking about marriage so soon felt natural but he had to wait until Nandi gained the financial independence that she sought. He felt he wasn't getting any younger and he was ready to have

a child but he had to wait until Nandi wanted the same things as he did.

Lakhiwe had not told her grandparents about the divorce because she feared that it might worsen her grandmother's condition. She planned on telling them afterwards when things had settled. She was afraid that they would also try to talk her into opting for polygamy. The divorce process had begun and Mr Dudumashe handled things on behalf of Lakhiwe. Things were pretty straight forward because

neither her nor Liyema wanted to part in a messy way. After days of trying to convince the kids to go for therapy they finally agreed. Things at home were not the best but each day everyone was trying. When Lakhiwe noticed the nail polish on her daughter's fingers she lost it especially after Amahle revealed where it came from. She and Liyema ended up having a nasty fight about him allowing his girlfriend to do such especially when it was school the next day. Amahle would be seeing Mrs Bam for therapy while the boys would talk to male colleagues

of Mrs Bam. Lakhawe felt opening up to another man would be easier for her boys. When it was time to go to their first sessions Banele was no where to be found. Concerned Lakhawe called the family and then had Bukhosi call their friends.

Bandile: "He's changed friends, Mom. He hangs out with another group and we don't have their numbers" he said looking like he didn't want to disclose that piece of information.

Bubele: "Then let us not go to the therapist. I anyway don't want to talk to anyone" he sulked.

Bukhosi: "I agree with Bubele, Mom" he looked at his mother.

Lakhiwe: "Please try it out and if it's not for you we will stop" she pleaded.

Amahle: "I want to go to Dad's. Aunt Elaine said that she will take me to the mall" Amahle made it a habit to go to Liyema's work without permission and she always seemed to find Elaine.

Elaine would put make up on her but have her wipe it off before Amahle goes home because she had her first big fight with Liyema after the manicure saga. The kids still didn't know about

her relationship with their dad but Amahle took a liking to Elaine and she thought the only way she'd see Elaine was when she went to her father's.

Lakhiwe: "Amahle... Amahle" she raised her voice while pointing at her daughter "You aren't going to the mall because you are going to see Mrs B" she said in a stern voice. The thought of Elaine not just near her husband but near her kids too infuriated her "For once will you all just work with me please" she pleaded.

Bubele: "I'll go wait in the car" he walked out. Everyone followed

behind and soon they were in the car heading to Mrs B's office. Laksiwe didn't think that it would ever be a place she'd take her children to but she felt it was needed. Talking helped her during Bonga's time so she hoped the kids would be open trying without shutting it down completely. Mrs B came to greet them at the reception area. Her practice had grown and Laksiwe was very proud of her. Zim lived in Durban with her husband and two kids. Mrs B never remarried and Laksiwe was certain she'd never remarry either.

Mrs B: "How are you?" she held Lakhiwe's hand.

Lakhiwe: "Coping" she looked at the kids who sat on the waiting seats.

Mrs B: "They will be fine. This is the first step in healing. You know it's not easy" Lakhiwe nodded "You didn't book a session for yourself?"

Lakhiwe: "I want them to be okay first. They always come first"

Mrs B: "You do too. If you're not coping they won't either so it's best that you take care of yourself too"

Lakhiwe: "I will Mrs B just not

now"

Mrs B: "They will be in great hands. I prefer them to have sessions seperatly and since we unfortunately only have one male therapist and you requested for one I recommend that you take the others out for fresh air while he's busy with one. Next time we'll book sessions on different days for them" Lakiwe nodded. A familiar face, a face Lakiwe didn't ever want to bump into showed up. Lakiwe's heart started to pound out of her chest as Daluxolo came to join them "Ntombi this is Daluxolo Xhego and

he is going to be working with the boys. Dali this is Ntombikayise Elephant mother to the four boys you will be counselling" Dali held his hand out and Lakiwe shook it. The moment was awkward but they couldn't make it obvious. "Come, Mahle let us go to my office because I have missed you so much" she said in a playful voice before helping Amahle up. The teen laughed when she got tickled. Mrs B was like a grandmother to them so Lakiwe knew Mahle would be most open. She suddenly wondered if she

shouldn't have had the boys talk to Mrs B too. After debating on who is going to go first Bubele finally stood to get it over with. Lakiwe: "They won't be coming back after today" she whispered to Dali.

Dali: "That's up to them. If they are comfortable with me then I advise that you not do that.

Children like stability so let us see how they react to their first session" he said politely. Lakiwe didn't say a word "Please excuse me" he walked away. Lakiwe went to sit between Bandile and Bukhosi. She was going to wait

until all of them were finished. Dali joined Bubele who sat uncomfortably in the arm chair. After a few ice breakers and jokes he watched the teen relax. Rugby was Bubele's favourite sport though it wasn't Dali's he was willing to talk rugby to get Bubele to see that he was just a guy so he could talk to him.

Bubele: "You see, Bhut Dali I'm not depressed like my mother thinks I am" he said casually. Dali asked about the divorce and how it made him feel "My girlfriend's parents are divorced, my teammate's also. You'd be

surprised at how common it actually is"

Dali: "I didn't ask you to give me statistics, Bubele. I asked how you feel?" he looked at the teen.

Bubele: "Well obviously sad you know but what can I do" he shrugged "I wish things were as they were but they aren't so no use crying like a baby" he added softly. The session went on until it was Bandile's turn. Dali conducted the session similar to Bubele's. He found that Bandile liked gardening so he went from talking about sport with Bubele to farming with Bandile. He asked

Bandile how the divorce left him feeling just as he had with Bubele. Bandile also shrugged a lot like his brother. It was a new experience to them so Dali had to be patient.

Bandile: "I asked my dad to help me with starting a garden. The day they told us they were splitting was the day that he was supposed to help me do it. We never got to it and I don't want to ask him again"

Dali: "You mentioned that you ran to your aunt's. Why did you go there?" Bandile shrugged again.

Bandile: "They are still married so

I guess I wanted to be where parents are still together" he started to cry so Dali gave him a tissue. Dali told him that he was in a safe zone and watched Bandile sob. That was the part that Dali hated about his job, the tears because he had his own personal issues to deal with. He could make people feel better but couldn't gift himself that same thing. Bukhosi's session came and no ice breakers nor jokes could get a reaction out of him. He just sat with arms folded looking at Dali with brows that were drawn together. Dali could see the pain

and the anger in his eyes but he didn't force the teen to talk. He knew there were four of them so he couldn't help but wonder what made Banele stay away. After an hour of just sitting and saying nothing Dali decided that it was best they give Bukhosi time.

Mrs E spoke to Amahle as she'd usually do to make Amahle feel free.

Mrs B: "So you feel like your mother could have done something to keep your father from leaving?"

Amahle: "You didn't see how she just stood and let him talk alone,

ma Bam. Even after he left she didn't beg him to stay"

Mrs B: "Would you have preferred to see her beg?"

Amahle: "My friend said that her mother begged her father to stay and he did so my mom should have done the same". Mrs B didn't always have teen clients so she had to remind herself that Amahle was a child. She tried to explain to Amahle how her mother did good by not begging. Saying that had Lakiwe begged then Amahle would have seen begging someone to love her as okay. Lakiwe was tired of sitting

there for hours but she persevered until all her children well except for Banele finished their session. Dali asked to see Lakhiwe aside so she went.

Dali: "I can separate my professional life from my private life so I won't allow what happened to get in the way of me helping your kids. All I ask is that you do the same please" Lakhiwe got a look at him for the first time. She liked his thick brows especially how he moved them when speaking on a serious matter.

Lakhiwe: "I can do that. I'm glad

that we can put what happened behind us because it was a mistake"

Dali: "One that makes a lot of sense right now" he finally knew why she looked so terrible that day and why she needed time alone. He also understood why she wanted to have sex with him, it was to try and forget "I'll see you when you bring them for their next sessions. You've got good boys, Mrs Elephant"

Lakhiwe: "Thank you, Mr Xhego" she walked away from him. Dali watched her walk away and he had to appreciate how perfectly

her jean fitted so he looked at Lakiwe a little too long. She was a loving mother and he could see that she wanted the best for her children. The moment they had together was short and for Lakiwe to say she loved Liyema afterwards ruined everything. Had circumstances been different Dali would have liked to get to know Lakiwe more because physically she was everything that he loved in a woman. Rich melanin skin and curves in all the right places but he was in no mood for the baggage that he felt she had especially not that

time of the year when too many painful memories haunted him also. Dali snapped out of his thoughts when Lakhiwe stood in front of him again.

Lakhiwe: "You're not married are you?" she had to know because the thought of being with another woman's husband didn't sit well with her. She didn't care to ask if he was married when they met but she always wondered if he was.

Dali: "I don't have a wife no" he said.

Lakhiwe: "Girlfriend?" Dali shook his head "Are you being honest?"

he nodded and watched her hold her chest in relief. Usually Dali would find it interesting when a woman asked him if he was taken or not because most time the women who asked were showing interest in him but he knew Lakhiwe was not interested in him. That day she was interested in the attention that she gave him and because he was having a very low moment he was also interested in the attention she gave him. Suddenly her concern about his relationship status and relief after hearing it was single gave away the reason for her on

going divorce. The thought of sleeping with a possibly married man and risking hurting another woman haunted her because she knew what it was like to be hurt that way so she was at a point where she wouldn't wish it on anyone else. Dali had many divorce clients whose partners cheated on them both men and women so he was able to read between the lines. He saw Lakhiwe's pain when their short lived moment was over and it all made sense "So you just go around picking up ladies at bars?" Dali raised a brow. He felt offended by the question "I mean

you had condoms ready like one who is always ready for action" she added.

Dali: "Not that it's any of your business, Mrs Elephant but I was coincidentally given that condom by my brother who told me to go get myself laid that day and then there you were" he looked at her.

Lakhiwe: "I'm not a woman who goes around sleeping with men she met in a bar and do not think that I'll give you my number so there can be a repeat"

Dali: "I'm not a man who sleeps with women he just met either and trust me I know that it was

a once off. You are in no space to go beyond what happened and honestly neither am I"

Lakhiwe: "Good then"

Dali: "I hope that it's the last time we'll talk about that night since we both agreed that it's best we put it behind us" he added.

Lakhiwe: "Was it good?" she asked. Dali watched as curiosity got replaced by embarrassment and watched her run out before he could tell her. Lakhiwe felt like kicking herself for seeking validation once again. She wondered why she cared about

whether he thought it is good but then realized that it was her rocky self esteem that was talking. After feeling the warmth of a woman's body against his after almost a year he was happy that he met Lakhiwe. Even his kisses were those of a starved man. Had Lakhiwe stayed long enough to hear his answer she'd have known that to him it was more than just good. He wished to have more of her that night, more of her warm skin and soft lips. But her tears afterwards made it clear to him that she was not ready to spend nights

with another man. Not when she still called her husband's name during sex and most certainly not when she still had to deal with troubled teenager. Like Lakhiwe it was his body that betrayed him that night because his heart, mind and soul could never belong to another woman. He has been to colleagues for therapy but stopped because nothing and no one could council him. The drive in the car was quiet and Lakhiwe switched the radio on.

Lakhiwe: "Should I book more sessions for you guys?" she asked to break the silence.

Bukhosi: "I'm not going back" he said stubbornly.

Bandile: "Did he tell you what we spoke about when you two spoke in private?"

Lakhiwe: "He's not supposed to tell me, my boy. What you guys speak in private is not meant for my ears" Bandile nodded.

Bandile: "Then you can book for me" Lakhiwe couldn't help but smile.

Bubele: "I'll give it another go too but I'm not depressed, Mom"

Lakhiwe: "I never said you were, Mntanam. And you, Nana?" she asked Amahle.

Amahle: "I don't see how it is helping. It won't bring dad back" she said.

Lakhiwe: "Talking about things help. Yes it won't bring dad back but it might bring those beautiful smiles that I miss back"

Amahle: "We've got nothing to smile about"

Lakhiwe: "We'll smile again someday" she said optimistically. She decided she'd just drop the kids off next time and not accompany them inside after the way she had parted with Dali. She was too afraid that he'd give

her an answer to a question she thought was stupid. If Liyema her husband didn't like being with her then no strange man would at least that's what she convinced herself of. She felt nothing for Dali so keeping their relationship professional was no problem at all.

Yanda had a blindfold over Hlubi's eyes as he led her inside of his studio. She loved his surprises because he was not a man of surprises so on those rare occasions when he did have one for her she would get extremely excited.

Hlubi: "Baby when can I look?"

Yanda: "Not yet, Khanya please" he said because he knew she might take the fabric from her eyes.

Hlubi: "Now?" she asked curiously.

Yanda laughed and shook his head.

Yanda: "Okay now you may look" he pulled the blindfold down. She blinked a few times to see clearly and in front of her she saw a few ladies clothing.

Hlubi: "You decided to start a female line?" she asked excitedly and jumped on him when he nodded "Congratulations, baby so when are you launching it?" she kissed

him.

Yanda: "Soon"

Hlubi: "So you have clients already? I'm sure your clients can't wait to have their wives come here" she hugged him again "I also have many, many ladies who will want YM originals" she went on and on and Yanda had to kiss her so she'd listen to him.

Yanda: "Forget about other men's wives for now. How can I dress another man's wife before my own? These are all for you. I also included pieces you can wear during and after pregnancy. This is my exclusive maternity line for my

beautiful pregnant wife" Hlubi rarely cried but tears of joy came in an uproar. She inspected the pieces and smiled.

Hlubi: "How many women can say they are wearing designer maternity wear? Mbuzo thank you, baby. I love them all so much. You know my style and I can't wait to have these on me" she cried more "Thank you for treating me like a queen" she hid her face in her hands and felt him hug her.

Yanda: "You are my queen and you deserve the best" he kissed her forehead. "So please try them on

so I can see if I did this beautiful body any justice" he wiped her tears. Mbuzo went to lock the door to his office so he's wife would have privacy. He watched her undress and smiled when he thought he saw a little bump already. Hlubi tried on a dress that fit her like a glove clearly it was made for her. She could already picture her big bump in it and she couldn't wait. She modelled her husband's clothes that he designed for her with such enthusiasm and pride. After taking off the last item she didn't bother getting dressed but

instead joined Yanda on the red velvet couch in his office. No man ever touched her as he did and she couldn't imagine that any man would be able to. The kisses he'd trace down her neck leading to the delicate spot between her breasts before he unbuckled her bra to reveal her full chest always made her weak to the knees. The love in his eyes on moments their eyes would meet during loving each other were indescribable. Feeling his hands claim her body as though it were meant to be touched by them. But her favourite moment, the

moment that made her lose all senses was when she felt him fill her up as she moved on top of him while his protective and gentle hands held her hips for support as the walls took in the moans, the groans, the soft whispers of each other's names and the blissful silences when pleasure didn't allow them to speak, only to feel.

Hlubi: "Yanda, you'll still love my body after I've given birth right?" she tilted her head to look at him. Yanda rubbed her smooth thigh which rested over his mid section as they held each other.

Yanda: "Always, wakwam" Hlubi was certain that it was once a promise Liyema made to Lakhiwe yet he complained about her body. She stopped the negative thoughts in their tracks and laid her head on Yanda's chest. They both fell asleep on the velvety soft couch.

Banele snuck into the house just before midnight but found his mother waiting for him.

Lakhiwe: "Where were you, Banele?" she walked closer to him. He reeked of weed. "I asked you a question Banele Elephant" she

added. Banele instead laughed with eyes as red as a tomato. Banele: "I was here" he pointed in front of himself "And there" he pointed out at a distance before laughing. Lakhiwe knew that talking to him in that state was useless. To know that he was high and who knew of what hurt her feelings. She watched him stumble upon the stairs leaving her feeling defeated. She knew that she'd get different reactions but drugs was not one of the reactions she expected. Another migraine began so she went to make herself some of the herbal

teas Bandile said would help her sleep. She would watch TV and fall asleep on the couch because though Liyema was not there their house refused to vacate his scent in their room. She sent him a text to tell him about Banele coming home high on marijuana and who knew what else. He was always the disciplining force especially for the boys because they would on occasion take advantage of her tenderness so she didn't know how to discipline them as Liyema seemed to do effortlessly. "I'm going to be there first thing tomorrow to

talk to him. Thank you for letting me know" read a text back from Liyema. Laksiwe was surprised that he replied so quickly but it still would have been better had he been home. Suddenly Tamci's words came to mind and she wondered if she was really going to cope without Liyema's masculine energy in the house when there were five teenagers in the house to put in line. 🖤

Top of Form

S2-INSERT 8

It was civvies day at school so the boys could wear their casual clothes and take a break from the stuffy uniform. A few weeks had gone by since their family broke. The day for the divorce to be finalized had come. Lakhiwe tried by all means to be open to them about the process without giving away the ugly details of such a process. Liyema coming over to talk to Banele after the weed issue didn't help much because there were moments when Lakhiwe could see that

Banele had been smoking. She took a more softer approach to deal with it instead of shouting and putting her foot down like Liyema by talking to Banele but it was all in vain. She felt she was losing him to peer pressure fueled by the pain he tried to escape at home. Amahle talking more and more about Elaine also hurt Lakhawe because she didn't want her children to meet the other woman without her being present to monitor the moment but Amahle found ways to do it without them knowing because

Liyema was not ready for them to know Elaine too much either.

Bandile and Bubele responded well to therapy so she found some comfort in that. She expected Bubele to be the one turning to the streets for comfort like Banele was doing but she was shocked to hear that he was so comfortable with Daluxolo that he invited his therapist to one of his rugby matches. Bukhosi walked down the stairs looking regal in his black and white traditional clothes. Lakhawe had to take a moment to check if she

was seeing right and the other kids soon laughed at him.

Lakhiwe: "Are you wearing that to school, boy?" she scanned from head to toe. Standing tall and proud like some Xhosa prince.

Banele: "You look ridiculous" he shook his head.

Amahle: "Just watch how the other kids laugh at you" she laughed with her other brothers but Bukhosi didn't look bothered.

Lakhiwe: "You're looking handsome, Mntanam but I remember you complaining about the cloth over your shoulder being

too heavy because Makhulu used to much material so ask one of your brothers to borrow you theirs" she suggested.

Bukhosi: "I'm sure theirs is dirty or creased where they are so I will manage" he had his breakfast. The transport was there before they could even finish their food so they took their bags and walked out.

Lakhiwe: "Bukhosi!" she called out and he looked back "Is this your way of acting out, boy? Please if you are struggling with your emotions then please talk to me

or let me make an appointment for you with Mr Xhego" she was concerned. He acted way to normal compared to the others.

Bukhosi: "They told us to wear our clothes today and that's exactly what I'm doing, Mom. I don't see how wearing my traditional clothes is a sign of crying out for help" he looked at himself "I have to go. See you later" he was out of the door quickly. Next week Lakhawe was starting a new job and after today she'd officially be a divorced woman. She and Liyema decided to

settle out of court to avoid drama and prolonged heart ache. When the Elephant kids arrived at school Bukhosi became the attraction of the day. Some teasing him for wearing a skirt referring to the cloth draped around his bottom. Banele felt like his brother was humiliating him so he quickly made his way to the smoke corner. The smoke corner was the corner at the far end of the field where children who smoked gathered. It was forbidden but they did it anyway risking suspension each day they

puffed a cigarette on school premises.

Zane: "What the hell is your brother wear, man?" he laughed and handed Banele a cigarette.

Banele: "Don't mind that fool, man" he inhaled the smoke of the tobacco and exhaled slowly. Zane was known as the school troublemaker and had it not been for his father's influence in the school he'd had been expelled long ago. Privilege allows him to get away with pretty much anything. Banele found himself in the circle of troublemakers after Liyema

left home and soon had a smoke in his hand. After school they'd meet to smoke weed and Banele always felt himself forget the troubles at home. He wasn't smoking for the thrill but to escape his reality. The look of indescribable pain in his mother's eyes can not be missed whenever he'd come home high and it hurt him but he felt it was the only way to take his own pain away even if it's just for a while. He was angry and he didn't know at who exactly so he preferred to "neutralize" himself. Even Hlumelo

his girlfriend couldn't stand the nauseating smell of tobacco when with him so she dumped him but he didn't care. Bukhosi, Bandile and Bubele hated seeing their brother go down that path their words no longer proved effective because the more they spoke about the dangers of smoking to Banele the more he pushed them away so they had to stand by and witness their brother let himself sink.

Bandile also found his escape but it was much healthier than that of Benele. He decided to bury

himself in books that stimulated his mind. Books that he never thought he'd ever find himself reading. One of them were Steve Biko's book and he was in awe of how conscious and mentally liberated Mr Biko was. Their teacher handed out their test sheets of last week in the mathematics class. Bandile looked down when his teacher stood next to him about to give him his paper. Usually he got low marks with his highest mark being 50% so he expected his usual mark if not lower because it was difficult

to study while dealing with the divorce too.

Teacher: "Well done, Bandile.

You've scored yourself 73% buddy.

I'm proud of you" the teacher said proudly. Lakhawe went to

speak to their teachers about

their situation at home and Mr

Hyde was also a child of divorced

parents so he knew how hard it

was. For a learner's mark to

increase instead of decrease

during such a trying time was

unusual and Mr Hyde couldn't help

but ask the class to appaude

Bandile on his great improvement.

Bandile: "Thank you, sir" he said shyly. He looked at the 73% that was boldly written in red and couldn't wait to go show Dali. On days when Bandile didn't want to talk about feelings Dali used the session as a tutoring session. For that reason Bandile asked Lakiwe to keep booking him sessions. His parents tried to explain maths in a way he would understand but he never seemed to be able to. Bubele went to Bandile's desk to pat his brother on the back. They shared English and maths class so unlike the

others their paths crossed in class.

It was break time and Bukhosi got the shock of his life when he saw Iviwe walking with Pamela who was the school's mean girl. It wasn't Ivi's entourage that shocked him but the skirt that she was wearing. Just one bend and Bukhosi was certain all her private areas would surely be revealed. The ladies who all had red lips made their way to the toilet and Bukhosi was certain it was to go put on more make up. Bubele: "I wonder what they

made her do to be initiated into the group?" he shook his head.

Bukhosi: "What do you mean?"

Bubele: "You don't just get accepted into Pamela's group, my man" he laughed softly "She's got to humiliate you first to see that you're worthy and she takes it to the extreme with each new "friend"

Bukhosi: "How would you know?"

Bubele: "I used to be her boyfriend remember. She'd bounce off ideas on some initiations" he laughed.

Bandile: "I knew that she

wouldn't last long as the good girl"

Banele: "Hi suckers" he sat down.

Bandile: "Dude your lips are even turning black from the smoking.

Stop that lung cancer causing shit" he warned.

Banele: "We're all going to die someday" he said casually.

Bubele: "Why are you doing this to mom, Anele?"

Banele: "Don't tell me how to deal with something that they did" he got angry and left.

Bukhosi: "I'd rather shut my mouth because I will hurt him

and beat the stupid out of him rather than talk to him like everyone had been doing"

Bubele: "Don't even dare, man. We got enough crap at home to start a war between us too. Let's just try to make it through this year.

Bandile is well on his way to matric with his mark

improvements" he tapped

Bandile's shoulders proudly.

Bandile: "Maths is actually not so difficult. I just needed to

understand it and Bhut Dali helped me get it. I hope I'll

remember his teaching even in

matric. Bukhosi you must give him a try. He's not so bad" Bubele nodded in agreement.

Bukhosi: "I'm not going to go talk to someone about my problems as if they have magical powers. I'm a man so I don't do that"

Bubele: "Okay..." he held his hands up "Man" he added in quotes.

Bukhosi excused himself to go and drink some water. It was an excuse to get away from his brothers who were praising Daluxolo as though he were a savior and solver of problems.

Iviwe: "Pamela please bring my

skirt back" she shouted desperately from the toilet. When Bukhosi heard sobbing between what sounded like a door being banged he made his way to the girls toilet. His heart was pounding because if he were to get caught he'd be in serious trouble. He heard Iviwe begging for her skirt back saying she couldn't go out in just her underwear. Bukhosi looked at his shoulder and took the cloth over it off. He quickly ran into the toilets and hung it over the door of the cubicle Iviwe was in before

rushing back out. He saw Pamela and friends return to stand in front of the toilet with a group of other learners. Clearly she went to tell others that Iviwe would come out naked from the toilet so Bukhosi stood to see the look of disappointment on her face. Pamela even had her phone in hand and Bukhosi was certain it was set on video. Iviwe made her way out of the toilet looking down. The cloth perfectly wrapped around her small waist as it rested just above her knees. Suddenly Bukhosi was glad he

didn't take one of his brothers smaller cloths because they wouldn't have covered her. She looked like she was one of those young traditional dancers with the matching black tank top.

Pamela looked so disappointed and her group angry because she called them for nothing. She gave Bukhosi a dirty look before rushing off fuming. Soon a teacher was walking next to Pamela.

Pamela: "Here he is, mam. He went into the girl's toilet" she pointed at Bukhosi. She knew it

was Bukhosi who helped because suddenly he and Iviwe looked like a couple with matching clothes.

Teacher: "Is this true?" Did anyone see Mr Elephant enter the toilet?" she shouted but no one did.

Hlumelo: "He gave me his cloth thingie to go give to her after Pamela took her skirt, mam" she lied. She like many were tired of Pamela already.

Teacher: "Did she take your skirt?" she looked at Ivi.

Ivi: "Yes, mam" she said softly.

Teacher: "Come with me. All of

you involved in this follow me" she led the way to the principles office. With Hlumelo's false witness Pamela was sent home and was told to return with her parents. Bukhosi thanked his brother's ex girlfriend for standing up for him.

Ivi: "Thank you for the cover. I'm going to bring it back washed tomorrow" her voice was soft and Bukhosi couldn't help but smile. .

Bukhosi: "You're welcome. Why did you take your skirt off in the first place?"

Ivi: "They said we'd try on other

clothes so when I took my skirt off they took it and ran" she said in a whisper. Clearly the experience was traumatic.

Bukhosi: "And you're friends with Pamela why? Don't you know she's as mean as they come?"

Ivi: "I'm new and I don't have any friends so yeah" she sounded annoyed.

Bukhosi: "Those are bullies not friends"

Ivi: "I know and I'm sure she's planning her revenge"

Bukhosi: "You can chill with me and my brothers during break and

I'll take you to your transport after school. You're in class with my brother Bandile so I can ask him to look out for you when I can't" Ivi smiled.

Ivi: "And what do you want in return?"

Bukhosi: "For you to stay away from Pamela and her friends.

Would you like to grab a coke before the bell rings so you can tell me what time your transport comes?" he smiled. Bukhosi felt like jumping up and down when Ivi agrees but he instead kept his cool. He looked at his brothers

who both had their thumbs up because they knew how happy their brother was to get a chance to talk to the girl he liked. Bubele was shocked to hear that he was promoted from the B rugby team to the A one. The divorce made him more focused on his sports and with that came great dedication. All three of his brothers came to jump on him in excitement when they heard because they knew how much it means to him.

Bubele: "You guys know what this means right?" he moved his

brows up and down.

Bukhosi: "You might get a scholarship after matric to go play at varsity level?"

Bubele: "It means more attention from the ladies" all of them laughed "You guys know how A team boys are chick magnets and with these looks I will have to peel them off me" they laughed again.

Banele: "Congrats lil bro" he smiled.

Bubele: "Go back to chess, Anele. It might help you deal with matters like rugby helped me.

Maybe Bhut Dali knows chess too so he can help you"

Banele: "I'm not looking for a replacement for dad like you guys are. Tell mom I'll be home at 6 or so" he walked off before they could answer. His brothers knew that he was going to go smoke weed.

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When the security guard came to tell Elaine that someone was looking for her the last thing she expected to find was Amahle in her blue uniform during school hours.

Amahle: "Are you mad at me for coming?" she asked nervously
"Please do not tell my dad" she pleaded "I found the gate locked at school this morning because I was late" she lied. The gate was wide open but she instead chose to cross the street bunking school. It was not a first but it was a first that she came to Elaine.

Elaine: "I'm not mad at you, angel and I know that you bunked school. Come let us go inside" she took Amahle's hand.

Amahle: "But my dad" she took

her hand back.

Elaine: "Don't worry. Your dad is not going to be mad because I will explain to him why you did it" she said softly earning Amahle's trust. They made their way to Liyema's office and Liyema was concerned about her thinking his daughter was sick.

Liyema: "So you bunked school, Amahle?" he shouted when he heard the truth "We pay lots of money at the school yet you decide it's best to stay away from it instead?" he was angry and Amahle became afraid.

Elaine: "This is a child who is going through a lot, Liyema. Please try to see things from her perspective. She is scared and confused so please call down before making it worse" she raised her voice at him.

Liyema: "We are not the first parents to divorce" he still spoke in an alarming tone so he took a moment to breath "Why are you doing this, Amahle?"

Amahle: "Because I miss you"

Liyema suddenly melted. "I know we saw you yesterday but I miss you like staying with you. We also

need to plan for the dance and we can't do that when you live so far"

Liyema: "We've been planning, Amahle. We even chose our colours so I don't get why you'd bunk school only to see me as if I haven't been coming to see you guys"

Elaine: "Maybe it's one on one moments that she misses. She told me you guys used to get icecream just you two" Amahle nodded. She felt understood by Elaine.

Amahle: "I prefer to come and

live with you" she whispered.

Liyema: "I don't have a place to stay yet and I won't for a while because I'm leaving the house to you guys"

Elaine: "If you come live with me then she can come be with you"

Amahle looked at her father with promising eyes. Liyema gave Elaine a warning look. He hated how she'd hint at their relationship to Amahle when he was not ready to be open about it to his kids.

Liyema: "No and if I hear that you bunked school again I will not

be this understanding. You'll live with mom and that's it" he put his foot down "Go and have Zinzi give you something to eat so I can call your mom and school to explain" he ordered. Amahle walked out because she was starving. She spent her lunch money on taxi fare.

Elaine: "You don't even see that your kids want to live with you and not her" she said when Amahle shut the door behind her.

Liyema: "They are better off living with their mom that's why I left her the house. She's an

amazing mother"

Elaine: "So Amahle must stay where she's not happy when you didn't stay?. I don't mind sharing a house with her because we've bonded"

Liyema: "You're not my wife, Elaine" he reminded her.

Elaine: "So because I'm not your wife I don't have a say when it comes to your children? I want to know them since we are now in a relationship"

Liyema: "I said after the papers are signed"

Elaine: "Which will be today?"

Liyema: "Lakhiwe's lawyer asked for it to be postponed. She's having a migraine again"

Elaine: "It's a delay tactic. First you allow her to get more of your assets...not hers but yours and now this"

Liyema: "It was my way of making up for hurting her so much. She's the mother of my children so by investing in her I automatically invest in my kids. Like I've said she's a great mother and Amahle might be throwing tantrums right now but her mother's side is where she

belongs"

Elaine: "So what am I to them?"

Liyema: "Currently non of their business" he said without even flinching. Elaine was about to let him know just how angry she was but she bit her tongue.

Elaine: "I'll stay away from you then" she walked out slowly because she wanted him to stop her but he didn't. Amahle's situation made him to angry to beg Elaine. His children would always come before anything and he told Elaine that. Banele's smoking was something he

couldn't control because it seemed Banele lost all respect for his father. He called the school to explain why Amahle wasn't at school and was shocked to hear that it had been a week since they last saw her. He knew Lakiwe knew nothing and with her having a migraine he chose to keep it from her until he sees her which will be to sign the divorce papers.

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It was Bandile's appointment so Lakiwe waited in the parking lot for them to finish. Bandile went

straight from school to Mrs B's practice so Lakiwe went to pick him up after work. She lied about the migraine. She just couldn't bring herself to go to a meeting that would end up with her being a single woman again. Technically she was single long ago but signing would make it too official. She stepped out of the car when she saw Dali and Bandile approach. She hugged her son and he gave her his test results.

Maths was a subject Amahle and Bandile struggled with so to see the improvement made Lakiwe

give him such a tight hug he swore his ribs would break.

Lakhiwe: "This is so amazing. I'm so proud of you, boy" she smiled.

Bandile: "And Bubele made the A team but act shocked when he tell you. Lakhiwe wanted to cry but she managed not to. Growth was great and for kids to be growing made her happy "Thank Bhut Dali for the extra maths lessons though" he shook his therapist hand before going to wait in the car.

Lakhiwe: "How did you do it? His father and I explained ourselves

until we were red in the face but he never seemed to "get it" she laughed.

Dali: "They don't call me the "teen whisperer" for nothing" they both laughed at the joke. "I'm kidding, he's a hardworker" he looked at Bandile who was listening to music in the car.

Lakhiwe: "Well keep whispering whatever because it's clearly working. Thank you so much" she smiled.

Dali: "It's my job. He said you signed the divorce papers today. Are you good?" Lakhiwe took a

deep breath.

Lakhiwe: "You're not my therapist remember?"

Dali: "I still have to learn how to leave my work in the office" he laughed.

Lakhiwe: "I'm still a married woman. I couldn't do it so I lied to get out of the meeting" she confessed.

Dali: "Your secret is safe with me and take your time" Lakhiwe nodded "I ask that you please reserve a space in your backyard for Bandile's garden. He doesn't talk about it anymore but I know

that he would like it. I can come and help if you don't mind"

Lakhiwe: "Why?"

Dali: "Because teenagers open up more when you do things with them that they love. Bubele started opening up after I attended his rugby match so I'd like to try the same approach with Bandile. I'm sure I'll mess your garden up but I really don't mind doing it. I'm trustworthy but you can speak to Mrs B so she can tell you more about my out of office work. I know it's not easy to trust especially not a

strange man"

Lakhiwe: "Okay if you think it'll be beneficial then I'll call Mrs B and ask about it. Will you charge extra for out of office?"

Dali: "It's included in my salary" he lied. He got no reward for leaving his office and sacrificing his weekends in attempt to help his clients. Helping was his passion and he didn't mind doing it for free "If anything out of office is what we as therapists should be doing when dealing with youngsters but only when they are willing and the parents give

consent of course. This thing of expecting them to open up in a stuffy neutral room is asking for too much"

Lakhiwe: "When would you like to come help him?"

Dali: "Is Saturday fine?"

Lakhiwe: "I'll ask him" he nodded.

Dali: "I'll hear from you tomorrow when you come pick up Bubele after his session then. How are the other three?" Lakhiwe looked at him "I'm sorry" he laughed and held his hands up "My work clearly follows me everywhere. Let me go inside so I can knock off" he looked

back.

Lakhiwe: "Bye, Mr Xhego"

Dali: "Mrs Elephant can we please go back to first name basis?"

Lakhiwe: "Bye Daluxolo"

Dali: "Goodbye Ntombikayise" he smiled before going back.

Lakhiwe: "Are you really comfortable with him?" Bandile nodded "Enough to see him on a Saturday at home so he'd help you with that garden idea?"

Bandile: "Yeah" he smiled "Dad will find it ready and he can help me from there. He couldn't do it yesterday"

Lakhiwe: "Things will settle soon"
Bandile told her about school and for some reason Lakhiwe liked the idea of Bukhosi having a girlfriend so he'd focus on being happy instead of the uptight robot NTOMBI thought he turned into.

Hlubi's third trimester had passed so she and Yanda invited their mothers to dinner to tell them the pregnancy news. When the doctor announced that they were having a boy Yanda couldn't help but to moon walk to express

his happiness making both his wife and doctor laugh. The baby's heart beat was as strong as they came making both parents grateful to God for the little miracle. Hlubi put her fears aside and let herself be consumed by the happiness. A little bump had started to form and both she and Yanda didn't get tired of looking at it. Nandipha accepted her diagnosis and did a complete change in lifestyle by eating well and walking around the block for exercise. Yanda and Hlubi say opposite their mothers holding

hands with bright smiles on their faces.

Yanda: "You two are going to be grandparents again" he said excitingly. He was not one to beat around the bush so Hlubi expected him to just blurt it out like he did. Mrs E jumped in her seat like it had just electrocuted her before her hands held her mouth. She put her hands together and looked up before standing to go hug her daughter and son.

Mrs E: "After so much stress these past few weeks this has come and just made me better"

she held on to Hlubi a little longer. To see her child happy after years of suffering was a joy to her and she was grateful to Yanda for making Hlubi a happy woman "Congratulations, my children" she let out a little scream of excitement.

Hlubi: "And it's a boy" Mrs E was over the moon.

Mrs E: "What is it with my children and giving life to boys only" they laughed "I'm sure Yanda is very happy though" she brushed her son in law's shoulder.

Yanda: "You've got no idea, Ma. I

still have to ask her to pinch me" laughed once again.

Mrs Mbuzo: "I thought you already had menopause" Yanda took a deep breath to look at his mother "I'm happy that you will get another child because I always feared it wouldn't happen but let us not forget that Lisakhanya is old and an old pregnancy has a lot of complications" she added.

Mrs E: "When a complications arises we will know that your witchcraft worked" she looked at Mrs Mbuzo.

Mrs Mbuzo: "I will pretend that I didn't just hear you call me a witch. Why would I bewitch my own grandson?"

Mrs E: "Because you hate the person who is carrying him". Hlubi and Yanda wish they told them separately because it was not a first for them to lock horns and usually Mrs E retaliated in defence of her daughter.

Hlubi: "Mama please sit down" she looked at her mother. Mrs E gave Mrs Mbuzo a cold stare before sitting down "And Mama the doctor said that I'm in great

shape so aside from the normal morning sickness, I'm healthy" she looked at her mother in law. Mrs E: "I don't give birth to children who age before their time. Your daughters look 50 yet they are in their 30's" Hlubi: "Mma please" she pleaded. Yanda: "We didn't tell you our news only for you two to have a fight. As the baby's grandparents you should have been over theoo. not fighting and Mama you're always the one starting the arguments with comments that you should have rather kept to yourself"

Mrs Mbuze: "I'm sorry, Yanda but it was just concern talking. I'm really happy that you are going to have a son" she stood to hug her son "Thank you for the coming gift, Lisakhanya" she gave Hlubi a hug too. "I'm sure Nandipha isn't happy about the thought of sharing your attention with a new child" she joked and laughed.

Yanda: "She is by far the most happiest of us all. Our daughter can't wait to have a sibling. We let her wait too long"

Hlubi: "Way too long, babe" she laughed.

Mrs E: "Thank you for calling us here to tell, my children. I honestly needed the great news. You two deserve it"

Mrs Mbuza: "Hopefully you won't put Nandi aside to give your son all the attention, Yanda"

Yanda: "I gave Nandi enough of my attention so much so that I suspect that she wants me to not mind her life anymore"

Hlubi: "No child is going to be loved more than the other, Mama. I love both my children very much".

The family had their dinner and Yanda went to drop his mother off

at home. Mrs E felt like there was some light at the end of a tunnel. The news of another grandbaby was just what she needed. She had accepted the divorce after days of battling to and saw it as a new journey for both Liyema and Lakhiwe and she wished with all her heart that they find the same happiness she sensed from Mahlubandile. 

S2-INSERT 9

NOT EDITED

Lakhiwe: "No, no, no" she shouted

before running out to the garden where Bandile and Dali were "why did you take out my Aloe Vera" she looked at them both. Bandile ran his fingers threw his head and Dali wore an apologetic expression "That there, Bandile is the spot where I said you could do your gardening" she pointed to the spot "why are my plants being taken out?" she went to pick up her aloe.

Bandile: "We actually didn't think you'd mind, Mom. You like have" he started to count the Aloe Vera plants "Six of them so what harm

could one less possibly do" he looked at his mother.

Dali: "We are sorry for touching your territory. It's my fault. I acted like I know something about gardening but truth is I really don't" he held his bottom lips between his teeth "we'll replante it though" he promised.

Lakhiwe: "If you were both so clueless you could have asked the champ to come show you how" she pushed them both aside to go get a tool to work the soil.

Bandile: "Oh you're a champ at gardening now, Mom?" he laughed

out loud "Now this I want to see"
he said sounding impressed.

Lakhiwe: "I'm a farm girl incase
you forgot, my boy" she got down
to business. She couldn't
remember the last time she had
her nails done so to work with
diet was not going to do any
damage. Liyema came to pick
Bubele and Amahle for the day
while Bukhosi said he was going
out for air. He had a date with
Iviwe at the mall. Banele had
been sleeping since last night and
Lakhiwe had to go make sure
that he was still breathing. He

ate a lot too and Lakhawe researched the effect is of weed and found that those who smoke it tend to have a big appetite. She didn't know how to save him and by the looks of it Liyema didn't either. Even Lungile came to talk to Banele but the teen was set on continuing his rebellion. "So what exactly are we going to plant?" she looked at Bandile. Bandile: "Well since pumpkin spreads I decided to opt for spinach and potatoes, Mom" he said while working hard trying to soften the soil so it would be

ready for planting seeds.

Lakhiwe: "So you've made up your mind about studying agriculture?"

Dali decided to stay silent and let mother and son bond. They did so effortlessly.

Bandile: "What I want to do is have natural herb compound someday. People actually need to know that there are herbs that can help them heal. Did you see how beautiful Nandipha's skin looks now? All she did was cut out sugar, meat and dairy. The body heals on its own provided we create a healing environment for

it. You must read up on alkaline living too" he said with enthusiasm.

Lakhiwe: "I'm not sure about being full vegan forever but we could give it a try"

Bandile: "So you'll try the lifestyle out with me?" he looked at his mother.

Lakhiwe: "Yes let's do it" they did a high five. Lakhiwe and Bandile had a conversation which lasted over 30 minutes. It was as though Dali was not even there with them. To hear Bandile laugh brought out his mother's

laughter. Dali pretended to not look at her when she laughed but he couldn't help it. He had only seen her sad and angry so to hear her laugh was refreshing.

Lakhiwe went inside to make lunch for them all. Banele came down the stairs without a shirt and Lakhiwe noticed how things he had gone.

Banele: "Hi, Ma" he yawned before leaning over the kitchen counter looking out into the garden "He's a garden boy too now?" he referred to Dali.

Lakhiwe: "Just because you don't

want to go talk to anyone it doesn't mean that you should disrespect the person your brothers feel comfortable talking to"

Banele: "Whatever" Lakiwe gave him a "death stare". "I'm sorry, Mom" he said sincerely.

Lakiwe: "Where do you think you'll end up with your new habits, Anele? What is the police find these drugs you are smoking on your person and arrest you?"

Banele: "I'm not doing any drugs, Mom. Please may I have something to eat" he looked at

what his mother was busy with. Laksiwe: "I'm going to serve lunch now but go brush your teeth so long because your mouth smells like something died in it" Banele laughed out before running to the bathroom. To hear them laugh was suddenly something she looked forward to since they don't do it a lot anymore. Their laughter was music to their ears. Though not sure if it were the weed or her that made Banele laugh so much but just the sound of it left her smiling. Dali asked to use the bathroom and Laksiwe pointed to

the toilet downstairs. Banele rushed back down and blew his fresh breath in his mother's face as proof that he brushed his teeth. The silliness took Lakhiwe back to when they were little boys. She stuffed a lettuce leaf in his mouth before laughing. He got too impatient so he went to inspect the fridge and found himself an apple. Banele stood behind his mother looking at her chop and peel what would eventually be their lunch.

Banele: "Mom" he said softly making Lakhiwe turn her head to

look at him.

Lakhiwe: "Mmm?"

Banele: "I'm not going to do something that'll make me end up in jail. I love you too much to hurt you that way" he looked down and back at her again wishing that she doesn't cry. He watched her get closer until he felt her hug hi. He hadn't allowed them to show affection since they told them about their divorce but he misses it. He missed his mother's warm hugs and his father's bro hugs too.

Lakhiwe: "I'm here should you

want to talk and your father is too. I know that you are angry at us for everything and with good reason but I want you to know that we will never stop loving you guys whether we're together or not. I know that adjusting to just having me around it hard but when it gets too much then talk to me and we can go out for some junk food to work through it. If it's dad you prefer he's a phonecall away"

Banele nodded "Are you wearing grey lipstick?" she joked and watched him laugh. She knew the

sudden dark lips were from the smoking "Please don't mess up a perfectly good pair of lungs" she tapped his bare chest.

Banele: "I'll get over this" he said casually. Dali stood from a distance waiting for them to finish talking before he could return outside. Banele nodded once in greeting when Dali walked back outside. "I see Anele and Bele really like this guy" he looked at his mother.

Lakhiwe: "I don't think it's about liking. It's about relating. That's why I didn't force you and

Bukhosi. I can't expect what works for Bubele and Bandile to work for you"

Banele: "What's dad's real reason for leaving, Mom?" Laksiwe broke eye contact and went back to her chopping.

Laksiwe: "Stuff, Banele...like he said people grow apart"

Banele: "And they can also reconnect if they put enough effort in it, Mom. How you and dad just gave up is disappointing. You guys didn't even try couple therapy yet you expect us to try this therapy thing"

Lakhiwe: "We can go to therapy just not as a couple but as individuals on individual healing journeys seeking to be happy again"

Banele: "Well your pursued of happiness is too expensive if costs you the happiness of your children and quite frankly it's selfish"

Lakhiwe: "I know you are hurting but don't forget that I'm not your friend, Banele. I'm your mother so you are not going to stand there and call me names" she pointed at him.

Banele: "How am I supposed to

find closer to this divorce if I don't even know what the reason behind it is? For closer to happen the mind must have all the facts so it can process and understand. I don't buy this drifting apart thing you and dad have going on. No parents raise children together until they are seventeen and wake up saying they drifted apart. You parents are quick to see something as disrespect when we as children express our feelings and when we just want truth" he said before running back up.

Bandile: "At least he spoke to you

today, Mom" he said while walking in. "Talking is better than silence" Laksiwe knew it was Dali's words but they made sense even when adopted by Bandile. There was a knock on the door and Liyema walked in. Bandile greeted his dad with a brief hug before Liyema came over to greet Laksiwe.

Liyema: "I came to get Amahle's throat pills"

Laksiwe: "Who are my children with if you are here, Liyema?" she looked at him.

Liyema: "They are okay, Laksiwe" he assured her.

Lakhiwe: "Please don't tell me that you left my children with her" he didn't answer because he knew she wouldn't like her answer "So you just decided to expose my children to your mistress without my consent, Liyema?"

Liyema: "I didn't introduce her as my girlfriend, Ntombi so please hold it right there before you burst a vein for nothing. They know her as my colleague and that's it" he looked at her "The throat soothers please because her tonsils are really acting up"

Lakhiwe: "Had you listened to me

when I told you that you shouldn't take her with they wouldn't have gotten worse. You know that they are bad during this time of year. My child's throat had better not be swelling shut while you are here since you left her with someone who knows nothing about her or so help me god you will regret it" she rushed upstairs to Amahle's room to get her tonsils medicine. Liyema looked outside when he heard Bandile laugh. The sight of his son doing something that he intended on doing with another man angered

him. He hadn't met Dali yet so he didn't know that he was the therapist. His mind let him to believe that Dali was Lakhiwe's new boyfriend.

Lakhiwe: "You go off on me for introducing Elaine to them yet your boyfriend is in our garden doing something that I was supposed to do with my son, Lakhiwe" he spoke with gritted teeth to avoid shouting. He didn't even wait for her to walk down the stairs before accusing her. Lakhiwe kept her cool and placed the pills in his hands before

walking past him. Liyema felt his anger rise at the nerve of Lakhiwe but he breathed to keep calm.

Lakhiwe: "Daluxolo" she called out and Dali turned to look at her.

Liyema appeared behind her and Dali could see that he was enraged "Please stand closer. I'd like to introduce you to someone" she added.

Liyema: "So I'm just someone now?" he whispered but she ignored him.

Lakhiwe: "Daluxolo this is the father of my children Liyema

Elephant" she looked at Dali "And this is Daluxolo Xhego, Bandile and Bubele's THERAPIST" she put more emphasis on the word therapist. Liyema felt his anger subside making him feel like an idiot for the way that he reacted. Dali: "Pleased to finally meet you" he held out his dirty hand. The men shook hands.

Liyema: "Likewise, Mr Xhego" he said calmly "So are they making any progress?" he asked.

Dali: "Slowly but surely, yes. You two raised good kids so they make my job easier"

Liyema: "Are the others still refusing to go?" he looked at Lakhiwe.

Lakhiwe: "Let's not force them" she said in a cold tone. "Please get those to Amahle before her throat swells" she wanted him gone.

Liyema: "Yeah" he looked at the pills "Mr Xhego I'd like to meet up when you got time so you can bring me up to speed with their progress"

Dali: "Call the office and schedule a meeting but know that I can't discuss what they disclosure in

the sessions without their consent" Liyema nodded. Dali went back to what he was doing.

Bandile: "Dad we are doing the hard work so all you'll come do is help me maintain" he laughed.

Liyema: "It's looking good, boy and I'll make time to come help you" he promised. He went to say goodbye to Bandile properly before heading back to the house "I'm sorry" he said.

Lakhiwe: "For what, Liyema"

Liyema: "For accusing you of having a boyfriend"

Lakhiwe: "Even if I did what

business would it been of yours, Liyema? Should I just sit here and watch you live your best life with your girlfriend?"

Liyema: "No but I would appreciate to be told about a potential partner since you are the primary caretaker now"

Lakhiwe: "I won't owe you an explanation when I someday decide to love again. You forfeited the right to knowing what I do with my life the day that you chose another woman over me"

Banele: "So you cheated?" he sat unexpectedly from behind his

parents. Lakhiwe wasn't even talking loud yet he heard the reason for the divorce. The real reason that he asked for just a few moments ago "Wow, Dad" he ran back up and soon the annoying loud music started and Lakhiwe knew that they were back to square one.

Liyema: "Are you happy now?"

Lakhiwe: "Yes because maybe we can now fully heal. Hurt us with the truth rather than comfort us with lies right? Isn't that what you basically said you did when you admitted to the

cheating rather than deny it?
Please bring Amahle back before
the weather changes because I
don't want her out with swollen
tonsils" she walked away to go
finish making lunch. Liyema looked
up to the direction of the boys
rooms. He wanted to hide the
affair to make it seem as if
Elaine was a woman that he met
after the divorce but it was all
out in the open now they had to
deal with the consequences of yet
another bomb. Lakhawe was at
war with the veggies as she
violently chopped them. She

herself didn't want her kids knowing that Liyema had an affair because she thought it was not the business of their young ears but there was nothing that she could do. Banele heard and he was sure to tell his brothers.

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Bukhosi sat at a good outlet unable to take his eyes off the beautiful Iviwe who had a black beauty mark right on her nose. He asked her out and felt like he was on cloud nine when she agreed. Most of the outing consisted of

them shyly laughing and making short eye contact that left them both blushing. It was Bukhosi's first girlfriend so the experience was new but he remembered that she never agreed to be his girlfriend.

Iviwe: "This place is so nice and their milkshake too" she took a sip of the creamy chocolate drink.

Bukhosi: "And the food isn't bad either you'll taste for yourself. So did you tell your parents the truth about where you are going and with who?"

Ivi: "I told my mom I'd be at the

mall with a friend"

Bukhosi: "A friend?" Ivi blushed while laughing.

Ivi: "Was I lying?" she looked at him.

Bukhosi: "No but hopefully after a few more milkshake outings I'll be more than a friend" he said in his most charming voice.

Ivi: "We'll see about that" she smiled.

Bukhosi: "So why do you always only talk about your mother.

Where is your dad?" Ivi's smile faded.

Ivi: "He died before I was born.

He was a taxi driver and they shot him" Bukhosi was suddenly at a loss for words.

Bukhosi: "I'm sorry to hear that"

Ivi: "It's okay, I'm used to it. So why don't you ever talk about yours?"

Bukhosi: "Because he did something that hurt me so I don't want to see him"

Ivi: "Life is short, Bukhosi so is whatever he did really so bad?"

Bukhosi: "He left my mother and us so yes it was bad"

Ivi: "So you are getting involved in adult matters?"

Bukhosi: "You won't understand"

Ivi: "You're eight because I never got a chance to get angry at my dad for something because I never even got to meet him meaning I never even got a chance to be happy with him either. I wish I knew what it was like to have all that you seem to have but I can't wake up a dead dad"

Bukhosi: "It's more complicated than that, viwe"

Ivi: "If you say so but all I'm saying is life is short"

Bukhosi: "Okay enough with the

heavy stuff. Please tell me you stop undressing in school toilets" Ivi laughed so much that she nearly choked from her drink. She playfully hit his arm.

Ivi: "I won't do that again but I'm glad I took off that skirt. It was ugly" they both laughed while nodding "But you gave me a pretty one" she said shyly.

Bukhosi: "That's not a skirt but I'm glad you think it was pretty" They had their food and soon headed to watch their movie. Iviwe held his hands as they made their way through the busy

mall and Bukhosi was more than happy to let her. They looked at each other while waiting for the movie to begin and hesitantly drew their heads together allowing their lips to meet. It was not a passionate kiss but rather a peck which lasted a second or two too long. Both having never kissed before were left feeling shy but with fuzzy feelings inside.

Bukhosi: "Does that make me more than a friend?" he smiled.

Ivi: "Ask me" she said softly.

Bukhosi: "Iviwe would you please

be more than just my friend by agreeing to be my boyfriend?"

Iviwe felt her cheeks warm up.

Ivi: "Yes I agree" she giggled.

The theater started to fill up so

Bukhosi kissed her cheek before

the lights went off. They held

hands until the movie ended.

Bukhosi felt like he had won the

lottery and couldn't wait to tell

his brothers that he finally had a

girlfriend. The same girl they said

he'd never get was his.

Elaine: "Here is some icecream"

she gave Bubele and Amahle each

one.

Bubele: "Are you trying to kill us? I'm allergic to mint and I've never seen my mother feed Amahle icecream when her tonsils are acting up"

Amahle: "No need to be rude, Bubele"

Bubele: "I'm not rude I'm just saying. Had she asked before buying she'd have known. She doesn't know us so how would she know what we eat and don't eat?"

Elaine: "I'm very sorry Bubele. I would like to know you though"

she said awkwardly. She knew getting to know teens wouldn't be easy.

Bubele: "Lady we are here to spend time with our dad. We hardly spend time with him anymore so you being here is just overcrowding. I can look after my sister until our dad returns"

Elaine: "Are you always such a rude brat?" she blurted out and regretted it the second she thought about it "I'm sorry, I'm just not feeling well and honestly there is no need to be rude"

Bubele: "I'm not rude, I'm telling

you that you are basically the awkward third wheel. I'm sorry if it came out wrong but please give us time alone with the old man" he pleaded. Liyema came running and immediately gave Amahle her pills so she could soothe her tonsils. Amahle: "Dad, Bubele was rude to aunt Elaine" Elaine smiled feeling like she got acknowledged by at least one child.

Bubele: "I wasn't rude. I just asked that she allow us alone time with you. She's not even a family friend yet she's been here since we met up with you" Liyema

looked at Bubele and Amahle.

Liyema: "There is something that I need to tell you guys" he wanted to tell them before they heard it from their brother

"Elaine... Elaine and I in a relationship" Bubele's mouth stayed wide open as he looked at his father.

Bubele: "Oh" he said softly not knowing what else to say.

Amahle: "Does that mean that I can now visit aunt Elaine when I like?"

Liyema: "No" Elaine's heart sink.

Bubele: "I... I forgot that I

have a project to finish" he said while looking at Elaine.

Liyema: "Bubele, please don't shut me out like your brothers are doing. I love you children so much and if it were up to me you'd all be here right now spending the day with us. Please tell me that you won't be shutting me out too" he pleaded.

Bubele: "I won't, Dad but I have to go. Amahle let's go"

Amahle: "Dad still needs to go buy me a dress for the dance"

Bubele: "Mom has better taste in clothes than dad" he said still

looking at Elaine.

Elaine: "I can help your sister"
she said.

Bubele: "Like I said my mom has
better taste"

Amahle: "I first want to see
what aunt Elaine will help me
choose" Bubele nodded before
leaving them. He was not ready
to welcome a girlfriend in his
father's life when he was still
trying to get used to see him on a
part time basis. Another
overwhelming revelation that he
needed to go process.

Lakhiwe went outside to inspect Bandile's garden and she couldn't wait to see his veggies grow. She was making dinner when she heard a car pull in and she knew that it was Liyema bringing Amahle back. Amahle walked in holding a few shopping bags and Lakhiwe was glad that she walked in alone.

Lakhiwe: "Hi" she smiled.

Amahle: "Hi, Mama" she said while walking up the stairs.

Lakhiwe: "Come and help me with the dishes please, Mahle" it was her turn to wash dishes that

night. "Amahle, stop walking when I'm talking to you. I said come down and wash the dishes" she repeated in a stern voice.

Amahle: "But I'm sick" she sulked.

Lakhiwe: "Come here" she ordered.

The teen walked down the stairs

slowly "It's your turn to wash

the dishes and if you could go

from shop to shop with your

father then surely you can stand

in front of a sink and do your

chores" she pointed to the sink.

Amahle: "Why are you being so

mean? Why doesn't one of the

boys wash the dishes. It's always

me who has to do them and not them!" she shouted. Lakiwe held Mahle's hand that she used to make her tantrum more dramatic. Lakiwe: "You will not talk to me like I am your peer, Amahle Elephant. I will give you a hiding that you will never forget. Now out those bags down and go wash those dishes. You know that it's your turn...you know it very well so I don't know where this accusation of me making you do more than the boys come from. Wash those dishes because I'm in no mood to deal with your

tantrums today" she took the bags from Amahle and pointed to the sink. Amahle went to do as told and when she was done she ran up the stairs to her room. Lakiwe heard about how difficult teenagers were and she was tired of it all. She looked inside the bag and was sad to see that Amahle bought her dress for the dance without her. She blinked away the tears and carried on cooking. The boys walked down the stairs and Lakiwe got ready for another teenage tantrum that would be

times four. To have Banele home was strange because she thought he'd go out and come back high after hearing them talk. Bandile walked around the counter and undid his mother's apron.

Lakhiwe: "And then?" she asked with a curious smile.

Bukhosi: "We are letting the queen mother rest" he took the chopping board and started to chop the rest of the veggies on it. Lakhiwe watched as Bandile put on her apron while Banele poured some juice in a glass.

Bubele held his mother's hand and

led her to the lounge.

Lakhiwe: "Guys what's going on?"
she was still smiling.

Bubele: "On what channel is that boring show you like again" he asked while pressing the remote "Nevermind I found it. Now do sit, Mommy dearest" he dusted the couch before letting her sit.

Lakhiwe sat down and juice was in her hands before she knew it. She started to cry at the considerate gesture of her boys.

Banele: "You see now you'll ruin it with the tears" he raised a brow.

Lakhiwe: "Okay I'm wiping them

off. Let me just stretch my legs for comfort. Please bring me the olives in the fridge so long. I'm craving it" the boys laughed at how quickly the orders came. They brought the olives and Lakhiwe couldn't remember the last time she just sat and watched her favourite show. She watched as the boys debated on slices but she chose to not get involved. The boys had a meeting and when they came out of it they all decided to try and lessen their mother's load. After hearing that their father chose another

woman they decided to make her feel good for a while. Her laughing at the funny parts of her show made them feel good. Banele promised his brother's he'd stay away from the bad crowd. Liyema called and Lakhiwe answered sounding cheerful.

Liyema: "Are you ready to sign the papers yet?" he asked calmly.

Lakhiwe: "Monday, definitely Monday" she said with a smile before ending the call. Suddenly she felt like things were going to look up. Monday she'd start her new job and she would also be a

divorced woman. Amahle heard the laughter downstairs and she wanted to be a part of that. She realized how wrong she was to accuse her mother of being unfair to try getting out of washing dishes.

Amahle: "Mom, I'm sorry about earlier. I just didn't want to wash dishes" she stood by the couch. Lakiwe told her to come join her on it.

Lakiwe: "Apology accepted but I want you to know that I will never single you out from your brothers.

Amahle: "I know"

Lakhiwe: "Is the dress that you chose the one you'll wear for the dance" Amahle nodded "It's beautiful, Nana. Let's talk about this nail polish business. I agree to you putting it on during weekends and take it off Sunday night. Do we have a deal?"

Amahle smiled and nodded quickly.

Amahle: "And lipstick?" she asked.

Lakhiwe: "No, you're far too young for lipstick but I can buy you those lip balms that colour the lips slightly but it's also only for weekends and school holidays"

Amahle hugged her mother to seal the agreement. Laksiwe took Dali's advice of doing what they liked and since Amahle liked to look pretty with girly stuff Laksiwe decided to allow it during weekends. "So did you have fun with dad?"

Amahle: "Yes I did. Will you be upset if I visit him when aunt Elaine is there?" it was a difficult question for Laksiwe.

Laksiwe: "Is she nice to you?" Amahle nodded "Has she said anything mean about me?" the teen shook her head "Let me talk

to dad about it first. Don't you want to go see Ma Bam again?" Amahle: "If I need to talk I'll talk to you" Lakiwe wanted nothing more than that. The boys put their sister to foot massage duty and Lakiwe was the most annoying client because she kept laughing whenever Amahle touched her feet. The boys finished cooking and they had a good dinner. The food was not good but the vibe was. Ever since they heard about the divorce they didn't have dinner together so to sit with her children having

a meal was progress. There was laughter again and Ntombikayise was going to take in as much of the moment as possible. She knew that they would have bad days but she was certain there would be good days too. ❤️

S2-INSERT 10

After Ntombikayise got a call from Dudumashe postponing her starting date to Tuesday instead of Monday she didn't hesitate in accepting. Being the kind and considerate man that Tat

Dudumashe was he didn't want to let Ntombi sit behind a desk after signing divorce papers.

Mahlubandile couldn't agree more and when Ntombi heard she was grateful but also hoped that it would be the last time that she got "special treatment". The weekend with her children was great. It was as though knowing who wanted the divorce and why had given the children new perspective. Ntombikayise wasn't sure what they discussed when they were in their bedroom but she liked the results of those

meetings. The day that she had been dreading and postponing had finally come and sitting opposite Liyema and his lawyer proved it. Mr Jack: "I have never seen a more civilized and clean divorce such as this one in all my years of dealing with such cases" he complimented after the final discussions were concluded.

Liyema: "It's proof of the calibre of woman that I married"

Ntombi looked at him and saw that he was smiling. Suddenly she sat opposite her husband with the kind eyes again who saw her

through positive lenses.

Mr Dudumashe: "which is why it is a pity that you two couldn't solve the matter because this calibre of woman doesn't come around more often. If a man had her once, and let's get go he'd be one lucky person to meet another in the same lifetime"

Ntombi: "Gentlemen, I'm still in the room" she felt she had to remind them since they spoke as though she had just disappeared from their sight "Thank you for the compliments though. I am sure Liyema will find happiness if

he hasn't already" she faked a smile.

Mr Jack: "Well let me be on my way then. We will see each other when we see each other. Good day lady and gentlemen" he stood and left the room after the others said goodbye.

Mr Dudumashe: "Let me leave you children also" he stood "Mrs Elephant I trust that you are going to be reporting to work first thing tomorrow"
Ntombikayise stood.

Ntombi: "I will, Tat Dudumashe. Thank you for the opportunity

and also for being by my side throughout all of this" she shook his hand.

Liyema: "Have a good day, Tata" he also shook the old man's hand and then watched as he left until it was just the two of them.

Ntombi sunk back into her chair and instead of leaving Liyema took the chair next to her, drew it closer and sat down.

Liyema: "Please look at me" he asked nicely and watched her turn to face him "You are the most amazing, the strongest and most resilient woman that I have ever

had to have the pleasure of knowing. Starting with an affair and hurting you is always going to consume me. I am sorry for the pain and I'm sorry for the times I was an insensitive jerk. To answer your question there is nothing that Elaine has that you lack" Ntombi heart sank because Elaine had the husband she now lacked "Because you two are two different types of women and I can't bring myself to compare you to her. I admit that you have qualities that she can only dream of having. The same qualities

that make me know for sure that my children are left in great hands"

Ntombi: "Yet those qualities were not enough" she said softly.

Liyema: "They were more than enough because I don't regret the years that I was married to you. It's just that the last two years have not felt like a romantic relationship but a housemate setting"

Ntombi: "You're right but I was hoping that we could work on it. What I didn't expect was for you to go seek the romance

elsewhere"

Liyema: "I didn't expect that either and I wish I didn't do it until after we discussed a proper way forward. I hated being caught between two women but I know our marriage would have been worse had you decided to give me a second chance because I know how much you value trust. I love you, Khiwe and I don't ever see myself stopping. Even Elaine knows that because you can't share so much with someone and just switch your love for them off" Ntombikayise wiped her

tears off trying not to look at him. She felt his familiar hand hold the side of her neck gently and felt goosebumps form on her skin and a shiver bolted through her entire body when he kissed her cheek. She looked at him and found herself pressing her lips against his "Lakhiwe" Liyema said in attempt to stop the kiss but she didn't stop so he allowed it. Ntombi felt her kisses become hungrier and that feeling returned once again. That feel of wanting him to love her and make love to her even if it was the last

time. For some reason Liyema didn't want to stop either and when he lifted her from her seat to place her on the boardroom table of her new workplace they started to slowly undo their clothes.

Hlubi: "I heard that... oh sorry" she watched the two jump to make space between them. Hlubi had been standing at the slightly open door long enough to listen to Liyema speak and for a second she saw her brother who was madly in love with his wife. She had no intention of interrupting the

kissing if anything deep down she wished that it led to where it seemed to be leading. It was when she walked away did she realise who would get the short end of the deal so she returned to go interrupt the moment before they could completely undress. She turned her back to give them time to fix the undone buttons and the loose belts.

Liyema: "I've got to go" he took his stuff and headed for the door "Sisi" he said in greeting.

Hlubi: "Bhut wam" she responded and watched him leave.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry, Hlubi. I know it was very unprofessional of me and it will never happen again"

Hlubi: "More like stupid of you, Lakhawe" she said and watched as Ntombi took offense. Hlubi closed the door behind her and walked to where Ntombi stood "What did you think would happen after the sex, Ntombi?" she asked.

Ntombi: "I didn't think that far" she admitted.

Hlubi: "Well fortunately I thought that far for you. After the sex he would have told you that it was not enough to make him stay and

you would have had to watch him choose that homewrecker over you again. So what you said no to being a second wife just so you could divorce him and be the other woman?" Ntombikayise started to cry. "Bestie, don't let the raw wounds make you do stupid things. He'd have had sex with you, left you and most probably gone to his girlfriend who has champagne ready so they could celebrate him being a free man. I know my words hurt but you know it's truth. I tell it like it is because I love you" she hugged her friend.

Ntombikayise: "It just felt good to feel him on me"

Hlubi: "I know but he is no longer your husband. Don't lower your standards by sleeping with your ex husband and turning yourself into a side chick. No, no, no he's not worth all this sauce, babe yhu" Ntombi couldn't help but laugh. .

Ntombi: "So I'm saucy?"

Hlubi: "Can't you see that you're saucy. You are drip dripping in delicious chocolate sauce and he is going to miss the sweetness of the chocolate sauce while stuck

with his bitter aloe vera.

Someday a man is going to come and he's going to lick all that sauce like this" she licked her lollipop and Ntombikayise laughed out loud.

Ntombi: "You're nasty sies" she poked her friend gently before they both laughed.

Hlubi: "Liyema will realize that you weren't just a snack you were the whole fucking garden who would have fed him forever but some man will come along someday and he'll chow you like this" she bit a piece of the sweet and

chewed it with eyes closed in delight and Ntombikayise laughed until tears formed.

Ntombi: "I wonder how Yanda copes with you" she wiped her tears off still laughing.

Hlubi: "You forget I was treated like trash by men most of my young life so how do you think I know that a man is going to come treat you right? I know because I found a man who worships the ground I walk on and damn does he chow me good" she smiled.

Ntombi: "Yeah clearly and you have that as proof" she pointed

at Hlubi's belly and they both laughed.

Hlubi: "I'm sure that Liyema's kiss didn't even have an impact. You weren't even moaning"

Ntombi: "Oh my word you watched us?" her mouth fell open "That's gross, you're gross" they laughed.

Hlubi: "I didn't watch but had it been good I'd have heard you moan when I walked away. Your body forgot him already" she said with certainty and Ntombi laughed again.

Ntombi: "You better stay away from my office when I start work

because I can't deal with you and work. You'll have me laughing and putting extra zero's were I'm not supposed to. Thank you for stopping me from having divorce sex and for making me laugh after telling me painful truths" they hugged.

Hlubi: "See I'm able to put my bestie and sister in law hats in different baskets?"

Ntombi: "Ex sister in law"

Hlubi: "And I'm saddened by it but Liyema must know that just because he let you go it doesn't mean that we..."

Mrs E: "I heard you children do divorce parties these days so I thought I'd come over with a bottle of non alcoholic champagne. I even went to get Alunamda for extra women power" she walked inside with Alu.

Ntombi: "Mma" she said softly when her mother in law hugged her.

Alu: "No we are not here to help you cry but to toast to the strength of women. They may bruise us but they can never take our power" she opened the bottle.

Hlubi: "Ma, I was just telling her

that Liyema divorced her alone.
We are still in this" they all
laughed.

Mrs E: "She knows it very well.
His divorce is non of our business"
the glasses got filled "To strong
women, may we know them. May
we be them and may we raise
them" she lifted her glass and
they toasted.

Ntombi: "When many in laws would
have cut all ties with me you guys
are standing here supporting me.
I always said that I found my
soul family in you all and I thank
you so much for the love you've

shown me but I also ask that you guys do the same thing for Liyema. I know that he wanted this but I can't imagine it being any easier on him. I know that as woman we stick together when we hear one of us was cheated and left but he was right when he said that we were more like housemates than a couple in the last month's leading to the divorce. It would be selfish of me to want to keep him where I could see he was no longer present. As much as it hurts to say I do hope this other woman

loves him and that he'll be happy. I don't see myself accepting her in any way but if he is happy then I ask that you be happy with him same as when you were happy with him being happy with me" they all started to cry.

Mrs E: "The thought of another woman claiming you as her daughter in law is just one I don't want to entertain but in a few months or years I do hope you find someone because you are far too young to be stay alone"

Ntombi: "For now I just want to bring my grandparents here,

Mma. I want to adjust to being the only parent living at home because I'm still struggling with that. I want to bond with my children. I want to excel in my new job and laugh again"

Mrs E: "She's every woman, they're all in her" she sang in her sweet voice and the other ladies laughed. Lakiwe looked at the Elephant women with a smile. Though she won't be sharing the same surname with them soon. she'll always share the special ladies moments.

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Lungile tried to do what the ladies did for Ntombikayise for his brother by bringing beers. Liyema still didn't drink but he appreciated his brother's gesture.

Lungile: "How do you feel? Is it as freeing as you made it out to be?" he sipped his beer.

Liyema: "It's actually not. It's now like I left an arm somewhere" he laughed at the statement "She kissed me" he told Lungile.

Lungile: "Other men get spat on and slapped but noooo not the

lucky Liyema. He got a kiss" he joked and laughed.

Liyema: "For a moment I felt that light that got blown out just get warm again when I kissed her. It got rekindled after we signed the divorce papers. How messed up is that?" he laughed.

Lungile: "So you're having regrets." Liyema kept quiet for a long while before he shook his head

Liyema: "I don't but damn when I lifted her on that table and standing between those warm

thighs I... I" he shook his head
"Nevermind" he added.

Lungile: "Well you traded those warm thighs for very slim thighs and that after calling them fat might I remind you" Liyema looked at his brother "What? It's true. So I hope you took in as much of that warmth to last you a lifetime because I have a feeling you won't park between those thighs again"

Liyema: "Are you drunk?"

Lungile: "Drunk on reality" he laughed "So there was lifting up on tables and warm thighs. How

did it end?"

Liyema: "Your sister walked in on us"

Lungile: "Why do you look disappointed by that?"

Elaine: "Disappointed by what?"

Lungile: "The warm thighs that my brother will never have again" he spoke without thinking and Liyema felt like kicking him.

Elaine: "What?" she looked at Liyema.

Lungi: "Chicken thighs, Elaine" he gave quick excuse "So there were these chicken thighs that he used to like buying. The owner

made a few changes to the recipe so your boyfriend stopped buying. Someone let him taste the new recipe and he realised that he still liked them" he elaborated to make the lie sound better.

Elaine: "Oh shame, babe. Where is this place so I can occasionally pick them up for you?" she went to sit next to Liyema.

Lungi: "That's just the problem he was too late. The owner closed shop so I doubt he'll ever taste them again"

Elaine: "Was it fried, grilled or what? Maybe I can make it for

you" Lungile laughed but stopped immediately when he saw how annoyed Liyema was.

Lungi: "You can't, Elaine. Let me leave you because I know that you have plenty to talk about.

Brother goodbye" Liyema stood to hug him.

Liyema: "Thank you for coming to check up on me" Lungile smiled.

Lungi: "You guys should come over for dinner some time. I'll talk to my wife" he said with a smile knowing that Alu wouldn't wouldn't like it.

Elaine: "Really? We would like that

very much thank you" she held Liyema's hand smiling.

Liyema: "It would really be great." he appreciated the fact that Lungile was trying to accomodate Elaine. Lungile said his goodbyes and left the lovers.

Elaine kissed Liyema before they could even hear the door close.

Liyema kissed her forehead and they made prolonged eye contact.

Liyema: "Now we can tell people about us" he slowly took off his wedding ring. He wondered when the pale mark it left around his finger would fade. Suddenly the

place where the ring rested felt cold compared to the rest of the hand. Even when with Elaine he never took his ring off and to not have it in his finger was foreign. Elaine: "We are going to be so happy" she kissed him again." I know that you are feeling a bit sad and so you should because you put an end to something you've been a part of for over 15 years. I know that I didn't make the divorce easy with me trying to force being in your children's life and I apologize for that" Liyema smiled before kissing her. He

lifted her from the ground and onto his office desk before getting comfortable between her legs. It was exactly what he did with Ntombikayise a moment ago and the difference between them was evident but the fire between him and Elaine was much stronger making him forget about earlier as they peeled each other's clothes off. Elaine was over the moon to have her man to herself. She had to beg to be loved and chosen in her previous relationships so it felt good to have a man choose her. She was

saddened by the fact that her happiness had to be found through the tears of another woman but she felt it was how it was supposed to be. For Liyema to be hers so quickly was the last thing she expected and her friends told her that he'd cheat on her too but she didn't want to think so far in the future. She wanted to be his wife and unlike Ntombi she planned on fighting any woman that tried to steal him away from her. So much was going through her mind as the two of them had one of what will

surely be many office quickies. To keep him satisfied was what she aimed to do so he won't go out looking for another woman to do it. Her goal was to poison Amahle against Ntombi so the teen could choose her over her mother but she realized how important a strong bond between Liyema's children and his ex wife was to him. She knew that if Ntombi had fights with her children it would affect Liyema so she decided to allow nature take its course. If they liked her she'd try by all means to welcome them but if

they didn't she was not planning on changing their minds. They had a mother so she didn't feel like they needed another.

Liyema: "Now we can go on that trip without me carrying the weight of the guilt. I know that we should have done it long ago but thank you for not nagging me about it" he said while getting himself proper again. He loved the spontaneous stolen moments that they had.

Elaine: "I can't wait to go with you and hold your hand freely" she said with a smile "I actually can't

believe that Lungile invited me to his house. I can't wait to meet his wife. I have a feeling that we will get along" she said with a smile.

Liyema: "Just don't try too hard. Be yourself" Elaine nodded "I've got to go see Mr Xhego to talk about how I can possibly get closer to the boys since he is the one who gets to hear about their thoughts and feelings"

Elaine: "The kids will be fine you'll see. They just need time to process the divorce and the fact that their dad has another

person in his life"

Liyema: "An amazing person" he kissed her "I have got to go. I love you" Elaine was left blushing.

Elaine: "I love you too, babe" she left his office with him to get back to work. She couldn't wait to tell everyone that she was on a relationship with him. Liyema drove to Mrs B's practice for his appointment with Dali. He wanted to be updated on the progress that his children were making He was happy to hear that Amahle also decided to go back to therapy. He hated that

his children had emotional battles to work through because of him. He thought he'd feel free but he instead felt like someone who was mourning. When he arrived he found Dali waiting for him. They engaged in small talk before getting down to what brought Liyema to Dali's office.

Dali: "I'm actually impressed with the progress. There was a little emotional down when they learned about the reason for the divorce but they worked through it. I'm not sure about your daughter's progress because Mrs Bam and I

don't discuss clients so you'll have to go talk to her"

Liyema: "I met with her in town and I could see that she wanted nothing to do with me. They are all taking Lakhiwe's side and they make no secret of it"

Dali: "I don't think it's about taking sides. I think it's because they think you already have someone to comfort you in your new lady so they want to be there for her. Had the tables been turned they'd have supported you more"

Liyema: "I'm sure that you think

I'm a jerk for leaving my wife of many years for a woman I met just last year"

Dali: "I actually don't think anything about you because it's not my place to have an opinion. My business is your children. You thinking that I am judging you is a reflection on your guilt. You are judging yourself so you feel everyone else who knows about the situation is too"

Liyema: "I just wish that I handled it better. Truth is I felt something for Elaine from the day that I met her but I fought it

off until I no longer could. I do wish I was honest with myself from the beginning. That way I'd have seperated from my wife and then gone to explore my feelings for Elaine. I feel guilty because I know I scarred my wife"

Dali: "Ex wife" he reminded Liyema "You've got to train your mind to call her by her new place in your life so that you don't in future feel like you still have a hold on her because should you still call her your wife and she does something that you don't like or approve of you'll think you've got

a right to tell her what to do"
Liyema nodded slowly as he
thought about how he reacted
when he thought that Dali was
Ntombi's boyfriend "Truth is from
now on she's non of your business.
If it has nothing to do with your
children then it's got nothing to
do with you" he added.

Liyema: "But her dating would
have something to do with my
children as it will affect them"

Dali: "And you dating doesn't, Mr
Elephant?" he looked at Liyema

"You can't galavant with another
woman and expect her to not find

a companion should she be ready. Both of your dating lives will affect these children. Let's not forget that they only know their father as their mother's husband. So to have to see you holding hands with another woman is sure to evoke emotions and same applies to your ex wife. Divorce isn't just the signing of papers and moving on but it's about dealing with its consequences for the rest of your life when children are involved"

Liyema: "So do you think I should have stayed with my wife for the

sake of my children?"

Dali: "Did you try to stay?" a question that Liyema never got asked.

Liyema: "I did but it just was not the same"

Dali: "Can you enjoy the beauty of your garden if you don't water it?"

Liyema: "I guess not"

Dali: "My question is did you maintain the life that made your wife bloom the first time that you met her? Did you continue to take her out on dates? When you found her sitting alone on the

couch did you go cuddle next to her? Did you continue to tell her that she is beautiful in that dress you always complimented her in?" he looked at Liyema "Did she continue to appreciate what you did around the house like fixing a light bulb? When was the last time she cooked your favourite meal for you? I'm asking you if you two watered each other as you did when you first got married by doing these small things that would make your marriage bloom or did you guys just put the tools down

because you were too lazy to fill the buckets with water to water the garden?"

Liyema: "I might have stopped watering the garden" he said in a whisper "The day before she found out about the affair was the last time she cooked my favourite meal and suggested that we go out on a date soon. So she watered the garden as best she could but I refused to help because I found a new garden"

Dali: "And I'm sure you are taking this new woman on dates, you're buying her gifts and that's why

she seems to have more of a glow than your ex wife. Love a woman right and watch her blossom. We seek respect and they seek to be cherished"

Liyema: "But I love her more than I do my wife. I know that it is bad but I do"

Dali: "Well don't stop watering your current garden then. Take lessons from your previous marriage so you won't repeat the same mistakes"

Liyema: "I came here to ask about my kids and end up in a session myself"

Dali: "It's no session. It's two men having an honest conversation. Conversations that we rarely have because we don't want to hear that we have played a role in why these women are miserable. I am glad that you were brave enough to make a choice though because your children were also starting to feel that the love between you two was not the same. To have stayed would have hurt them in the long run because the unhappiness would have made the marriage toxic. I honestly wish

you the best and hope you make choices that will not hurt your kids more. I can see you're a good father because you came here to talk about your kids but it's also necessary that you apologize to them. Don't just say sorry but say what you're sorry for. There is no reason why divorce should cause a rift between you and your kids"

Liyema thanked Dali for the advice and left the office feeling different. The talk about watering the garden stayed in his mind as he realised that both him and Lakiwe stopped doing what

kept the marriage alive. They stopped "dating" each other and suddenly he wondered if he should have tried more. The confusion was the last thing that he wanted and needed because it was too late. He was Lakhiwe's ex husband and his future was with Elaine.

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Ntombi went to see Mrs B and she was ready to talk about everything with someone. She needed to let out the pain, anger and even a hint of denial. She didn't make an appointment so

she found Mrs B fully booked for the day but she made an appointment for next time. It was late afternoon already and all she wanted to do was go home. She passed Dali's office and decided to go say hi before being on her way again. His door was slightly open and she heard what sounded like crying so she thought he had a client. She was about to leave when her intuition told her to go back. She peeked in and found the other seats empty. Dali sat in his seat with a bowed head and the sobbing was clearly

coming from him.

Ntombi: "Daluxolo" she said softly and watched the embarrassed expression on his face when he found he wasn't alone. He wiped his tears off and stood up faking a smile. "What is wrong? Did you just get bad news?" she looked at his phone.

Dali: "It's nothing" he smiled once again. Ntombi didn't want to take on another person's load but she couldn't bring herself to just leave him, not after he helped her with her kids. She shut the door behind her and walked inside.

Ntombi: "You can talk to me. I'm not good at this therapy thing but listening I can do"

Dali: "Go home, Kayise" he kept himself busy with a file. Ntombi saw a picture on his desk that had tear drops on it. Her heart nearly stopping when she saw that it was a picture of his wedding day.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry" she said softly. He looked at her confused.

Dali: "Do you apologize to everyone you find crying though you know that it is not your fault?" he laughed. He love laughing a lot.

It was a laugh of pain.

Ntombi: "Of course I'm to blame. I'm sure you're crying while looking at your wedding picture because you are thinking about how you betrayed her by sleeping with me" Dali couldn't help but laugh "Don't laugh Daluxolo. I don't want to be the reason your marriage ended. It was just once and believe me when I say that I don't want a repeat because it meant nothing to me. I'm no homewrecker so don't feel guilty because your wife won't find out" she promised "Oh my goodness

please don't tell me that she knows" she walked up and down in the office.

Dali: "Ntombikayise" he called her but she was already too deep in panic mode.

Ntombi: "I'm sure there is a way that we can fix this. Tell her that I threw myself at you and you were so drunk you thought it was her" Dali laughed louder. He went to stop her before she walked a hole in his carpet.

Dali: "Firstly your excuse is lame. I'm sure even a drunk man knows his wife" he laughed "Secondly she

doesn't know anything" Ntombi breathed "Thirdly she'll never know because she is not alive" he added.

Ntombi: "Oh" Dali hated the pity in her voice "Sorry" she added.

Dali: "Apology accepted though not necessary"

Ntombi: "Is that why you are crying?"

Dali: "Today would actually have been our anniversary" he sat down on his desk and held his wedding picture in his hand. Ntombi sat down next to him feeling sorry for him.

Ntombi: "What was her name?"

Dali: "Gugu" he said while smiling
"Gugulethu" he added.

Ntombi: "She was beautiful"

Dali: "That she was and no other
woman could ever compare"

Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "How long would you have
been married today if she were
still alive?"

Dali: "Seven years" he looked at
Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Do you have children"

Dali shook his head and Ntombi
nodded.

Dali: "We once thought we'd have

one when a home pregnancy test was positive. So we went to the doctor so excited to go and confirm that it was really the case. I was so excited, Kayise" he looked down and smiled.

Ntombi: "Then what happened?" she thought that they had a child but a car accident claimed both his wife and child's life which would explain why he said he doesn't have children.

Dali: "The doctor found something but it was not the baby the home pregnancy test led us to believe. They found that she had cervical

cancer. That's how I ended up losing her, she list the battle to cancer but she fought, damn she fought hard because she didn't want to leave me alone" Ntombi jumped backwards slightly due to shock. She couldn't imagine going to a doctor to confirm what she already believed was a baby only to hear it was cancer. "I left that doctor to let another doctor do the tests and even she gave us the same results. The sad part was the fact that it had already spread so they had to schedule her for surgery soon

after that to remove her womb. I'll never forget how broken Gugu was after that operation" he looked at Lakhiwe whose vision was already blurry from the tears. She knew how broken Gugu was because she was broken too when she heard that hers was removed. She could not imagine what it was like for a woman who didn't have any children of her own.

Lakhiwe: "I can imagine" she whispered before wiping her tears.

Dali: "I don't think you can,

Kayise. As a man to see your wife think less and less of herself just because she can't get pregnant was hard. To try by all means to bring the beautiful confident woman you back by giving her words of affirmation on a daily basis. To tell her that it's okay because children aren't a building block of a marriage when deep down inside you wished that you could at least just have gotten one, just one before your wife's womb was taken away" he wiped his own tears.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry that it had to

happen before you could even have kids, Xolo"

Dali: "The worst part of it is the fact that she wanted us to try for one right after getting married but I kept telling her that we weren't financially ready for a child yet so I asked her to wait until I got a better salary. I know that she resented me for making her wait... I resent myself for making her wait. For taking away her chance to carry a child"

NTOMBI: "There is no way you could have thought that your

wife would have cancer, Xolo. If we knew the future I believe we'd have made certain chooses differently to prevent pain and regret but we can't"

Dali: "You don't understand, Kayise. Your husband never had to hear that you can't have children. You gave him four strong boys and an adorable girl. You never had to hear a doctor tell you that a part of you, a part that makes most women feel feminine has been taken out of you"

NTOMBI: "I don't have a womb, Daluxolo" he looked at her shocked

"So I know what it is like to hear a doctor tell you that a part of you had to be taken out. The boys were not mine after I gave birth so I know what it is like to wonder how you'll tell your future husband that you can't give him children" Ntombi's story was not one that Dali knew so he got curious.

Dali: "What do you mean they weren't your yours at first?"

Ntombi told him her story "I didn't know" he said after listening to her.

Ntombi: "I know that you are

hurting and you are filled with regret but I don't think your wife blamed you for delaying having children because she understood your reasons. You're young, Xolo and you can still fall in love with a woman who is going to give you many children" she smiled. Dali: "My mind knows that but my heart just isn't catching on because it's holding on to the past"

Ntombi: "Have you tried therapy?"

Dali: "That would be weird so no I haven't"

Ntombi: "The helpers need help too sometimes, Xolo so please try it"

Dali: "So what about you, do you want more children?"

Ntombi: "I'm content with my five. I remember wanting a girl and God brought us Amahle. When you're ready to put yourself out there you'll find a woman who will give you a soccer team" she laughed.

Dali: "Some men are blessed" he looked at Ntombi "Had I been your husband I would have never let go You gave him four strong

sons and in the process lost your womb. I would have exhausted all attempts at fixing the marriage and even then I would not have just let go"

Ntombi: "You say that because you're not in this situation"

Dali: "Surely he knew about the fears you had when you thought that you wouldn't be allowed to mother your boys. The fear of meeting a man who wanted children only to hear that you can't have any anymore because your last pregnancy cost you your womb. I do not understand why

he would make you feel those fears again by divorcing you and making you start this love thing all over again. Sharing secrets with a new person and I imagine dating will be much harder on you now that you have children because you can't date wrecklessly"

Ntombi: "If I do get involved which will be after many years then I would go for a man who already has children" she looked at him "I'll stay away from the Daluxolos of the world who still want children" she joked and they

laughed. "You know" she looked at him smiling "Nevermind" she shook her head.

Dali: "Tell me. You can't get me curious and say nevermind. I mind" he stood in front of her.

Ntombi: "If I were to get married and still have kids I'd most probably have enjoyed that pregnancy most because I'd have a husband to tend to my cravings and who would rub my belly and go with me to those birth classes.

My sister in law's husband is the most attentive father to be and I find myself smiling when I see

him just spoil his wife. Because I was a surrogate Liyema had no obligations to do that and I was not with him throughout the entire pregnancy"

Dali: "Your brother in law is as attentive as a man should be. I imagine I would be worse. I'm sorry that you'll never get to experience a man fussing over you when you're pregnant. I hope I get a chance to do it. To feel the kicks. To wake up in the wee hours of the morning to rub her back when she is having morning sickness" he spoke as though he

could already imagine it.

Ntombi: "It'll come, Xolo. I believe that you'll get your pregnant woman to fuss over someday soon but you got to forgive yourself and accept that your wife is gone but she'd want you to be happy. Let me go" she stood.

Dali: "How are you after signing the papers?"

Ntombi: "I'm okay"

Dali: "That's an answer for your kids. How are you really?"

NTOMBI: "I'm crushed, Daluxolo. I randomly had to just blink away tears the entire day today. To

know that he is with her at this very moment hurts me so much that I want to go there and tell her just how much she hurt me by taking him. I didn't even want to let go after signing so much so that I kissed him and had it not been for a friend interrupting I'd have done so much more. I now have this urge of just wanting him to tell me that I'm enough or just any man for that matter" she wiped her tears.

Dali: "Is that why you asked me that question the first day you dropped the kids off?"

Ntombi: "I wanted to hear you say that it was electrifying. That you wanted us to do it again because you can't forget how amazing it was out of your mind. I wanted to hear you tell me that my body is perfect and you loved touching it, that it was satisfying" she was shocked that she told him all of that.

Dali: "It was more than satisfying and I absolutely loved touching it. Had we met under different circumstances and we didn't have these wounds that we are trying to heal I'd have

wanted us to explore each other more. Your body is breathtaking and I'd be lying if I said I didn't think about the moment but I also can't forget that it was not me that you were making love to. Physically it was but emotional, mentally and perhaps even soulfully it was your husband you were with and I understand because I also had mental hallucinations of it being my late wife that I was intimate with. I think that's why the moment was so filled with passion even though we were strangers it was

because mentally we were making love to the individuals we are clearly still bound to" Ntombi took a deep breath "That's why you and I don't have awkward moments right now like many who had a "fling" do. We are already in love but got betrayed by our bodies" he added.

NTOMBI: "How are you able to make such sense of thing though?"

Dali: "Experience both professionally and personally" he smiled "It was more than nice" he added.

Ntombi: "What was?"

Dali: "That day you asked if it was nice. As absent as I was mentally I got to appreciate your beautiful body" Ntombi blushed. It felt good to be complimented on her body.

Ntombi: "I got to appreciate yours too" she laughed shyly.

Dali: "Let's not make the friendship awkward" they laughed

Ntombi: "So we're friends?"

Dali: "You can't open up as we just did and not call it something. Since it's not romantic it's definitely a friendship because it can't be a

client therapist relationship since you didn't pay for this meeting" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I paid you a listening ear, Xolo"

Dali: "And I appreciate it, Kayise" they made prolonged eye contact "You smell lovely" Ntombi smiled.

NTOMBI: "Thank you" she sniffed her shirt "I changed perfumes" she added.

Dali: "I knew the second you walked in" he walked to the other side of the desk. Ntombi picked up a list titled "Our Bucket List".

Dali: "Gugu and I drew up a few

months before she died. Got to
some but not all"

Ntombi: "Why is having kids
scratched off?"

Dali: "That won't happen"

Ntombi: "Well since you can't finish
with her you gotta honor her by
finishing it for her" she grabbed a
pen something"

Dali: "Have many, many, many,
many children" he read before
laughing.

Ntombi: "And with that smooth
voice and good looks you'll find
someone soon. I've got to go.

Please come for dinner on Friday"

Dali: "I can't remember the last time I had a home cooked meal so I'd love to"

Ntombi: "I didn't say I'd cook stop being forward" she took her bag and left him laughing. Dali was still laughing seconds after Ntombi left him and kissed his wife's picture.

Mrs B: "Ntombi you're still here?" she said behind Ntombi. "I hope you weren't waiting for me" she got worried.

Ntombi: "I know you can't squeeze me in, Mrs B but one of your employees helped even

though it was an informal meeting" she pointed to Dali's office.

Mrs B: "Really?" she seemed surprised "Usually I don't let him see anyone on this day because his wife...it's not important"

Ntombi: "Since he got married to his late wife on this day?"

Mrs B: "I'm surprised be told you all of that. Dali is as private as they come especially about being an orphan and growing up in different foster homes" Ntombi pretended to not be shocked by the revelation.

Ntombi: "We all have a story. Let me go cook for my kids. I'll see you tomorrow" she hugged and kissed Mrs B on the cheek.

Mrs B: "I'm proud of you, Ntombikayise and I know your mom is too. Thank you trusting me with your emotions once again". Ntombi smiled before waving goodbye. She planned on acting like she knew nothing about what Mrs B just said about Dali. She wondered if he had anyone to lean on during tough days because many leaned on him. When she arrived home

and found Liyema on the couch she thought that she had stepped into the wrong house. He stood when he saw her before smiling. It was all too soon for her to be friends with him so she prayed he was not there to offer her his friendship.

Liyema: "I'm here to talk to the kids. They know that we signed today so I want to talk to them and reassure them again that it doesn't mean I'm leaving them"
Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I'll be back" she went up the stairs.

Liyema: "I'd like for you to be present, Lakhawe please" he shouted but she just ran up without looking back. She returned after a short while.

NTOMBI: "I had to go do something" Liyema nodded. 'About earlier I was acting on emotions so please forgive me for kissing you" the children all walked in from their extra school activities and both parents knew that the boys told Amahle about the affair because she didn't jump on Liyema as she typically would do. When Bandile closed the door behind him

Lakhiwe certain that Benele was back to his old tricks. After the weekend that they had she hoped that he would stop smoking but she just knew he was with the wrong friends. They greeted their mom with a hug and gave their dad a cold "hi, dad".

Liyema: "How was your day?" he smiled.

Bubele: "Tiring" he answered on behalf of them all.

Liyema: "Please sit down because I'd like... we'd like to talk to you guys" the kids looked at their mother and only after Ntombi sat

down did they put the bags down to join her. Liyema took a deep breath and sat down facing their children. He asked about Benele but the other boys didn't know where he was.

Liyema: "Firstly thank you for listening to me. You guys know that the divorce got finalized today. Meaning that your mom and I are no longer husband and wife"

Bukhosi: "You not having your ring on while mom still has hers shows which parent messed up"

Ntombi: "Bukhosi..." she was

about to call him to order.

Liyema: "It's okay, Lakhiwe. You are right I did mess up and that is why I am here. I am apologizing to guys as my kids for destabilizing your lives. I'm sorry that my actions has sent you to therapy, one smoking and all of you feeling hurt and angry. I made choices that led to this point and I know it won't be easy but I ask that you forgive me" he said sincerely. The kids looked at each other.

Amahle: "I don't want to see Elaine anymore" her brothers told

her what happened so she found someone else to blame. At first she blamed Ntombi for not stopping Liyema but she then blamed Elaine for not only taking their father away but her mother's husband too.

Liyema: "And I'm never going to force you to. We will take this one step at a time and all I ask is that you guys give me a chance to make it up to all of you. I'm begging for that chance" the kids looked at their mother.

Ntombi: "Guys I have told you before that what is between your

father and I shouldn't involve you. It affects you guys I know but you guys are not supposed to be taking sides and you are certainly not supposed to fight on my behalf. This is your father and absolutely nothing is going to change that. I don't think I need to remind you of how much he loves you because I know that you know. We are not perfect. We will all in this room make choices that will hurt the other because we are human beings. Please don't want to fight on my behalf. I might not be married to your

father but I do not wish to parent without him because you all need him so much. I love you too much to keep you guys away from him. Had I wanted you five in this battle I'd have asked the court to give me sole custody of you and use you guys to get back at him because I know that being apart from you would have hurt him terribly but I also know that it would have hurt you just as much and as your mother I would never deliberately hurt you"

Bandile: "But dad hurt us deliberately. He chose to choose

another family" Liyema blinked away the tears when he saw Bandile cry. He was the one who wore his heart on his sleeve and was not afraid to show his tears.

Liyema: "I choose you guys"

Bandile: "Just not our mother who is a part of us" Ntombi had to wipe her tears off.

Liyema: "I choose your mother as the woman who gave me five beautiful children. I choose her as a life partner even though not romantically but we will always be bound to each other because of you so she'll always be my life

partner in that sense. I choose her as a friend should she allow it someday. I choose all of you even if I don't live with you. You keeping your game dates from me hurt Bubele because I want to be at every one just as I did before. It goes for all of you I want to be included in every single thing concerning your lives. The end of my marriage to your mother doesn't mean the end of my journey as a father. I love you all so much"

Banele: "Until you find replacement kids like you found a

replacement wife" he said while walking through the door clearly he'd been standing at the door long enough to hear what was being said.

Liyema: "Elaine is not a replacement wife and nothing can ever replace you guys absolutely nothing" he said honestly. Banele went to sit next to NTOMBI.

She scanned his walk and eyes to check if he was high.

Banele: "I'm not high" he laughed before sinking to the spot next to his mom "You cool, mom?" he asked. He had been worried about

her all day.

NTOMBI: "I'm cool" she smiled before kissing his cheek.

Banele: "I know you guys thought I was rolling joints but I was actually at a new boxing academy" he looked at them.

Ntombi: "Boxing? But you'll get hurt"

Banele: "Would you rather I punch a punching bag to let out my anger or smoke weed to feel numb?"

Liyema: "Boxing is a disciplined sports when done right. Tell me where this academy is so I can go

pay your fee"

Banele: "It's free. They are doing it to get youth off the streets so yeah don't worry about it"

Liyema: "I can come hold the punching bag for you during some training sessions. I did some boxing when I was young" he smiled.

Banele: "I prefer doing it on my own. Let it be my thing" Liyema nodded.

NTOMBI: "I guess boxing is not so bad but I do not think I'll come watch you be beaten or beat another person" she cringed and

her kids laughed.

Banele: "Saw a poster there about people you meet not being a coincidence... can't remember the exact quote but I took something from it" he looked at his mother "When we read up on surrogacy we realized that had you not married mom she'd most probably not have been a part of our lives. You were right, not all people are meant to be permanently in one's life. Some come, serve their purpose and move long. You marrying mom gave us the privilege of knowing her. I can't

imagine a life where we were raised by you alone, dad. So maybe your marriage happened so that we could experience a mother's love and if that was the purpose of it then I'm grateful that it happened even if it had to come to an end" Ntombi smiled between smiles. She kissed his cheek and brushed the back of his head.

Liyema: "It also happened because we were in love but your perspective gives it so much more purpose because the best decision that I made was to agree to your mother being a part of your

lives"

Banele: "I'm not at peace yet dad. I'm still mad just less mad today"

Liyema: "And I understand. I'll wait on all of you to be ready to start again"

Banele: "Maybe I'll give the therapist guy a chance too"

Ntombi couldn't believe how quickly Banele just changed. She thought she'd have to welcome him drunk at the end of the day but was happy it was not the case. She couldn't help but hug him and the other kids stood to go join in the hug. As Liyema sat

opposite them he realised that he couldn't be a part of those hugs anymore, not the ones that included NTOMBI.

Liyema: "I have to get going" he stood but laughter came from the heart of the hug so he had to wait for the inside joke to be over before speaking.

Ntombi: "Thanks for coming" she smiled at him. Liyema said goodbye to the kids and walked out. He could still hear the laughter on the other side of the door and he placed his forehead against the door while listening to

the lighter with a smile on his face. He suddenly felt like the odd one out.

Amahle: "Ma, why are our rooms locked?" she leaned over the stairs to look down.

Ntombi: "I thought you guys would run to your rooms again should a conversation not sit well with you so I locked them to prevent that from happening when dad spoke to you guys. Come get them" she watched them come down in a line "You guys know you share a room and could just have sent one of you right?" she

looked at the boys "But nevermind sit down because I'd like to say something" she added.

Bubele: "Oh boy" they all sat.

NTOMBI: "I'd firstly like to tell you how proud I am of all of you. You're going through a difficult time but I see you take it a day at a time. I also ask that you open your hearts to your father when you feel ready. Also I've decided to go get my grandparents so they can come live with us because they are too old to look after themselves"

Bandile: "You already told us that

so we're ready to welcome them"

Ntombi: "I also ask that you boys stop acting as stand in husbands, especially you Bukhosi" she looked at her son "You guys are children and in this house it'll forever be like that. I don't need you guys to toughen up to take up the role of the men of the house. I know you feel obligated with dad gone but it's not right so I'm putting a stop to it today" she looked at her boys "Also Amahle I'm not going to tolerate your disrespect and the stinking attitude you've shown lately. There are better

ways to deal with issues that have nothing to do with disrespecting your mother. Don't think that I'm not going to whip all of you to enforce discipline because I will. It's only us now and we've got to get used to it but we'll be fine"

Bukhosi: "Yeah we will" he nodded.

Amahle: "I'm sorry for disrespecting you, Mom. Ma Bam also made me realize that my attitude is the reason why I don't have friends at school. I stopped it though and today I got a friend" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "Apology accepted and you see you've got to respect people and they will want to stay with you. Okay you guys can go take your uniform off and I've decided we can order in today" everyone looked pleased to hear that they won't have to help with cooking "Also I'm saving money for a little weekend trip. We need it"

Bubele: "Yes!" he jumped from the couch "We need it so much" Ntombi couldn't agree more.

Ntombi: "But you guys have to be patient though. Let's get the elderly settled here at home first

and then we can go have fun. I want to bond with my little munchies" she tickled them all. Banele: "Mom we're too old for this" he said while laughing. They took the keys and ran up the stairs to get away from her but she ran after them and the house was filled with laughter. Ntombi could hear them talk about the trip she promised them when she went to the kitchen and she was glad to hear excitement in the house once again. She also couldn't wait to have her grandparents stay with them

though she didn't look forward to finally telling them that she was a divorced woman. The talk with Liyema was good and she was glad that it happened. They had dinner and though looking at Liyema's empty seat would take some getting used to they took it a day at a time. Ntombi helped with the homework when asked before they all went to bed. She looked at her bed and suddenly it looked way too big for her. when she saw Liyema's empty wardrobe space all emotions came flooding in. She could imagine him packing

his clothes in Elaine's closet and then going to her bed to make love to her and then holding her all night. Tears came and she didn't bother to stop them. When she gave him his clothes she thought he'd say he wasn't going anywhere and that they'd work things out no matter what but reality was he was not going to come back. When he penned his signature that morning there was no turning back and as difficult as it was she knew that she had to move forward with her children. She hoped that

someday she'd reach a point where she could be friends with Liyema for the sake of their children. Children that forced them to remain in each other's lives forever. Children Ntombikayise felt more grateful to have after her conversation with Daluxolo. ❤️

S2-INSERT 11

Mahlubandile was in her car looking for the scalf she always had in her car. She was parked outside her mother in law's gate

to drop off some groceries for her and Yanda's sisters. Her sister in laws not wanting to go look for work frustrated Hlubi but if she spoke up about it she feared she'd be even more disliked by Ma Mbuzo. Yanda's father just upped and left his wife and children and no one knew where he went to. His actions forced Yanda to be a man at a young age and Hlubi was proud of him for doing it but she wished his his sisters could see that it was not always easy on them to take care of them and their own children especially with

a baby on the way. She carelessly wrapped the scarf over her hair and called one of Yanda's nephews to come help her with the bags. Sanda: "Malumekazi" the ten year old hugged Hlubi "Did you bring me chocolate?" he scanned the bags Hlubi offloaded and she laughed. Hlubi: "Help me get these in the house because I might just have that chocolate in one of them" Sanda called his two friends to help and they ran to the car as though they had been waiting to be called. They greeted Hlubi before she gave them each a bag

while she carried the rest of the bags. A curtain moved so Hlubi knew that she was being watched yet no one came out to help. Sanda opened the door and Yandiswa greeted them by the door.

Yandi: "Haibo where is Bhuti?" she looked out to the car to check if her brother was in it.

Hlubi: "Hello to you too, Yandiswa. Yanda had to go to Paarl today so he asked me to bring the groceries" she said trying to hide her annoyance.

Yamkela: "Do you even know what

to buy because you know we don't just eat anything" she looked inside the bags coming from the kitchen. Yandiswa was the sound born and Yamkela the last born. They preferred their food to be bought at PnP and not Shoprite because for some reason Shoprite was below their standards. Hlubi couldn't believe the nerve of her lazy sister in law's.

Hlubi: "Who do you think Yanda goes with to buy the groceries, Yamkela?" You forget that men can't do these things"

Yandiswa: "Bhut did it just well

when he still lived with Nandipha way before your time" Hlubi wasn't sure if it was her mother in law poisoning her daughters against her or if they were poisoning their mother but whatever it is made her hate being around her in laws.

Yami: "If he is in another town you could have deposited the money and not go through so much effort. We know suburb people hate it here"

Hlubi: "Deposit the money only to have you go do hair with my husband's hard earned money

again? Why do you think he stopped giving cash and started buying himself. There is a vacancy at the firm for a cleaner so I suggest that one of you apply for it" she couldn't stay polite anymore. She passed them and made her way to the kitchen where she found a woman standing awkwardly next to a cupboard like one who was playing hide and seek "Hello" Hlubi said with a smile.

Lady: "Hi" she said in a soft voice while smiling.

Yandi: "This is the girl from next

door. She's here to do my daughter's hair" she took the lady and led her to the door.

Yami: "Yeah..." she said awkwardly
"Go wait for us in the room sis
Ro..."

Yandi: "Rorisang" she finished her sister's sentence.

Hlubi: "Nice meeting you Rorisang"
she gave a polite smile. Rori
smiled before she got pushed out
of the door to the bedroom by
Yamkela. "Send me a picture of
Sharon's hair when done. I'm
looking for someone to do my hair
so I want to see if Rori is good at

it" Hlubi said while packing the groceries.

Yandiswa: "She is not staying long. She's visiting her aunt but tomorrow she'll be on a bus home again"

Hlubi: "Okay"

Ma Mbuzo: "Yho girls the herbs that gogo Phumla gave me seems to be strong" she came in holding two rolled newspapers "Oh Lisakhanya hello" she said trying to hide her herbs.

Hlubi: "Hi, Mama and you don't have to hide your traditional medicine. Yanda told me it's what

you prefer so each to their own"
she smiled "He's not home so he
asked me to bring the food" she
added.

Ma Mbuzo: "Oh he didn't say. How
is the baby?"

Hlubi: "Growing and making me
fat" she laughed.

Yandi: "I can already picture what
a difficult labour you'll have due
to your age"

Hlubi: "It'll be worth it as long as
my baby is healthy. I can't stay
because I've got to go back to
work. I'll come by with Yanda and
Nandi when we've got time"

Yandiswa: "Why do you not put Nandi at your work? Is it because she is not an Elephant?"

Hlubi: "It's because she is an independent young woman who prefers to do things her way. Her being an Elephant or not has nothing to do with it. I'm the only Elephant in that firm yet we have about six lawyers in our family" she looked at Yandi.

Yandi: "Hmmm" she frowned.

Hlubi: "Are you going to apply for the job or not?"

Yandi: "I can't clean because of my back problems" Hlubi rolled her

eyes.

Hlubi: "whatever" she whispered to herself. Yandiswa left them to avoid the topic.

Ma Mbuzo: "Are you already tired of Yanda helping us?"

Hlubi: "I actually am tired of your daughters not helping their brother to look after you, Mama. The casual retail work they wait on is not a way to live. Our cleaners are well paid and we have benefits for them like medical aid so why do your children see it as being beneath them? There are graduates who are cleaners so

why can't they who do not even have matric do it? Even you spend all your grant money on the sangoma and church. Just for once see the pressure that my husband is under sometimes. We love helping but when its taking advantage we too get tired"

Ma Mbuzo: "Yho" she clapped once "I'm sorry that I didn't marry into money and inherited it like your mother, Lisakhanya. I'm sorry that my daughters don't have a family company to work in. I'm sorry that I give offerings in church and buy herbs from my

healer. I will tell Yanda that we will be fine. I'm sure if you can talk on his behalf like you are doing now he knows that you are here talking about being tired of helping us"

Hlubi: "There you go again twisting my words to try and make my husband and I fight. I spend time with this man so I know that he's taking strain and you know Yanda is a typical provider so even at home he wants to do more than me. All I ask is that my husband please be thought of please" she couldn't

remember a time she spoke her mind like that to her mother in law but when it came to her husband she had to. Yanda was the type to bend over backwards for people who wouldn't do the same for him. He was the typical nice guy and Hlubi felt someone had to say no on his behalf and though it came with hate she took up that role to protect her husband from being taken advantage of. She did the same with clients who wore the suits yet refused to pay in full too. Her legal knowledge helped Yanda a lot

Ma Mbuzo: "I will keep that in mind, Lisakhanya. I'm sure Yamkela will want to apply for the job. How is Nandipha? Her sickness is concerning me and how it suddenly just happened out of the blue. Please make tea for me"

Hlubi clenched her fists to keep the rage from coming out. Ma Mbuzo knew she had to return to work yet she couldn't get her daughters to come and make tea. Hlubi poured water into the kettle and went to get a cup.

Hlubi: "Nandipha is perfect. In fact she's at her healthiest. No

sickness is expected they are all out of the blue"

Ma Mbuzo: "You being pregnant after years of not being able to and suddenly Yanda's other child getting sick"

Hlubi: "What are you implying, Mama. That I went to some witch and asked for a baby and in return sacrificed my daughter to get it?"

Ma Mbuzo: "Hayi that was not even what I was thinking but you seem to know a lot about such. First you got him to marry you knowing that you had sex

with over a hundred men. So whatever you are using must be working" Hlubi looked at her mother in law trying not to get worked up "I am sure that he doesn't even feel anything when he's with you because I imagine you being..." she pointed to Hlubi's private area, and Hlubi waited for her to finish but she didn't.

Hlubi: "You are disgusting. What mother sits and thinks about her son's sexual pleasures? I can't do this" she held her hands up "Make your own tea before you tell Yanda I bewitched you. You are a bitter

woman, Nolali and I'm sure Yanda's father was chased away by that" Ma Mbuzo stood clearly angry "Hit me and see how quickly you sit in a jail cell. I'm sure Tat'Mbuzo is hiding in the darkest tunnel waiting on you to die so he can come see his children. I wouldn't want to be next to you either" she walked away.

Ma Mbuzo: "A tunnel is what's between your legs!" she shouted but Hlubi walked out of the door. She had to take a moment to just sit in her car and let her anger out. It was not a first that Ma

Mbuzo spoke so ill to her but it was a first for Hlubi to retaliate in such a manner. She dialed Yanda's mother before his mother could twist the story. She told him everything and her part also. Yanda: "I will go there as soon as I'm back in town. I'm sorry that you had to deal with all of that, Wakwam and you were right to tell those two to look for a job" Hlubi: "I'm sorry that I disturbed you while working, Babe"

Yanda: "You didn't, sthandwa sam" he assured her "Khanya" he said

softly.

Hlubi: "Baby"

Yanda: "I believe you" Hlubi smiled. Yanda knew how his mother was. He could still remember how she used to insult their father to a point where it drove his father to drinking. One day he got so offended that he didn't bother coming back. It was anger that Yanda still held towards his mother but he felt obligated to be the man of the house to take care of the ladies. "I love you two" he smiled.

Hlubi: "We love you more,

sthandwa sam. Let me get back to work". To hear Yanda say that she believed her made her feel good because she twisted nothing about what happened.

Hours went by and Yanda's first stop was his mother's house. The anger had cooled down so he was planning on having a decent conversation with his mother.

After greeting his nephew and niece he went to sit down and as expected his mother's version of the story was completely different from Hlubi's.

Yanda: "I know that you started

it, Mama and should my wife have a miscarriage from the stress that you put her in I'll never forgive you. Don't push me to a point where I do as Tata did by walking out of that door and never looking back. My wife's peace of mind is more important to me because it's my baby that is growing in her body" he looked at his mother and she started to cry.

Ma Mbuzo: "I'm sorry that I reacted that way. I don't know why I am like this. I think that I have a calling and that's why I

am so hot tampered" Yanda shook his head "I'll go apologize to Lisakhanya and I promise to never stress her again. Please don't leave me like your father did, Yanda. I won't survive it" Yamkela: "Bhuti please forgive Mama" she pleaded.

Yanda: "You two had better apply for that job Khanya told you about. I'm going to have a baby soon and that means I won't be able to do the things that I used to. Go look for work and stop accusing my wife of poisoning me against supporting you financially.

I've played my role in your lives when Tata left and even when I had Nandi I made a plan.

Lisakhanya has no problem with helping at home. Had she had a problem then you guys would not have been getting the things that you are. You don't even know that when Nandi started university it was my wife's money that was used to buy you food, toiletries and even fix the broken toilet. She took it on because she wanted me to focus on taking Nandi through university. She does so much in the background

for you yet you've never heard her brag about it. I do not mind taking care of Mama but you two should start trying to take care of yourselves. This job pays R5000 with benefits. Who is going to give you so much money, Yandiswa?"

Yandi: "No one, Bhuti" she said while looking down.

Yanda: "And you, Yamkela" she gave the same reply as her sister "I work for the money that I give you. So go and work for yourselves so you can feel it's not easy. I'm to blame because I

spoiled you but it had to stop. You are grown women with children. It's only when you carry your own water will you appreciate each drop. Changed behaviour is what will make me forgive you this time not words. The way you treat my wife in my absence and presence will determine if I forgive you"

Ma Mbuzo: "I will prove to you that I'm sorry" she promised.

Yanda stood to leave "Yanda" he turned to look at his mom "Please may I have R500 for a church convention"

Yanda: "The cupboards are full,

Mama. You got your grant a few days ago yet you tell me that you can't pay for your church trip?"

Ma Mbuzo looked down. Yanda took a deep breath before taking his wallet out "I only have R250. I'm sure between you three the rest can be raised since you get grants and don't buy food. I've got to go home" he said goodbye and left.

Yami: "I think we should have told him that Rose was here and she'd like to get back into Nandi's life"

Ma Mbuzo: "Mxm Rose was just

dumb to have let him go. Now she's married so there is no chance of them trying again".

Yamkela: "Rose never deserved him but Nandi deserves to have her mother in her life so I hope Bhuti won't put up a fight. I for starters am going to go look for my CV so that I can apply. I can't watch R5000 go by and I'm sure Lisakhanya will let them give me the job since she's family" she left her mother and sister.

Yandiswa: "I'm not going to apply for such. The shop I worked for usually calls around this time so I

will wait" she folded her arms.

Ma Mbuzo: "Did you hear him say that she's the one supporting us with her money?" she laughed "I wonder if it's prostitution money or lawyer money" she added.

Yandiswa: "I'm not getting involved in this again, Mama. He chose her and there is nothing you can do. I'm going to mind my own business from now on and I suggest you do the same before they stop helping all together" she left her mother. Ma Mbuzo was going to apologize to Hlubi but not because she wants to but

because she didn't want to lose her son. There was something about Hlubi that she didn't like but she didn't know what exactly.

Lakhiwe told the kids that she invited Dali over for dinner that night. The question about whether he's her boyfriend was asked and she assured them that he was just a friend and she had no intention of ever making their relationship more than that.

When there was a knock on the door they knew that it was their guest. When Ntombi heard about

Dali's story she decided to cook a hearty meal because she believed that he hadn't had one in a long while since he had no family.

Ntombi: "Hi" she said with a smile
"Come in" she stood aside.

Dali: "Hi and thank you" he walked inside and looked to where the kids were busy setting the table
"It smells great" he looked at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Hopefully it tastes just as good". Dali followed her and the kids greeted him politely before offering him a seat. Banele had also gotten acquainted with Dali

so he was able to say a few things to him. To have their therapist in their home for dinner was strange but they took comfort in knowing that Dali wouldn't discuss what they spoke about with their mother. Ntombi explained that Dali was going through a tough time so they didn't mind having him over. The cake that he brought made him even more welcomed by the children. It was time to go and sit down so Ntombi went to the kitchen to get the food.

Bukhosi: "That seat is reserved

for family men only" he said just as Dali was about to sit in what they called "the chief chair" a chair Liyema always sat on during dinner. The other children looked at Bukhosi not believing his rudeness.

Bandile: "I'm sure it won't desolve when a non family man sit on it, Khosi" he looked at his brother "Sit, Bhut Dali" he added.

Dali: "I'll grab this one" he chose another chair "I didn't know that the chair was reserved, Bukhosi so please forgive me" he looked at the teenager. Bukhosi sat down

on the chair he stopped Dali from sitting on.

Bukhosi: "It's cool" he said quietly.

Ntombi: "I really hope that you all enjoy the meal because there is no back up" she placed the food on the table with the help of Banele before they sat down.

Amahle: "Your food is always the best"

Dali: "Thank you for inviting me over, Kayise". It felt good to be apart of a family again even if it wasn't his family. He knew that the seat Bukhosi sat on was

Liyema's so he knew that seeing another man on it was not easy for them. Having worked with teenagers for a long time he learned to observe their behaviours well and Bukhosi was showing him that no other man would ever replace his father. They said grace and dug in. Dali couldn't help but close his eyes for a second when he first tasted the good food on his plate. The last time he had such a meal was when Gugu was still strong enough to cook for them.

Ntombi: "Are you ready for the

dance at school tomorrow?" she looked at Amahle who was nodding with cheeks filled with food.

Amahle: "I called dad today and he said that he couldn't wait.

It's sad that Pretty doesn't have a father though but she said her uncle would go with her" she spoke about her friend.

Bubele: "Father's aren't just people who helped create a kid. It can be an uncle or granddad so I'm glad that she won't miss the dance because her dad is not around"

Amahle: "I'm glad that I have a

father. Dad's shirt is the same colour as my dress. We are going to be the best looking pair there I'm sure" she smiled.

Ntombi: "I'm sure of that too.

You two must take a lot of pictures. Please remind your father because he would be holding a camera yet forget to take pictures" the kids laughed.

Dali was smiling while listening to them talk. He thought that he and Gugu would have shared the same thing with their children.

He sat there and he was certain that Liyema missed those

moments.

Bandile: "Bhut Dali my garden is coming along well" Dali snapped out of his thoughts when he heard his name.

Dali: "You should show me before I go"

Bandile: "My father bought me some fertilizer so I think that's what making it grow so quickly"

Dali: "That and the fact that you are blessed with green fingers"

Amahle: "What does that mean?"

she laughed out before holding

Bandile's hand to inspect his fingers.

Bandile: "It means that whatever I touch in the garden grows well" he said proudly.

Amahle: "Ohhhh" she nodded.

Banele: "Mama please buy me some training gear since I'll be starting training soon"

Ntombi: "I don't know what you'll need, boy so will you come with me to the mall?"

Banele: "No, not with you because you'll see a pot or a shoe and we'll never leave the place. Rather give me the money and I'll go alone" Ntombi laughed.

Dali: "I know what you are

talking about. Women go to town for a loaf of bread and they return with the entire bakery" everyone laughed.

Banele: "Like tell me about it" he shook his head "It's annoying Mom so please stop it" he added.

Ntombi: "When I get there I suddenly see other things that I'll need. It's not deliberate nor planned. You guys can sit in the car and wait we don't mind"

Amahle: "I like shopping with Mom because dad keeps checking his clock". Ntombikayise likes that the kids still talked about Liyema

because just because he was out of sight he didn't have to be out of mind either. Bukhosi was awfully quiet but Ntombi didn't force him to speak.

Bukhosi: "Can I please go have my dessert in the lounge, Mama? There is a movie I'd like to watch" he looked at his mom.

Amahle: "Oh my word I nearly forgot about. Please can we go, Ma?" they all looked at her with pleading puppy eyes.

Ntombi: "Ye..." all five jumped from their seats before she could even finish get sentence. They were on

the couches watching before she knew it "Yes you may go" she finished her intended reply while shaking her head and Dali was left laughing.

Dali: "That was so quick" he looked over to the lounge.

Ntombi: "You see what we have to deal with yet you still want them" she shook her head while smiling.

Dali: "I'm sure you wouldn't trade them for anything. Can I help you clear the table?"

Ntombi: "Since my assistants chose a movie over me I'd really

appreciate that thank you" she stood to start clearing and Dali did the same.

Dali: "Your food is great thank you for the effort you put in" Ntombi nodded

Ntombi: "I'm glad that you enjoyed it. I saw what Bukhosi did and I apologize on his behalf. He feels the need to step up and be the man of the house. I spoke to him about it but clearly he wasn't listening"

Dali: "He was listening trust me. He just doesn't like having another man in the house that's

not his father"

Ntombi: "Well he'd best get used to it because my grandfather is arriving tonight. My brother Lwazi was kind enough to bring them" she smiled.

Dali: "How many siblings do you have?"

NTOMBI: "Two but my sister doesn't want anything to do with me. I only know about what's going on in her life through Lwazi. They are twins Lwazi and Nokwazi. They are my father's children from his second marriage" they spoke while moving from the

kitchen and the dinning area.

"How many do you have?" she looked back at Dali who was walking behind her.

Dali: "Non that I know of. I got orphaned when I was a baby so my first understanding of a home was at an orphanage because apparently I had no other family or at least non that wanted me"

NTOMBI: "I'm sorry to hear that".

Dali: "It's okay no use crying over spilt milk"

Ntombi: "There was a time in my life when I ran away from home

so I know what it is like to miss your family"

Dali: "I can't miss what I never knew, Kayise. According to the social worker who was in charge of my case I was left at the orphanage as a baby with a note saying that my parents had died. I can't even look for them because I was given my name and surname by the social worker just so they could have a birth certificate be made for me. All my details were guessed. I don't have a clan name like any typical African man. I do not even know

if I'm really Xhosa" Ntombi stopped what she was doing to look at him.

Ntombi: "With Amahle we at least know her family so they could give us those details. The mother ran I think because she knew dumping a baby came with legal consequences"

Dali: "You and Liyema did a great job with raising her. She seems like a happy young girl. Don't feel pity for me for my upbringing though because I dealt with those wounds. The government councillor they used to give us was

actually the reason I chose the profession. When you were a troubled child who was surrounded by other troubled children you get to understand young people going through difficult things better"

Ntombi: "And that's why you're so good with them" she smiled "I'm glad that you healed that wound. If you could see someone to deal with the struggles of your upbringing then why can't you do the same with your wife's passing?"

Dali: "Like I said I can't miss what I didn't know so with my

upbringing I only had to deal with the identity issue and also my abandonment issues but with Gugu..." he shook his head "Gugu I knew and made memories with her so I had to battle with those... I still do because I thought I finally found a permanent person to grow old with me. When you went from family to family you seek stability as an adult. Gugu was my stability but I had to let go once again just as I used to have to do when a family was no longer up for fostering me for whatever

reason" Ntombi's heart scattered. She looked at Amahle and was glad her daughter didn't have to deal with such.

Ntombi: "Is that why you take so long to meet someone else? Are you afraid that you will end up losing them too?"

Dali: "For someone who claims to not being good at "the therapy thing" you sure ask the right questions" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "I've been going to therapy for years so I think that's why. I have demons of my own to deal with"

Dali: "Don't we all?" he went to the table to get the last dish "I guess you could say that's why I'm taking my time to move on. It's been two years now"

Ntombi: "You'll get there" she brushed his arm "And the brother who gave you the condom where does he fit in?" they both laughed.

Dali: "It was a boy I was once fostered with so we reconnected again at varsity and call each other brothers. She's married and has children so I'm an uncle"

Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "Like my son said at dinner when we spoke about the friend without a father, family isn't always blood. Look at Mrs Bam and I. She was my mother's friend and that makes her my aunt because we have that kind of relationship. I'm back in therapy so please go back again"

Dali: "I'm talking to you" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I can't put things in perspective like you therapists do. I can be your financial therapist and help you budget but that is as far as it goes" she took a bite

of the chocolate cake.

Dali: "I actually do need help with that. Since Gugu died my money just doesn't last and I don't know where it goes" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "It goes to those reckless spendings, Mr Xhego" Dali gave a guilty laugh "If you don't mind me seeing your payslip then I don't mind helping and since you call yourself my friend I'll do it free"

Dali: "So the friendship is one sided?" Ntombi shrugged and they both laughed "Well since I'll be getting paid in a few days could

you please help me now since I have a feeling we won't see each other like this very soon?"

Ntombi: "Let me go get my notebook and pen" she left him eating cake.

Bukhosi: "Mom, can I please have more cake?" he bit his bottom lip when he saw Dali was alone in the kitchen.

Dali: "I don't know if your mom is one of those parents who watch their kid's sugar intake so I think it's best that you wait because I will end up giving you all of what's left" he tried to make

conversation so the moment wouldn't be as tense as it were at dinner with Bukhosi "I'm sorry once again for the chair issue, Bukhosi"

Bukhosi: "Are you my mom's boyfriend? Be honest"

Dali: "I'm not your mother's boyfriend. She found me at a down low and out of pity invited me to dinner" Bukhosi nodded "And even if I was I would never have made myself known so soon"

Bukhosi nodded once again.

Ntombi: "I found it so let's get started" Bukhosi asked for cake

again when she appeared and he scored himself another slice. Soon all of them wanted another until there was nothing left of the cake "I was hoping to take a slice for Mahlubandile on Monday but there goes that gesture" she said as she threw the cake container away.

Dali: "Ah forgive them. So let's begin" Ntombi went to sit next to him and she was shocked that he disclosed his salary. At first Ntombi thought it wasn't much but she realized that she was comparing it to her own income so

she dismissed that judgement. She helped him draw up a budget and she learned that he bought food for the orphanage that he grew up in every month so a chunk of money went to that.

Ntombi: "I actually know a wholesaler on the other side of the city that sells food in bulk and at a very good price. You buying the food at the major retail stores is costing you. I'm sure you'll save money when you buy in bulk at a wholesaler and then you can use the extra money for something else. Since you have all

important things covered I suggest that you use it as spending money. You can't work hard and not have money left to spoil yourself, Xolo" she smiled.

Dali: "I don't even remember the last time I "spoiled" myself. Tell me where the place is then I can go check it out"

Ntombi: "Also I see that you've got budget for your out of office activities" she raised a brow.

Dali: "Well yes so I can buy tickets to attend events should I be invited by clients like I did with Bubele's rugby game...you know

such things" he scratched his head.

Ntombi: "Daluxolo you are already stretching yourself thin so if a parent hears their children has invited you to a game or something then it's only right that they buy you a ticket, pay for your transport, food and such. I asked Mrs B about this program you have going on and I know that you don't get compensated for it so please when a parent can pay then have them pay. When you helped Bandile you spent nearly half of your day here

so it's just wrong of us as parents to not pay you"

Dali: "It's not like I have anything to do on weekends, Kayise. My friends have families so weekends are for family. By including me these kids save me from sitting at home feeling sorry for myself. I can't charge money for that I'm sorry" Ntombi raised her brow and he laughed "I'm sorry" he added.

Ntombi: "Let us put this budget to the test this month and we'll meet again for a feedback session"

Dali: "You even gave me a savings budget" he smiled "Are you sure you worked on the right salary?" he started to count and everything was accurate "Then where does the sudden extra come from?"

Ntombi: "The extra will only be there if you stick to the budget, Daluxolo. You can't not be disciplined with your money and be shocked to see that it didn't make it through the month.

Firstly you shop expensive, Bhuti"

Dali smiled "Since your car will be paid off next month you will have

even more to spend on yourself or save. Just don't buy a new car" she looked at him.

Dali: "Cross my heart and hope to die" he swore to not buy another car. They talked about the unnecessary expenses and Dali promised to stick to the budget though he wasn't used to having one.

Ntombi: "So what do you do for fun?" he looked at her as if she was talking a foreign language. "No fun makes Xolo a dull boy" she added.

Dali: "I read" Ntombi raised a

brow and he laughed "I don't know what I do for fun then, Kayise" he tried to think.

Ntombi: "There is this dance club right next to Banele's boxing academy. Wanna be my partner?" she asked enthusiastically.

Dali: "No thank you" he folded the budget and put it in his pocket "Dance lessons are not in my budget" Ntombi laughed so hard that the kids turned to look at her. She apologized for making noise.

Ntombi: "That was a good excuse, Mr Xhego" she pointed at him

while laughing "I'll cover the costs" she offered.

Dali: "It's not about money, Kayise. I don't see myself doing vosho or whatever"

Ntombi: "It's actually ballroom dancing so we'll be doing the tango"

Dali: "Even worse"

Ntombi: "Why doesn't anyone wanna go with me?" she sulked "I figured I'd tone my body and have fun while at it and apparently dancing does that. I wonder how long my brother will be in town but since he's got a girlfriend and

kids to go back to I doubt he'll stay long. I guess I'll just have to dance alone with an imaginary partner until the instructor is free and pities me"

Dali: "Okay I'll go to your first class just so you wouldn't be the awkward one there" he hid his face in his hands like one who regrets it already.

Ntombi: "Thank you, friend" she smiled "I'll call you to tell you the day and time" she added.

Dali: "So now I'm your friend?"

Ntombi: "Yes because now we'll be hanging out together as friends

should"

Dali: "I regret this already but hey what are friends for right?"

Ntombi: "Exactly"

Dali: "Let me go home then, friend before you make me go shark diving or something" he put his dessert dish in the sink "I will embarrass you. You know that right?" he said talking about his dancing or lack thereof.

Ntombi: "As I will you" she smiled before watching him go to the lounge to say goodbye to the kids. Ntombi walked him to his car and watched as he drove off. She

went back inside and called Lwazi to hear how far they were and when Ntombi heard her grandmother was an hour away she got started on the dirty kitchen to avoid Makhulu's unimpressed look. She was excited to have them with her. She needed her family by her side. An hour and 30 minutes went by and there was a knock on the door. Ntombikayise ran to open and Lwazi lifted his big sister in the air when he saw her before going to greet the children like the typical uncle that he was.

Tamkhulu pushed Makhulu's wheelchair inside and Ntombi held them both tightly.

Tamkhulu: "Mntanam" he kissed Ntombi's cheek and she loved the familiar feeling of his beard poking her face.

Makhulu: "Look how much my children have grown. Come and say hello to Makhulu" the kids smiled before hugging her "I bought you these sweets. The oldest one must divide them evenly and when there is one odd one left give it to Makhulu" she gave them the sweets.

Ntombi: "They just had an entire cake, Ma. Keep the sweets for tomorrow"

Bubele: "Ahhh, Mama" he looked at his mother.

Bukhosi: "Makhulu thought about her adorable great grandkids when she bought these yet you don't want us to accept them" he held his heart.

Banele: "I'm sure she spent her last pension money" he acted sad too.

Bandile: "Maybe they are all the way from the Eastern Cape too" he said in a whisper.

Amahle: "I don't mind you keeping them, Mom I'm full" her brothers mumbled at how she messed the moment up and the elders laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Where is the man of the house? We can't just barge in and sit on the couch when I haven't greeted the man of the house" his typical traditional self said. The kids looked at their mother and so did Lwazi because he knew about the divorce.

Lwazi: "I'll go watch TV with the kids" he said to Ntombi.

Ntombikayise: "Thank you for

driving all this way to bring them, Mntase" she gave him another hug. It was kind of him to especially since they weren't his biological grandparents.

Lwazi: "I'd move mountains for you" he kissed her cheek before going to the lounge with the kids. Ntombi pushed her grandmother to the dining room and the elderly people looked at each other because they knew something was not right.

Makhulu: "What is wrong, Ntombikayise? Please don't tell me you have this cancer that is

finishing young people"

Ntombi: "No, no Makhulu I'm not sick" she said quickly and saw her grandmother close her eye clearly relieved to hear that.

Tamkhulu: "Let me sit because I have a feeling that I'm not going to like this one bit" he pulled out a chair and sat. Ntombi sat down too and took a deep breath.

Ntombi: "Ma do you still remember how I used to call you telling you that my marriage has changed?"

Makhulu nodded "well Liyema and I couldn't fix it" she added before looking down.

Tamkhulu: "Good thing we are here then that way you can get his family here and we as elders will help you children fix this"

Ntombi's heart sank.

Ntombi: "We did that already, Tamkhulu" she said in a whisper.

Tamkhulu: "The last time I checked we were your elders, Ntombikayise. So who exactly did the two of you sit with if not with your family elders? Don't tell me you went to white people and paid them money for something we can do" he said in a stern voice. Ntombi told them the entire

story and she could see how hurt and disappointed they were "You children of today dispose of everything even people" Tamkhulu added "When the black family structure got broken down by the apartheid system I thought that you children would be the generation to rebuild it but one problem and you just give up. Only a black man can teach black boys how to be black men. With the family broken who is going to teach those children how to be men who knows their culture?" Ntombi started to cry and her

grandfather took a breath to calm down "The same way we were your council during your lobola negotiations is the same way we should have been your council of advisers when Liyema's family representes him in trying to solve the problem. Imagine how it feels to hear that your child went through such all alone" he took his cloth out to wipe his tears. Like Bandile he was quick to tears. Makhulu: "Our child was putting my health first, Tata. But your grandfather is right, Ntombikayise you should have told

us because we needed to support you. I can only imagine how it was for you to be surrounded only by his family when you sat all alone crying. I honestly can't say that I am surprised though. You two started on such a shaky foundation. You went from being just his incubator and out of nowhere you two came to tell us you got married without us knowing. I'm saddened by this because no parent want to hear their child returned from marriage but to be honest I am not shocked. We love you so I will

not shout at you but I will be here for you. Marriage is not easy"

Tamkhulu: "It's not easy yet here we are still married though it was not easy"

Makhulu: "So what did you expect, Tata? For our child to be married alone while her husband is married to another woman emotionally?"

Ntombi you know that I told you to not persevere in situations where you feel like you are oppressed just so you can keep your marital status. I'd rather have you return home than have

your corpse be brought to us because you had a heart attack trying to hold on to something that no longer served you. Even when I opened the door the first thing I told Tata is how you've lost weight. I know you children and diets so I thought that's why but now I know the real cause. I'd rather you be a divorcee rather than a corpse. I just ask that you not throw yourself at another man soon. Let him have other women but you don't dare try to compete with him. Focus on yourself and your children. You're in

your early thirties, Mntanam so if God has a man for you then he'll come when the time is right because I don't want you being alone all your life but for now I want you to be alone. You're so young had it not been for the issue with your womb you'd still have more children in future. I'm sure you expected me to shout at you and ask why you didn't accept a second wife but you'll never hear those words come from my mouth" Ntombi was sobbing and nodding. It felt good to hear her grandmother day such.

Tamkhulu: "I'm just saddened by the fact that she didn't call her elders as if she's some orphan with no one but I hear what your grandmother is saying and she is right. We are here now and we will help you with the children as best we can" he stood to hug his little girl for a long long while "We love you so much" he whispered.

Ntombi: "I love you too, Tamkhulu so much" she tightened her hug.

Makhulu: "We also thank you for being willing to take us in because we were starting to struggle. Your uncle's wife would get so

angry when she had to look after me that I feared she'd hit me. Your grandfather was the one who was washing me lately because we didn't want to bother your uncle and his wife" Ntombi's heart sank.

Ntombi: "But I paid her for doing it. It's not like she didn't get rewarded for being your carer"

Tamkhulu: "It got so bad that they filled in forms for us to go to an old age home" NTOMBI was shocked by the news "we didn't want to bother you by asking you to take us but when you told us

we were so happy because I'm sure we would have died quickly in an old age home" he said in a shaky voice.

Makhulu: "Plus being with you and the children will make me look forward to life again. Your uncle even put us in a policy and his wife would ask me when I'd die so she can get money" Ntombi felt her anger rise.

Ntombi: "I'm going to call her and tell her exactly what I think of her. She's going to wait a long time for that money because you're not dying" she said in anger.

Tamkhulu: "Lwazi is going bro stay at the house free since he works that side now. I told him to marry that girl though because there will be no vat en sit in my house" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "The children and I are planning to go for a trip to just forget about reality for a while."

Tamkhulu: "Why are you wasting money to go stay in someone's house and be served food you can cook at home, Ntombikayise"

Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "That's what we are going for, Tata to go and relax

while others do things for us but mostly it's just to reconnect as a family. I will find a wheelchair friendly place so Makhulu can also get the best experience"

Tamkhulu: "I sold my cows so that I can help you here. I can't just come and hang my feet while you work hard to buy food. I also came with seeds so we can eat from the garden" Ntombi was glad to hear that Bandile would have a mentor because her grandfather was great at gardening.

Makhulu: "I feel so much better

already. I feel like I'm home because of the laughter coming from the lounge. Push me to where the happiness is coming from Ntombi" Ntombi did as asked. The kids were watching a comedy so everyone was laughing until tears came from their eyes. Ntombi warmed food up for Lwazi and her grandparents and served them on treys so they could eat while watching TV. Lwazi took leave for a week so Ntombi planned to go spoil him and buy her nieces gifts for Lwazi to take with him. The night was great

and Ntombi felt like a child as she sat between her grandparents on the couch resting her head on her grandmother's shoulder while her feet were on her grandfather's lap. She needed the parental warmth so she planned to take it all in

.

Liyema and Elaine arrived at Lungile's house for dinner. Alu gave Elaine a cold stare but her husband pleaded with her to try. They had dinner and Alu had to pretend she didn't want to kick Elaine in the face. She hardly

looked at Elaine. Time came for Elaine and Liyema to go.

Elaine: "Thank you so much for the lovely dinner, Alu" she smiled but Alu gave her a closed mouth smile. Lungile poked his wife's hand subtly.

Alu: "It was my pleasure" she smiled "Not" she said in a cough so they wouldn't hear. When Alu finally gave herself chance to look at Elaine she couldn't take her eyes off her "You look familiar" Alu said to Elaine. Elaine looked surprised.

Liyema: "The world is a small

place so it's possible" he smiled.

Alu: "What schools did you attend?"

Liyema: "This one was home schooled" he laughed.

Alu: "What's your last name?" she looked at Elaine more attentively.

Lungile gave Alu a look so she'd stop interrogating their guest.

Elaine: "Bhokwe" she said.

Alu: "Elaine Bhokwe?" she seemed to be thinking "I had an Elaine in my class once but she wasn't a Bhokwe" she shook her head.

Lungile: "Even if she was she's not this Elaine because she was

homeschooled as Liyema just mentioned" he tried to make Alu stop.

Elaine: "Baby I think it's time to go" she smiled.

Liyema: "Alunamda thank you Sisi for the dinner. Next time we'll invite you"

Alu: "Are you sure you don't know me?" she ignored Liyema "You really look familiar. Alunamda is my makoti name but my maiden name is Phelisa April. Does it ring a bell?"

Elaine: "Nope" she shook her head quickly "we've got to go" she

headed to the door and Liyema followed. They said goodbye and left.

Lungile: "People look alike so I'm sure you had a lookalike as a schoolmate. Thank you for trying to be welcoming" he kissed his wife.

Alu: "I hope so because had she been the person I went to school with then it would have been rather disturbing with me knowing what I know about her lookalike"

Lungile: "It's not her so don't crack your skull over it. Our

guests are gone, Cwenga is sleeping so it's time for mommy and daddy to have some fun" he kissed her before picking her up to go to their room. Having had many girls in his life Lungile was enjoying married life as it made him grow in many aspects. ❤️

S2-INSERT 12

It was early in the morning yet Ntombi's grandparents were up and dressed up like people who were also going to work. She loved having them around and she

realized her grandmother still had mobility even though it isn't as it used to be. Ntombi had rails be installed in their room leading to their bathroom so she'd have something to hold on to on days where she would feel strong enough to get up from her wheelchair to walk. Because they didn't eat cereal Ntombi had to make soft porridge for them and she was laughing while making it because she could see her grandfather throwing air punches while ducking.

Tamkhulu: "I was showing these

boys that I used to be a boxer"
he said to Ntombi when she put
their porridge on the table.

Banele: "There's no way,
Tamkhulu" he laughed.

Ntombi: "My grandfather was
regional champion in his days so
you best believe it. I even have a
picture to prove it. You can learn
a thing or two from my dad" she
said with such pride.

Banele: "I'm sorry for
underestimating you, Tamkhulu.
Would you mind helping me with
my training?"

Makhulu: "With him by your side

you are sure to be the next Muhammad Ali, mzukulu. Had it not been for his knee injury your grandfather would have made world champion. He was so quick" she said as she remembered the good old days.

Tamkhulu: "I don't want a lazy trainee so you best be prepared to sweat. Unlike that gym of yours I'll be training you on the streets" he felt Banele's arms and nodded.

Amahle: "Ayeye, Benele" she laughed as she imagined the training Tamkhulu was talking

about "Tamkhulu will have you running up table mountain" they all laughed.

Benele: "I'm ready" he threw a few jabs.

Tamkhulu: "That's my boy" he patted Benele in the back.

Ntombi could see that the boys enjoyed having a male figure in the house again. They even let him sit in the "chief chair" and it seemed to be fitting for him.

Bandile: "Don't plant your seeds without me please, Tamkhulu. I really want to see how you do things"

Tamkhulu: "I will wait for you, my boy. Today I will just be fertilizing the soil so that you won't have to come from school and do that" he put sugar and milk in his porridge.

Ntombi: "I can ask someone to come and do it. There are always men on the side of the road looking for work"

Tamkhulu: "Ntombikayise and wasting money" he shook his head "You want to go get some strange man to do something when there is a man who is here all day that can do it? You are not afraid of

things, my child. You can't go pick up a man in the street to bring him here to your house. People are crooks" he said before eating "Fertilizing soil will not kill me" he added.

Makhulu: "Let him do it please, Mntanam. Your grandfather is easier to be around when he is doing his own things" they all laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Bukhosi took me for a walk yesterday so I even know where the closest shop is. I will sometimes just go for a walk with my wife. It is nice and quiet here"

Bukhosi: "I enjoyed that walk very much" he smiled.

Tamkhulu: "He told me that you told him to stop acting like the man of the house" Ntombikayise looked at Bukhosi and couldn't believe he snitched. Suddenly she felt like the older sister not the mother "When manhood is calling you then you've got to answer. It's unfortunate that he had to be forced by circumstance but you must accept that these boys will always feel a need to protect you now that their father is gone. They are boys well on their way

to manhood and even had their father still been here it would have happened. So let Bukhosi step into this new phase, Mntanam but Bukhosi to your mother you are a child. You don't dare let this new phase think that you can be her equal. I do not play, I bleksem unruly children so you boys best behave" the kids laughed at how he said bleksem.

Bukhosi: "I won't do anything that'll get me bleksemed" they laughed.

Bubele: "And that cane that's always in hand just makes me

shudder now" laughter again.

Makhulu: "Ntombi won't they be late for school?"

Bubele: "Our transport comes to get us here at the house, Makhulu"

Makhulu: "And little Amahle?"

Amahle: "We go together,

Makhulu. They first drop me off then they go to their school.

Today we'll all be talking about the dance at school. I was the prettiest there" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "Awa Tamkhulu's little flower really was pretty. I wanted to go with" Amahle

laughed.

Amahle: "Why didn't you say so, Tamkhulu?"

Tamkhulu: "Because your father was already next to you as the teachers said it should be" he let out a gentle laugh. The school transport arrived and soon the chaos of packing bags and looking for blazers began. When they were good they said goodbye to their elders.

Makhulu: "You are doing such a good job with raising them, Ntombi. I can not believe Amahle is going to high school next year.

I thought she was still in standard two" she teased and Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Her not getting any taller is what makes her seem like she's still in a lower grade"

Tamkhulu: "I thought that I would want to punch Liyema when I saw him but I saw that he still respects you and he loves his children. To me it's still unbelievable that you two gave up"

Makhulu: "He gave up, Tata. I'm not saying our child is perfect but when she used to call me it was

to ask advice on how to make her marriage feel like a marriage again. He gave up not her. I personally wish him no ill and I hope you don't either, Ntombi"

Tamkhulu: "She wasn't raised to. She knows wishing others ill is witchcraft" Ntombi laughed. Aunt V arrived just in time. Ntombi told her about the elders arriving so she wasn't shocked to find them there. Ntombi did introductions. Makhulu: "Don't worry, my child we won't be in your way. My husband is a man who prefers to be outside most of the day.

Bukhosi showed me a show that I like so I will watch that" she said with a smile.

Aunt V: "You don't have to stay in one place, Makhulu. I'm sure I can work while you're around. I also heard sis Laksiwe say that your mqusho is top notch so I'd like to taste it" Makhulu laughed.

Ntombi: "Like you just heard, sis V they are independent people so you just have to keep them fed and also run little errands for them in and around the house please"

Aunt V: "I have a feeling that we

will be good friends. They remind me of my parents" she smiled.

Ntombi: "I have to go. Bazali I'll see you later. I love you" she hugged them.

Makhulu: "I love you too. Tell Mahlubandile to come and see me. I had a disturbing dream about her and I want to advise her on how to protect her pregnancy against the dark things of this world. I also want to tell her which food is best for pregnant woman. All those things I did when you were pregnant"

Ntombi: "I'll tell her, Mama and

she'll be so happy for the advice"
she went to get her bags and
said goodbye before leaving.

Aunt V: "Can I make tea before I
start working?"

Tamkhulu: "We don't want to
delay you"

Aunt V: "No Tamkhulu I first
have coffee before I work. Sis
Ntombi knows about it"

Makhulu: "Then we would love
some too, Mntanam thank you"
she smiled. They watched aunt V
go to the kitchen to make coffee.

"I wish I was not in this chair.
I'm the one who should have been

helping Ntombi around the house"

Tamkhulu: "Maybe being here will strengthen those legs, mkam. You never took a few steps when you were at home so to see you walk a bit makes me happy"

Makhulu: "Those rails Ntombi put in our room helps, Tata. I could even walk to the toilet this morning" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "I saw you, my dear. We have to remember to not treat her like a child in her own house. Here all three of us are adults so no undermining how she does things"

Makhulu: "I can't undermine habits that I taught her" she laughed "She cooks and cleans like me and has taken some of our principles to raise her children" she pushed herself to the lounge and her husband followed.

Tamkhulu: "We are blessed to have her. So many of our friends and neighbors are in old aged homes and thanks to our own son, we nearly ended up there too. God blessed us when he directed Ntombi to us. I hope that we add to her life as much as she does to ours"

Makhulu: "I think that we do, Tata. This entire weekend she just blended in with the children as she wouldn't let us out of her sight. She'd be hugging or just putting her head on my lap" she laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Uyatefa" they both laughed "Did you really see the marriage ending coming?" he asked.

Makhulu: "No, Tata but I had a feeling that Liyema loved the idea of having a mother for his children therefore interpreted it as being in love that's why he

made the rush decision to marry her. He wanted to do it while the high was still there but as time goes a high becomes a low and in those times we reflect and admit that maybe that was not the best of choices. That's why he was able to just give up. It was not love at first sight to him, he had to know her to love her. I think with this woman it was love at first sight as I think it was with his first wife. It was a sense of familiarity and sad thing is that it came when he and Ntombikayise were experiencing

difficulties"

Tamkhulu: "Well when he could reflect on his relationship with Ntombikayise and realized that it was other aspects which he thought was love that drove him to marry her in such a rush then he is to have another reflection with this other woman one day because he did no better with her. He rushed into it as he did with Ntombikayise so for his sake I hope he wasn't interpreting lust as love since he seems to misinterpret love a lot. With his first wife he interpreted

friendship for romance allowing his father to arrange marriage for him and look where that ended up. With Ntombi he interpreted having children with her as romance and look where that ended up. With the current one he might be interpreting lust as love so let's wait and see how that will end up. Those are the type of children absent parents produce. I'm sure that Zola was not always as attentive as she is now when she was still blinded by the money and we know his father was emotionally absent to the

end. It makes children see love or the lack thereof for what it is not"

Makhulu: "But Ntombikayise didn't get that emotional love from her parents for some of her adult life. So I do not understand what you mean"

Tamkhulu: "Ntombi's parents were emotionally available and she can still remember it to this day. The trouble started with the other wife treating her bad in her own mother's house but our girl already knew love by then from her parents. What drove her

to the Bonga character was not the lack of love from her father but desperation to get away from the step mother. She managed to walk away from Bonga because she knew what he served her was not love. She loves Liyema while he loved the idea of her and what she added to his life. Our child chose to walk away again because Bonga's situation made her turn to herself for love and she realized it's the only love that was permanent, then we found her and added to it and then her children added even more

so. I'm proud of her for knowing the love of self. The lack of the love of self make us stay in situations we should long have abandoned" Makhulu looked at her husband impressed "Don't look at me like that. I've been speaking to the boys who go see this man they talk to. Those are the type of things he apparently talks to them about" he laughed "Our parents would have told us to man up and that a man doesn't cry. So I'm glad Ntombi allows her boys to cry so they can heal" he added.

Makhulu: "Haibo so he discusses Ntonbi with her children in her absence?"

Tamkhulu: "He has these discussions with the boys for their sake. I'm just applying what they say he teaches them to our Ntombi's situation"

Makhulu laughed.

Makhulu: "I think they love having a man in the house. I see even Bukhosi prefers to talk to you"

Tamkhulu: "Bukhosi has the mind of an old man" he laughed softly
"He prefers to talk to someone

with wisdom and not book knowledge. Ntombi shouldn't be concerned about him. He is going to be alright. I also enjoy having children around me again" he smiled "will you go out and take a walk with me after tea before it gets too hot?" he looked at his wife.

Makhula: "will you push me?" she smiled like a teen in love.

Tamkhula: "If I don't push you who will? I used to run after you around the house when we were younger"

Makhula: "Tata" she blushed and

looked to check if Vuyi was still in the kitchen. She remembered those days when he'd run after her and when he caught her he'd love her like it were the last time he'd get a chance to do it. She was glad that they were fortunate enough to be together in old age.

Tamkhulu: "So pushing you around now won't be a problem" he kissed her hand. Vuyi came with a tray and served the elders. .

Aunt Vuyi: "Sis Lakhawe asked that I make you something else to eat since soft porridge isn't

much. Are you elders going to eat now?"

Tamkhulu: "Make it in an hour or so, ntombam. For now sit and have your usual coffee as you would have had we not been here. I want to hear which part of Tsolo you are from" he sipped his tea. Aunt Vuyi sat down and loved that it felt like she was sitting with her parents. The conversation lasted so long that she started her usual duties late. Tamkhulu put his hat on and took his wife for a walk to familiarize his wife with the area as Bukhosi

did with him. The city life would get a bit of used to but Ntombikayise's house was in a quiet area so they loved that about it.

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Liyema's employees still had to get used to seeing him walking into the office holding hands with Elaine. Some saying that Ntombi looked much better by his side but Elaine didn't allow office gossip to dim her shine. They went to Liyema's office as they usually did before Elaine started her duties. Elaine: "I booked a table for us

for lunch at some sushi place.

"You're going to love it" she didn't bother closing the door behind them because she knew if they had privacy she'd never get to work.

Liyema: "I don't love sushi"

Elaine: "Who doesn't love sushi?"

Liyema: "Me" he looked at get

"But you know what I love?" he

smiled "You" Elaine blushed. "Plus

I am going to see Lungile around lunch" he added.

Elaine: "But you saw him Friday"

Liyema: "I'm extremely close to

my brother, Elaine. Why do you

think I ran to him when I got kicked out? Even Lakiwe knew that nothing could separate us. She even had this thing where she'd go pick him up herself when she felt he neglected me too much" he laughed while shaking his head. Elaine rolled her eyes behind him.

Elaine: "I just want more of you now that I don't have to hide my love for you" she sulked.

Liyema: "Absence make the heart grow fonder. I can't work with you and live with you and spend my free time with you. Even my

kids are not this clingy" Elaine couldn't believe that he just said she's clingy. She was excited to be with him and wanted to be with him as often as possible but she decided to give him time to breathe.

Elaine: "Have you ever considered moving, babe? Get a new start after everything. Here we are too judged by people so to go elsewhere the people won't know our story so they won't judge us"

Liyema: "My immediate family is here and my life too and by my life I'm talking about my kids"

Elaine: "Aren't you tired of running into your ex?"

Liyema: "I like running into my ex wife because we have things to discuss. I hope this is not you feeling insecure"

Elaine: "I'm not feeling insecure"

Liyema: "Good so don't suggest moving to me again because it won't happen"

Elaine: "Where is your sister in law from?"

Liyema: "She's actually your home girl. She's from Grahamstown so I'm sure your face looks familiar because she saw you randomly in

town or something. Because you being in the same school as her is impossible right?"

Elaine: "Completely. Let me love and leave you" she kissed him.

Someone clearing their throat by the door interrupted them.

Liyema: "Othunyiweyo" he smiled when he saw one of his clients.

After months of running after Othunyiweyo he finally got to do the Advertising for Kumkani Construction.

Othu: "I'm here for our 8 o'clock" she said and watched Elaine run out closing the door behind her.

"So the rumours are correct? You left your wife for another woman?" she went to sit down. Their relationship had gone to them calling each other by first names already but it wasn't personal.

Liyema: "It was not planned. I fell in love and decided to pursue it and I know as a woman you already took my wife's side"

Othu: "It's not my place to take sides but I do sympathize with her. If Craig were to do the same thing I'd have tied him and his mistress up, taken them to

the desert and leave them to dry, literally or I'd have shot them.

How I feel would have determined the punishment"

Liyema could see that she was not joking.

Liyema: "Good thing Lakhiwe is not you then" he laughed.

Othu: "Just the fact that she didn't drag your reputation through the mud by talking to the press shows how good of a person she is. Craig and I went through the most. I literally dodged bullets because of that man so are you telling me that

you just easily let go?"

Liyema: "Shamefully yes but not regretfully so. I am ashamed how how I left her but I don't regret deciding to because I'm happy"

Othu: "Okay but I'm sad to hear that you spilt. Just the other day Craig and I spoke about inviting you and your family over for dinner"

Liyema: "Elaine and I could come" he said hoping that Othu would agree. To have a personal friendship would strengthen their business relationship too meaning that Liyema would have the KC

account for a long while as there would be trust between them.

Othu: "No thanks to small talk and awkward silences" she shook her head.

Liyema: "What could Lakhiwe possibly have that makes her the perfect candidate for a dinner invite and Elaine not?"

Othu: "Lakhiwe and I are women who have a lot in common. We are both women with growing careers. We both had a multiple pregnancy and all boys at that. We are both raising daughters we didn't give birth to. We both can't

have any more children though we want to. The list is endless"

Liyema: "And you know all of that how?"

Othu: "The gala event she attended with you. With us women it's not about bonding over beer and a game. We bond based on things we relate to. Laksiwe and I spoke like we knew each other for years that night. In fact she was partly the reason why I gave your company a chance to handle our account. I thought that if she could be so graceful and accommodating then

surely the husband must have qualities that will make a good working relationship good"

Liyema: "So will you take back your business now?"

Othu: "I'm able to separate business and personal issues. I'm happy with the care you give KC"

Liyema: "Thank you for the professionalism. If you don't want to invite me to dinner. How about I invite you and Craig to mine and Elaine's place?"

Othu: "Let's forget the dinner and talk business, Liyema" she said while taking out a file.

Liyema knew better than to push the dinner issue so he got to the business at hand.

Ntombikayise couldn't wipe the smile off her face as she kept looking at the colourful flowers while she was signing for them. She thanked the delivery guy and took the box of chocolates and flowers from him. She had no idea who they were from but before she read the card she first hugged the bunch of flowers. The arrangement was beautiful and the chocolates one of her

favourites. She couldn't remember the last time she got spoiled like that but it had been years. "She's a strong cup of coffee in a world that is drunk on cheap wine, of shallow love" - JMStorm. Read the quote on the card.

Hlubi: "Ntombikayise Elephant do you have a new man in your life?" she went to smell the lovely flowers.

Ntombi: "They are from Othunyiweyo Knight. I met her at some business event that I accompanied Liyema to a long while ago" she smiled "I didn't

think she'd remember me through. Clearly she heard about the divorce" she offered Hlubi chocolates.

Hlubi: "Woman unity tastes good" she said before taking a bite of the chocolate. "I thought you were getting in the groove again" she gave a sneaky smile.

Ntombi: "I am just not with a man. Let me go find something to my flowers in. This has brighten up my day so much. It's like she knew that I was thinking about the last time someone got me flowers" she quickly went to find a

vase and when she found it she filled it with water and placed the flowers on her desk.

Hlubi: "They are beautiful" she helped Ntombi arrange the flowers while in the vase. They sat and spoke about work while eating chocolates and Ntombi couldn't remember enjoying office time that much. She didn't have to adjust much at Elephant Attorneys because they were truly like one big family.

Ntombi: "Oh Makhulu asked that you go see her because she had a bad dream about you" Hlubi

organized her files in a rush "And then?" she asked.

Hlubi: "I'm going to go see her before my client gets here. With my mother in law being as is I can't ignore an elder's dream.

Never... not when I'm carrying precious cargo" she said before rushing out the door. Ntombi looked at her flowers again and felt warm and fuzzy inside to have been thought of by someone. She didn't have Othu's number so she couldn't call to say thank you but she knew where Kumkani Construction was so when she had

time she planned on popping by Othu's office to give her a personal thank you. Hlubi arrived at Ntombikayise's in no time and found Makhulu knitting while Tamkhulu was working hard in the garden. She went crazy with excitement when she saw them because they were like her grandparents to her.

Tamkhulu: "I knew that we wouldn't have been able to get rid of you even with the divorce" he joked and they all laughed.

Hlubi: "Never! I'm here to stay, Tamkhulu" she sat down and

after talking for a while the old man went to the garden once again. "Ntombi said you wanted to talk to me, Makhulu" she looked at Makhulu.

Makhulu: "And I'm glad you came so quickly. Mahlubandile, my child I had a dream that you had lost your child. Pregnancy is very sacred, my baby... very sacred. So it is important that you be careful of things that might damage this sacred process. I'm not saying that someone is bewitching you but I'm saying that energy is a real thing. Do

you let people touch your belly now that they know you are pregnant?" Hlubi smiled.

Hlubi: "Yes, Makhulu. I am so excited I can't help but share the joy" she rubbed her belly.

Makhulu: "You can share it without getting too personal. Please stop that nonsense of making everyone touch you. Some people come with their anger, some with their grief, some with their pain. They carry all those heavy energies and then come to touch your belly, a sacred place now since a soul is growing in

there, a sensitive soul who takes on all these energies. In my time the only person who could touch a pregnant woman was her mother and husband but you kids allow even strangers in town to. Please stop that bad habit. I came here with a herb that my grandmother used to use to clear bad energies. I used it on Ntombi too whenever she'd come from the hospital after being touched by nurses we didn't know. You just crush a leaf and whenever you come home after a day of meetings people you put it in your

bath water to cleanse yourself of the energies that you picked up"

Hlubi: "Oh wow, Makhulu thank you so much"

Makhulu: "And if you know someone hates you don't allow them to touch your belly even if it's family. If they are hostile towards you don't allow them near that sacred place" she pointed to Hlubi's belly. "Go to the downstairs bedroom and bring me that green bag. The cleansing herb is in there" Hlubi did as told. Advice from an elder was not something that Hlubi did unless

that elder was Ma Mbuzo of course. So she took the herbs with a heart filled with gratitude. She got up and offered to make lunch for Makhulu and Tamkhulu. She was advised on the food to eat to avoid pregnancy complications too.

Ntombikayise's grandparents were known as people who spoke their mind and what everyone loved was the fact that what was in those minds was always relevant and informative. Hlubi was glad they were close so she'd come to get blessings from them

and teachings since her grandmother died a year ago. She promised to limit the hands she'd allow to touch her and she vowed to herself to never let Ma Mbuzo and his daughters to touch her.

Yanda was busy trying design ideas for his female line. He knew that he'd get new clients should he expand the target market. His daughter and wife being his biggest supporters in the new venture and he felt blessed to have them. There was a soft knock on the door.

Yanda: "Not now please, Lwando" he said thinking that it was his intern. He looked up and was shocked to see that it Nandipha's mother. Yanda stood as Rose walked inside.

Rose: "I know that you don't want to see me and with good reason but please listen to me Yanda" she spoke quickly and told him why she showed up in his life again. She was still happily married so she didn't come to wreck his marriage but only asked to get to know Nandi.

Yanda: "Are you going to break my

daughter's heart, Rose?" that was his only concern.

Rose: "No I promise that I won't do that again. I can't raise my other children knowing that I left one behind anymore. I even came clean to my husband about having left a child and he was angry but forgave me. I'm here with no agenda. I just want to see her and I can't do it without you knowing"

Yanda: "Nandipha is 23, Rose so she is fully capable of making that choice for herself but I must warn you though, she

already found herself a mother in my wife so if she declines you should respect it"

Rose: "I saw your wife at your mother's house" Yanda was not shocked that his mother kept seeing Rose a secret "Your wife is a good woman but your mother doesn't like her"

Yanda: "I know all of that. Let me talk to my wife and Nandi about this because like I said Nandipha is an adult" Rose breathed.

Rose: "Thank you. You've done well for yourself, Yanda" she looked

around.

Yanda: "Thank you". At some point he dreamt about sharing the success he had with her.

Rose: "Let me go. This is my number just in case you want to contact me or Nandi" Yanda took the piece of paper and said goodbye to her. He wondered how seeing her again would be but he was glad that his heart had no reaction. Clearly it got stolen by Hlubi long ago and he was glad. He knew he couldn't make the decision on behalf of Nandipha so he was going to let her decide

since it was her life Rose wanted to be apart of. Hours went by and Yanda told his wife what happened earlier on. Hlubi couldn't believe that the Mbuzo women lied and said Rose was Rorisang but she was glad to hear that Rose came to Yanda herself and not through the Mbuzo women because it would have angered Yanda. They waited for Nandi to come back home and her father told her what happened.

Nandi: "Why didn't you tell her that I don't need her, Tata?" she said with a hint of anger.

Yanda: "Had you been ten years old I might have but you are a young adult who can tell her that yourself"

Nandi: "But I don't want to see her" she said with frustration.

Hlubi: "Nana I know that you want closure and to talk to her might do that. I know that you want to know why exactly she left and this is your chance to do that. We aren't saying welcome her into your life but we say that should you still have questions to matters only she has answers to please don't deny yourself the

opportunity to know them. But also if you don't want that we won't hold it against you because like your father said you are an adult"

Nandi: "I do not want to see her" both parents nodded "And I have news... I have an interview on Friday" she smiled and so did her parents.

Yanda: "It's about damn time they called you for interviews. I'm so proud of you" he hugged her.

Hlubi: "Me too" she hugged her daughter too.

Nandi: "This is all that I need.

You two...oh wait you three of you" they all laughed. Nandipha went to have dinner in her room because she wanted to talk to her boyfriend. He advised that she hears what Rose had to say and she promised to think about it. She didn't know what Rose even looked like because she never even saw her picture. She tried to search for Rose on social media but she didn't have accounts on any of them. By the end of her phonecall to Mashudu she decided to put her curiosity to rest by scheduling a meeting with Rose

but she planned on doing it after her interview because she didn't want to be distracted.

Yanda: "I'm going to join you in these cleansing baths because I touch a lot of people and come home to touch you"

Hlubi: "You'll use an excuse to be naked together, Mbuzo" he laughed.

When Dali stood next to Ntombi as they were about to have their first dance lesson he felt out of place. He was the only one in casual clothes while other men

put in more effort to look formal but mostly it was because he couldn't dance to save his life. He listened to the dance instructors who were a married couple introduce themselves and talk about how they started to dance. Ntombikayise was still in her tight fitting pencil dress and heels she had on at work. She went straight to dance class from work and she was so excited the exhaustion became numb.

Carlo: "So tonight we are just going to try and have fun by letting those stiff hips loosen up

a bit like this" he took his wife's hand and she put her hands on his shoulders while his was on her small needle waist. Soon the couple started to move their hips like they were born doing it.

Ntombi looked at Dali and laughed at how constipated he looked. It was the class's turn so Ntombi turned to face Dali.

Ntombi: "Oh loosen up, Daluxolo it's just hip movement" she laughed.

Dali: "That's exactly what nearly broke my hip during my wedding dance" he joked and they laughed.

Carlo: "Don't be afraid to hold her, my friend. She is not going to bite" he said before putting Dali's hands on Ntombi's waist "Now move together. Move those waists to the rhythm of the music" he said while demonstrating. Dali loosened up a bit when he saw Ntombi do as Carlo did. "Move with her. Don't keep a lady waiting" he said to Dali who awkwardly started to move his waist. It looked so robotic that Ntombi could not help but laugh.

Dali: "You see? No I'm not doing

it" he felt embarrassed.

NTOMBI: "Okay I'm sorry.

Please don't stop. You are thinking about it to much. Don't think just do" she moved her waist and watched him do the same. His gaze on her feet and waist so he'd be able to do the same thing. When he looked around to find the other men struggling just as much he relaxed and stopped over thinking it.

Santa: "There see when you let the music take control your body responds to it" she said while moving about with her husband.

Soon Ntombi and Dali were so in sync that the instructors used them as an example on how it should be done. Had they been more than just friends Dali knew he'd have run his hands over her wide hips. His imagination got the better of him more when Ntombi turned around to dance with her back at him. Her arms up in the air and her laughter filling most of the space. Carlo made her more confident when he told her to bring out her sexy. Ntombi brought out that sexy and a part of Dali wanted to close the gap

between them by holding her from behind while dancing but he knew that it might come with a slap and because there was nothing romantic about their friendship. Ntombi: "Do that dip thing" she asked Dali when the music was about to end. Dali had no idea what she was talking about so Carlo showed him. Dali gently dipped Ntombi backwards to a level safe enough for him to not drop her. Her new perfume excited his senses even more as his nose was close to her neck. The class clapped for their fellow amateur

dancers and Ntombi did a happy dance. Dali always thought that she was introverted but suddenly he wasn't so sure anymore. It was either she hid her carefree side well or the dancing brought out a part of her most didn't know but whatever it was Dali was glad he was there to witness it. They were given a chance to get to know the others and a certain lady showed great interest in Dali.

Ntombi: "I want to be the best woman at your wedding because had it not been for me you

wouldn't have met her. I can't believe that I might have to swap dance partners soon" she said when he walked with her to her car.

Dali: "She gave me her number but I do not know if I want to pursue it. What if she can't hold a conversation?"

Ntombi: "The only way to find out is if you go out with her. I'm not saying marry her, just make more friends and possibly find a girlfriend"

Dali: "I'll think about it and don't worry no other woman is going to

make me leave you to dance with her" he joked but saw Ntombikayise's expression change "I'm sorry I wasn't thinking, Kayise" he added.

Ntombi: "It's okay. So does that mean you'll come back?"

Dali: "I will give it another go"

Ntombi: "Yes!" she put her hands up and he laughed "I have a feeling that I'm going to score you a woman by bringing you here"

Dali: "Oh" he laughed.

Ntombi: "Let's bet" she held out her pinky finger.

Dali: "When is the expiry date of

this bet?"

Ntombi: "The day you tell me that you're dating a lady you met in our classes. R1000" she made her bet.

Dali: "Let's give it a year max. If this time next year I'm dating

the woman you supposedly

prophesy I'll meet I'll owe you

but if the person I end up with

has nothing to do with this place

you'll owe me. Deal?" Dali didn't

regret going as he initially

thought that he would. Had he

not gone with Ntombi he would

most probably have been

watching his wedding video again

for the millionth time. To see Gugu alive made it feel like she was with him and he was not ready to let go of that feeling. But that night he knew he'd be too tired to watch it due to the dancing and it was in a way a good thing.

Ntombi: "Deal" they locked fingers to seal it.

Dali: "Aren't you picking Banele up?"

Ntombi: "No their father took them out for dinner so he came to get Banele" Dali nodded. "Thank you for the great night. I think

we'll be ready for competing soon"

Dali: "No I'm doing this because I didn't want you dancing with a broom and now I'm doing it to score myself money from our bet because you'll lose" Ntombikayise laughed "I actually think I'll call her just to make more friends like you said"

Ntombi: "Yes" she said with excitement "It's time to live in the present again so I'm glad that you are going for it. You deserve love again and two years of being alone is enough I think"

Dali: "Don't pretend, Kayise. I

know you just want me to date so you can win the bet" he joked and she laughed out "But on a serious note I think that you might be right" he smiled while nodding in approval of his own words

"Goodnight" he added.

Ntombi: "Night night" she smiled before getting into her car. She called Banele to make sure that Liyema picked him up before leaving the neighborhood. She was happy that all five kids agreed to dinner with Liyema. It was time to accept, heal and move on.

Alunamda had their bed messy with pictures and all Lungile wanted to do was sleep.

Lungi: "Alu" he said sounding exhausted.

Alu: "Throw those on your side on mine, baby. I want to check if Elaine is in my old school pictures"

Lungi: "Not this again. Alunamda she can't be in them because she never set foot in a school"

Alu: "How many people of our generation do you know we're homeschooled?"

Lungi: "Non"

Alu: "Exactly because our parents were too broke to hire private tutors and they were always busy working so they couldn't reach us themselves" she said with certainty.

Lungi: "Mine could have afforded it had they wanted to do it.

Maybe Elaine is from money just like us. Maybe that's why Liyema feels more connected to her"

Alu: "I'll pretend I didn't just hear you imply that Lakiwe was below Liyema's standards and that's why he went for Elaine" she scanned the pictures "Dammit

where are you, Elaine?" she said in frustration.

Lungi: "No where there. Baby drop this. You are looking for skeletons where there are none so that you can prove to Liyema that the grass isn't greener on the other side due to your womanly bond with Lakhiwe.

Didn't you see how happy he is? Why would you want to ruin that by looking for something that's not there?. Divorce happens everyday but the people involved heal eventually" Alu threw herself on the bed.

Alu: "You're right it's not her, babe. It's impossible that it could be her for the reasons stated. She wasn't in the mainstream school system and her surname is Bhokwe and I never had a Bhokwe in class. Where is she from?"

Lungile: "I don't know" he shrugged "I think Liyema said Port Elizabeth" he tried to remember.

Aku: "No it's really not her then. I might really want to prove to him that the grass isn't greener. I saw how happy he was and I

know that his happiness equals to yours. I guess Elaine will be sharing makoti duties with me soon then" she exhaled.

Lungi: "And my beautiful wife will show her which family members to stay away from and which to befriend like Lakhawe helped her" he kissed her "Let me get these ugly faces off our bed" he took the pictures and placed them in their box before putting them on the top of the wardrobe.

Alu: "I guess by trying to prove that cheating isn't right to Liyema I thought you'd get the

messenger too. When something like this happens to someone you know you can't help but fear that it might happen to you too"

Lungi: "I know all of that and you don't have to try to break my brother's relationship to prove it. I'm here and I won't go seek love when I have it already. This might be Liyema's soulmate just that they started off in a way that makes people not see it that way. He's happy so please let him be. If Elaine isn't good it'll eventually show without you even lifting a finger. Focus on us and

leave other people's relationship alone especially family's as it may create tension" he kissed her before the two of them went to play with their son. Alunamda planned on helping Elaine adjust should Liyema decide to marry her even if she wasn't a fan of her. She also decided to stop playing private investigator to prove a point with the comfort of knowing that should Elaine have skeletons they would soon come out. 

S2-INSERT 13

NOT EDITED

It was a Thursday and Ntombi had to do all that she needed to do that day because the following day they'd be at their long weekend getaway. A lot of great progress happened within those two months even if she still had off days were she'd cry herself to sleep. Her body had started to be more toned thanks to the dancing and Bandile's alkaline lifestyle that they occasionally tried out. Like his mother Banele's body had undergone changes of its own

thanks to the boxing. He seemed to have found his passion because he never missed training whether it was at the gym or running up stairs during training sessions with Tamkhulu. He was so good at boxing that a match had been scheduled for him but Ntombikayise and Makhulu said they wouldn't attend an event where their child would get punched. Bubele's rugby career was thriving just as his brother's boxing and he seemed confident that he'd make captain next year. Bandile's garden passion got more

stronger when the family had umfino made with spinach grown by him and his marks remained good which made his parents proud of them. Amahle had gotten a lead role for her next ballet concert. To Ntombi it felt like God was finally wiping their tears with all the good that they had been experiencing since the news of the divorce. Bukhosi like the old soul that he is found his comfort in his discussion about culture and life that he had with Tamkhulu. They were seeing less of Dali because they felt they

worked through the major issues that bothered them. Hlubi's baby was getting bigger and stronger by day and soon it would be the launch of Yanda's female line and Ntombi couldn't wait to buy herself a piece in support. Nandi's had her diabetes in control but she still had not contacted Rose for a meet up because she didn't feel ready. Liyema and Elaine settled well in their new apartment and were happy.

Ntombi never got around to going to see Othu to thank her for the

flowers. As she stood in the lift going to Othu's office she felt ashamed to show herself weeks after she got the flowers. Farrell, Othu's PA led Ntombi to Othu's office. Othu was on the phone when Ntombi walked in behind Farrell but her smile and eager wave proved to Ntombi that she wasn't interrupting much.

Ntombikayise's eyes fell around the spacious office deserved by a CEO. Ferrel offered her a seat and for some reason she felt nervous because she and Othu were not friends.

Othu: "Ntombi" she said with excitement as soon as she put the phone down. What Ntombi didn't expect was for Othu to come around to hug her.

Ntombi: "I hope I'm not disturbing you" she said with a nervous smile "I'm sure you hardly have time to eat due to running such a huge company" she added.

Othu: "Girl, I would rather have this place sink then starve myself" she joked and both women laughed "Coffee?" she offered.

Ntombi: "I'm actually not staying because I have a few errands to

run and then go help five children pack"

Othu: "The horror" they laughed.

Ntombi: "Juice and water are quicker to drink than coffee though so if you have one of those then I'd love some"

Ferrel: "I'll go get you ladies juice" she said just as Othu was about to ask her. They watched Ferrel shut the door behind her and Ntombi turned to look at Othu.

Othu: "So where is the big five going?"

Ntombi: "Somewhere where they hope to see the real big five"

they laughed softly "I'm taking them away for the long weekend. I took today and tomorrow off so that I can spoil them even though my grandfather says it's a waste of money. It's sad that they didn't want to come with but luckily my helper is going to stay with them until we are back"

Othu: "I'm glad that you guys are taking a breather. Had I known I'd have asked you to take my three and the busy bee granddaughter of mine with you so that my dear hubby and I can

rest" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I know exactly what you mean. Had we known each other on a personal level I'd have taken yours one weekend so you and hubby can rest and you'd the same for me the other weekend" they both laughed "I'm actually here to thank you for the flowers you sent me two months ago" she covered her eyes in shame but Othu laughed.

Othu: "We are busy women, Ntombi so I understand trust me. How are you holding up?"

Ntombi: "Honestly?" Othu nodded

"I'm not as good as I imagined I'd be by this time. I love that my children are good again but with them being good it means I have no one to try and save"

Othu: "And when you've got no one to save you have time to think about your issues?" Ntombi nodded "I think that this is the most important stage then.

Where you have to give the same energy you've put into getting your kids back on track into yourself so that you can get back on track too. Have you considered therapy?"

Ntombi: "Yeah but I don't feel like it has the same effect on me like it used to the first time. With my first relationship issues I didn't have reminders of the man who hurt me, Othunyiweyo. I didn't have to look at a child who is a copy of him on a daily basis. I didn't have to see him at activities involving our child"

Othu: "I guess that's what they mean when they say that divorce is ten times worse when kids are involved. You can't rid yourself of this person because you've got these little people who bind you"

Ntombi: "And it's exhausting" she took a deep breath before looking at the ceiling "I don't regret having my kids but I do sometimes wish that I never agreed to being his surrogate that way I'd have had my womb and met a man who would marry me, father my children and stay with me forever" she felt Othu hold her hand "I'm sorry for offloading like this. It's just that my best friend is also my ex husband's sister and I can see she's struggling with who to support because she loves us

both"

Othu: "Don't apologize because I'm certain you'd have listened to me too. I can't relate to what you are going through but all I can say is be grateful. Be grateful that you had the kids when you did because I believe had they had a different father they wouldn't be who they are now. Can you imagine your life with children with different traits?" Ntombi laughed softly before shaking her head "Exactly so don't wish he didn't father them because chances are they

wouldn't have the traits that they do now and they certainly wouldn't have had the physical features that you like because some of those come from Liyema's family. Girl, all I can tell you is be a bit selfish with your energy now. You put it into helping them and they are doing well. You used it to help your grandparents and they too are well now. So please use that energy on you so that you can be well. Believe me when we are not well they are not well" Ntombi: "I want to be well, Othu but how can I when I see that

spark in Liyema's eyes that he lost after a few years of marriage? How can I when I bump into him at a home decor store and hear that they are renovating. How can I when the couple pictures of him and her are on social media?"

Othu: "You can by saying hi and being on your way when you bump into him. You do not owe him an ear so you can listen to what he does with her. You do it by blocking him from all your social media. His spark is on him, our happiness depends on us and if he

finds his in people he is in deep
shit because people are not
permanent for various reasons.
Your happiness is your
responsibility and I'm sure yours
is waiting to be reclaimed and
hugged by you again"

Ntombi: "You're right and I
actually found some happiness in
ballroom dancing" she smiled "I
feel so sexy when I do it, so free,
so feminine and my dance partner
is an amazing man" she smiled.

Othu: "Then dance until your
shoes get ruined and even then
take them off and dance

barefoot. Do more of what brings a spark in your eyes. While his is depending on a woman who can leave for whatever reason leaving him unhappy again. Yours is in dancing and even if that studio closed you'll find another because it's not about the studio or the teacher but about what's inside of you. You make your own happiness"

Ntombi: "With the people in my life I really don't need therapy" they both laughed "And you're right I'm sure happiness is wondering when I'll turn to "her"

but she doesn't have to wait long because I'm well on my way slowly but surely and this weekend is going to take me a step closer" she closed her eyes to take in the feel good moment.

Othu: "Yeesss, girl" she snapped her fingers with attitude. "Why should they mess up yet we should be the ones who are sad as we watched them go into the sunset with others? Just because society allows them it doesn't mean that we should. To hell with allowing men to strip us of our essence"

Ntombi: "To hell" she shouted in agreement. Ferrel walked in looking confused. She gave Ntombi her juice and left again.

Othu: "Give me your number please, Ntombikayise" they exchanged numbers. "So did you pack any bikini's?" Ntombi looked down and shook her head "Why not?" Othu asked.

Ntombi: "I don't feel confident enough to"

Othu: "Ntombikayise go buy yourself a bikini whether you'll wear it at a beach or pool it's fine. Just please don't wear jeans

to the beach. You've got an amazing body and those boobs look like they never breastfed the way they are just looking at me and I can see you're not wearing a bra" Ntombikayise laughed out. Ferrell: "Mrs Knight, Miss Tailor is here for your meeting" she peeked through the door.

Ntombi: "Let me leave you to it and thank you for the words of encouragement and the delicious juice" she stood.

Othu: "Next time we are going to make this a proper date. I'll give you a call". They promised they'd

call each other to set up a proper date. Not so far from Othu's office was a barber shop and Ntombi found herself walking inside it though she knew she didn't have much time to play with. She walked out of there feeling great with a tampered cut that had a coffee brown colour. When the stylist let her look at herself in the mirror she couldn't help but feel the style was perfectly suited for her. Dali called her and asked her to meet up. Ntombi had no intention of seeing him but she could hear

that he needed to talk so she went to meet him before she went home. When she arrived at their usual cafe she found him seated already and judging by the look on his face Ntombi could see that something was not right. She hugged him in greeting before sitting down.

Ntombi: "Are you okay? You sounded so strange over the phone, Daluxolo" she looked at him. He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly before looking at her.

Dali: "There is no easy way to say

this so I'll just say it. I'm leaving town" Ntombi's mouth fell open from shock because that was the last thing she expected to hear him say. She asked for his reasons thinking that he was in some sort of trouble "I applied for a better paying job in Johannesburg months ago so they called to tell me that I got the job. You know that I don't earn a lot here so I needed this opportunity" Ntombi didn't expect the news to hurt her as much as they did. She was happy to hear that he got a better opportunity but she didn't

want him to go.

Ntombi: "Okay" she said in a whisper "Congratulations on the new job, Xolo" she managed to give him a smile. Dali was just as sad to leave their friendship but he had no choice "So you'll be staying the month right? To work your notice off" she asked.

Dali: "Tomorrow is my last day at the practice so I'm leaving Saturday" Ntombi looked down trying to hide the sadness.

Ntombi: "Yho this is not what I expected to hear today, Daluxolo. So you'll just up and go?"

Dali: "The perks of being a single man without kids" he laughed.

"Don't worry I told your boys about it so they understand. I told them that I'm a phonecall away and I meant it" he assured her.

Ntombi: "So when I return you won't be here?" he shook his head at her answer "Okay" she whispered once again. Dali put her hands in his and smiled.

Dali: "Hey friendship doesn't desolve when one moves away, Kayise. We will talk as we do now just not face to face. I apologize

for leaving you without a dance partner but I'm sure you'll find one soon" Ntombi gave a faint smile.

Ntombi: "Thank you for being my friend, Xolo. You've made the past months easier by being in my life. I honestly hope that Joburg treats you well and when I'm that side please accomodate me"
Dali laughed.

Dali: "Of course" he promised. "I'll have those salty olive things you love in my fridge when you come to my place" Ntombi had an obsession with olives and everyone who

knew her well knew that little secret "Come here" he helped her up "Don't look so down" he pulled her in for a hug. They held on for a long while and even people around them stared at them.

"You're looking so beautiful with the new hair. It suits your beautiful skin perfectly" he said with a smile after breaking the hug.

Ntombi: "I guess that means I owe you since I lost the bet.

There's no way you'll meet a woman there with you leaving" they laughed.

Dali: "I'll collect the next time I see you because I'm sure the trip cost you money"

Ntombi: "It's divorce money and you are leaving now when I wanted to give you a taste of divorce money" Dali couldn't help but laugh "I love you, Xolo" she added before hugging him again.

Dali: "I love you too, Kayise" he kissed her cheek. "Now go before you miss your flight tonight.

Please try not to be lion food at the Kruger national park" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Plus with all this sauce

"I'm really in danger" she looked at herself and they both laughed

"Please call me and update me on how you've settled in busy Jozi"

Dali: "There's no way I wouldn't do that. Thank you for everything. For taking me dancing and listening"

Ntombi: "We've got a give and take friendship and that's what I love about it. Have a safe trip. Its such short notice I didn't even get you a gift to put in your new place over there. Are you sorted with everything? Money?"

Dali: "Completely sorted thank

you" They sat down for coffee one last time well they both hoped that it wouldn't be the last time. Ntombi gave Dali a hug after the coffee and left with a heavy heart. She had already gotten attached to him so much so that she shed a few tears when she sat in her car.

Zukile who is Daluxolo's foster brother saw everything as he sat at the table not so far from Dali. He patted his brother's shoulder because he could see Dali was just as heavy hearted.

Zukile: "You could still tell her how

you feel" he looked at Dali.

Dali: "Not while I feel like I'm betraying Gugu by being in love with another woman. Kayise doesn't need the baggage. I won't bring her into another relationship that has three people only to end up hurting her"

Zukile: "You must really love her if you are willing to go away to avoid getting into a relationship with her to protect her from yourself"

Dali: "What's not to love, bro? Did you see how beautiful she is especially with that haircut and colour. Each time I hold her in my

arms when we dance I don't wish to let go because it seems her body just fits perfectly in my arms. And her scent yho"

Zukile: "Well pity you're running rather than try to shake off Gugu's ghost then. I for one would have loved to see you happy with a woman again"

Dali: "Not if she'll carry the baggage of my past. Plus Kayise is recently divorced. Let's stop talking about this. Come and help me pack" he settled the bill and stood.

Zukile: "Will you be able to let her

out of your mind? How long will you allow your grief to stand in the way of your happiness, Dali? You are a good man deserving of a good woman"

Dali: "Even if I didn't have baggage I'd still not have told her that I'm in love with her because she doesn't love me in that way. Let's go" The two men left the cafe to go pack Dali's things. Falling in love with Ntombi was the easy part it's admitting to himself that it happened that was most difficult part for Dali. He's had defences for weeks now

and he was glad that Ntombi didn't notice the moments where he'd hug her a little too long. The moment when he looked into her eyes and getting lost in them smiling like a fool. Falling in love with Ntombi was like coming home that's how natural it felt but he didn't want to abandon the home he tried so hard to keep alive in his memory. He felt himself fall harder after each second he spent with her but Dali also knew that sometimes attachment could feel like love and that's why he took a break free from Ntombi to

evaluate the difference. He wanted to be certain that what he felt for Ntombi was real and that it wasn't his way of trying to replace Gugu. He loved Ntombi too much to drag her into his mess. He saw all of Ntombi, the joys and the sorrows, and he felt like he was home. The sad part was he wished he could tell her but he had a few things to work on first. Perhaps one day he will tell Ntombi.

Ntombi needed the confidence boost that she got from her children when she arrived home.

They complemented her on her hair and she loved the feeling.

Ntombi found Aunt V at the house already ready to spend the weekend with her grandparents.

Tamkhulu: "Hurry up before you miss the plane, Ntombikayise. You spent too much to miss it" he panicked on their behalf.

Ntombi: "I feel like I am forgetting something, Tata" she tried to think "Oh yes" she ran up stairs to go get her bikinis and hoped that they still fit her. She couldn't remember the last time she had one on.

Makhulu: "Why were you crying, Ntombi?" she asked when the kids ran like headless chicken to go get the things they suddenly remembered they had forgotten. Ntombi was hoping no one would notice because she didn't speak about her friendship with Dali to her grandparents. She finally told them what happened "I advised that you stay single for now Ntombi. You'll go seek comfort outside when we are here"

Ntombi: "Trust me nothing is going on between me and Dali. He is still mourning his wife. I'm

going to do as you advised, Ma" she promised.

Tamkhulu: "Ntombikayise, take your children and go. The car is waiting for you outside" Tamkhulu was not one who liked wasting money. He already felt the trip was a waste of money so Ntombi knew she wouldn't hear the end of it should they miss their flight. The bags were taken to the car and Ntombi went over things with aunt V again.

Makhulu: "We stay with Vuyi everyday so a weekend will not be a problem. Now go before you give

my husband a stroke, Ntombi" she laughed. Ntombi and the children said their goodbyes and I love you'd before getting into the taxi. Bukhosi: "I'm so excited about this" he said as the car drove to the airport.

Bubele: "Dude I can't wait to see a lion live, as in live, bra"

Amahle: "I'm just looking forward to swimming in that big pool Mom showed us and drink their milkshakes Mmm"

Banele: "Thanks for this, Ma. We honestly can't wait to spend the weekend doing fun stuff with you"

Bandile: "We love you, Mamzie" he shouted making Ntombi smile.

Bukhosi: "Yeah, yeah" he also shouted in a deep voice.

Ntombi: "Seeing you guys happy makes me happy. Just please don't go on walks there and end up being stepped on by an elephant"

Bandile: "But we are Elephants ourselves" they all laughed "we'll behave, Mommy we promise"

Ntombi: "And I love you guys too. I can not wait for the two and a half day adventure with my princes and princess" she looked at

all of them. They were at the airport before they knew it and soon were on their way to Nelspruit. The flight was not long but the drive to the Kruger national park was not one that Ntombi liked but since the kids couldn't drive she had no choice but to. Ntombi checked into their cottage with her children and they went crazy when they saw the beauty of the place.

Amahle: "Mama!" she shouted from the balcony making Ntombi and the boys rush to her thinking something was wrong "The

sunset...check the subset" she pointed at the orange sun with excitement. Ntombi and her boys stood closer and soon all her children were surrounding her as they took in the beauty of nature. Ntombi wished that her grandparents were there to witness it with them but she respected that getaways were not for them. Ntombi felt her children hug her and as she stood at the heart of that embrace looking at the orange sky while birds singing absolutely nothing mattered. She was content so

much so that she closed her eyes for a while and took a deep breath before exhaling to take in the beauty before her again. She knew that that was a moment neither she or her kids would forget and she hoped that it was the first of such beautiful memories. Lots of pictures were taken before they had dinner that night.

The excitement in the lodge the following day was high as the kids were going to go on their very first game drive. Ntombi could

kick herself for not saving money and bringing them sooner but late was better than never. The staff at the lodge were very friendly and explained to the small crowd what they could expect on the adventure.

Amahle: "Dad?" she called out and Ntombi hoped her daughter saw wrong. All five kids running to the opposite direction of the trucks told her that indeed Liyema was here. She turned and felt herself get sick when she saw that Elaine was with him. Liyema waved with a smile and Ntombi

lifted her hand for a second before calling the kids. She couldn't believe that of all the days Liyema and his girlfriend could go for a getaway it had to be when she and her kids did too. Soon the trucks were driving to the gates of the game reserve and Ntombi didn't allow herself to feel down. Coincidentally the very first thing that they saw was a small herd of elephants. The kids all looked at their father clearly excited to see the animal that had the same name as their family. Ntombi took as many

pictures as possible of herself, her kids and all the animals that they got to see. She was happy to see that Liyema didn't have the same activities planned as them after the game drive.

Elaine: "Hi" she said behind Ntombi as she stood at the lodges main patio. They were at the same accomodation but in a different cottage, the couple's cottage. Ntombi turned to look at the woman who now warned the man who used to be her husband's bed. The woman who didn't think anything about the pain sleeping

with a married man would bring to his children.

Ntombi: "Liyema is with his children at the reptile place because I'm sure that you didn't come here to talk to me"

Elaine: "You do know that at some point we'll have to try and be civil right? Since I might be your children's step mother soon"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "I've got enough friends thank you"

Elaine: "For what it's worth I am sorry for my part in hurting you..."

Ntombi: "Lady what the hell

makes you think that I want to hear what you've got to say?

Like I've said your man is at the reptile place" she said and she watched Elaine look down before turning to walk away.

Elaine: "Of all the places you could have gone to you had to choose this one. Why?" she turned around.

Ntombi: "Honey, I can can go wherever the hell I please. Plus I had to put your boyfriend's money to use somehow" she smiled and she could see that Elaine was fuming "Please excuse me because

some of us are actually here to enjoy ourselves not keep tabs on a man" she left Elaine standing there. Ntombi looked back at Elaine and she saw a beautiful woman but she couldn't believe that she compared herself to Elaine. Ntombi went to the reptile sentuary and found Liyema and the children holding a snake. She had a fear of snakes so she felt her entire body shudder.

Bandile: "Mom, come and touch it. It's actually harmless" he held the snake.

Ntombi: "No" she closed her eyes

"I came to get you guys so we can go eat" she told them before walking back out. She didn't care that they were laughing at her but she was not going to let herself give nightmares filled with deadly snakes. Their first day was amazing and they ended off the day by going for a late afternoon swim in the lodge's pool. Fortunately it was only her and the children. Suddenly there was a big splash in the pool after someone threw themselves in and Ntombikayise shook her head when it she saw that it was

Liyema. Due to the kids loving the moment Ntombi had to let him play with them in the water while she sat around the pool. He joined her after a long while looking so happy.

Liyema: "Why didn't you join us?" he asked casually.

Ntombi: "I came here with my children, Liyema. I'm only letting you do what you did today because I don't want to start a fight in front of them. Go and do whatever with the person that you came here with. I had better not see you anywhere where we

are tomorrow or I will lose it and you are so not going to like the scene that I will make. You want to take everything, even my bonding time with my children. Pretend that we are not here. I don't want to do things with you. Stop acting as if things are normal between us. Go to your girlfriend and leave me and my kids alone for godsake man" she said through gritted teeth so the kids wouldn't hear before getting back into the water to join her kids. Liyema knew that she was right that's why he

didn't say anything. He said goodbye to the kids and how they didn't beg him to stay stung a bit. The laughter that was coming from the pool could be heard by the entire lodge. Elaine was not in their cottage when he arrived and his phone kept beeping as social media notifications came through. His timeline was flooded with pictures from the kid's social pages. What hurt him more was the fact that none of the kids posted the pictures that he took with them. All pictures were them and their

mother with happy captions thanking their mother for the great weekend. He looked around the empty room and suddenly felt lonely. He didn't know where Elaine was and he wasn't welcome at the sun set swim at the pool. He stood to go to the bathroom for a shower and accidentally knocked down Elaine's toiletry bag and all her things scattered. He banged the little cabinet before picking up the feminine products. He was about to read the writing on a tablet container when he felt the content be ripped out of his hand.

Liyema: "What are those? In fact another container rolled that side" he wanted to go get it but Elaine ran ahead to pick it up first.

Elaine: "They are multi vitamins" she sounded edgy and quickly put them in the pocket of the dress she was wearing.

Liyema: "I've never seen such before. Let me see maybe I might buy them for myself"

Elaine: "Why the hell did you bring me here if you are going to ignore me all day, Liyema?" she shouted, ignoring his request to see the tablets.

Liyema: "What are you talking about?" he asked calmly to avoid agitating her even more.

Elaine: "You spent the entire day with them when you promised me that this weekend will be ours" she shouted once again annoying him in the process.

Liyema: "What the hell did you expect me to do? Ignore my damn children, Elaine?"

Elaine: "Is it the children you wanted to avoid ignoring or the mother?"

Liyema: "I'm not doing this" he walked out of the bathroom but

she followed behind.

Elaine: "You made me feel like I was the damn other woman again and not your girlfriend. Can you imagine how pleased your ex is with herself knowing that she can still grab your attention?"

Liyema: "She honestly isn't thinking about you right now. Don't flatter yourself because unlike you Ntombi had a life apart from me, she always has!" he shouted back at her.

Elaine: "So what? You miss the freedom that she gave you?"

Liyema: "Why are we fighting

about someone who isn't even thinking about us. I'll be yours tomorrow"

Elaine: "And I saw how you looked at her fat ass when you saw her in that bikini. I'm sure that pool is filled with your saliva because you were drooling" Liyema didn't have a quick reply because he indeed was drooling for a moment when he saw Ntombi in a bikini. "So I'm right?" she shouted crushed.

Liyema: "No" he said hesitantly. "Can we please just get on with what we planned? You promised

to wear those little outfits for me tonight" he stood trying to soften her.

Elaine: "Masturbate at the thought of your ex's fat ass. She can afford such places with money you gave her yet whenever we discuss marriage you tell me about a damn pre nup. Screw you, Liyema" she pushed him aside. Liyema laughed in disbelief and watched her walk out. He sunk back to the bed not believing that spending the day with his children could lead to both Elaine and Ntombi being angry about it.

He looked at the products that were still on the floor and he didn't bother picking them up. He didn't even realize that all Elaine cared about were the pills he didn't get to see. Elaine returned after a long while and gave him the silent treatment all night. He couldn't believe that he spent so much money on a romantic getaway only to be given a cold shoulder. 🥰

S2-INSERT 14

As Nandi stood at the entrance of

the place she told Rose to meet her at she was suddenly not sure if speaking to her biological mother was a good idea. She knew the lady in a red scarf was Rose because they agreed to make it their mark of recognition and Rose also fit the description Yanda gave her. She took a deep breath and forced her frozen legs to move forward to get the meeting over and done with. Hlubi was right Nandi did have a couple of questions for Rose and she knew that Yanda didn't have the answers. She went to stand by the table and when Rose looked

up she could not believe that the baby she left years ago was now a beautiful young woman. A young woman of great class as Rose noticed. Rose's heart was beating at an alarming rate just as Nandi's was.

Rose: "Nandipha" she stood with a smile.

Nandi: "Hi, Rose" she said with a straight face "You are actually as I imagined you to be. I don't look like my father so I figured I must get most features from you" she added before sitting.

Rose: "Oh please, I could never be as beautiful as you" she laughed

softly before sitting down again.
"You are far too classy" she
complimented.

Nandi: "My mother is a classy
woman. I'm sure you saw that
yourself"

Rose: "I did" she nodded "I'm not
here to make you choose between
me and her Nandi"

Nandi: "Good because nothing is
going to come between my mother
and I" she said with sure
certainty "I'm here Rose so say
what you have been wanting to
say"

Rose: "Thank you for coming. I
thought that you wouldn't. I'm

here to apologize for leaving you,
Nandipha"

Nandi: "Why did you?" she shifted forward as she wanted to listen to the reasons why. Rose rubbed her palm with her thumb and looked at her daughter "Please don't give me that whole "you were better off with your father" story. Tell me the truth, I can handle it"

Rose: "When I met your father I fell madly in love with him. So much that the thought of ending things with him drove me crazy. Your grandmother adding fuel to my already unhealthy obsession

didn't help much. When your father started his business he used to meet a lot of women and I didn't like that one bit"

Nandi: "But he designs for men it's only now that he started a ladies line"

Rose: "Yanda used to design for women when he first started out"

Nandi nodded and was going to ask her father about that later

"So I got jealous when he had to touch these ladies to take

measurements. Some would throw themselves at him and it made

my blood boil so I told your

grandmother about it. She liked

me for her son so she too wanted to see us together forever. She advised me to stop going to the clinic so I could get pregnant"

Nandi: "So I was a means to hold on to your man?"

Rose: "When you are young, naive and in love you make poor choices. Ma Mbuzo encourageing me as my elder I thought that it was the right thing to do. So I stopped going for my contraceptives without Yanda knowing. When I fell pregnant he wasn't happy, not because he didn't want you but he wasn't expecting you so soon, not when he was still trying

to build a good life for you and the other children we dreamt of having. A life completely different from the one the two of us grew up in. But Yanda being the man that he is stuck around and I was so happy. I looked forward to your arrival because it would make Yanda and I be closer to each other"

Nandi: "Yet you left" she said sarcastically. A waiter came to take their drink orders and gave them privacy again.

Rose: "Yanda became so busy that he no longer had time to go to the clinic with me. I thought that he

was neglecting me but he was building his empire. And then you came...you came and at that time I didn't like you" Nandi blinked so her tears would stay hidden. To hear your mother didn't like you hurt "The dislike and disconnection towards you grew with each day I had to look after you" Nandi's tears rolled over her soft cheeks and she took out a tissue to wipe them. The waiter asked if all was right when he came with the drinks and Nandi nodded before thanking him.

Nandi: "You tried to trap my father with me yet you didn't like

the end product?...wow" she smiled in disbelief between tears. Rose: "It became so much that I didn't want you near me. I tried but I just couldn't so I went to drop you off at your father's and left. I spent years feeling absolutely no regret about it because I felt relieved. It was only when I met a social worker that I opened up about and she made me aware of postnatal depression. It's when you sometimes feel anger and resentment towards your baby. At that time no one told me such exists. We are expected to be

beaming with joy after giving birth and naturally bond with your baby. So when you resent the baby and can't feel a bond with it you felt like a bad mother. No one told me that it's okay and that with treatment it gets better"

Nandi: "Why didn't you come back after you knew what the problem was?"

Rose: "Because I had sunk deeper into depression, Nandipha. I used to spend months in hospital because of it. So I didn't think it was fair of me to bring that into your life. I then met a man whom I didn't tell about you. We got

married, had kids and went on with life. But I always thought about you so I got so tired of just wondering how you are and decided to take action. I told my husband and he was angry that I kept you secret but eventually supported me in trying to know you. So I did leave you with your father because I felt you were better off with him. My mind made me believe that I hated you but once I learned that it was a medical condition and took steps to treat it, I realized that I miss you so much and I love you. Had Ma Mbuzo been as clever

as she thought she was at trapping men then she would have also told me that I was sick after giving birth to you. In our times when elders never mentioned something you didn't know that it existed. They never mentioned possible depression after birth so I didn't know about it. I didn't tell Yanda anything because I didn't want to lose him by telling him that I can't connect with our baby as he did. It got so bad that I ended up feeling anger towards both of you. When you cried I'd just watch you cry your lungs out while

blocking my ears. It was hell Nandi. A hell I couldn't share with anyone so instead I chose to free myself from the hell by running from it. But I know now that you were not the hell but the demons in my mind were. A year would pass and another and I'd miss you more after each of those. When I asked your sister to search you on Facebook I knew that it was you and I was so happy to see that you were healthy and beautiful" she smiled. Nandi: "I have read about the horrors of postnatal depression so I don't hold that against you but

I don't get why you didn't return after feeling better. I would have accepted you with your major depression episodes because I'm an informed young woman. I know about these things and I'd have tried to help as much as possible"

Rose: "No mother wants to burden their child like that. I'm sorry, Nandi"

Nandi: "I hear you, Rose. How many other children do you have?"

Rose: "Three girls" she smiled and Nandi nodded. She'd been an only child for so long so the thought of sisters kinda made her happy.

Nandi: "I've got to go. I need time to think about what you just said. I'm sorry that you went through the hell of depression alone and thank you for leaving me with my father instead of harming me. I hope that you are better now. Please excuse me" she stood quickly as tears came in an uproar. She ran to an isolated area outside to just let all the pain out. She went straight home after that and the first thing she did was throw herself into Hlubi's arms while sobbing. Mahlubandile was glad that Nandi went to see Rose

because she knew Nandi battles with why Rose left. Nandi told her mother everything that Rose said and Hlubi's heart broke for Rose. She hoped that she wouldn't be faced with the same fate but she was certain she'd get help and support should it happen while Rose was alone.

Hlubi: "You cry it out, Nana. Some wounds need to be opened and cleaned well before they can heal. I'm proud of you for going to see her"

Nandi: "To hear her say that she hated me was like someone had hit me with a fist in my gut, Ma"

she whispered.

Hlubi: "I'm sorry that you had to hear that but you asked for honesty and she gave it to you. At least now we know her reasons and they were beyond her control. As sick as she was I doubt it was easy to let you go"

Nandi: "I was made to trap dad and not because they wanted me"

Hlubi: "I'm glad that it happened because I found myself a daughter and I know Yanda feels the same way"

Yanda: "What does Yanda feel?" he walked in. The ladies told him what happened "Mama just had

to be in there too. The woman is unbelievable. But your mom is right you're the best trap that I fell into" Nandi laughed softly. "I wish she had told me about it instead of just leaving like that"

Hlubi: "How does a woman tell her man that she doesn't connect with their baby, Mbuzo? When it's men who struggle to bond with a baby society says it's okay because he wasn't the one who felt the joys of pregnancy and gave birth but when it's a woman we get judged. Let us try to put ourselves in her shoes because we don't know what depression has

done to the poor woman. Let us be grateful that she is here today because many parish because of mental illness. Find peace for yourself, Nana please" she looked at Nandi.

Nandi: "I'm actually not as upset at her as before, Mama. I've read about depression and lost an old school mate to suicide. So I'm glad that she is fighting this illness as best as she can" she said quietly "Did you design for ladies first?" she asked her father.

Yanda: "I did but I saw it put strain on my relationship with

Rose so I stopped because she was getting jealous of my clients. Luckily I now have a secure woman" he kissed Hlubi's forehead.

Hlubi: "Oh" her eyes widened as she held her tummy "I swear I felt a kick" she smiled. Yanda and Nandi's hands were on the belly in no time and instead there was some movement that left all of them laughing in excitement.

Ntombi allowed for some sibling bonding when she let the children go to some animal rescue center. To touch leopards and lions was

not something that she pictured herself do but she couldn't ask the kids to miss out because of her phobias.

Ntombi: "Don't touch the wild animals guys please. What if one of you get eaten?"

Bandile: "Mom they were rescued from cub life so they are domesticated wild animals" the other boys agreed.

Ntombi: "Mahle, baby don't do as they do. Respect the wild animals okay?" Amahle smiled and nodded "Maybe I should come with" she looked at them "I might not be strong but my motherly instincts

will tear down even a lion who is trying to get at my kids" all the children laughed.

Bukhosi: "We know that you want to finish that romance book so keep your claws hidden, mommy because no lion is going to crave your ugly kids"

Amahle: "Who speak for yourself. I'm not ugly"

Ntombi: "I don't have ugly kids. Banele since you box punch any animal trying to get near your siblings"

Banele: "Mom and being dramatic though" they laughed "We love you and enjoy your free time"

without us because when we're back you're not resting" he promised.

Bubele: "Goodbye our lioness we're going to send you pictures touching the animals so please don't faint" laughter once again.

Ntombi: "Enjoy, my nunuberries." she gave each a forehead kiss before they left the cottage. She looked around with a smile and couldn't wait to enjoy the alone time. She first went to have a dirty cocktail by their balcony looking out at the river and the greenery around. She took a selfie showing her background and sent

it to Dali but only one stripe showed meaning he didn't get it. She went to her room and changed into a navy and white high waisted bikini before going to get her book. As she stood in front of the mirror before going out she smiled at how sexy she felt. She felt good about her curves and mild cellulite. Her sun hat was on, her drink was in one hand and another dose of cocktail in the other hand as she made her way to the pool. She found herself a comfortable spot to sit and relax by the pool while reading her fiction love story. She went to

take selfies after a while of reading to rest her eyes. "With that goddess body it's a shame that you're only capturing that beautiful face" said a deep voice from and when Ntombikayise looked to where it came from her brow couldn't help but go up to take in the beautiful man who had just given her a compliment. He had the typical breathtaking male model body that left Ntombi's mouth feeling dry. Dark chocolate skin that seemed to glow in the sun and a smile so wide that Ntombi felt she needed shades to look at the white

teeth properly. He finally made it to her. "Hi, queen I'm Reth" he said while extending his hand. She couldn't recall a strange man calling her queen.

NTOMBI: "Hi , Reth I'm Ntombikayise" she held his hand to greet.

Reth: "So what is a beautiful woman like you doing taking selfies of herself when there should have been a professional photographer here to do it?" he looked around and Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "No photographer here and my children went to go about

their business so I have no choice but to take selfies"

Reth: "Children? How many?"

Ntombi: "Five" Reth looked at her from head to toe.

Reth: "No way that body gave birth to five children but if it did then damn, queen" he said sounding impressed. Ntombi realized in that moment that men had different preferences. While she's fat in Liyema's eyes she was the form of a goddess in the eyes of men like Reth and Dali.

Ntombi: "Yup five teenagers"

Reth: "Mmm you are beautiful. All

of you is just beautiful, queen but let me stop before you think I'm a pervert. So can I take pictures of you then and be stand in photographer for your children?" Ntombi's shyness crept in until she saw Liyema make his way to the pool holding Elaine's hand. She was not doing it to make him jealous but to prove to him that she still had some confidence in her after he commented on her body. She gave Reth her phone and being the joker that Reth was he managed to get pictures of Ntombi's carefree laugh. She was so in the moment with him

that she even forgot Liyema and his girlfriend were around. She gave her sexiest and silliest poses at different spots around the pool before going to stand next to Reth to view the pictures.

Ntombi: "I look so different" she smiled.

Reth: "You look happy. Not that smile that you had to fake for the selfies earlier on. Let me go ask those two to take a picture of us. I wanna show my friends South African beauty"

Ntombi: "No..." she wanted to stop him when she saw he was heading to Liyema and Elaine but

it was too late so she waited for them to brush him off rudely.

Reth: "Hey guys, could one of you please come take pictures of me and that gorgeous lady?" he pointed to Ntombi.

Liyema: "Do you make it a habit of talking to people you don't introduce yourself to?"

Reth: "Oh my bad, man. I'm Reth"

Liyema: "What does that mean?"

Reth couldn't believe the hostility toward him from Liyema.

Reth: "It means the king and I believe it's fitting for a chief's son. And you are?" he looked at

Elaine who seemed to have gotten a shade of red in her face. Liyema: "Liyema, husband to that gorgeous lady you are asking me to take pictures of"

Elaine: "Oh for fucks sake" she stood up "He's her ex husband. Give me the phone I'll take the pictures for you" she offered.

Reth: "Thank you" he gave Elaine the phone and they walked to Ntombi. Ntombi was a bit uncomfortable but Reth soon had her laughing to a point where who was taking the pictures didn't even matter. It was when Reth scooped Ntombikayise up

into his arms did Liyema feel his jealousy anger rise. Elaine loved the moment because it would prove to Liyema that Ntombikayise had moved on.

Reth: "Take a picture as we jump into the pool" he asked Elaine and she nodded "1, 2, 3 now!" he said to Ntombi and the two of them ran to the pool and both jumped in at the same time. Elaine captured the moment when they were above the water and the moment they made the splash. Ntombi laughed so much when she wiped her face to see properly. They made their way out of the pool

and Reth thanked Elaine for the pictures.

Reth: "Let's go have a drink and you can send these pictures to me. I also want to know what the man who is on the brink of a strokes story is" Ntombi laughed. They went to get themselves drinks and returned to the pool side to dry. Ntombikayise learned that Reth was a future chief and his accent explained that he was not from South Africa but Uganda. He was at the Kruger for some leisure time. Ntombi told him why Liyema was rude to him and she couldn't understand

why because he was with Elaine. Reth leaned forward to check Ntombi's phone screen but from the angle that Liyema sat it looked as though the two were kissing.

Liyema: "Where are my kids when you are busy kissing strange men, Lakhawe?" he bolted to them not giving Elaine time to even stop him. She was fuming with anger but as another couple came to join the pool area she decided against making a scene.

Ntombi: "The kids are busy doing kids stuff allowing mommy to do mommy stuff. If you are so

concerned about them you'll find them at the rescue place petting lions"

Liyema: "Alone?"

Ntombi: "No...with the lions,

Liyema" she said in sarcastic annoyance "Like I said pretend that we are not here today" she added.

Liyema: "Do you know that she has kids? Five?"

Reth: "Bukhosi, Bubele, Bandile, Banele and Amahle" Ntombi was impressed with him remembering names she just told him "I know them very well" he lied.

Liyema: "So you are a man who

sits and laugh with the mother of other men's children when the kids are alone who knows where?"

Reth: "Well when those men give me an opportunity to laugh with the mothers of their children you best believe that I'll take it" he said with a smirk "I see you're the type to leave a woman and get shocked when another man shows interest. Yes I am interested in knowing her and no her five kids don't turn me off. If anything it shows me just how fertile she is. The type of woman that a future chief needs. Maybe soon your children will be Princes

and a Princess"

Elaine: "Let's go Liyema" she held his hand and led him away.

Reth: "How on earth were you married to that?"

Ntombi: "He wasn't always like that. Actually he never was this jealous of other men I spoke to so it's weird that he's doing it now that we're divorced"

Reth: "It's a sense of entitlement that's what it is. I hope the girlfriend smacks him on his head for humiliating her like that"

Ntombi: "I do not care. So shouldn't a future chief be

married by now?" Reth laughed.
Reth: "He should have been according to his elders and that's why they arranged a wife for him. I'm getting married next month. The nice thing is that it was love at first sight for us both" he smiled.

Ntombikayise: "Oh man, so my kids won't be Princes and a princes" she joked and they both laughed out.

Reth: "Oh believe me had I not found the love of my life I would have done so. I meant what I said... just because you have five children it doesn't mean it's a

turn off to real men. A real man will just add more" he smiled and Ntombi did too. She didn't have the energy to tell him that she couldn't have more. She was surprised Liyema didn't bring it up when Reth spoke about fertility. Ntombi: "Don't let your lady see the pictures then"

Reth: "I saw the most beautiful South African woman so there was no way I wouldn't come talk to you. I will show her the pictures so she can see my friend. Next time I'm here I'll be with her and hopefully you'll be with a real man too. A man friend can

give his lady friend a compliment right?" Ntombikayise nodded with a smile.

Ntombi: "I've been meeting the most amazing male friends since my divorce. Where have you guys been all this time?"

Reth: "Mr Entitled was blocking you from meeting us" they laughed "would it be weird to leave you with a gift since I'm leaving today? Just something to remember Reth by. Hey come to think of it would you like to attend my wedding also?"

Ntombikayise: "I never say no to gifts and I'd like to witness how

you guys in Uganda do things. I can't wait to see the woman who'll be laughing all her life because you know how to make a lady bring out her embarrassing, wide mouth laugh" he laughed. Reth: "Come get on my back so I can go buy you that gift. I want to see how far Mr Entitled's jealousy goes" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "I don't want him to have a stroke. My kids need him but okay why not" she gave a sneaky laugh before getting in his back.

Liyema pretended to not be

affected by Reth carrying Ntombi to what seemed to be the direction of her cottage. What he didn't know was that Reth was going to buy Ntombi one of the local bead work as a gift.

Liyema: "I can't believe she'll go gave sex with him. My kids could walk in on it and then what?"

Elaine: "Go join them Liyema because it seems you want a piece of that too"

Liyema: "Maybe I do want a piece of that since you already withdraw sex as a weapon in arguments" he said without thinking "Look I'm sorry. I do not

want a piece of her. All I want is to enjoy this time with you" Elaine breathed.

Elaine: "I'm sorry too" she laughed "why are we letting your ex get to us like this?. She's a non factor in our life" Liyema nodded in agreement before kissing her.

Liyema: "Let's go take a swim"

Elaine: "I don't want to get my hair wet. Not all of us are tomboys" Liyema laughed. He picked her up and carried her to the pool kicking and jumped in with her. When the anger faded Elaine allowed herself to enjoy the moment. She wrapped her legs

around his waist while kissing him.

Elaine: "This is how it should be" she said while kissing him "I love you so much, Liyema Elephant. I hope that your children and family see that soon. We are bound to fight if they are against us" she added before hugging him. The water felt good.

Liyema: "They'll come around. They will get used to not having Lakhiwe in their lives anymore and will open their hearts to the new, beautiful, feisty, hot woman in my life" he tickled her and she laughed.

Elaine: "What do you think my makoti name will be the day they welcome me in the family?"

Liyema: "Something to do with beauty. Maybe Buhlebendalo" he suggested with a smile and watched her blush.

Elaine: "Elaine Buhlebendalo Bhokwe. I like it"

Liyema: "But I'm not ready to be married so soon after my divorce. And when I react to seeing Lakhwe with other men it's not because I want to sleep with her or because I still love her. It's because I have to know the man for my children's sake. She can

sleep with whoever. Even if she's having a one night stand with that fake prince I don't care" he kissed Elaine again.

Elaine: "If you're still hung up on her please deal it. I can't stand the disrespect anymore. You calling out a guy just because you saw them kiss is not nice. I know you don't want her but you still feel like you can have a say in her life and you don't. From now on wait until your children complain about her behavior and then act"

Liyema: "You are so right, Babe. I'm sorry for humiliating you. Let me go to that animal place to

check on the kids since the mother doesn't care. I'll be right back. I love you"

Elaine: "I love you too. I'll go wear those little to nothing outfits and wait for you" Liyema liked the sound of that so much that he ran out the pool to go get dressed to go check on the kids. When he found them they assured him that they didn't need babysitting and that they were the ones who wanted to give Ntombi a breather . The kids loved the personal experience with the wild animals. To be able to touch an elephant's trunk, brush

a cheetah's fur and so much more was amazing. They couldn't thank their mother enough for the time away.

Bukhosi: "So you guys suggested this place to dad knowing very well that Mama was going to bring us here? I hope this is not your plan to get them back together. Mama is finally looking happy again" he was frustrated with his siblings.

Amahle: "We didn't know dad would come at the same time, Bukhosi. We have accepted that they are not together"

Banele: "Dad knew where and

when mom was planning to bring us here since we bragged about it so much. If there's anyone to blame it's him"

Bandile: "Do you guys think he wants her back?"

Bubele: "Well bringing his girlfriend was a dumb move if that was his plan. We should just stick with who we came here with. I know mom said no taking sides but this weekend we choose mom. It's her money that got us here and her efforts too. Plus I don't want to have awkward moments with dad's girlfriend. She is just too much and if we don't give her the

reaction that she wants she gets upset"

Bukhosi: "I'm glad that we are on the same page on that. How strong do you think mom's heart is?"

Bubele: "We haven't pranked her since the divorce" he gave a sneaky smirk. Ntombi hated the pranks the kids used to play on her and Liyema but since the divorce they stopped out of pity for her but they were up to no good once again.

Elaine: "It's rather low to ask a stranger to pose as your man so

you could make him jealous"

Ntombikayise felt herself get sick again. Had she been quick to anger Elaine would have been on the ground long ago but Ntombi chose her battles well.

Ntombi: "As if you didn't leave that cottage holding his hand after you saw me at the pool to try and make me jealous.

Difference between us is I didn't have to try, your man acted like a jealous lover. Put your damn dog on a leash next time" she continued reading her book.

Elaine: "The same dog you are showing thigh to?"

Ntombi: "The dog was not even the target market for these thighs. He has those right so he no longer has the rights to mine" she looked at Elaine's legs "Mine were too much to handle for a puppy" she added before putting on her shades. She couldn't believe that date had her vacate at the same place they were but nothing would allow her to not enjoy the moment. She'd even go report them for harrassment if need be.

Elaine: "Ntombi I was really hoping we could work together here. Please I want to be a full part of his life and that includes

kids and they won't budge unless you do" Ntombikayise ignored her "Why are you being such a stuck up co... woman?" she added.

Ntombi sat up quickly making Elaine jump back thinking she'd hit her.

Ntombikayise: "You'd just love for me to hit you so you can lay charges, watch me get arrested and go whisper to Liyema what an unfit mother I am. And since he's dumb he'll go fight me for sole custody so you two could walk into the sunset with my children. That only happens in fairytales. Don't play with me as far as my

kids are concerned. If Liyema promised you kids you best believe that he was not referring to mine. You and your man are set on ruining my weekend when I don't even give a damn about you two. It's always you two disturbing my joy instead of living out yours. I will slap both of you should I see you in my face again and then I'll have you two thrown the hell out of here and I'll be sure to record the humiliation for social media. Go make these kids you so desperately want to have in your life but don't dare come to me again asking me to be friends

with you so you can be close to my kids"

Elaine: "For what it's worth I'm really sorry"

Ntombikayise: "You're still in my face dear and you won't like it if I show you what I do to annoying mosquitoes"

Elaine: "Wow" she stood and left. Ntombikayise got back to reading her novel in peace. When the kids arrived at the cottage they heard what sounded like a lion before a desperate scream followed.

Ntombi: "Run!" she shouted desperately with a torn shirt

that was filled with claw scratches and blood "Lion!" she said heading to the door and she watched her children's facial expression change to that of pure horror as they encouraged her to run faster. She even jumped over a couch and got onto a table to reach them quicker.

Bukhosi: "Mama run faster" he shouted in a shaky voice close to tears. When they saw she was behind them they ran for dear life but Ntombi stood at the door and laughed so much that she had to sink to the floor. They then realized that they were pranked.

Banele's shirt that he was given at the rescue center was torn and Ntombi didn't know where they got fake blood but it looked as though he got attacked by a wild animal too.

Ntombi: "You just got pranked" she stood up still laughing. At first they didn't laugh with but then they realised they planned to prank her the same way so they started to laugh while shaking their heads.

Bukhosi: "Mom" he walked over to her and hugged her while laughing. He was relieved.

Bandile: "No, Mom not like this" he

wiped his tears while laughing. He was shocked by the moment. To see his mother jump tables while her clothes were torn was not a sight he wanted to see again.

Ntombikayise apologized to her boy before hugging him "That was scary" he said while his mom wiped his tears.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry guys but I know you well and there was no way you'd let the chance to prank me here go with all these animals around here to play with. I just did what I see you planned to do"

Amahle: "But Mama you were extreme. The lions roar and

running to us screaming. What is this?" he checked the red on her torn shirt.

Ntombi: "Had you not been so absent minded due to the excitement of pranking me you'd have seen the lion on the TV screen. This is food colourant and I took a knife to make these "claw marks". I'm actually disappointed that you guys fell for that lame prank" they all laughed.

Amahle: "Mom we saw these animals at the game reserves so how could we not fall for the prank. For all we know one could

have found their way here" they all laughed. Lodge personnel came to check after they heard the panic but ended up laughing with when they heard the story.

Ntombi: "I'm officially a prankster" she did a happy dance as they were having their lunch.

Banele: "That's what made the moment real. You hate pranks so we didn't see this coming. You got us, Mom you got us good" the others agreed.

Bubele: "But the day is not over and we still have half a day tomorrow" he raised a brow clearly plotting revenge.

Ntombi: "Bring it on, Elephants bring it on" she said while beating her chest and the kids laughed. To see her playful was refreshing and for a second it felt like they were with a friend and not their mom who would scold at them for pranking and other mischief.

Ntombikayise decided that if she can't beat them she'd join them but the look of fear, shock and horror in their eyes when she ran towards them made her certain she wouldn't prank them again, not when it is something that seemed life threatening. Her defences were up because she

knew that they would come for revenge but she hoped it wouldn't involve a snake. She couldn't believe that she beat them at her own game. 🖤

S2-INSERT 15

The weekend felt short yet so amazing and Ntombi promised the children that they'd do it again when the budget allows. They couldn't stop talking about it and that was exactly what Ntombi was hoping for. She felt relaxed

and so did her children. Aside from having to deal with Elaine and Liyema it was absolutely wonderful. She had no expectations of hearing from Reth again but she was thankful for his part in making her weekend memorable. She couldn't get hold of Dali all weekend and she started to get concerned but Bandile said he was able to reach him which was just strange to Ntombi. There was nothing unusual about the week as it was school and work as usual. What Ntombi didn't expect to find was

her grandfather dressed in his vintage three piece suit.

Ntombi: "Haibo, Tamkhulu what day is it today? Did I miss your wedding anniversary?" she said while looking at him.

Tamkhulu: "I'm taking a very special lady in my life out for supper at her favourite place" he said while fixing his tie.

Ntombi: "Tshisa, Makhulu. Hey having a husband is nice neh?" she teased and laughed.

Makhulu: "Today my husband is not taking me out. There is another special lady in his life"

Ntombi looked at aunt V wondering what her grandfather was getting up to on those walks of his "But I don't mind because this is one woman I don't mind sharing his attention with. So go get dressed, Ntombikayise your father is taking you out" Ntombi breathed when she heard her grandmother say that. When the surprise sunk in she was smiling from ear to ear. Her grandfather taking her out was the last thing she expected because she knew he didn't like spending money on food they could cook at home.

Bandile: "Mom go before Tamkhulu comes back to his senses" they all laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Please do your old man the honour of going out with him, ntombam" he did a bow and Ntombi felt like a princess.

Bukhosi: "See what those movies did to your grandfather?" he smiled while shaking his head.

Ntombi: "I'd love to go out with you, Tata" she wiped her tears.

Bubele: "Why the tears?" Ntombi shrugged.

Amahle: "She's happy. Come Mom I will help you choose an outfits

that goes with Tamkhulu's attire. I know exactly what you can wear" Amahle led her up the stairs and helped her mother choose an outfit that would be fitting for the special occasion. Ntombi had witnessed Liyema go with Amahle on daughter and father dates but she knew her own father would never. Suddenly she was just overwhelmed by the love she received from all the men in her life. When she was done she found her "date" waiting for her. She couldn't remember the last time a man asked her to dress up

so he can go and spoil her and it being her grandfather to do so after such a long moment made the experience sweeter.

Tamkhulu: "You'll have to drive, Nto-Nto because with my poor sight we'll never make it to that place"

Ntombi: "Okay, Tamkhulu" she put her arm around this "Makhulu I'll bring your husband back, I promise" she said with a smile.

Makhulu: "Careful that he doesn't faint when he sees the prices at those places" they laughed.

Banele: "We gave him places with

good deals so he'll be fine. You kids enjoy your night" he joked and they laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Hey, hey" he pointed his cane at Banele for calling them kids.

Banele: "I'm sorry" he laughed "we'll keep your lady company while you go spoil another woman" he joked once again.

Tamkhulu: "Let us go before I bleksem this boy" he laughed softly. They were soon in the car and Ntombi went to the cheapest yet classy place she could think off. She appreciated the gesture

but she didn't want him spending a lot of money on her.

Tamkhulu: "So tell me how your day was? Are you still enjoying working with other people's money?" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "My day was good thank you, Tamkhulu. Yes working with their money still excites me a lot. How was your day?"

Tamkhulu: "It was good, ntombam. Your grandmother and I took a walk around the house. It took us forever but to see her on her feet again felt good. I don't know how to thank you for

that, Mntanam". Their orders came and Tamkhulu was glad to see that it was lamb as he knew it at home. "That is why we decided to make you feel good" he added after the waiter left.

Ntombi: "You didn't have to come spend money for that, Tata. Just knowing I'll find you two home makes me feel so good"

Tamkhulu: "I also wanted to spend time with my little girl, just us. Did I tell you that you are beautiful?" Ntombi nodded while smiling "Good because a gentleman should not make a lady

wonder if she is beautiful" he added before eating "Mmm it is actually good" he complemented the food.

Ntombi: "Where have man like you gone to, Tamkhulu?" she asked while looking at him with such admiration "By that I mean kind, intelligent, masculine and committed men?" she added. The food was indeed good.

Tamkhulu: "Some have turned into feminine male who abuse woman. No true man, no masculine man would ever raise his hand at a woman because a masculine man

knows that we are blessed with this strength to protect women not beat them. Some are cowards who do not want to take responsibility for their actions hence you find many fatherless children today. Some want their bread buttered not just on both sides but on the crusty sides too. Some have been so hurt that they hurt others out of a place of pain. Some do not know who they are yet so they seek themselves in others instead of turning inwards. But Nto-Nto even amongst all of that there are

men who fit into the masculine, kind, committed category that you have just described my girl" he sipped water "But society has pushed those type of men aside because love today is measured by the amount of money a man has in his bank account. A man without money is less likely to find a woman because woman today measure love by the money that he has. I'm not saying that it is right of a man to not try to provide but what he provides is overlooked because he has no money. The women of today do not

appreciate how that man without money grows his own food and gives her his crop so the kids can eat because she wants to be seen holding shopping bags of Woolworths filled with the same veggies that her man grows in his garden to impress people. Masculine men exit but society doesn't appreciate these men, instead they praise the imposter of a masculine man who behind closed doors hits his wife but because he hits her behind the doors of a mansion society embraces him"

Ntombi: "Shuu that was a mouthful. I hear you, Tata"

Tamkhulu: "In our times marriage was a common thing because the women of your grandmother's time knew that a man, a father brings more to the home than just a paycheck. Back then we didn't get much from the boer so our women appreciated us for the discipline that we brought into her home and the masculine energy of being able to come up with means to feed our families without the boer. I used to grow the food that your mother and

uncle ate and never did my wife see me as less of a man because I not only provided food in our home but so much more. Relationships do not last because the world is filled with coward men who's first instinct is to run and because it's now filled with young woman who measure manhood by the type of hair a man can buy her. Gone are the times women respected men and when men cherished and protected women. That is just opinion, ntombam I'm not saying see things that way"

Ntombi: "It's rather hard not to,

Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "I also hear you ask your grandmother what you could have done to prevent Liyema from going. My baby, Liyema's personal issues are non of your business. Just as you had no blame in the Bonga character abusing you, you have no blame in this boy cheating. Bonga watched his father abuse his mother.

Liyema watched his father cheat on his mother. How is my child involved in that again?" he looked her directly in the eyes.

Ntombi: "Nothing, Tata because

I had no part in the choices and actions of their fathers"

Tamkhulu: "My clever girl" he said proudly and everyone looked at their table. Ntombikayise couldn't help but laugh because it felt like she was at school again "What these boys did to you is a reflection on the unresolved issues that they haven't dealt with. It had absolutely nothing to do with you. They would have done it to other women too. Don't carry guilt of issues that are non of your business. You came and served the love that you were sent to give

them and they allowed issues that they had unknowingly been suffering from to come in the way of loving you right. You did your part so bow out gracefully. I never want to hear you ask your grandmother why you weren't enough again. I became so angry that day but couldn't say anything because it was a private conversation but now you know what I think about it"

Ntombi: "Thank you, Tamkhulu wam" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "Plus the next man that knocks at the door to ask

for you will not hear the typical "what are your intentions with my daughter" question" he shook his head.

Ntombi: "Now this will be interesting" she laughed "what will you ask, Tata?" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "I will ask him how aware he is of his childhood traumas, his psychological unresolved issues and what steps he's taking to deal with them because hell will freeze over before I allow another boy to project his issues on my child"
Ntombi could see that he was

dead serious perhaps even a bit angry. Ntombikayise couldn't help but laugh.

Ntombi: "How did I get so lucky though" she held his hands "More daughters need a father like you in their lives" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "The next vula mlomo will not be whiskey. It'll be a long talk with that boy to check if he has any unresolved issues and if he does I will send him back to go work on them so that he won't bring that nonsense to my child"

Ntombi: "Yho I pity the man who comes near me" she laughed.

Tamkhulu: "That's why Makhulu and I want you to take your good time to deal with this divorce. We do not want you to go suspect a faithful man of cheating in your next relationship. Heal, Ntombikayise. Let Liyema galavant with his unresolved issues but you heal, my child. Even if it takes five years, heal. If you feel your bed is too big for you and that pain makes you want to turn to another man come tell me then we can get you a single bed so you won't roll over to a cold side but to the floor so you'll come to your

senses" Ntombi laughed so much she spit some of the juice out. She put her hand over her mouth to avoid that and when she finally swallowed she laughed out "Ja, I'm on a mission, ntombam" he added. It was how serious he was that made Ntombi laugh even more.

Ntombi: "I love you, Tata" she stood to hug him "You're honestly the only man that I need in my life right now" she kissed his cheeks that had snow white trimmed beard.

Tamkhulu: "I love you too,

Ntombam. You're not the only woman that I need in my life because I need your granny too but I have plenty of love to go around. Even those who don't have a father figure may come."

Ntombi: "The best date ever" she put her hands up and they both laughed "Pity you are too old to be my dance partner" she added.

Tamkhulu: "No even if I was strong enough I already have a partner because your grandmother is starting to walk again and soon we'll be dancing"

Ntombikayise: "Lucky her to have

scored herself a manly man"
Tamkhulu shook his head
laughing. Ntombi watched him
finish his food and if she could
choose people to live forever her
grandfather would be one of them
because she felt the world needed
more of him. It was indeed the
best date that she had ever had
and with a man she knew would
never hurt her intentionally.

Alu was busy packing her school
memories right again after
Lungile put them on the wardrobe
carelessly. She'd smile as she

looked at the blurry pictures clearly taken by antique cameras. She came across a picture that had been stuck behind another. She separated the two pictures and she nearly had a heart attack when she saw the face before her. She fell to the bed while still looking at it.

Lungile: "Not this again, Phelisa Elephant please" he walked in from work and got upset when he found her looking at pictures again.

Alu: "I found her" she looked at her husband before offering him

the picture "Elaine" she elaborated more. Lungi checked the picture and he couldn't see Elaine in it.

Lungi: "She's not here? Let me guess she's the photographer who ended up killing everyone after taking the pictures. Oh but wait...how would you have gotten the picture then?" she was not in the mood for his sarcasm.

Alu: "You don't see her because she doesn't look like she did back then. Back then she was Elroy Madikela" she pointed to the young boy in the picture. Lungi

looked closely and could see the resemblance but he refused to believe it.

Lungi: "No fucking way, Alunamda. Now you've gone too far with this" he shook his head.

Alu: "I might be wrong, baby. Like you said people look alike a lot and she said she was home schooled so yeah...yeah that a look alike and Elaine is from PE" suddenly she didn't want to believe.

Lungile: "Baby please tell me that this is not possible" he pleaded "I'm all for everyone doing what they want with their lives and

body and so is Liyema but if this is true then he doesn't know because I would have known. He's going to lose it should this be true"

Alu: "That's why I said it'll be disturbing should Elaine be who I thought she was. It wasn't because I think there is something disturbing about the LGBT+ community but him not knowing that his girlfriend was born a male could come with disturbing consequences" she felt herself feel sad not just for Liyema but for Elaine too. She

could imagine how difficult gaining the courage to transition was. How difficult telling Liyema was and that's why she kept quiet. Suddenly Lungi was on the phone and Alu could tell that it was with his mother. Not even an hour went by and Mrs E was at their house. The sound of Lung's voice over the phone made her rush to meet him. Lungi didn't waste time. He just showed their mother the picture and told her what they hoped was not true. Mrs E: "So what do you expect me to do, Lungile?"

Lungi: "Are you seriously asking me that, Mama. Your son might have a breakdown should this come out" he shouted.

Mrs E: "Well she did what needed to be done to be a woman and she is a woman Liyema chose so I don't see what you want me to do? Your brother told me to stop meddling and I washed my hands off his love life on that day. You called me for such. Are you telling me that Liyema couldn't tell the difference?"

Alu: "I read that one can barely tell unless the person who

transitioned tells them, even a partner"

Lungi: "So you think Liyema has time to notice whether or not his girlfriend had a penis before, Mama" he shouted. He was furious.

Mrs E: "Well she now has a vagina, the same one that made him leave his wife. So what do you want me to do with this? He's a grown man" Lungile could you believe that his mother was so cool about the issue.

Alu: "We were hoping that you could confront Elaine, Ma"

Mrs E: "Why me, Alu?" she laughed out "Even your husband told me to leave Liyema alone so I'm shocked to be called to this. Plus Liyema will say I deliberately went out of my way to find this when in fact I was minding my business as he and his brother told me to. Again, Lungile why am I here?"

Lungi: "Okay Mama we are sorry for telling you to back off. I ask that you confront Elaine and should you find it to be true I ask that you give her money to dump Liyema in exchange for your silence

because if she didn't tell anyone about this then she doesn't want it to be known" he looked at her with pleading eyes. Mrs E hated that his son was possibly never told that detail by Elaine but she wanted him to learn but at the same time she wanted to save him.

Mrs E: "So my money should go warm Elaine's hand so she'd break up with my son? The son who chose her himself with no one forcing him? You must think I've got money to play. I'd rather take my grandkids to Disney world

overseas"

Alu: "Mama we beg you. If it's not Elaine then we'll take the blame when Liyema confronts us but if it is her we ask that you please give her money to dump him and save him from hearing this. We know he doesn't hate the LGBT community but to hear that he was not told that he's dating a trans woman will hurt him"

Mrs E: "Or it might not bother him at all" she said casually.

Lungi: "Mama" he shouted while banging the table hard "I know

this man like I know myself. This will bother him so please just do this. I'll give you the money please"

Mrs E: "Here I hoped I would never have to be a villain again. Now I must go tell her I know her past that she most probably wanted to hide forever hence she never said anything. I now have to crush her spirit by forcing her to leave her man or else I'll expose her. No I'm not doing this. You two told me to stay out of it so you Lungile as Liyema's biggest supporter in this new relationship

go get your hands dirty. I don't like this Elaine but I'm not possibly going to unearth her demons. Bye" she walked out. She knew should Liyema find out he'd blame her so she chose not to get involved.

Aku: "You've got to do it. I am certain this will stay between us should Elaine take the money and leave. Liyema will just think Elaine wanted the thrill of being with a married man but realized it wasn't so nice so she ended it with him"

Lungi: "What happens if she

doesn't do it?"

Alu: "Then we wait and see how Liyema will react to the revelation. He might actually not mind and continue to love her"

Lungi: "Or all hell might break loose" Lungi was angry at Elaine for not playing open cards with Liyema. He felt in such a situation it's best that the person knows the full story so they could go in the relationship knowing. Lungi called around to try and have the money ready should Elaine be Elroy. He was determined to keep

this secret from his brother at all cost. ❤️

S2-INSERT 16

NOT EDITED!!!

Alu decided that it was best for her to go and speak to Elaine woman to woman before Lungile could approach her. Since she and Elaine knew each other from their school days Alu hoped that Elaine would hear her out. It was not an easy discussion to have but Alu felt she'd be more compassionate to Elaine than her husband.

Elaine opened the door to their two bedroom apartment with excitement and let Alu walk inside. Elaine: "You look like you are carrying a heavy burden" she looked at Alu "I'm so glad that you're here because now I finally have someone other than Liyema to show our getaway pictures to" she said with excitement making Alu feel bad for coming to dampen her mood.

Alu: "I know, Elaine"

Elaine: "Don't tell me that Liyema actually sent Lungile all the pictures" she put her hand over

her face "But it doesn't matter because I've got so much I've got to tell you. Sit I'll go make us something to drink. I know you like coffee"

Alu: "I remember you from school Elaine" Elaine stopped on her tracks and turned to face Alu

"Please don't try to give me that homeschooled story because we both know that it is not true. I know you are Elroy Madikela, the quiet little boy who used to sit about two seats from me at the back" Elaine turned to face Alu again.

Elaine: "Wow are you people so hell bent on breaking Liyema and I up that you'd accuse me of actually having been a man once?" she said calmly while making her way back towards Alu. "I actually thought that you were the one family member of Liyema that embraced me, Alu but clearly you were just pretending" she looked at Alu.

Alu: "Then how do you explain this?" she took the picture out of her bag and gave it to Elaine.

Elaine studied the person Alu said was once her and laughed out.

Elaine: "So some boy who looks like

me has you thinking that I am a trans female huh? Let me tell you something Alunamda Elephant. My father was what we call a man whore in his days. He blew up every skirt that he came across and not just in my home town but I imagine the entire South Africa because he was a truck driver. I don't know who this boy is but I will ask my mother if she knows about a brother of mine from my father's affairs. Who knows maybe you have just begun a reunion between myself and a brother that I never knew" she

placed the picture against Alu's chest hard making Alu fall backwards a bit.

Alu: "I hear you and what you are saying actually makes sense but how do I know that what you are saying is true, Elaine?" she tried to come across as hardcore and cold like her mother in law.

Elaine: "Oh my fucking word" she raised her hands in surrender "I don't owe you any damn explanation but wait here while I go get the proof that I have always been a girl" she disappeared from Alu's sight and

Alu stood not knowing what to do. A part of her was afraid that Elaine might hurt her but she took comfort in the fact that her husband knew where she was. Alu waited for a long while but she didn't sit down fearing that letting her guard down might be dangerous. Elaine appeared at last and once again had Alu holding on the couch for balance after she placed something on Alu's chest hard. Alu's chest had started to feel hot but she didn't show it by rubbing it or checking if it was bruised. On the first

picture was a little girl who resembled Elaine and she was sitting next to a woman with books in front of them. The second picture was just that little girl with long plaited hair and yellow ribbons. The smile was exactly as Elaine's was at present so Alu just nodded before looking at Elaine again.

Elaine: "Do I look like a boy to you on those, Alu?" she folded her arms "Oh check the back, one thing my mother always did was write dates and age on the back of pictures and the picture is so

old the ink is starting to fade so I didn't just write it on there" Alu turned the pictures and indeed it had a date on it. She ran her fingers over the writing to check if it wasn't recent but it had started to fade so it was old indeed "Do show your dear husband that his brother isn't dating a trans woman because I was a girl then and that's why I'm a woman today. Bring my damn pictures back so that I can have childhood memories to show my children someday"

Alu: "Who is the woman?"

Elaine: "That's my aunt who was a teacher. She used to be my tutor and as you can see on the picture we are not in a classroom but at home because I was homeschooled"

Alu: "Why were you homeschooled?"

Elaine: "Because I had a condition that didn't allow me to go to mainstream schools, Phalisa!" she shouted.

Alu: "Mind telling me what kind of condition?" Alu could see Elaine was at the brink of exploding and she feared what the consequences of those might be

but she had to ask as many questions as possible.

Elaine: "Of course I mind, Alunamda because it is absolutely non of your damn business!" he shouted.

Alu: "Does Liyema know?"

Elaine: "Oh wow this woman is testing me. Yes he does, Alunamda now get the hell out of my house and don't bother coming back" she pushed Alu towards the door.

Alu: "So if I ask him about this condition he won't be shocked to hear it from me?" she pushed back as best she could and stood

firm.

Elaine: "Go ahead. You think I'd give you Elephant witches ammunition against me when I know how much you hate me? Go ask him and since you wanted to know what condition it was he'll explain it to you as I explained it to him"

Alu: "I hope that you are telling the truth, Elaine. I hope you told him about this alleged disease.

Also I hope that you really were not Elroy because he is going to be mad when he finds you let him love you while you kept it from

him"

Elaine: "So now you're discriminating against trans people? How sure are you that he would have been mad after finding out I'm not who he thought I was? Do you know Liyema's private thoughts and fantasies, Alunamda? Many men actually prefer trans woman over cis women" she said with a smirk "But pity I can't prove that Liyema might be one of those men because all of this is natural, girl. Now get the hell out of my face before I literally kick your ass out

of here" Alu looked at the pictures.

Alu: "I'm sorry for accusing you of something you are not guilty of" she said sincerely "I'm just protecting my family"

Elaine: "What was your plan? Had I been a trans woman keeping the truth from Liyema what would you have done? I know you came here with a plan and since you varldged in here making accusations I deserve to know what my "punishment" would have been?"

Alu: "My husband was going to

offer you money so you'd leave Liyema and we'd have kept the secret" Elaine laughed out.

Elaine: "You clearly don't know me if you thought that I would have let the man of my dreams go for money. I love Liyema. That man is mine and I will bulldoze anyone who tries to come between us"

Alu suddenly felt a cold chill run through her body when she looked into Elaine's eyes.

Alu: "You gave me the answers to my questions and the proof to go with it so we won't try to come between you and Liyema meaning

you won't have to bulldoze anyone.
Bye, Elaine" she turned to walk
away.

Elaine: "Alu" Alu turned her head
"Bring my damn pictures back and
after that I never want to see
you here again. Are we clear?"

Alu: "Cristal" he turned around
and walked to the car. She could
hear a loud scream come from
behind Elaine's closed door but she
didn't bother going back to check
because she knew Elaine was just
letting out the frustration of the
conversation they just had. Alu
went straight to Lungile's

workplace to give her husband feedback. She told him everything on arrival and could see the relief on his face when he looked at the pictures.

Lungi: "This is definitely her" he said with a smile "The boy looked like her but not as much as the little girl in these pictures. Damn I'm so relieved" he breathed.

Alu: "So you think she's telling the truth?"

Mrs E: "Who is telling the truth?" she walked in "I came to check if you two decided what to do with the issue you told me about" she

went to stand next to them.

Lungile: "Why do you care when you told us that you wanted nothing to do with it, Mama?"

Mrs E: "I still want nothing to do with it but as a mother I'm concerned" Alu told her mother in law the story and showed the pictures "Well her story does check out if you'll take her word for it until you dig deeper and find that this is her twin sister" she gave Alu the pictures back.

Lungile: "The skinny body structure, the smile and eyes.

This is Elaine, baby don't let my

mom get to you. You'll end up spending a lot of money digging for something that is not there" Alu nodded.

Mrs E: "No don't get upset with me for having a mind that is able to see things from 8 different angles. I honestly don't care what becomes of this. I'm glad that you children were able to sort it out but from now on you two wash your hands off Liyema's new relationship and try by all means to be civil to the new girl. For me it's not easy because she triggers painful memories of your

father's cheating but you two have no reason to hate her. Don't dare bring Mahlubandile into any of this because I don't want her stressing herself out"

Lungi: "We won't bring it up because there is nothing to bring up. Damn it feels like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I can finally look my brother in the eyes again" he smiled.

Alu: "I'm sorry that I started all of this, babe"

Lungi: "I love how you tried to protect my brother, babe. I'm not angry...not at all" he kissed her

forehead and hugged her.

Liyema walked in feeling exhausted after running a 10km marathon. He put his exhaustion aside when Elaine ran into his arms sobbing. He held her while trying to get why she was in such a state. When she finally calmed down she told him what happened.

Liyema: "Alu? Of all the people in my family Alu was the one here to make such accusations. The damn woman is family by marriage yet she thinks that she can come and question my woman like that?" he

was furious.

Elaine: "It was terrible to explain myself to someone that I owe no explanation to, Liyema" she wiped her tears off "Your family hates me so much that they can make such accusations"

Liyema: "I'm sorry that I wasn't here to protect you but I promise it'll never happen again" he held her for a long while until he thought she was herself again. He couldn't wait to go tell his family exactly what he thought about their little stunt. He thought they had some nerve to

try and pay Elaine off.

Elaine: "Liyema" she said in a whisper.

Liyema: "Mmm?"

Elaine: "Baby, what would you have done had it been true?"

Liyema: "That you were once a man and you kept it from me?" he looked at her and she nodded. "I would have gone mad with rage, Elaine and that's the honest truth. I don't don't what my rage would have made me do but it would have driven me to something I know I would regret later. I have nothing against

trans woman or them showing interest in me but I can nicely tell them that I prefer non trans woman. That's just my preference. So if it were true and you didn't give me a chance to walk away instead made me fall in love with you and making me choose you over my wife I would have lost it, babe" he clenched his fist as the thought of it alone got him upset.

Elaine: "But they are women too"

Liyema: "Not they type of woman that I prefer, Elaine. Not the type of woman who when I look

at their baby pictures I see a boy. I've got nothing against gay people but I do not want that in my life. I don't like the thought of having sex with someone who was once a man. I don't have any fantasies of it because I am extremely certain about my sexuality. I love woman and woman who were born woman at that. So you thank God that this was not true because I would have showed you flames for bringing me into it" his fist was still clenched but Elaine unlocked it.

Elaine: "Well luckily that's not the case" she kissed his cheek. He stood and told her that he's going to go see Lungile to tell him about how unhappy he was about what Alu did to Elaine. He arrived at Lungile's home still fuming from earlier on and the violent knock proved just how much. He pushed Lungi aside as soon as he opened and let himself walk in. When he saw his mother sipping tea he couldn't help but let out a laugh of disbelief.

Liyema: "I should have known, Mama" he looked at her "I should

have known that you were the one who put these two up to this" he laughed while shaking his head.

Alu: "She had nothing to do with this. I am the one who found an old school picture and I thought that it was Elaine"

Liyema: "How the hell is it any of your business, Alunamda? May I remind you that you are just a makoti in this family?" he shouted.

Lungi: "Don't you dare shout at my wife like that" he pointed at his brother "we were doing what

we thought was in your best interest. We've had the damn talk hypothetically before so when I thought that Elaine was Elroy I wanted to prevent it from reach your ears because I know that you wouldn't have taken the fucken news well. I love you enough to want to shield you from shit I knew would have fucked you up should it be true" he shouted.

Liyema: "I don't need you too, Lungile. Elaine had epilepsy as a child which prevented her from going to school for a number of

years. She told me about that so don't come and dig up things that aren't there. I divorced Lakhawe so stop obsessing over her as if she's the only good woman in this world. What you just did has made me realize that you are just like your mother. When you do not get your way, you make sure to cause disruption"

Lungi: "Do you think she'd have been so quiet had she had anything to do with this?"

Lungile's face was so close to Liyema's as they both looked at each other with rage "You know

that she's no coward. As my wife said Mama had nothing to do with this. If you can't see how Alu and I were trying to protect you then I too realized something. I realize that had I been in the same situation you'd have let me find out and be hurt by the betrayal and deceit rather than first makes means to try and protect me from the truth" Liyema: "I don't need you to protect me against false accusations. Maybe Elaine was right. A break from you all might be good until you all accept that I

divorced Lakiwe"

Mrs E: "Don't do something that's going to hurt your children more, Liyema" she stood "You have already dumped so much on these kids with this new relationship so don't dump more on them by moving just when they have worked through the effects of this divorce. Had you had no children I'd have told you to ride off into the sunset with Elaine and heck I'd have even given you the damn horse to ride on but you have children to think about before making such drastic

choices. Give my grandbabies a chance to adjust for godsake.

They are still adjusting to you not being home so don't dump more emotional baggage on them now please" she said with tear filled eyes "You wanted these kids so desperately that you couldn't wait to find a woman to give them to you so you did surrogacy. Don't make them think that you regret having them because I know that you don't. This is not about Lakhiwe" her tears fell but she wiped them.

Liyema: "Stay the hell out of my

relationship" he looked at them
"All of you" he added before
leaving them.

Mrs E: "This love must be truly
blinding if he lost all logic. I just
saw so much of your father in
Liyema at that moment. I've
prayed so much that none of you
turn out like that but Liyema is
even worse. At least your father
never broke up his family for
something he was not even
certain about. He's pushing
Lakhiwe and as sweet as this girl
is she'll do whatever it takes to
protect her children so Liyema is

pushing her to go for sole custody. Who wants a part time father for their child who is going to play with the children's emotions?"

Lungi: "We're sorry that you were dragged into it"

Mrs E: "I don't care about that. He'd have accused me even if I wasn't here. I am worried about this mud life crisis of his" she took her bag and left.

Alu' "I'm sorry baby" she said sounding emotional. Lungile hugged her and assured her that it wasn't her fault. Lungile couldn't remember the last time

he had a fall out with Liyema as they just had and he hated the feeling it left. He hoped that Liyema would see that they were trying to do what they thought was best to bring as less pain to him as possible. He also hoped that it was anger that drove Liyema to speak about moving and that he'd come to his senses once he's calmed down.

•
Mahlubandile waited for Rose to arrive because she wanted to know the woman that her daughter was meeting on

occasion. She recognised Rose the second she walked in and Rose too because the two had seen each other at Ma Mbuzos house. Hlubi ordered juice for them already because it was a hot day.

Hlubi: "Thank you for coming" she said with a smile.

Rose: "I hope this is non of those stay away from my man warnings, Sisi. I have no intention of ever getting back with Yanda and I know he doesn't either. I just want to get to know my child" she spoke quickly like one who was frightened.

Hlubi: "I'm not the type of woman to warn woman to stay away from Yanda because I trust him and I'm secure in my marriage. He knows that I am here and so does Nandi" Rose could breath again.

Rose: "So why did you ask to meet me?"

Hlubi: "I would be a bad mother if I didn't get to know the woman who my daughter has been meeting. Nandi wants you in her life and I want to know you because of that. Not as a friend don't worry but as two mothers

sharing a child" she smiled.

Rose: "That was unexpected. Usually we woman fight each other even when there's no reason to. I'd like to know my daughter's other mother thank you. I also want to thank you for helping Yanda raise her. You did a great job and Nandi can't stop talking about you" Hlubi smiled.

Hlubi: "I love her very much. I can also imagine that it was not easy to leave her but you're here now and that's all that matters. How are you?"

Rose: "I am good. I take my

treatment even if they make me feel numb but I know they are important. My husband got a job this side after a year of both of us not working so that is something to be grateful for" she smiled.

Hlubi: "Where did you move to?"

Rose: "I was all over the Western Cape at first but after I got married we moved to the Eastern Cape"

Hlubi: "Are looking for a job?"

Rose: "Eish, Sisi I am but it is not easy at all" she looked down

Hlubi: "Yandiswa and Yamkela

didn't apply for the job at my work as a cleaner. Maybe you could apply"

Rose: 'I heard you tell them about it that day and I wanted to come out and tell you that I'd like to be I was told not to talk to you as you'll go out of your way to keep me away from Nandi. I then remembered that I once followed Ma Mbuzos advice and it got me no where so I decided to try find Yanda myself and I'm so glad that I did"

Hlubi: "Do you have a CV?" Rose nodded quickly.

Rose: "I have it and a certified copy of my standard ten and ID I keep them in my bag always just in case a job comes around randomly" she gave Hlubi the documents.

Hlubi: "My kind of woman" she said with a smile. "I will make sure this reaches our HR department" she promised.

Rose: "Why are you helping me, Mrs Mbuzo"

Hlubi: "Because too many of us women don't help each other and I am sick of it. Tomorrow it might be you helping me. I'll try

my best to get you the job
because two salaries at home are
always better than one"

Rose: "That is so true but at
least the children's grant is also
helping here and there. I was so
sad to hear about Nandi's
diabetes. My father had it and I
hoped none of my kids would"

Hlubi: "The doctor is so impressed
with her that he no longer sees
the need for insulin. She's taking
very good care of herself but it
did scare me too at first"

Rose: "Yanda is blessed with a
true wife indeed and I don't know

why his mother doesn't appreciate it. Did he tell you I used to back chat with her as if she were my peer yet she always liked me" Hlubi laughed while shaking her head.

Hlubi: "My energy irritates her demons that's why she does not like me. My sister in law's grandfather made me aware of that so now I'm just happy knowing that whatever Ma Mbuzo is dealing with is non of my concern. My family is healthy and growing and that's all I care about."

Rose: "Amen, Sisi" she smiled in agreement. The two ladies got to know each other a bit more. Hlubi liked Rose and could see a good future with Rose as a part of Nandi's life. She didn't want Nandi feeling like she had to choose one mother, not when she could have the best of both worlds. 

S2-INSERT 17

NOT EDITED

The past was something real and that one couldn't run from. There were certain scars that would

place a person right where they thought they no longer lived. No matter how hard Elaine tried to hide from her past it always seemed to catch up with her and she was tired of it. She had decided to take leave and focus on fixing the walls that seemed to be cracking. There was a knock on the door and Elaine's friend Danny came all the way from Plettenberg bay to see her after Elaine called her sounding hysterical over the phone. Once the hugs and kisses were over with wine got served as the two ladies made themselves

comfortable on the couch.

Danny: "So have you told him yet?" she looked at Elaine and Elaine shook her head "Elaine" she added clearly not impressed with the answer.

Elaine: "I know that you advised that I be open about it to him but it became difficult after each second that I spend with him, Dan. I love this man so much" she sipped her wine.

Danny: "And you said that he loves you right?"

Elaine: "The way that he looks at me makes me certain that he does. The man left his wife for

me, Danny. I am not proud of that but that should tell you how much he loves me"

Danny: "But he can't love all of you if he doesn't know all of you, Lain"

Elaine: "What exactly is all of me, Dan? Isn't all of me who I am now? So why must I take myself back to a dark time in my life and potentially ruin a perfect relationship?"

Danny: "Because he deserves to know. He should have known from the very beginning. You yourself said that he said he'd blow a gasket should he find it to be

true. The past is never really where you left it and that's why you need to be open about it so no one can use it against you"

Elaine: "My present is so perfect, Danny and my future is looking promising so why the hell must I take myself back to my tense past?" she started to cry.

Danny: "Honey any man who doesn't accept you with your past is not worth your time"

Elaine: "But am I not worth his time, babe? she sniffed "I've been stripped off the love of my family and now I once again feel like I'm actually loved. Now people

are asking me to give it up because of a person I no longer even am"

Danny: "So what's your plan, Elaine? Now that his family members know the truth what's the plan?" she wiped her friends tears with her thumbs. Elaine sobbed and it was the cry of a person lost of all hope. She shrugged and continued to cry it out. She didn't have an answer to her friend's question.

Elaine: "You...you know how long it took me to reach this point, Danny. You know how my entire family disowned me after I

became Elaine. You were there when I was open to the first man that I met post operation and you witnessed for yourself how he insulted me. He made me feel like I don't deserve to live. Is it my fault that I didn't have a choice in choosing the body that I was born with? Everyone I've told about my past stripped of off their love and I am honestly just so tired... I'm emotionally exhausted. I just want people to see me as I see myself. So what if I was once trapped in the body of a boy but I never felt like one and I took the necessary steps to

be the woman that I knew I am. You guys don't know what it's like to be born in a body that feels foreign to you. To look at your sisters and know that that is the body that was meant for you" she broke down. Alu's visit took her back to the school bullying again where the boys wouldn't allow her to enter the toilets because they said she was too feminine to share the facility with them and the girls said they wouldn't share a toilet with a boy. Having depression when no one tried to understand what she meant when she would tell them how she felt.

The first and only man she was open to about her transitioning literally spat at her and called her names that would stay in her mind forever and the fact that she was madly in love with him made the experience even more traumatic. After that relationship she built walls around her heart and that came with never telling her intimate partners that she used to be male. It never used to be much work to keep the secret but with Liyema it's different because it was the longest relationship she had been in and trying to explain

away the little clues had started to become exhausting.

Danny: "He once almost found your hormones pills and now the family knows the truth. It's best that you tell him yourself. He might surprise you by embracing you as you are. He is in love with you after all meaning that he sees qualities in you that he likes. So much that he left his wife to start a new life with you. I know that you are fearful and drained but trying to keep this secret longer than it has already been then he is going to find out from his family. These people already

don't like you so you best believe they would take pleasure in telling him" Elaine shook her head.

Elaine: "They want to protect him from finding out so they won't say anything. The problem is the brother's loyalty to Liyema. He would much rather have his brother be left heart broken than have him find out that he's dating a trans woman. I can't let him go, Danny. I know that no one believes me when I say I hate how I got him, I do so much. I know that he was not the first married man I've met but the previous one didn't tell me about

his marital status. I even regret trying to poison his daughter against his ex. That's not me, Danny and you know it and that's why I stopped when I realized what I was doing. No one plans how love comes and for me to have found it based on the tears of another woman doesn't sit well with me. I am sorry for not telling him to first end things with the wife but when you're in love all logic leaves"

Danny: "See how this relationship has already turned you into someone you are not? If he leaves after telling him then let

him go. Part of the transitioning process is feeling comfortable enough in your new body that you don't keep it secret. Many others are waiting to hear your story. Please stop letting men limit you from living your full life not even this Liyema guy is worth it. If he leaves you let him be on his way because it would mean that he was never yours to begin with. A great man who doesn't mind whether you're a trans or cis woman will come along and he'll love you for you, all of you. The good and the bad of your story"

Elaine: "I let him leave his wife

for me, Dan" she sobbed again
"He's going to be angry at me for
that and for not telling him my
past. Even if he doesn't mind
being with a trans woman he'll
never get over the deceit and I'll
lose him. I should have told him"
she wiped her tears but more
came.

Danny: "You didn't force him to
cheat with you. He was the
married one not you. He also made
the decision to leave his wife and
be with you by himself. He can't
blame you for something he was
most responsible for. Let him be
angry for not revealing your past

sooner but at least you'll be free to tell your story without any shame. No man is worth you living like this. All I'm sure of is the fact that this is going to blow up but please make sure that it doesn't blow up in your face. I remember how crushed you were when the last guy hurt you when he found out so please don't put yourself in that situation again"

Elaine: "My god why did I allow myself to fall in love with a man again" she stood to get a refill "I live with him. I know his annoying habits and his annoying snore but I want to be with him

regardless. It's like he was made for me, Danny"

Danny: "You can only say that for sure should you tell him the truth and he stays. That's the only way that you'll know for sure he is made for you. I'm going to stick around for a while in case you need me. I can't leave you to deal with this alone"

Elaine: "You're right. This is my story to tell and I'd be damned if I give his mother and sister a chance to beat me at it. It won't be easy but I'm going to do this"

Danny: "You've done the work of accepting yourself already, don't

set yourself back by spending your time with someone who you worry might not be as accepting and that's true when it comes to being honest about any important aspect of yourself. Tell this man because it's unfair of you to keep this from him. I know it's easy for me to talk because I have never been in your situation but I wouldn't like it when someone keeps such from me either. Free yourself, Elaine please. You can go and start a new life in Plett with me should he end things after telling him. You can help me at the café until you find another

marketing job"

Elaine: "My man is going to accept me, Danny. His love for me is more than skin deep, that I'm sure of. He knows that I'm the woman that he needs and that's why he chose me. We are in love. I can't lose him because I need his love"

Danny: "No you don't. You want his love but it's your love that you need. That self love that's going to make you feel proud of the journey you've walked. It was hell, lonely and depressing yet here you are looking beautiful and glowing and that's not because of a man.

It's the self care that you've been doing since you left your home"

Elaine: "I will tell him when I feel ready. I read a book that said trans people aren't obligated to tell their partners the truth"

Danny: "Isn't that a violation of his sexuality, Elaine? I know you are now ready to accuse me of being transphobic but as your friend I need to be honest with you about this. I'm not transphobic but cis gender people have a right to choose if they'd like to be in a relationship with trans people. Unfortunately some

trans people see us as transphobic when we say that but Liyema has a human right to know who he is getting into bed with. The same would have applied had he been with a non trans woman. Honestly it the best policy. What you are doing is potentially violating his sexuality. I don't know the law but he does so what if he gets you arrested for sexual assault or something? He didn't give consent to be in a relationship with a trans woman. Love shouldn't be like this, Elaine. What happens if he wants you to try for kids? You'd have to come

up with lies to cover why you can't have any of your own. I imagine that to be very draining on you. I love you too much to not be honest with you, way too much" Danny could see Elaine didn't like what she had to say much.

Elaine: "I said I'll tell him when I'm ready" she snapped.

Danny: "And when will that be? You said so after your first date with him yet here you are still tip toeing around the issue. This man has you working overtime to keep him from knowing and thus I see you are losing the Elaine that I

know. The kind and gentle Elaine. Since you've met him you've become desperate to keep him and I fear that desperation is going to grow. Find your people, Elaine. Those who won't force you to change who you are. You are an amazing, strong and independent woman and many women are waiting to hear your story so they can be inspired too. It's like you have become ashamed of yourself once again like you were growing up. Remember that Elaine please. The one who is proud of her story. What made you ashamed was that one man

that reacted badly when I know there are many who would love you as you are" she pleaded.

Elaine: "When I'm ready I'll tell him" Danny just nodded slowly. She hoped that Elaine would disclose soon but she doubted it very much. Elaine always felt guilty for not telling Liyema about her past but the deeper in love she fell with him the harder it became to open up about it. Apart from the few friends she met over the years she only had Liyema since her family disowned her for being transgender. She was forced to go dig up a chapter of her story

that she hoped would never have to be read out loud again and she was not ready for the consequences that might come with disclosing. Danny sat with her friend because she was concerned about what Liyema might do to Elaine should Elaine decide to tell him.

Ntombi did something that she had never done before. She borrowed one of the boy's phone to make a call to Dali since he was not picking up his calls. The phone rang and Ntombi was pacing up and down in the kitchen. She was

not sure why she was so nervous but she had no control over her body.

Dali: "Bubele, is something the matter boy?" Ntombi couldn't explain the relief that she felt when she heard his voice. She kept quiet for a while "Bubele?" he called out with a sense of urgency.

Ntombi: "Hi...hi Daluxolo it's me mom... I mean Ntombi" usually he'd have called him out on not contacting her but she could feel that their friendship was not the same anymore. She didn't know why but she hoped to find out.

Dali: "Hi, Kayise. I was going to call you but something always just came up" he said nervously. To hear her voice felt good but it was a good that he didn't want to feel at that moment because it made him miss her even more.

Ntombi: "Don't lie, Xolo. The boys say that they don't have a problem reaching you yet I can't even get a text back. If you don't want me to bother you again you should just say so because we are too old to be playing the silent games" she blurted out quickly.

Dali: "I've just been dealing with a lot, Kayise and it's got nothing

to do with you. I answer their calls because I don't want them to be without someone to offload on. Like I said before, I have this habit of allowing my work to follow me" he hoped that he'd hear him out.

Ntombikayise: "Just a hi, Xolo I'm not asking you to drive down here to see me. I want to know how you have e settled in?"

Dali: "I am sorry for being a selfish person. I'm settling in well thank you. I still have to get used to the rush this side but if there is one thing I'm good at its adapting. The kids sent me

pictures of your holiday. You six looked so happy. Why have I never seen you in a bikini?" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "You've never invited me to go to the beach with you that's why. I really missed hearing your voice. Carlo said that I should say hi. He went out of his way to get me a dance partner. He's not you but he'll have to do. I hope you found a studio there so that we can do a Chacha together" Dali laughed and listened to her go on about the things that he missed out on since he left. He loved the sound

of her voice so much that he didn't disturb her. Plus to hear the excitement in her voice was like magic to his ears.

Dali: "I'm glad to hear that you are so excited about life again" he meant every word.

Ntombi: "I've got my grandfather to thank for that. He took me out on a father daughter date just the other day. You two would get along so well because he is just so wise and you are too so I think he'd like you. Next time you are this side please come for dinner"

Dali: "That won't be anytime soon,

Kayise"

Ntombi: "I understand" she said softly "Have you met anyone interesting there?"

Dali: "Not as interesting as you but there's this lady who flirts whenever she sees me and she is my neighbor so she cooks for me"

Ntombi: "Hmmm that sounds nice"

Dali: "She's 63" Ntombi laughed "I think she's just after my body" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "You weren't complaining when I was after the same body"

Dali: "I thought we no longer spoke about that night" he smiled.

Ntombikayise: "Back when we're still in denial yes but now we can look back and laugh about it.

What do you think about friends with benefits? I'm not referring to us but just in general"

Dali: "I think it is dangerous and people shouldn't entertain it much because most are bound to fall hard for the other person. Don't tell me that you met someone you see as a potential friend to give you sexual benefits"

Ntombi: "No but I was just wondering what you thought about it. Had I proposed it to you would you have agreed?"

Dali: "Ntombikayise Poti where on earth is all this coming from?" he raised a brow.

Ntombi: "I'm horny" she said in a whisper and Dali couldn't help but laugh at the confession "Don't laugh, Daluxolo" she added regretting letting her in on her secret.

Dali: "Good thing I'm not there then because I wouldn't want your horny phase make us do silly things" Ntombi laughed "Go take a cold shower, Kayise" he added with a naughty smile. He would have liked nothing more than to help her but he was thankful

that he couldn't. Sex with her again would have made him love her to a point of no return and he feared rejection because he was certain Ntombi didn't feel the same way. "What's that noise?" he asked when after a loud car hoot.

Ntombi: "I don't know but it must be next door" the hooting suddenly had no stop and Ntombi got annoyed.

Bandile: "Mom, there is a party car parked outside" he said while standing at the door.

Ntombi: "Apparently it's parked at my house. Let me go and check.

I'll tell you about it later but you've got to answer my calls"

Dali: "I will. Later" he said before both hung up. Ntombikayise got off the kitchen counter and found Tamkhulu scolding a group of ladies who looked like they had been taught doing something bad. Tamkhulu: "You do not just make noise in someone's yard like that, my girls. There are old people and babies in this neighborhood" he said in a stern voice.

Othu: "We are sorry, Tamkhulu. We didn't realize that Ntombi lived with elderly people. We are terribly sorry" she said sincerely.

Ntombi: "Hi" she said after Tamkhulu was done telling them of their disrespect. "Tamkhulu this is my friend Othunyiweyo. I met her at work" Tamkhulu nodded.

Tamkhulu: "Oh okay" he brushed his beard "Nice to meet you, ntombam" he held Othu's hand.

Othu: "Likewise, Tamkhulu.

These are my friends Zuko, Yandi, Poppy, Nomandla and Felicia.

Ladies this is Ntombikayise Elephant" she made introductions.

Ntombi: "It's so nice to meet you ladies but what exactly are you guys doing here with a mini van

that looks like a disco exploded in it"

Poppy: "We heard from Othunyiweyo that there is a lady who is in need of a good party after years of being cooped up in the house" she said with a smile.

Yandi: "So Tamkhulu may we please borrow your daughter for a few hours. We are trustworthy so be sure that we will bring her back safely"

Tamkhulu: "Ntombikayise do you want to go?" Ntombikayise didn't know what to say.

Ntombi: "Uhm..." she said sounding unsure.

Lucia: "Girl, we are not people to take no for an answer"

Tamkhulu: "Go and enjoy yourself. We are going to look after the children but you come back home after this party, Ntombikayise"
Ntombikayise had never been a part of a collective group of friends so she felt excited about being a part of one even if it is just once.

Zuko: "Go put on those heels and let's go dancing" she started dancing.

Tamkhulu: "Come inside so you can meet my wife while waiting for her to put on her disco dance" the

ladies laughed softly. The elder led the way inside and Othu was given instructions on how to make tea soon enough while they waited for Ntombi to get ready. The children were having a mini braai because they craved braai meat.

Makhulu: "Ntombi never told us that she had so many friends. We know Mahlubandile to be her only friend because the ones she met at school are not as close to her as before"

Othu: "Our friendship is new, Makhulu" she sipped on her coffee.

Makhulu: "Are all of you married?"
she looked as some nodded and
some shook their heads.

Mandla: "But we are all mothers,
Makhulu" Makhulu nodded.

Makhulu: "You children be careful
of these boys who put drugs on
drinks. I watched a story on it
last month"

Zuko: "Fortunately we are the
type of girls who buy their own
drinks, Ma"

Tamkhulu: "That's my girls. I
give Ntombi to you ladies with a
free heart because I can tell
that you are all good. Maybe
having more friends will do her

good"

Makhulu: "Mmm" she nodded in agreement. Ntombikayise came walking down the stairs with a short dress with heels ready to go paint the town red "Hayi, Ntombikayise I can see parts of you that I am not supposed to see" Ntombikayise looked at herself.

Ntombi: "It's just above my knees, Ma. You haven't seen me in such because I respected my wife status just as you guys said but now I can go back to being young and free again. Okay I'm ready" she said to the ladies before

Makhulu could reply. They all thanked Makhulu for the hot beverages before saying their goodbyes. Ntombi said goodbye to her elders and children and it felt good to not go to stuffy restaurant but to a place where she could test out her new dance moves. She went inside the tailored mini bus that had leather seats, drinks and colourful lighting. It was a club on wheels. Othu: "Okay now I can do proper introduction. Yandi over there is my sister in law. Poppy is my sister. Zuko and Mandla are cousins"

Lucia: "Will you please be my family, Ntombi?" they all laughed "I'm kidding we are all just one big family. These are my sister's from other mothers. I think I speak for everyone when I say that we'd like to get to know you more. Don't reject us please. We'll show you the crazy tonight so please" they laughed before toasting.

Yandi: "I'm not a fan of these divorce parties and you strike me as someone who isn't either but we are not here to celebrate your marriage failing but to come and usher you into this new phase of

your life. As someone who has experienced divorce before I know that it's not easy but I am certain that things will feel normal again. Like Lucia said we are one big family and I can't wait to get to know another phenomenal woman" they raised their glasses.

Poppy: "If you get bored tonight just know it's because the party freck is pregnant" she held her belly and they all laughed "But please let go and let loose because we've got you. We are the kind to not leave a drunk friend alone"

Ntombi: "I'm so overwhelmed

right now" she gave a nervous laugh "I'm in a pumped up car with people I barely know yet I'm comfortable. Yandi you're right divorce parties are not my thing but hey who am I to turn away friends"

Othu: "To us" she raised her glass and the other ladies tapped theirs against it. The champagne tasted amazing while Poppy made up with sparkling juice. Ntombi had no idea where they were taking her but she was excited about it. She felt like the young woman that she was. They arrived at a venue that was

private to have a meal before going dancing. Ntombi didn't know that divorce parties had traditions of their own and was only made aware of it when the ladies told her to write the negative things that Liyema did and said to her and burn them. Ntombi: "He was actually a good man to the end. Apart from the cheating and comments on my body he was and still is a good man" she said as she held the pen over the blank note. She wrote down those and watched as the ladies lit it to release it all. After having their meal it was time to

go party but Poppy couldn't because she was pregnant.

Ntombikayise couldn't remember the last time that she had been in a club. The vibe felt happy and alive as they made their way to a little cosy area. The wines and cocktail came and soon after Lucia led the way to the dance floor.

Ntombi danced the night away and it felt like the music was controlling her like a puppet. None of the ladies gave the men any attention because they were not there to be one night stands but to enjoy the night. Ntombi moved in her dress like her hips were

made to sway and she suddenly missed Dali because he was her dance partner. As much fun as the ladies had they couldn't dance until 5am because they weren't so young anymore so they called it a night. 

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NOT EDITED

It is said opportunities do not just happen, one has to create them. Yanda was barely touching ground backstage at the runway launch of his new line. It was chaotic as each person did their

part to try make sure the night goes smoothly. What made the show different from all other shows that he has had was not just the fact that the models were women but they were everyday women. Hlubi, Ntombi, Alu and Nandi were amongst the strong women who would walk down the runway to launch YM Original's first official female line. A line that Yanda had to put on hold years back when he was just an amateur designer because Rose was too insecure. It had been months of planning and to

finally be standing at backstage waiting to see the reaction of his guests he couldn't be more proud of how far he had come. As a man people didn't understand why he wanted to make clothes for a living but he never allowed the judgements to distract him from his dream. He invited his celebrity clients and other local designers to his big night with hope that the line would be received well. Had it been up to him he'd have had just a regular party to launch but it was Mahlubandile who advised him to go big from word go. Ntombi

sat as her make up was being done and she couldn't believe that she'd be a model for the night. It was when she was put into a Yanda Mbuzo creation did the moment become real. She glanced over at Alu and Mahlubandile while smiling and she could see that the two of them were just as excited about the night as she was. Soon it was time to go bring life to Yanda's clothes and the ladies stood as the choreographer showed them during their practice sessions. Yanda's nerves were shot but Hlubi assured him

that all will be well. Mrs Mbuzo would model the opening piece while Miss Mbuzo would model the closing piece as Yanda took the opportunity to honor the women in his life. He wanted to ask Yamkela and Yandiswa to be a part of it but his sister's were not reliable people so he chose not to but he was sure to include them in the night. The music started and Mahlubandile made her way down the runway as many looked on. It was not your usual serious fashion show where the model walked with a straight

face but one where the model did a dance and smiled while showcasting that which was on her body. Ntombi's turn came and she nervously walked down the runway but her nerves soon left when she remembered that it was not about her but about the garment that she was wearing. She like the ladies who walked before her moved her body to the beat of the music while wearing her most authentic smile. She felt like a queen and it was sure an experience that she would never forget. Nandi's turn finally came

and she flaunted not only what her mother gave her but what her father made. She put a little Nandipha magic by dancing as the woman before her before going back to go get her father. Yanda was also wearing his own creation as father and daughter walked down the runway together. They came back to get Mahlubandile and the three of them like the beautiful family that they are waved as the audience clapped hands for the beautiful art that they had just witnessed. Yanda kissed Nandi's cheek before going

on his knee to kiss Hlubi's perfect baby bump. He stood to give his wife a kiss before he watched them walk back to where the other ladies stood glowing. The crowd was so excited that it took a while for them to calm so that Yanda could speak.

Yanda: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'd firstly like to thank everyone for gracing this event with your presence.

Honestly without your support this would have never been possible. I'd also like to thank my team for helping me make this

night a reality. I overworked you guys but you have never complained...thank you. There is a special woman that I would like to thank tonight and that's my beautiful wife Mahlubandile Mbuzo. This line is dedicated to the resilience of women and I can not go without mentioning my queen. She is the woman who has been through hell but still remained soft. She's the type of woman who come from the flames holding buckets of water to help other women still trapped by flames. I love you, baby" he looked

back at the crying Hlubi "There is no way I could dedicate this line to the resilience of women and not include the everyday women to represent my clothes. Behind me are women who were once victims of human trafficking" he referred to his wife "Women who have experienced the pain of losing children" he referred to Alu's miscarriage before having Cwenga "Women who have gone through divorce" he spoke about Ntombi "Women who are battling chronic diseases" he spoke of Nandi's diabetes "Ladies thank

you for making the world a beautiful place to be in. I hope that tonight my garments made you all feel like the queens that you are. I hope that it'll make each lady who wears them feel like she can conquer the world because, you can do that with the love of warriors that you spread around. To women" he said with a smile and officially launched his new line. The MC announced that the models would walk around the room to give people a chance to experience the clothes up close. Ntombikayise invited Othu and

the ladies in support of Yanda and the way they raved about the clothes was clear that they'd make a few purchases.

Poppy: "I have to get the piece that was worn by the first model. I've honestly never seen such a beautiful maternity wear"

Ntombi: "I'll go call her so you can feel the fabric" Ntombi quickly went to fetch Hlubi. Poppy wasn't the only one who loved the dress she wore. "Ladies this is my best friend and also sister of my ex husband" she wrapped her arms around Hlubi's shoulder "Bestie,

these are the ladies that I told you about" she said with a smile before introducing each to Hlubi by name.

Hlubi: "The ones who are stealing you from me" she joked and they laughed.

Mandla: "If you don't join us then you best believe we will steal her because we want her too" more laughter erupted.

Hlubi: "I guess since I can't stop them from taking you, I might as well just join them. If you can't beat them join them right?" they all laughed while nodding.

Zuko: "Guys we are now enough to actually have a stokvel so why not. That way we can buy these amazing pieces we saw tonight"

Othu: "Or Hlubi can steal them for us" she said softly while sipping her cocktail with a straw and everyone laughed.

Hlubi: "I technically steal from myself if I steal from hubby so I agree with the stokvel option because he told me that I also have to buy"

Yandi: "You deserve any piece you want for free. I mean you are giving him a baby. How are these

men though?" laughter once again.

Ntombi: "Thank you so much for making it, ladies" she smiled.

Lucia: "The sad part is our men ran away when we told them which pieces we wanted" she pointed at the bar area where a group of men stood. Apparently times are tough but I am going to make a turn at YM because girl your man sure knows his stuff. What an amazing idea to launch with a fashion show"

Yandi: "Oh and the fashion bloggers were a great idea. Soon

YM's new line is going to be on everyone's lips. Prepare to never see your husband again as he'll be very busy"

Hlubi: "Honey, as long as he brings home those notes because damn babies are expensive and then there are the likes of Ntombi who had four at once. I'd die" they laughed.

Zuko: "I am content with my one. The labour pains and spending pains are just too much" Zuko's partner Zimasa whom she introduced as Zim came to speak to her girlfriend. Zim was one of

the photographers so she hardly touched ground but Ntombi loved how she made time for Zuko in between gaps.

Zim: "I'll be all yours in an hour's okay" she promised before kissing Zuko.

Zuko: "Okay love you"

Zim: "Love you more. It was great meeting you ladies" she said before going. Alu went to where the familiar face of Ntombi and Hlubi were because she was not good at being social.

Zuko: "Would you like to join the stokvel?" Alu looked confused so

Ntombi explained. She laughed out when she finally caught the inside joke.

Alu: "I hope the joining fee won't cost me my entire savings because with the way you ladies are looking gorgeous I can't imagine it being cheap" she joked and they laughed.

Othu: "Just have the spirit of girl power. Be a woman's woman and you are in"

Alu': "That I can do as easily as breathing"

Hlubi: "Would you ladies like to be introduced to the man responsible

for making this night possible?"

Mandla: "Yho your husband looks like he's busy with more important people" she referred to the celebrities and socialites Yanda stood with.

Hlubi: "Oh those are close friends so they won't mind at all" she said casually.

Othu: "I swear this friendship is going to grow our experiences so much. Now we'll be rubbing shoulders with celebrities" she said with an excited smile. Hlubi laughed before leading the way to wear Yanda was. She introduced

the large circle of ladies as friends and Yanda in return introduced his well known friends. Once the formal event was over, it was time for the after party. All nine ladies sat at the same table getting to know each other better. Alu was not one to talk but that night she made her presence known. Ntombi wasn't sure if it was the wine or if she was comfortable but she liked that Alu was with them. When she first met Alu she thought that her sister in law was stuck up but it turned out she was just

shy hence she kept to herself a lot. The dance floor was opened by the younger guests but Ntombikayise and her gang did not sit like old woman who were sipping tea. Poppy and Hlubi didn't allow their bumps to get in the way of their festivities.

Everything was going so well for Ntombi until all her friends had their partners close for a dance. When the DJ noticed that the dance floor was filled with couples mostly, he suddenly changed the music and Ntombi watched as the men drew their ladies into their

arms in a dance. She had no partner so in that moment she had no business on the dance floor. Her eyes trying by all means to not look over to Liyema and his partner. She knew they'd be there because Yanda and Liyema were family after all. Ntombi didn't like admitting that she got lonely at certain times because over time she had learned how to lessen the pain but she felt lonely. It's said that loneliness is such an easy thing to fix. You find a friend, reach out to someone who cares but what does what do in

moments when those you usually reach out to are with their people and you suddenly feel like an outcast? She went to sit back down and as much as she tried to bury the pain buried underneath the joys of a weekend getaway, father daughter dates, dancing and divorce parties she felt it creep into each of her nerves as she sat alone watching people in love embracing each other. It suddenly hit her that she was the only single person in her new circle of friends. The thoughts of being invited to a braai in Othu's

house terrified her because she'd be the one whose partner isn't standing around the braai area trying to make their ladies the perfect gift. No one would lean over for a quick kiss during those gatherings while she caught every stolen kiss given on the room and she yearned for such attention again. She felt her tears try to overpower her so she stood quickly to go to the restroom so that should her tears win she'd be alone where she wouldn't worry anyone. The restroom was empty because

every lady was on the floor with her plus one.

Ntombi: "You have been alone before, Ntombikayise" she said to herself as she looked at herself in the mirror. Her face perfect with a touch of make up that was barely visible. "Plus you are not alone. You've got your kids and parents. Don't allow the sight of lovers to make you feel lonely" she added in a whisper. She knew that her pep talk to herself didn't help one bit because the type of loneliness she felt required a lover to solve. It's the need for

physical closeness, for touch, a dance for emotional warmth from a partner in life, a partner that she no longer had. A partner that was on the dance floor with his partner. When a tear fell and someone invaded her privacy, a privacy she had no right to since she was in a public toilet she ran into one of the cubicles to go lock herself inside. She sunk to the toilet seat crying softly. She wondered if anyone would miss her. Deep down she wondered if Liyema would feel a sense of emptiness around h should he not

see her around him anymore. Her phone was on her ear quickly as she waited for Dali to answer.

Dali: "Kayise" he sounded half asleep because it was rather late in the night. When Dali heard her sniff he sat up on his bed and his heart started to beat faster

"Ntombi" he called her that for the first time since they met

"Kayise I won't know how to help if you don't tell me where you are.

Please tell me you're not in some type of trouble" he got off the

bed. If he could teleport he'd be

by her side within a blink of an eye

but he was no superhero so he had to wait on her to speak.

Ntombi: "I've got no one to dance with" she said like a little girl.

She told him what she meant by that and that was when he really wished that he was there.

Dali: "So you're now in the restroom crying?" Ntombi nodded as if he could see her. For some reason he knew that she was nodding, he could sense it.

Ntombi: "When is it going to stop hurting, Dali?"

Dali: "I don't know" he was at a lost for words which rarely

happened. Ntombi hoped Dali would give her some advice on how to speed up healing. He wanted it to stop hurting as much as she did. To receive a call from her late in the night crying and hurting hurt him too and that night all she needed to feel better was someone to dance with. A thing he had gotten so used to doing with her but he was not there when she needed him as a dance partner most. The two of them kept quiet but neither hung up. Ntombi actually appreciated the silence. It was better than

having him fill the air with meaningless words. She could hear him breath so she knew that he was still there.

Hlubi: "Bestie are you in here?" she asked. Ntombi jumped up as she didn't expect someone to go look for her.

Ntombi: "Yeah" she said "Xolo, I've got to go. Thank you for listening" she added.

Dali: "I wish I could have done more. I might not know when but you'll be fine someday, Kayise. Go through all those emotions and release them. I love you" he

wished that she knew just how much. Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "I love you too" they both smiled before hanging up "My migraine is acting up again" she said as soon as she saw Hlubi outside the cubicle. They knew her headaches could get so bad that she'd end up crying.

Hlubi: "Why did you come here then and not tell me? Should I drive you home?"

Ntombi: "No I'm better now. Let us go get a drink. I need it after that temporary hell" she faked a laugh.

Hlubi: "Lucky you who can drink"
they both laughed. Ntombi did
some touch ups on her make up
before joining the party again. At
least the music was real dance
music again. There was suddenly
screaming where the young people
gathered and when Ntombi and
Hlubi rushed to inspect it they
found a man on one knee before
Nandipha. Ntombi found the sight
of young love beautiful making her
night feel a bit better. The shock
on Nandi's face couldn't be missed
and Ntombi hoped that it was a
good kind of shock.

Mashudu: "Nandipha Mbuze, you are the most amazing woman that I have met. Will you please marry me, baby?" he said nervously.

Nandi: "Uhm" her hands looked as though they were shaking. Hlubi didn't know how to feel but when she glanced over to Yanda she knew that he wasn't liking what was going on "Yes" she shouted nervously "Yes" she repeated but with certainty of her answer.

Mashudu slid the ring in Nandi's shaking finger before standing vto kiss her. Everyone around

clapped hands and congratulated the young couple.

Ntombi: "I didn't know that it was this serious between them"

Hlubi: "I didn't either" she said with a smile. Nandi held

Mashudu's hand and led him to

her parents when the excitement died down

Nandi: "Mama and Tata this is Mashudu Mambani my fiance and baby these are my parents" she introduced them with a smile.

Hlubi: "It's very nice meeting you, Mashudu. Wow you caught us by surprise there but a good kind"

she shook his hand with a smile.
Mashudu: "I'm sorry that I ambushed your event, Mr Mbuzo. I felt I should take care of the courage I had tonight" he laughed but Yanda was not "I'm so happy to meet the two of you. Nandi has told me so much about you" he said still with his hand out to Yanda.

Yanda: "She said absolutely nothing about you" Mashudu took his hand back.

Hlubi: "Let us talk about this when we are alone"

Yanda: "How long have you known

this boy, Nandipha?"

Hlubi: "Mbuzo please" she pleaded.

Nandi: "It's been a couple of months" she said in a whisper.

Yanda: "You better take that ring off before the excitement about an engagement goes to your head. You are not marrying a boy that you have only met a couple of months ago. You are unemployed, Nandipha. I do not care if this boy is a millionaire but you are not getting into a marriage when you've built absolutely nothing of your own. We are going to talk about this when we get home" he

said before leaving them.

Nandi: "I don't know what your husband wants anymore, Mamam He told me to never introduce a man to him unless that man is my future husband. I just got engaged and then introduced my husband yet he isn't happy. No man" she shook her head in anger.

Hlubi: "Let us talk about this when we are home"

Nandi: "I'm not going home tonight. He must see that I'm no longer a child but a woman. Why couldn't he just be happy or at least civil. He didn't even greet

Mashudu"

Mashudu: "He was not expecting this, Nandi. Go home with your parents"

Nandi: "If you don't want me at your place then I'll go to my friend's" she looked at Mashudu before walking away.

Mashudu: "She'll calm down, Ma. I will bring her home tomorrow" he promised before running after Nandi. Hlubi closed her eyes not feeling like she had strength for tomorrow. She still didn't know what to do or what to make of the situation. She told Ntombi

that she was going home because she knew Yanda was too upset to be with people and since it was an after party no one would miss him because they are too drunk.

Ntombi also decided to call it a night because she feared that overpowering loneliness would return. She tried to enter the house as quietly as possible but she found Tamkhulu waiting for her.

Tamkhulu: "Now I can go and sleep. I saw you are home safe"
Ntombi laughed softly.

"Goodnight, Nto-Nto" he kissed

her cheek.

Ntombi: "Tata" he looked back
"Can you please sit with me for a while? I am not ready to be alone in that bedroom" she watched him walk back towards her.

Tamkhulu: "I am not sleepy anyway" Ntombi could tell he was lying because she could see that he was exhausted. The two of them made their way to the couch and put on a movie. Both of them fell asleep on the couch but Ntombi didn't mind because she didn't want to be by herself. 

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A few weeks had gone by and Yanda had still not accepted Nandi's engagement. Not even Hlubi who could usually talk sense into him got through to him this time. Nandi spent more time at Mashudu's which was like adding fuel to the fire. Mahlubandile was so tired of the tension between the two that she had to go get backup. Tamkhulu took his hat off when he entered the Mbuzo house. He had just attended his

first church service since being in Cape Town so the day was good. When Yanda saw the elderly man behind his wife he stood immediately to greet. Tamkhulu was not one to just interface in other people's business but he regarded Hlubi as a granddaughter so when she pleaded with him to go have a word with Yanda regarding the issue he didn't hesitate.

Hlubi: "I invited Tamkhulu over for Sunday lunch. Makhulu could unfortunately not make it because she didn't feel too well after the

ceremony" she explained their guest's presence to Yanda.

Yanda: "It's always an honor to have an elder visit. I hope Makhulu is not too bad, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "No she actually just wanted a break from me" his joke made the couple laugh "She just has that leg that keeps acting up. I think it is because she overdone the walking out of excitement but it is not bad because she is visiting family in Khayelitsha" he added.

Yanda: "Tell her not to push

herself too much. Let us go sit that side, Tata" he pointed to the lounge area "Wakwam, could you please make us some tea?"

Hlubi smiled and nodded.

Tamkhulu: "You know exactly how I like mine, ntombam. I can't believe you made we wait so long to come have tea in your house"

Hlubi laughed and apologized before going to the bedroom to go put on comfortable shoes so she'd make tea and lunch. The men went to sit in the lounge and Yanda switched off the TV. With Tamkhulu there was never

awkward silence. If there was someone who was good at holding a conversation it was him. Yanda was laughing before he knew it. Tamkhulu had a thing of cracking a joke and while others were laughing he'd be dead serious and that made the moment even funnier.

Tamkhulu: "I hear from Ntombi that you are about to welcome cows" he said with a smile but Yanda's facial expression changed.

Yanda: "I am not going to welcome the cows of a man whom I do not know, Tata. This boy is

much older than Nandi and is also well established" Tamkhulu nodded while listening to Yanda state his reasons for being against the marriage "Plus intercultural marriages are not easy. She doesn't know how those people live" Tamkhulu's eyes shot open.

Tamkhulu: "Those people, Nyana? Are you the type to discriminate against other tribes?" Yanda took a deep breath.

Yanda: "I'm sorry that came out wrong. No, I'm not but I don't know what will await my child

there the day that she has to join another family of a tribe who does things far different from ours"

Tamkhulu: "Well if you don't know something take necessary steps to know. If you do not want to sit down with this boy yet then find someone of his culture to sit down with you and educate you on their ways. Let ignorance and fear not allow you to stand in your daughter's happiness because she might resent you for it. Nandipha will not be lost should she marry into another African tribe because

I believe that we are one. The colonizers succeeded in their divide and conquer strategy by making us believe that we are each other's enemies. The sad part is even after colonization we carry on that evil by not embracing the fact that we are one. I am sure you don't turn down a Sotho client so why are you asking Nandi to turn down a man she loves just because he is Venda?

Intercultural marriages are beautiful because they open up the doors of learning more about each other and they close down

the divide and conquer legacy.

Regarding his age I am certain that Nandi does not mind it and she is adult enough to choose for herself. There are old men who sleep with these children in exchange for money yet this one wants to come to you and ask for your daughter's hand in marriage and I am sure he is not your age. In my opinion this boy does not sound too bad at all"

Yanda: "All that you have just said makes sense, mntu omdala but the fact that she'll be depending on a man does not sit

well with me. She must first be able to have her own income she can spoil herself with her money"

Tamkhulu: "Life is not the same for us all, Yanda. Not all get the chance to follow the typical life order of school, work, marriage and then kids. Some life gives them the children before marriage. Some get work before school. Life isn't just black and white. You just sit down with Nandi and be a listener not the talker. If you are so concerned about who this boy is then have a proper talk to him as a father.

The last thing that you want is for her to marry him without you. It hurts a parent when a child does that just ask me. Ntombi's mother did it and so did Ntombikayise"

Yanda: "Yes I wouldn't want my only daughter to get married without me. I will do as you say and try to keep an open mind"

Tamkhulu: "I know letting go of your little girl is not easy but it's life. They have to go carve out a life of their own because we raised them for that"

Hlubi: "Here is the tea" she put a

tray on the table "Let me go warm up the food, Tamkhulu.

Mbuzo thank you cooking the rest of the food" she smiled.

Yanda: "You're welcome" he smiled back and Hlubi left them alone

again. Yanda reached for

Tamkhulu's cup and handed it to him before taking his own.

Tamkhulu: "Do you not wish for Nandi to have the same joy that I feel between you and your wife someday?"

Yanda: "I do Tata. I guess

having to give way to another

man after I've been her primary

male figure is not easy. I'll talk to her, Tata thank you". The two gentlemen enjoyed their hot beverage before lunch got served to them. Tamkhulu loved people so to be out of the house felt great and he knew Makhulu was enjoying being out too. Yanda's new line was doing so well that they were overwhelmed with the influx of orders but he didn't mind. He heard the Elder's advice and felt bad for discriminating against Mashudu's culture. He promised to inform himself more.

Mahlubandile didn't join them for lunch because she had plans with the ladies. Since Ntombi introduced her to the group they have stayed in contact even created a WhatsApp group.

Ntombi's children were welcome too but they didn't want to go until they heard that Yandi's house has a swimming pool. It was not the perfect day for swimming because the weather was not good but they insisted it would change as Cape Town weather always did. Ntombikayise was glad that Hlubi would not go

with Yanda because she didn't want to feel like the third wheel again when they were all coupled up. Every lady took something to Yandi's so that she wouldn't have to cook for so many people. Yandi's house looked like one that belonged in a property magazine and Ntombi could only dream about owning such a beautiful home. The inside was just as breathtaking as the outside and Ntombi had to tell her kids to close their mouths before a fly could get in.

Ntombikayise: "Your home,

Yandisa" she looked around once more "It is wow" she said before hugging Yandi.

Yandi: "It was a gift" Ntombi's eyes shot open when Yandi told her..

Ntombikayise: "Does your husband perhaps have any brothers so that we can share a mother in law?" Babini appeared from nowhere laughing. Tall and proud as usual.

Babini: "I don't have one but if your friend doesn't mind I can become a polygamist" he joked and laughed.

Yandi: "Don't you dare, Zweni"
they all laughed.

Babini: "Let me get going. I love you, Ntliziyo yam" he kissed her cheeks "Boys" he brushed all their heads roughly in greeting "Adorable one" he pinched Amahle's cheek gently while smiling before being on his way. Soon all the ladies arrived and Ntombikayise was glad to see Othu's boys. They didn't need to be forced to communicate because the five of them got on like a house on fire. Amahle and Owam had a rocky start as they both

sat in the lounge awkwardly. The food got combined and lunch got served soon enough. Alu arrived late but it was better than never. When she had her plate in hand she sat down with the ladies catching up. The magazines always advise women to only have five friends but Ntombi found herself comfortable in the large group of friends. Once the pregnancy discussions, family discussions and just life in general were out of the way jokes got served and all of them were laughing until the kids wished

they could be apart of it.

Othu: "So Ntombikayise and I have been talking about this stokvel idea" she looked at Ntombikayise who was nodding.

Zuko: "No, don't tell us that we are going to be like those middle aged ladies in stokvels" they laughed.

Alu: "Our peers have joined the stokvel family so it's no longer old people gathering for tea and scones. Now it's wine and snacks while discussing stokvel business, babe" she said with a cheerful attitude. Ntombikayise then

realized that it wasn't the wine that made Alu more out there that night but it was because she found people she didn't have to hold back to.

Lucia: "Now you're talking, honey" she said when she heard about the wine.

Mandla: "So you guys are actually suggesting that we give it a go?"

Hlubi: "Any reason to have more of these gatherings. We could rotate homes so we don't crowd Yandi's family" the others nodded.

Ntombikayise: "Othu and I spoke

about trying it out but ours will not be the usual we all contribute to giving money to one this month and the next to the other"

Zuko: "Please don't tell me it'll be a grocery one. Zuri and I would never finish that food. That's for people like Ntombi and Yandi who have triplets and quadruples" they all laughed.

Ntombikayise: "And I need it because my boys are eating me close to bankruptcy" laughter once again "But we were thinking it could be more of a charity stokvel" she looked at all of them.

Poppy: "Care to explain please"

Othu: "Gladly" she smiled "So I think I speak for us all here when I say that we are rather fortunate women. Fortunate enough to be able to afford the basics of living and have plenty more to spoil ourselves" she looked at the ladies and watched them all nod "So Ntombikayise and I spoke about contributing monthly but instead of having that money be spent on us, we go out and spend it on people who are not as fortunate as us" she suggested. .

Ntombi: "Those who are unable to

join aren't obligated to because we are aware of the fact that our situations aren't the same. Some of us are single mothers so if you can't then we understand" Mandla: "How much will we have to contribute?"

Othu: "This is not your usual stokvel where you have to give a fixed amount. Whatever you are able to give that month is acceptable. We aren't going to keep tabs of it and say things such as "Oh why does Othu only give R100 while Poppy gave R500". We are not doing this for

us but for others so we won't even have a book where we write who brought how much. I honestly do not want this to be about who did more and who did less because when it comes to charity there is no such

Ntombi: "And it's not just monetary contributions. We have kids who outgrow their clothes and who don't wear certain stuff anymore because they aren't in fashion" the mothers of teenagers laughed while nodding "So we ask that you mummies speak to your children and ask

them to donate. Winter is upon us and there are children who don't have warm clothes while our children's old clothes gather dust. We could also give our old clothes to women who went into safe houses without a single piece of clothing because they were fleeing from their abusive lovers. They are in need of clothes and feminine hygiene products"

Mandla: "As someone who deals a lot with such woman I am fully behind it"

Alu: "Cwenga has heaps of clothing that don't fit anymore so

I'd love to give it to kids that are in need" Zuko said the same about Zuri.

Hlubi: "I imagine that charity isn't just materialistic but time is also appreciated. So on occasion we can go cook for the kids and help the aunties bath the little ones so that their carers can just rest on days we are there. I actually love this stokvel idea very much. I definitely have extra to give so I can give money too"

Othu: "Me too and with that money we can buy groceries.

Ntombi mentioned that a friend of hers does that and she also knows a wholesaler who sell in bulk"

Lucia: "Are we going to adopt one NGO and help there forever?"

Ntombi: "I suggest that we adopt different causes. Like you just said it doesn't have to be materialistic. A children's home and a safe house, etc"

Hlubi: "I suggest we not forget the homeless. We can get the municipality involved too. Like you ladies just said winter is upon us. Let's make sure as many

homeless people have blankets this year and maybe soup once or twice a week"

Alu: "I'm so glad that I came here today. I have so many blankets gifted to me when I got married so I can do that too. As a married woman I obviously have to go talk to my husband about donating money but I'll get back to you ladies"

Othu: "We understand because it's not a choice either of us who are married can make without our people. We'll sort out the logistics later on but we can do this" the

others cheered. "We are all in right?"

Yandi: "Definitely count me in" the other ladies nodded.

Ntombi: "It feels good to share and I'm happy that I have people to do it with"

Othu: "This gesture is long overdue hey. So many lack the basics so I look forward to finally providing some with those to them. I wish we could do it for everyone who lacked but a little difference goes a long way"

Mandla: "Others might get inspired to do the same and join in.

I agree with you Othu it's long overdue. Not all of us got born into privilege so we know how it feels to struggle"

Poppy: "Oh my word could we please get involved in that keep a gurl child in school project of donating sanitary towels?"

Zuko: "Yes, yes and yes please" they all agreed "Like Othu asked let this not be a debate about who does what more than the other So let our friendship not be cracked by such. Our objective is to help where we can not to show off what we can do" they all

nodded in agreement.

Hlubi: "We have been focusing on women and girls so maybe we could get the husbands and their friends to take up causes involving young boys" she suggested.

Ntombi: "As a mom of boys I know how fragile they are even though the world forces them to toughen up so I agree to give attention to the boy child too"

Lucia: "And men are best suited to deal with them since they know what it's like to be young and male. I'll definitely talk to my

fiance about it"

Ntombikayise: "This was easier than I imagined it would be.

Thank you so much for listening to our suggestion, ladies"

Yandi: "More such stokvel should exist. Babini is fond of children so I don't see him minding being a mentor in young men's lives. Othu and Ntombi thank you for coming up with this. Honestly it's crossed my mind but I never knew which steps to take to make it reality. I'm glad I have a team to help me. We truly, truly are privileged so let us use that privilege for

the greater good indeed"

Ntombi: "Men say that we won't be able to have a woman's conference yet look at how we handled this mine conference" they laughed.

Zuko: "Pity I didn't bring Zuri with because those two look like they need a little help" she pointed at Owam and Amahle.

Yandi: "My daughter is not the most social so poor Amahle" they laughed.

Ntombi: "Amahle doesn't sit where she's bored so trust me she'll go to the boys soon because

they seem to be getting on well"

Mandla: "Men" she shook her head and laughed.

Lucia: "So Hlubi when are you asking us to help you plan your daughter's wedding?"

Hlubi: "The day the dad accepts that he's not the only man that his daughter needs in her life" they all laughed.

Othu: "Craig is now fighting Chula because Chula and her boyfriend are apparently planning marriage soon and want to take Qhayiya with them. Craig told them Qhayiya is his child" they laughed

once again.

Hlubi: "These men though but we love them" they all nodded. Owam and Amahle breathed in relief when the older ladies came to their rescue by suggesting that they play a board game. Soon the boys also joined the ladies. Banele was taken with Owam as he did his best to impress her so she'd give him attention. Ntombi felt herself become broody when she held Yandi's babies. They were grown and the most adorable little people Ntombi had seen in a while. Hlubi could not wait to hold

her own baby soon. The weather indeed cleared and the boys were in the pool before the parents knew it while Owam and Amahle only dipped their feet in. The ladies put on some music and danced barefooted on the shiny wooden floor.

Yandi: "Can we always do this when we get together for our stokvel meetings?" she said while twirling around.

Alu: "Yes mummies need some time out too". They weren't doing any wild dancing but it was a jazzy type of dance that was perfect

for the Sunday afternoon chill before going back to reality tomorrow morning.

Lucia: "Guys I think at the end of the year we should have that girl's getaway but I was thinking instead of expensive flights we do a road trip. We can hire a ten seater, leave the kids with trusted family and be on our way"

Ntombi: "That would be so amazing"

Poppy: "No but some of us will be new mothers that time" Hlubi nodded in agreement "So let's make it sooner please because

newborns don't allow mother's time to breath. why on earth did I have to go get myself pregnant?" the others laughed. Hlubi: "Let's do the roadtrip within the province then because Poppy has a point"

Ntombikayise: "Pregnant women travelling a lot is uncomfortable though, ladies. Your feet will get all swollen and stuff so let us stay in the city. We can find a house to let for a weekend maybe by the beach. We then save on flight costs and petrol. I love the idea of having to sleep over with you

ladies though. I feel we have so much to share with each other. I also have never had a sleepover so let's rather do a sleepover and then when the preggy ladies have given birth and can leave the babies with daddy after a few months we can then go big"

Mandla: "My husband's associate owns a beach house. I'm sure I can borrow it free of charge" she smiled.

Othu: "We love free things. I have a feeling this weekend will be filled with so many tears because stories will be shared

that we don't usually get to during such meetings where the kids are present but I have a feeling it'll be filled with more laughter than tears. Please can non of you get pregnant after Poppy and Hlubi because I want this roadtrip sooo bad" they laughed.

Alu: "I'll have to tell Lungile then" they laughed.

Poppy: "We can have those couples retreats like in that movie too" she suggested so quickly that the other ladies looking at Ntombi reminded her that not all have a

partner "I'm sorry, Ntombi" she said sincerely.

Ntombi: "It's okay, Poppy"

Yandi: "Just as we will wait for the pregnant women to give birth and breastfeed we'll wait until Ntombi meets a handsome man" they all laughed.

Ntombikayise: "I have a feeling you ladies will be in for a long wait. Please don't inconvenience yourself because of me"

Mandla: "We are not going to leave you so if it takes years to get this couples retreat then so be it but you are going to be a

part of it and you'll be absolutely happy" Ntombikayise smiled.

Yandi: "Oh yes". Ntombikayise knew such moments would come along but she appreciated how the ladies made her keep feeling good.

Ntombi: "I'm actually happy" she smiled "Like really feeling happy at the moment" she said honestly while smiling.

Othu: "I am too. Do you have any other friend you want to bring in before applications close?" she looked at Ntombi. Ntombi looked at Alu and Hlubi with a smile.

Ntombi: "No these are my girls"
she wrapped her arms around Alu
and Hlubi.

Othu: "Well these are my girls"
she and her friends did the same
"I'm glad we met and I'm happy
to connect my girls with your
girls"

Ntombi: "I'm happy to have mine
connected to yours too" she said
with a bright and happy smile.

The ladies came together to form
a circle while each had their arms
wrapped around the one next to
her. They looked at each other
and just smiled to appreciate each

other. They were different women from different walks of life and different stories but there was something that connected them and they were glad that life brought them together.

Yandi: "May this chain never break. May we be mothers to each other's children and sisters to each other. May we together bring the little light we can to those who need us. I know that I only recently met some of you while I've known some for years but from the bottom of my heart

I love all of you ladies. I can not wait for the beach sleepover. I can not wait to be at the hospital when our babies are born" she looked at Poppy and Hlubi "I can not wait to be invited in all your houses and be so free in each of them as I'll be in my sisters homes. I want to share my joys and sorrows with you. I feel safe with you all. I thank God and my ancestors for this connection" all the ladies nodded before they closed the circle by combining their heads and laughing. All of them felt happy and all had a feeling

that they'd feel that way forever because they knew it would be a forever friendship.

After ignoring Danny's calls to avoid listening to her friend ask her when she'd tell Liyema, Elaine finally got the courage to do it. She had been battling with whether or not she was obligated to tell her partner her story or not but it was when Liyema started to speak about possibly have more children did she decide it was time to tell him. She was terrified and nervous about it but

a part of her had hope that Liyema would love her as is.

Liyema: "Please don't tell me that you maxed out my card, babe. You look like you are about to tell me something that you know I will not like" he laughed and watched Elaine take the chair opposite him. Elaine was shocked by the fact that Mrs E had not come to tell Liyema.

Elaine: "Babe, I firstly want you to know that I love you. You are the only man that I have loved so much. You give me the love that I have always yearned for,

always. Sometimes we do things or keep things from people because we are afraid that people might reject us"

Liyema: "Nothing that you say makes sense. The best way to tell me something is by being direct about it and you know that.

Where is all of this coming from?"

Elaine took a deep breath.

Elaine: "I withheld something from you that I should have opened up about the second I started to show you that I like you. I am not ashamed of who I am but who I am has made

people reject me and I didn't tell you because I was too into you so I wouldn't have taken your rejection well"

Liyema: "Elaine, you're still speaking in circles and it's starting to frustrate me somewhat because I'm not a patient person. Tell me what it is that you should have told me so that I can deal with it sooner rather than later"

Elaine: "You love me for me right? You don't love me for just my body but for my personality too"

Liyema: "Of course I do" he looked

at her "If I was into just your body I wouldn't have committed as much as I am. You know that" Elaine: "Then I ask that you keep that in mind as I tell you what I am about to tell you. I am sorry for not telling you sooner. I got so lost in us and what we share that I just thought that it didn't matter but a friend of mine made me realize that it does. It does to me and to you"

Liyema: "Okay can you now let me in on it" he got comfortable. Elaine took a few deep breaths once again because this was not an

easy thing for her to do. It would not have been easy on the first day she met him and it was even worse as they shared so much already. She would read stories about transgender people who were activists and proud and at some point she thought she'd be the same but the judgements she got blew that confidence out. She started to tell Liyema what she had been keeping from him with a shaky voice. Liyema's knuckles turned pale from clenching his fists too hard, and his teeth were gritted from effort to remain

silent as rage flew through him. Had he been of lighter hue he'd have been red from the suppressed anger but the way his hands shook indicated just how angry he was at what he was hearing. Every word Elaine spoke stung only fueling the fire that burned inside of him. He stood to stand away from Elaine.

Liyema: "Tell me that this is a fucking prank, Elaine" he looked at her with bewildered eyes. When she said nothing he knew that it was true "You came to me, seduced me and failed to tell me

about this!" he shouted "You deceived me into a relationship that I wouldn't have gone into knowingly" he pointed to her while walking towards her but Elaine jumped up from the couch to keep the gap between them big. Her tears flowing freely because she'd never seen him so angry that his eyes turned red and a vein popped out in his forehead looking like it was about to burst.

Elaine: "I wanted to tell you" she shouted "But the first experience where I was open was not good. Please Liyema I am still the

person that you love" she sobbed.
Liyema: "The person that I loved would not have kept something this big from me. You let me fall in love with you while keeping such a big secret. You even allowed our damn relationship to reach physical intimacy" he tried to get closer to her but she kept moving to avoid it.

Elaine: "I'm sorry" she wore her hands on her head while crying. He scared her and she'd read a story about a trans woman who had done the same thing she did only to find that the man was

transphobic which resulted in the woman losing her life. His rage was evident and was made worse when he lost it so much that he started to knock over the glass pieces which decorated their home.

Liyema "I chose you over my wife and you let me do it knowing that you have deceived me. You are fucking disgusting because you kept this from me. You are a fucking disgrace to all transgender women out there" he shouted to her while pointing.

Elaine: "Please don't say that. You

don't know how..."

Liyema: "Don't!" he stopped her from finishing her sentence "Don't you dare try to justify what you have done. You have violated me in so many fucking ways that the sight of you disgusts me. I'm not going to hit you because I know that you are classified a female now and I know better than to do that. It's people like you who make men like me become transphobic. I had no fucking problem with the transgender community but because of you I will forever be angered by it. I

hate you so fucking much" he marched forward towards her without any signs of stopping. Elaine was certain that his rage would lead to violence so Elaine ran to take her small gun out for protection. Liyema stood in his tracks "Wow now you want to kill me too" he laughed like one who had lost his mind.

Elaine: "I love you so much but right now I am afraid of you so you give me no choice but to try and protect myself. I'm sorry that I hurt you" she looked at him through blurry eyes. Liyema

felt a strong mixture of betrayal, pain, rage and emptiness as he watched the person whom he gave so much to point a gun at him. Her hands were shaking and tears were never ending. How Elaine took away his right to choose made him feel violated. It was the exact same feeling that he got when he thought that Zingisa had infected him with HIV. Zingisa didn't love him enough to protect him from STD by using a condom with her lovers meaning that she placed him in a situation he would not have

chosen to be a part of had he know that she was unfaithful. It felt no better with Elaine because she too didn't give him a chance to choose. Zingisa violeted his rights to consent when she didn't give him choice to be in an open marriage. Elaine violated him by not giving him choice to consent to a relationship with a transgender woman. He knew that there was something about Elaine that reminded him about Zingisa. At first he thought it was just the carefree nature of both woman that he loved so much but in that

moment he felt they were both deceivers too. All of him wanted to have his fist on her face but he was certain society and the law would take her side as someone who was now female and not care about how she hurt him and pushed him to a point of no return. Part of him also wishing she'd pull the trigger so that he wouldn't feel like the fool of a lifetime. He was disgusted by the sight of her after months of being mesmerized by that same sight. His mind went to his children and he knew that

whatever choice he took whether it be to fight Elaine and end up either in jail or dead, would affect them.

Liyema: "I hate you. May you rot in hell for what you did. I didn't give consent to this so you best believe that I'm going to do everything in my power to have you behind bars. Let me get out of here before I do something that will end up in bloodshed. I'm not going to allow you to make me do something they will hurt my children again" he took his keys and walked out of the door. Elaine

ran to the door to lock it before sliding down against it sobbing. It was a sob from a deep emotional pain. Suddenly it took her back to when her father looked at her with the same disgust that Liyema just did. She felt stripped of a love she had been chasing since her parents turned their backs on her. She knew that she chose wrong ways to catch that love but she was desperate for it. Desperation made one do crazy things. The gun was not loaded and she was glad that Liyema didn't come close to her to find

out. She knew that she hurt him badly and she knew he didn't deserve it after going through such great lengths to be with her. At the beginning she was certain that he never had to find out about it but when she saw Alu that night she knew that her secret would be public knowledge soon. Her happiness was short lived once again but in Liyema's case she only had herself to blame. Liyema's trembling hands could barely hold on to the steering wheel as he made his way anywhere far from Elaine. He

felt himself feel sick so he stopped the car to get some air. He hit his car hard before finally letting the tears fall. He couldn't understand how one could go from loving someone to hating them so quickly. He wished that he had walked away when Elaine first started to show interest. He wished that Elaine was honest so he'd tell her that he was a man who preferred cis women that way they'd have continued to have a good working relationship instead because he respected that people had different

sexualities. He felt Elaine violated his body, his heart and his sexuality by deceiving him. He started to cry so much that he went to the grass to throw up. When he felt good enough to drive again he was in his car heading to the police station to open a case against Elaine. If he couldn't fight her physically he planned to do so legally. He parked outside the station and suddenly remembered the stories of men who claimed to have been laughed at by police after reporting cases of abuse. He didn't have the

courage to tell someone that he slept with a woman that he thought was born in a female body without knowing the full story. He didn't have the courage to tell them how violated it made him feel. So he drove to a bar instead. He couldn't remember the last time he had an alcoholic drink but it had been years. He felt betrayed by love because he truly loved Elaine. Soon he had drinks coming on until the barmen refuses to give him more because he was too drunk to even remember his own name.

Barman: "Sir, I've called a taxi for you. You can come get your car tomorrow because it'll be safe here. Where should the taxi drop you off?" he said trying to keep Liyema awake before he could pass out.

Liyema: "Take...take me to the woman who loves me" he said with in such a way that his tongue sounded like it was swollen.

Barman: "Okay but where does this woman live?"

Liyema: "In here" he pointed to his heart before laughing. After many attempts the barman

finally got an address to give to the driver. Liyema was put in the car and the barman asked the driver to check that he was going to this woman. The driver was kind enough to even walk him to the door. It was late at night and the house lights were off so they stood knocking until they saw a light be switched on.

Mrs E: "Liyema?" she said when she opened the door. The driver told her where he found Liyema "No this person has not had a drink in years. His kids have never even seen him with one and they

are teens now" the driver shrugged. He told Mrs E that the barman paid for Liyema already and that Liyema's car was still there "Thank you...thank you so much, sir" the driver nodded and was on his way. Mrs E led her son to the couch as heavy as he was. Liyema: "You were right, she was born male. I feel like such a fool, Ma" he said in a drunk whisper. Mrs E's heart broke at the sight of him so drunk. It reminded her of when he nearly drowned in alcohol to deal with the Zingisa issue. To see a repeat hurt her.

Mrs E: "Oh, Liyema" she looked at him but he was passed out already. She sunk to the couch opposite him feeling drained. She hoped that Elain's story that she gave to Alu was true. She didn't dig deeper because she feared what she might find. She was not ready for the emotional pain when he would wake up sober the next morning. 

S2-INSERT 20

(Not edited)

It has been exactly two days

since Liyema was told the truth by Elaine and it has not been an easy two days for both him and his mother. All that Mrs E had to witness Liyema do was vomit and complaining about stomach cramps yet he refused to go see a doctor. All of Mrs E wanted to make Elaine pay for what she did to her son but she also wanted Liyema to feel the consequences of his choices. No other person but beside the two of them knew the truth because Liyema didn't want to face people. Mrs E had to call Ntombi so she'd tell the kids Liyema went away on business

unexpectedly and where he was had no cellphone reception because she didn't want to worry her grandchildren. She walked from the kitchen with yet another ginger root home remedy that she had been serving Liyema. The remedy would help for a few hours but he'd be back to square one again and each episode terrified Mrs E more. Liyema laid on the couch with a pain in his stomach that wouldn't end and he hoped he would not have to run to the bathroom to vomit again. He felt worse than before. The heartbreak was evident but so

was the anger. Mrs E emptied all alcohol bottles she had in her house since he arrived because she didn't want him drowning himself in booze. He sipped the remedy his mother made for what felt like a millionth time.

Mrs E: "So you and I are just going to stay in this house alone and not talk?" she sat down to look at him. He looked terrible.

Liyema: "What good is talking going to do, Mma?" Mrs E couldn't believe that he spoke. He had been walking around the house like a zombie so to hear him speak felt good.

Mrs E: "I feel like we are dealing with the Zingisa issue all over again, Liyema. Why do you give so much of yourself to these toxic women who end up leaving you like this. Yet you could let go of a good woman so easily and didn't show an ounce of heartbreak?" Liyema shook his head as she spoke.

Liyema: "This is why I haven't been taking"

Mrs E: "I just want to understand, Ndoda. As your mother do you think that I like seeing you like this?"

Liyema: "I don't know, Mma. I do not know why I failed to

appreciate a woman who wouldn't hurt me intentionally yet love those whom I knew could be capable of it. That's what you want to hear right?"

Mrs E: "I want to hear my son say that he is going to rise above this and move on. That he'll take steps that will make him better again. I actually do not know how you want me to help you but I want to do bad"

Liyema: "You've been giving me home remedies so yeah... thanks"

Mrs E: "You are not getting any better though yet you refuse to even go outside. You can't hide in

here forever"

Liyema: "I feel like a fool, Mma. I feel like a fool for not listening to you guys. I feel like a fool for allowing myself to be seduced. For allowing myself to fall for

her...him" he sipped his medicine

"If this is life's way of punishing me for hurting Lakhwe then it chose a cruel way to do it but I guess I deserve it for leaving a woman who didn't fear my then status when many said it was too much for them" he laughed softly before buying his bottom lip.

Mrs E: "Let us not bring your failed marriage because it won't

help anyone. I'm sorry for bringing up Lakhawe. What is the way forward? How can I help you move forward?"

Liyema: "Can you wipe out the feeling of betrayal, pain and violation?" he looked at his mother who looked defeated herself.

Mrs E: "I can't but I can go with you to lay a charge. Surely what she did was illegal and has legal consequences" Liyema ignored her.

Liyema: "I couldn't bring myself to do it because the thought of telling another person is humiliating itself"

Mrs E: "You've got to take some kind of action. Your PA called and she says that clients are not happy with you going MIA. Your employees are trying to keep the ship steady but the captain has to return to steer soon. Also the kids have been asking about you. You didn't allow Zingisa to get you down, Liyema so don't allow this Elaine to. You are a strong Elephant man" Liyema laughed at her last sentence. He didn't feel strong. A strong man is in control of his life but he didn't feel in control because Elaine stripped him off his consent "You can't hide

here forever" Mrs E added.

Liyema: "I will find a way to deal with this"

Mrs E: "Please don't do anything stupid. Let us go to the police station and open a case or sue this woman for all that she has got. Leave her begging in the street"

Liyema: "Okay get Hlubi here"

Mrs E: "Your sister is not taking on such a personal case. I'm not placing her and the baby at such risk"

Liyema: "I've been so distant from you guys because you didn't want to accept my "girlfriend" he

quoted with his fingers "That I even forgot that my own sister is pregnant" he smiled while shaking his head. "I don't remember ever congratulating her" he thought back.

Mrs E: "I'm sure she isn't holding it against you, Liyema. Let me call Dudumashe and the three of us can sort this out. Finish your ginger I'll be back" she stood to go to the landline to call Me Dudumashe. He promised he'd make a turn as soon as he had time. Mrs E had to beg Liyema to eat but he only accepted a smoothie but she thought that

it was better than nothing. Mr Dudumashe arrived after two hours and sat down to listen to why he was asked to come. The old man breathed out loudly before running his bald head. He didn't know what to make of the situation not from a legal standpoint from from a standpoint of someone who was like an uncle to Liyema.

Dudumashe: "I have literally never, not in all my years of being a lawyer seen a man divorce his wife as quickly as you did. I'm not talking as your attorney right now but as someone who has been

in your life since you were born. Some people wait a few months before making that decision but you just woke up and decided it was a good day to divorce. I feel like you were with Ntombi for security while waiting for the next best thing to come and when it came you left everything to follow it to the land of dreams and fiction. No divorce, Liyema non that I have dealt with as a lawyer hurt me more than yours because I knew that we'd be here. I didn't know the reasons why this new best thing would end but I knew that it would end. I'm pained, Zola" he

looked at Mrs E with tear filled eyes and Liyema started to cry too "I'm pained because this boy knew, he saw what his father's infidelities led to...he knew" he spoke while pointing at Liyema but he didn't break eye contact with Mrs E but his tears rolled down his wrinkled cheeks. Mrs E was sniffing too "I heard that you said you chased happiness but not even happiness wants to be chased as you did it. I'm not perfect, Liyema. I've had affairs of my own but I didn't remain in the streets, I came home and was fortunate enough to have a

wife who was forgiving. She didn't deserve it but because she saw me return from the streets she gave me chances I know I didn't deserve. She gave an ultimatum one night. She said it is either you go to the streets and stay there or you lock that door behind you and stay home for good. That day I stopped seeking refuge I knew I would never find in the streets. You didn't even give Lakhiwe the chance to give you that ultimatum and let me tell you as one who was her lawyer I know... I know that she yearned to give it to you and I know she wanted

to hear you say that you are locking the door behind you because you are staying home"

Liyema was sobbing as he listened to his father's best friend "Men like us are nonsense yet we seem to be the ones most blessed with the rare gems of women while deserving men are forced to watch us ruin the treasures on our hands" he was shouting which made the moment even more emotional "I'm pained, Zola" he turned to look at Mrs E again "I'm pained that a boy I regard as a son chose the streets. Now he can't return back home

because the locks were changed after he ran to be embraced by the streets. I'm pained" he took out a cloth to wipe his tears. For a moment no other words were said as emotions were too high. They got back to the business at hand when Mr Dudumashe was finally able to separate his uncle and lawyer role. They went to the police station and Mr Dudumashe made sure everything went well but Liyema got cold feet again.

Ntombi had been trying to get a hold of Liyema because there was something school related that she

had to run past him before making a decision. It was unusual for Liyema to just go on a trip without letting his kids know but she trusted Mrs E so she didn't think much of it. She had just come from another exciting dance class and was happy to find that Dali didn't abandon dancing. It was their thing and even with the distance she felt close to him. She could call him anytime of the day and just chat and he could do the same. She started to be so obsessed with dancing that her family knew her for her dancing entrance after work. As usual she

glided across the room showing off her new dance moves. Bukhosi stood to go dance with his mother as best as his two left feet knew how. Just hearing her laugh and seeing her eyes go smaller and mouth wider with laughter was enough.

Makhulu: "You are so beautiful lately...just glowing my baby. Had I not known better I'd have said we are going to welcome a little one soon" they all laughed.

Tamkhulu: "She turned inwards, mkam and those are the results when you don't put your happiness in the hands of others you look

like that"

Banele: "But we make you happy right, Mom?"

Ntombi: "More than happy. You guys are my reason for breathing"
all the kids smiled.

Bukhosi: "Makhulu gave us instructions on what to cook and it is so good, you won't believe that we are the ones who made it" Ntombi went to check what they have cooked.

Ntombi: "Oh wow" she looked at them impressed.

Makhulu: "I don't want them to someday burden their wives by not being able to cook so I'm

training them now"

Tamkhulu: "But you never felt burdened by me not being good at cooking"

Makhulu: "I didn't tell you that I feel burdened, Tata but the time I was a new mother I wish your mother had taught you how to cook" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "All these years of marriage yet you didn't say anything. You see when they say a woman is a deep ocean of secrets?" Ntombi laughed.

Bubele: "I will cook on days my wife comes home late from work" the elders were impressed.

Bandile: "You mean you'll buy takeaway and put it in pots eight?" he asked sarcastically.

Amahle: "I will have a chef at my house. I'll have cleaners to so I won't have to do all of that"

Makhulu: "Tshisa modern lady" she said with a smile "Then work hard to be rich, Mntanam" she added.

Amahle: "That's why I'm doing my homework now. I want to have a degree in modelling" the boys laughed so hard their stomachs hurt.

Ntombi: "Mom will take you do a career Expo, Nana then you can

hear which careers you like" she kissed her daughter's cheek.

Bandile: "Will it be a BA or BCom?" he teased and they laughed again.

Amahle: "Mxm" she went back to writing.

Tamkhulu: "Go and wear your home clothes so we can eat, ntombam" he looked at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "All books off the dining table when I return please" she ordered before going to her bedroom. Her phone rang and when she checked the screen it was Othu.

Ntombi: "Girl" she said in greeting

"If you are calling to ask about Liyema I don't have answers" she took her clothes off.

Othu: "Girl, I think I know why he's been hiding. He is all over the gossip pages and as a business I know that it is not a good thing because even I am now wondering of KC's shareholders will want KC to associated with Ndlovu Communications" Othu's words left Ntombi's heart pounding.

When Liyema did a rebranding of his company he changed the name to Ndlovu Communications because he used to love it when Ntombi called him Ndlovu. Him being

business man of the year in the communication sector made him and his business public news so Ntombi was not shocked to find him written about. That's why she kept the divorce private because it would have been news to gossipers and Ndlovu Communications would have suffered. If the business suffers then so does Liyema's finances and if his finances suffers so do the kid's lives as he paid half of their expenses. Liyema was a very private person too so Ntombi was nervous about reading what was written about him. When she

checked the online pages Othu spoke about all she could see was news of Liyema divorcing her for another man. Some claiming that he was an "after nine". It was all news about Liyema's sexuality and Ntombi didn't know what to make of it.

Ntombi: "These people like writing rubbish. Don't they know that this man has kids who use the internet?"

Othu: "I thought the exact same thing. This might damage his reputation so much. I'm sorry should it come to a point where KC has to distance itself from

Ndlovu Communications, Ntombi"
Ntombi: "It won't come to that,
Othu. I promise this is fake
news. The only truth in this is
that he left me for someone else
but it's a woman" she assured
Othu "Let me try to get to the
bottom of this. I will call you
later"

Othu: "Call if you need anything"
Ntombikayise hung up quickly and
dialed Mrs E's number. When Mrs
E explained what was going on
Ntombi felt herself feeling
drained. She didn't know how she'd
explain this to her children but
she had to find a way before they

could see it on the internet. Just when Ntombi thought Liyema and Elaine's relationship had stopped affecting the children that had to happen.

Mrs E felt like fainting when she saw the articles. She had to hold on to the kitchen counter for support. Her phone soon started ringing non stop and she knew many were trying to get hold of Liyema too but his phone was off. Liyema: "Mma, your phone is driving me crazy" he said from behind Mrs E. She was too focused on the read on her tablet to hear him and since he was

much taller than her he looked over her shoulder and felt his entire body feel hot.

Mrs E: "Li... Liyema" she stuttered when she felt his presence behind her. She knew that it was too late to hide the article "You've got to release an official statement, Ndoda. I can't believe that this girl is sinking so low by running to the press. He was not answering because she was trying to wait for the sudden heat wave that only he felt pass. Mrs E started to panic so she helped him sit down.

Liyema: "I can't bre... breath" he

started to breath at an abnormal rate to get in as much air into his lungs as possible.

Mrs E: "I think you are having a panic attack" she unbuttoned this shirt "Breath, Ndoda please" she pleaded. There was a quick knock on the door.

Lungile: "Mma, did you read..." he bathed in but his brother having difficulty breathing made him forget what he wanted to ask.

"Don't you dare have a cardiac arrest, Liyema" he looked at his brother. Lungile lifted Liyema off the seat and went with him to the car as difficult as it was.

They didn't want to wait on an ambulance so Lungile drove like a maniac to the nearest hospital. Mrs E was sitting at the back with Liyema. He was attended to immediately on arrival and as much as Mrs E wanted to keep the news from Hlubi she had to let her know about her brother. Soon Yanda, Nandi and Hlubi were all at the hospital waiting to hear what happened.

Hlubi: "He has a history of heart failure so this is not good"

Mrs E: "If something happens to my son I am going to lose it. I know he chose to have an affair

but he didn't deserve this" she started to pace up and down at the hospital. Ntombi had to be told not to bother her but because she was the mother of his kids. She wanted to leave the children home but they didn't want to stay home. Tamkhulu and Makhulu assured her that they'd be fine so Ntombi rushed with her kids to hospital. Too much was going on at the same time.

Ntombi: "How is he?" Mrs E shrugged.

Mrs E: "I feel like history is repeating itself because we have

been here before"

Bukhosi: "Is it his heart?" no one could give him an answer. Ntombi wished that her kids were still babies who she could have left home but they were teenagers aware of many things around them. They saw the articles but insisted that they wanted to hear Liyema's side of the story. They were more calmer than Ntombi expected but all they wanted was for their father to be okay. They needed him dearly so the thought of losing him scared all five of them. They waited for hours and Ntombi also

felt like it was history repeating itself but unlike the first time she was not as hysterical. She wanted Liyema to live for his children but she was not going to go beg him to not leave her as she did before because he already left her. She was there for her children and Liyema's family. When Ntombi looked to the left to stretch her neck she caught a glimpse of Elaine but Elaine ran away quickly. Ntombi excused herself saying she's going to the toilet and ran after her.

Ntombikayise: "Why did you have to keep it from him? We would

have avoided all of this had you just played open cards with him from the beginning" she held Elaine's arm and pulled her back. Elaine turned to look at her with red eyes.

Elaine: "I regret it deeply. I don't know how I thought it would end but this was not it" she started to cry "This was not it" she repeated.

Ntombi: "You led him to a web of lies, Elaine. I was actually starting to deal with the fact that he left you and was thinking of sitting down with you woman to woman because I could see

that he was happy and I wanted to talk about the children seeing as you two lived together they were bound to spend time at your place. Now I'm angry at you all over again for hurting my babies again. If he is not okay then my babies are not okay" she also started to cry. Both women just cried "You can't do what you did and not expect it to not have big consequences" she wiped her tears "I suggest that you go because should his mother see you she is not going to let you leave this hospital alive. Her boys are her oxygen" she added.

Elaine: "I'm sorry for everything that I did. I was acting from a place of pain that I never dealt with. I know it is no excuse but I was desperate. Please forgive me. Tell him that I didn't go to the papers. I swear I didn't go to the papers. I love him too much to worsen his pain"

Mrs E: "Lakhiwe!" she shouted and Ntombi watched Elaine run off.

Elaine: "Ntombi" Ntombi looked at her "Please look after him... please" she pleaded before running off just in time for Mrs E to miss her.

Mrs E: "Oh Lakhawe he's going to be fine" she held Ntombi's hand and led her to the family. After waiting for a long while a doctor came to update the family.

Doctor: "He had a heart attack" the family expressed shock "The first 24-48 hours after a heart attack are when the condition will be most unstable so we are going to monitor him closely"

Bandile: "He's alive. That's all that matters" he hugged his mother.

Doctor: "That he is but he is not out of the woods yet. He's in ICU and we are giving him the best

care possible. I'll come let you know should there be any changes but I recommend you go home, shower, get some sleep and then return"

Mrs E: "Thank you, doctor" the doctor nodded and left "Lakhiwe take the kids home. This is no place for them" she said softly.

Amahle: "Nooo" she sulked.

Ntombi: "There is nothing we can do here. You won't be able to see him yet. First thing tomorrow we'll be here. Come guys let's go home" she looked at her boys.

They all went to her open arms.

Mrs E: "Yanda take Hlubi and

Nandi home too please"

Hlubi: "No" she said stubbornly
"That's my brother so I'm not
going anywhere"

Lungile: "I'm not either". Ntombi
wondered why she didn't insist on
staying too. She wonders if she
stopped caring about him? A part
of her even feeling sorry for
Elaine, for the both of them. She
took her children and left the
hospital hoping that Liyema
would be fine tomorrow when they
return. Elaine was truthful about
not going to the papers. An
employee at the police station
knew Liyema was a business public

figure so after hearing about what happened they sold the story for a quick buck. 🖤

S2-INSERT 21

Liyema spent a week and few days in hospital before he got discharged. Elaine fled leaving only an apology letter that Liyema didn't bother finish reading. He was in pain on all fronts so he did not want any triggers. The children went to see him everyday at the hospital and after school they'd have the transport drop them off at their grandmother's

place where Liyema had been staying. The doctor said that severe stress was what eventually led to the heart attack. Signs of depression were also picked up but Liyema refused to have it properly checked out. The heart break and public humiliation proved to be too much and he swore that he never wanted to see Elaine again. Mrs E has been working hard trying not only to help Liyema recover but also to find out who leaked the story because she read Elaine's letter and for some reason she

felt Elaine was truthful about her not having been the one to run to the papers. The gossip pages has an affect on the children's schooling as they would be teased by others. The boys could handle it since they had each other but Amahle has been refusing to go to school because of it. Ntombi had to go to both schools to speak to the principals about the bullying her kids were subjected to and both schools promised to look into the matter. Mrs B was still Amahle's therapist so she helped Amahle in

any way possible. It has not been an easy couple of days on anyone. Mrs E sat at the police station waiting for the Captian to join her. After days of trying to find who the rat within the police system was she finally found him. When the Captian entered he went to sit opposite the polished lady who looked like a mature version of a model.

Mrs E: "Captian I was here a few days ago to let you know that one of your people violated my son's privacy by taking confidential information to the press"

Captian: "How could I possibly forget that accusation, Mrs Elephant? You barely tried to be subtle" he remembered Mrs E as the dramatic woman who was shouting at everyone while threatening to sue the station.

Mrs E: "Well my anger is no lady, sir. My anger is a crazy bitch so it is best that you not awaken it and the way you brushed me off when I came to lodge a complaint made sleeping demons rise"

Captian: "Like I have said, Mam non of my officers did what you are accusing them off. So if you do

not mind I have real criminals to catch" Mrs E gave a sarcastic laugh.

Mrs E: "You first rid your own house of parasites before going to the streets, sir. Since you told me that you will not waste state resources on unfounded rumours I thought I'd use my own private resources to help you since it's my son that's involved in this" she handed over a file to him "In there is proof that an officer working at this station contacted various gossip journalists on the day that the story broke out.

That same officer might I add happened to be the one who assisted us on that day. I will also never forget his unprofessionalism as I can clearly recall how he found my son's situation amusing. It does not end there" she looked at the captain "Those drugs that keep disappearing from the evidence room"

Captain: "How do you know about that?" he sat forward.

Mrs E: "Private resources have their perks, sir. So in there are the people that you had difficulty

catching and lo and behold the gossiping officer is also involved in it. I even have witnesses to testify should the need arise. It is a shame that you fail to keep order in your station. If you are going to ignore this then I will take it to the highest rank within the police system. Like I have just mentioned, private resources have their perks"

Captian: "Are you threatening my job, mam?"

Mrs E: "See it as motivation to pull up your socks and do your job properly. I have done my bit so

you do yours or I will have someone more competent to do it for you" the captain swallowed hard. "I'd also like to talk to the accused please" she requested.

Captian: "I can not allow that. Thank you for the information and if any of it is true I promise to take proper action" he looked at her as she wore a smirk.

Mrs E: "Sir, it is either you allow me to speak to him in your territory because if you give me freedom to do it on mine the conversation that I want to have with him might turn ugly"

Captian: "You don't call the shots here, Mrs Elephant. Your money won't protect you from the consequences of threatening an officer of the law" he warned.

Mrs E: "You'd have known had I been threatening you. You don't want me to turn my private resources on you now do you? I could do a complete clean up in this station and you now it. God knows how many deserving youth would appreciate that so they could finally be employed" the Captian stood silently feeling like his back was against the wall. It

took a long while but the officer finally made it in "I do hope what you got from those journalists was enough to retire with, Ta Zuks" she said as he walked in. Zuks: "I do not know what you are talking about"

Mrs E: "You wanted to burst out laughing while my son told you about his situation it's just that you were on duty so you knew it was not wise. You are the type of officer that is responsible for the suffering of many abused men out there. You're the type to ask "but how can a man get raped or

beaten by a woman?" while laughing at the person telling his story. You are a disgrace to the force and to men in general. You might have been able to get away with laughing at men who came to open abuse cases in the past but this time you stepped on the wrong toes. No man or woman will have to deal with your insensitive ass in this station again or any other law enforcement agency for that matter"

Zuks: "You don't have the authority to fire me"

Mrs E: "Of course I don't but I gave someone who can reason to" Zuks shifted in his chair concerned. "Not so confident now are we?"

Zuks: "I'm clean so good luck with that"

Mrs E: "Clean how when you steal drugs confiscated by your colleagues to sell for personal gain? Clean how when there are records of you calling papers whenever an influential person steps foot in this place? Oh and clean how when you are busy with prostitutes while you have a

wife" she pressed her phone and turned the screen to him and let him watch a sex video where he was starring in. Zuks didn't know what to do.

Zuks: "Please delete that. I will confess to my boss that I was the one who leaked your son's story and that of other well known people"

Mrs E: "Let me tell you something, Zukile. When you do anything to hurt my sons then you make me angry but when someone hurting my sons automatically hurt my

grandbabies too which is what you did then you bring out the devil. Do you think that I'll be satisfied with your confession and let the station deal with you internally while giving you paid suspension? You took my son's business to the internet streets so it is only fair that I meet you at the playing field that you chose"

Zuks: "My wife will leave me please don't do this. I can't lose my job and wife" he pleaded.

Mrs E: "She's better off. Who knows what you might bring to

her with these sex ordeals and I'm sure your boss won't be happy with you picking up hookers in police vehicles" she said while pressing her phone.

Zuks: "Please, mam" he went on his knees "This is the only income that I get. At least your son is rich please"

Mrs E: "I'm sure your wife won't feel the absence in income since you use it all of booze and hookers. I really do hope that you saved the money from your extra drug side hustle and gossiping" she laughed "Mandy can go find

herself a good man to have children with too" she smiled "What does the Bible say again about only those without sin can cast stones. I don't know but I'm sure you know what I mean. Goodbye Ta Zuks" she took her bag and walked out. When Zuks went out all he could hear his colleagues talk about was the video of him on social media that had already been shared by thousands of people. On top of that public humiliation he also got suspended with immediate effect pending an investigation into the

information that Mrs E brought. When he got home he found his wife packing her things to go to her parents house. Mrs E went about the day knowing very well what Zuks's fate was and she walked around feeling no sense of remorse and guilt. She knew it would not blow away Liyema's issue but there was something about revenge that made the fire within her burn hotter and she actually loved the feeling of hurting those who hurt her and her tribe. She was yet to decide if she should go teach Elaine a

lesson but deep down she felt sorry for Elaine but she also felt it was not reason enough for Elaine to hurt her son that way. She knew that should she feel that Elaine should pay there was no where Elaine could hide from her but she wanted to focus on getting Liyema back on his feet again.

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Ntombikayise had to go by Mrs E's house everyday after work since Liyema getting sick to pick her children up. Usually she didn't bother going in as the kids would

come out to the car as soon as they hear it's hoot but that day they didn't seem to want to come out so Ntombi had no choice but to go look for them. She knocked but no one responded so she let herself inside. No one was in sight so Ntombikayise knew her children were not in the house.

Gladys: "Yhooo Lakhiwe" said Mrs E's helper with a bright smile when she saw Ntombikayise "I haven't seen you in forever" she went to hug Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "Ma Gladys" she hugged back "I am around, Ma" she added

with a smile.

Gladys: "And beautiful too" she looked at Othu from head to toe.

Ntombikayise: "Thank you" she looked at herself "I'm not staying. I'm here to pick up my children but it's so quiet I doubt they are here " she looked around.

Gladys: "They quickly went to the store but they should be back now now but Liyema is in the lounge should you want to go say hi"

Ntombikayise: "No, Ma. I'll wait for the kids here"

Gladys: "Nonsense" she led

Ntombikayise to the lounge by

hand "This woman was not successful in keeping him because he was never her man to keep. This is your chance to get your husband back, Ntombikayise. They are men so they cheat but that does not mean that we must throw them away"

Ntombikayise: "In case you haven't heard, Ma he was the one who threw me away"

Gladys: "He was bewitched so what did you expect. He was not in his right mind. The muthi made him make divorce him. Go and take your husband home. A

woman must hold the knife by the sharp end to keep her home strong. God is giving you the opportunity to get back with him by letting you nurse him back to health. The korobela has faded now, it's our Liyema who is sitting there so go and be with your husband" she whispered softly before being on her way.

Ntombikayise couldn't believe what she had just heard. She was so taken aback that no words came. She walked to the entrance of the lounge and found Liyema trying to reach for the

remote. He was holding his chest while showing his gritted teeth so clearly the chest was sore.

Ntombi: "You look like Casper the ghost" she said sarcastically while walking in. He looked pale hence her comment. She watched him laugh softly before sitting back.

Liyema: "Thanks" he returned the sarcasm "They went to buy something at the garage around the corner and knowing them they'll be a while so you best make yourself comfortable" he added.

Ntombikayise: "I've got no

business being comfortable in your mother's house"

Liyema: "Oh come on. She's the grandmother of your children and someone who loves you dearly so surely making yourself at home here it not hard"

Ntombikayise: "I have a home. Remember the one you left me in?"

Liyema: "Are you going to be sarcastic until the kids arrive?"

he smiled but she ignored him

"Lakhiwe please let us not be awkward with each other" he pleaded.

Ntombi: "I stopped being Lakhawe long ago, Liyema" she looked at him "So why haven't you released an official statement yet? You being silent is not good for Ndlovu Communications"

Liyema: "So you do care?" he asked with a smile.

Ntombi: "You best believe that I care but not about you feeling sorry for yourself. I care about Ndlovu's finances. If big companies such as Kumkani Construction threaten to jump ship it means money lost. When money is lost then my children

suffer. We made these kids accustomed to a certain lifestyle so I don't want to depress them by having them give that up too on top of everything else that you made them give up"

Liyema: "Ouch" he held his chest.

Ntombi: "Release a statement in which you tell the truth, Liyema. I will not have a business I own shares in go down because of your coward behaviour. It's either you fix this or you go away and let us fix your mess for you as usual"

Gladys: "That is not how you should speak to your husband,

Lakhiwe" she said while bringing the tea in.

Ntombi: "This is not my husband, Ma Gladys. He has not been that for months now. You couldn't go to him and tell him to go fix things with his wife yet you dare tell me to come take care of him so he'd take me back again" she snapped "I don't want your tea either because this is no social visit.

Just give me my kids so I can go home please" she became upset.

Ma Gladys put the tray on the table and left.

Liyema: "I understand why you

would snap at me but you had no reason to do the same to Gladys"

Ntombikayise: "She is your biggest fan. Since she has a daughter and you love chasing skirts why don't you two team up and let her daughter be your girlfriend so she can tell her daughter all the nonsense she's been telling me" she looked at him.

Liyema: "I don't want another woman so no thanks. I am sorry, Lakiwe. I knew that you and I wouldn't be the best of friends after what I did but please find it in your heart to forgive me"

she ignored him as she was trying hard to calm down "I will give that official statement to tell the people the truth. I will call all clients personally too and apologize" he added.

Ntombi: "Are you telling me that you never thought of doing that? Had I not come wouldn't you have even considered that? What is your PR team doing kanti?"

Liyema: "Following my orders. I was not ready to talk to the press"

Ntombi: "Because you are a coward. Your children get teased

daily yet they go to school everyday while daddy who is the reason for the teasing is hiding behind his mom's high security walls"

Gladys: "Oh Lakhawe, I am sorry for interrupting again but I can hear you shout from the other side of the house. Don't forget this man has just had a heart attack please, my child please" she pleaded.

Ntombi: "Yes because the side chick broke his heart literally. How can someone with a history of a heart decease chase

excitement so much?. Excitement is for the strong hearted, Bhut. You don't get a 100 year old man with a heart problem having sex with a 30 year old because he knows the excitement will kill him. Busy chasing happiness and excitement with a disabled heart now look you"

Gladys: "Oh Lakhawe" she was close to tears.

Liyema: "It's okay, Ma. I deserve it. Please don't mind the shouting because she is well within her right" Gladys nodded and left the room again "Let it all out,

Lakhiwe" he looked at her.

Ntombi: "So you can tell your mother that I gave you more chest pains? That's the thing with you. You want to be treated like a baby when times are tough. You did it with Zingisa and now with Elaine. You could afford to do it back then but you better snap out of your self pity and realize that you have five babies so you can't be number six" her words stung but he took them as bitter as they were "Some of us lost our mothers when we were babies ourselves so we didn't have the

luck you have of having a mother
wipe your behind until adulthood.
Don't make me lose the little
respect that I have for you by
being this pathetic man, Liyema.
Send Elaine to jail, go to therapy
or whatever will help you deal
with this"

Liyema: "I'm working on it... I
promise I'm working on it. Thank
you for your honesty and you are
right when I don't have external
motivation I dwell in self pity
which is a major flaw that I need
to work on" Ntombi took a deep
breath to calm down "This is not

easy for me. Even the divorce was not easy" he added.

Ntombi: "You could have fooled me" she rolled her eyes.

Liyema: "I know it's hard to believe but it is true. I left a woman that I shared a bed with for 16 years. I left my home and children and believe it or not it was not easy. I love you and I always did but we reached a point where we couldn't live with each other anymore"

Ntombi: "Don't count me in on that because I had no problem living with you even when I felt

my presence disgusted you. You'd be loving Liyema when around the kids but dare poor Ntombi try to get some of that love you'd go cold. You divorced me in your mind long ago but Elaine just gave you an excuse to do it officially too"

Liyema: "That's not true"

Ntombikayise: "Are you attracted to me, Liyema?" he looked at her "Years ago had I just been a woman you passed randomly in town would you have turned your head to take another look at me or would you not have bothered because you wouldn't have been

attracted to me physically? I believe that attraction is physical first before anything else so would you have been attracted to me?"

Liyema: "Why are we talking about physical attraction?"

Ntombi: "Because I know that I wouldn't have turned your head. I have seen you when we walk in the mall. You'd always stare at the same kind of women who I look absolutely nothing like. You prefer them with long straight hair, fair skin, long nails and heaps of make up but poor you ended up

marrying the exact opposite of your type. You thought oh if she could stay with me when I'm HIV positive she'll sure stay for anything else. I actually don't think you'd have cheated had you still thought you're positive. I'm not saying HIV positive people should have low standard, anything but actually. But because the other women you told about your status bailed, the women who were at your dream standard you thought that it would be better if you lower your standard. And women like me in

your mind were below your standard and so you settled. You settled because you thought that I was good enough for the HIV positive Liyema. The Liyema that got rejected by his dream type of women for being HIV positive. So you stuck around in your settlement after you found that you were HIV negative but as soon as your eye caught Elaine who like Zingisa are your type you thought to hell with settling for less because Ntombi doesn't deserve HIV negative me because my type of woman is showing

interest again"

Liyema: "That is not true. Elaine would never...never have been my type had I known her past" he raised his voice "I love you, Lakhiwe. I never thought that you are below my standard, ever. You are a beautiful woman and had we had daughters I'd have loved for them to look like you"

Ntombikayise: "I know I'm beautiful but not through your lenses. You stopped making me feel beautiful long ago, Liyema. You didn't even bother to ask me why I no longer changed in front

of you. I'll never be the size of a Victoria secret model, never because I'm not structured that way. Even if I lose weight I'll only get a smaller waist but the bottom curves will always be there and I love them. I love how I have to jump up and down to get my bum in my jeans. I love how full my jeans are when I have them on. I love how my thighs do that stretch thing when I sit down. I love how soft they are. I also love that I am confident with a bald head. I love how my skin absorbs the sun and

I never have to worry about burn marks. I don't want to be skinny. I don't want to be fair skinned. I don't want to wear weaves. I certainly don't want to be all of that for your validation. If there is anything being apart from you made me realize is the fact that I'm physically other men's type. They pass me by and they just have to turn their heads to take a good look". Hearing her say that made Liyema a bit uneasy. The thought of other men looking at her.

Liyema: "I love your body"

Ntombi: "You had a funny way of showing it, bra" she shook her head. She still loved him dearly but she didn't feel that was enough to do as Gladys advised.

Liyema: "Then give me a chance to prove it to you"

Ntombi: "I don't want scripted love. I want spontaneous and free love. Not a love where you ask to prove to me that it's there. I want to feel it when I'm in your presence and right now I don't"

Liyema: "I made a mistake, Lala. I know that it won't be easy at first but we can be us again"

Ntombi: "And what is us?"

Liyema: "Spontaneous wedding, going to the gardens while I carry you on my back" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "So you can collapse with my curvy self on your back. Let's not forget that you are not equipped enough to handle this" she pointed to her body and he nodded "That heart would surely stop, dear. I need a stronger man who is not only going to put me on his back during walks in the park but also to lift me up against the wall with ease while giving it all

to me good" she added in a flirty tone.

Gladys: "The kids are here" she peeked in "Sorry to disturb again."

Ntombikayise: "Thank you, Ma and I apologize for how I spoke to you earlier but not for what I said"

Gladys: "It's okay. I had no business meddling" The children walked in and gave their mom a hug.

Bandile: "We'll go get our bags. I can't wait for schools to finally close" he ran out.

Bubele: "Have you been waiting

long, Mom?" Ntombi nodded.

Amahle: "With dad?"

Ntombi: "Well I couldn't just ignore him" she looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "Don't worry. I kept mom company" the kids gave each other a secret grin.

Ntombi: "Next time I'm going to leave you guys. I won't even be able to go to my dance class tonight. I don't know what you needed to buy that we couldn't get on the way home"

Banele: "We are sorry, Ma. A friend said she saw a celebrity at the garage so yeah... we're sorry"

Ntombi: "Say goodbye to your dad so we can go home" she ordered.

Bukhosi: "Dad we'll come sleep over here during the holidays. I'm sure mom would like that very much" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I'll be too busy to even notice. Liyema please if you have clothes that you don't wear anymore give them to me. I'd like to donate it to men in need"

Liyema: "No problem. Anything else I can do"

Ntombi: "Heal that fragile heart" she raised a brow and he nodded feeling somewhat embarrassed.

Liyema: "Wow" he said silently.

Amahle: "Mom, I'm doing a presentation on bullying at the assembly because I hate that so many of us get teased and picked on. Will you help me?"

Liyema: "Why didn't you ask me?"

Amahle: "Um...we are used to having mom as the homework buddy. It was like that even when you were home" she looked at her dad and Liyema nodded with disappointment "Plus she is more patient" she added.

Bandile: "Unless it's accounting" he walked in "She doesn't get why we

aren't as good as her at it" they all laughed.

Mrs E: "I can't remember the last time I heard such laughter in my home" she hugged all her grandkids "Khiwe" she gave Ntombi a peck on the lips.

Ntombi: "I came to get the big five" she looked at her kids.

Mrs E: "Makhulu is sorry she wasn't here today, babies but tomorrow you'll find me here"

Bukhosi: "We were actually thinking about spending the holidays here, Makhulu"

Mrs E: "Oh yes and I'm sure your

father is going to heal faster. You don't mind right, Khiwe?" Ntombi shook her head.

Amahle: "Makhulu, mom and dad spend hours together" she exaggerated.

Ntombi: "And that's our cue to go. If I get to the car before you, I leave you here" all five said goodbye before racing to the car.

Mrs E: "Thank you for raising them so well, Khiwe. I honestly thought that without a man in the house the boys would rebel"

Ntombi: "There is a man in the house, Mma. My grandfather

enforces discipline like no other.

"Bukhosi I will bleksem you" she spoke like Tamkhulu and they all laughed.

Liyema: "As long as it's not some strange man. I'd blow a gasket should some other man want to enforce discipline on my kids"

Ntombi: "With heart that you get where?" she looked at him "The next gasket you blow will blow you straight to heaven or hell" she laughed and didn't mind that she was laughing alone.

Liyema: "Will you always remind me of my heart issues?"

Ntombi: "Please get that official statement out. I as shareholder can't speak your truth for you" she ignored him.

Mrs E: "Why don't you get more involved until he is strong again?"

Ntombi: "I know nothing beyond finances. I don't have a creative bone in me. Liyema tell me who to officially place as acting CEO"

Liyema: "You'll have to come back tomorrow to discuss it"

Ntombi: "Okay. Let me go. I have elders that I have to go cook for" she took her car keys.

Mrs E: "I'm glad that you guys

are talking" she smiled.

Liyema: "While you're still standing by the table. Could you please pass me the remote?" Ntombi raised a brow.

Ntombi: "Haibo am I your wife?

Did you wifey me again? Is us together?" she said with

attitude before walking out

leaving Mrs E laughing. Ntombi

felt what she did was petty but

the look on Liyema's face made it worth it.

Liyema: "I don't know why you are laughing, Mma. Please pass me

the remote" she gave it to him

"I will find a way to get her to forgive me"

Mrs E: "Good luck with that. Do you want me to trace your lover?"

Liyema: "Don't call Elaine that. I don't want to get myself sick again by talking about her. I will let you know soon. For now let me write that statement"

Mrs E: "I often wonder where you would have been had it not been for Khiwe. She's been calling your clients left right and center to apologize. Do you know what will make most clients stay? The fact that they know that you have

her support. Some did business with you because you were married to a woman of class and integrity because they saw it as a sign that you are sober minded and not afraid to commit. Same as with your father. I polished his business profile. They are staying on board because they feel you still respect your wife hence she is helping you. This is life, my boy and you will learn that some people are not to be disposed of. Let me go cook. Your siblings and their families are coming over for dinner. I have a

feeling you'll be less depressing to be around tonight" she stood and left him alone. She couldn't wait to have her house filled with her grandchildren over for a couple of weeks. She felt it could contribute a lot towards Liyema's healing.

Ntombi got home to find a nice meal of samp and beans cooked by her grandfather.

Tamkhulu: "I thought I'd let you all taste that I am not so bad at cooking. I added lamb in there too so it tastes very good"

Makhulu: "Thank you for cooking,

myen wam" she smiled "I fear the taste but I appreciate the effort" she brushed her husband's hand.

Banele: "Couple goals" he pointed to the elderly "Not those Instagram couples who break up over followers" he ran to their room to change. The others followed him. Ntombi explained why she was late and went upstairs too.

Makhulu: "You won't warn her about being attached to him again?" Tamkhulu shook his head
Tamkhulu: "Ntombikayise knows

exactly what I'd say should she ask. I'm allowing her to make her own choices and all I can do is pray that she was listening to me speak. She knows that I will say what this boy is going through is none of her business but if she makes it her business then my hands are tied"

Makhulu: "I don't want her hurt again, Tata. No one had experienced the ugly effect this had on her like we have. I can not see my child in pain again so I will give warning one more time"

Tamkhulu shrugged. Dinner was

served and after that the kids went to their rooms to study. Tamkhulu was busy fixing the kettle.

Ntombi: "You know Makhulu I am glad you are not the type of mother to advice nonsense. I can't imagine how many woman are in cold relationships just because their mother told them to hang on to a man no matter what. Just look at sis Gladys. That woman sounds like she'd make her daughter go back to an abuser I tell you" she clapped once.

Makhulu: "Does that mean that you are not going to allow Liyema back in? I don't want you to. You are fine on your own"

Ntombi: "I won't, Ma"

Makhulu: "You didn't sound too convincing, Ntombikayise. Don't let me make your grandfather go tell Liyema to stay away from you"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "I see Liyema for the sake of the kids"

Makhulu: "Until he apologizes in a way that speaks to your heart. Or he does things that he used to do when things were still good"

Ntombikayise: "I have got work to do, Ma. Don't worry about Liyema. I've got it under control" she stood and excused herself quickly. Makhulu looked back to where Tamkhulu sat and all he did was raise his shoulders in a shrug and continued working.

Ntombikayise didn't want to tell her grandmother that Liyema already started to remind her of the good old days by dishing out happy memories that took her way back. She was not up for a lecture so she had to get away. She had no work to do so she

watched a series on her laptop instead. Dali called and she smiled. Ntombi: "Creator of peace" she translated his name and Dali laughed.

Dali: "Daddy's daughter" they both laughed and their usual catching up followed. Both laid on their backs on their beds while talking to each other. Ntombi told him about her ordeal with Liyema.

Ntombi: "I think my grandparents fear I'll run back to him"

Dali: "Do they have reason to fear that?" he was not read for the

answer but he couldn't just brush her off.

Ntombi: "I don't think so"

Dali: "That's not an answer, Kayise" he said in a disappointed tone. If she didn't know then there was a chance that she'd go back to him at least it's how Dali saw it. His therapy is going well. Like Ntombi he started to create his own joy separate of others and a part of him hoped someday she'd add to that happiness as he wanted to add to hers.

Ntombi: "Let's talk about something else. What did you say

you'd be coming to Cape Town for?"

Dali: "I do not know. Mrs B says there is something I have to do that side so I won't have any hassles in my current job"

Ntombikayise got excited. She missed him.

Ntombi: "So for how long will you have to stay?"

Dali: "Only a day and whatever it is might take up that entire day meaning I might not even get to see you" his words came with disappointment.

Ntombi: "Maybe I can come and

visit you" she suggested "I don't mind sleeping on the floor" she laughed.

Dali: "As if I'd allow a lady to sleep on the floor"

Ntombi: "Plus my kids are going to spend mid year holidays with their dad. I can ask sis V to spend a night or two with my grandparents again. What can one do there in Jozi?" she tried to think of anything exciting about the city of gold.

Dali: "We could go on a boat ride in Vaal but I don't think I'll have time, Kayise" he was afraid of

what feelings her presence might bring.

Ntombi: "Ja I understand. Plus I'll be busy with the charity thing I started with the ladies. Did I tell you?"

Dali: "You tell me everything" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "True. If you have a gap during that day you'll be here you'll let me know right?"

Dali: "Yup then we can go to the beach"

Ntombi: "You wish. The cold is getting worse every week. You just want to see if I'm really as

cute in a bikini in real life or was it the filters that made me look so good" Dali laughed.

Dali: "I've seen you in your birthday suit so I know that it's not the filters" Ntombi blushed "I've spoken to the boys about the articles and besides the school teasing they are actually not fased by it. I really do feel for the man though. I pray he recovers quickly"

Ntombi: "Hmmm I actually don't feel as crushed as I think most people expect me to. I still love him but he no longer gets a

reaction from my heart. Thank you for always listening"

Dali: "You listen to me. So it's what friends are for. Let me get to bed. I've got an early start tomorrow morning. Send my regards to your family. I'm going to ask Mrs B if I'll have an hour to myself during this meeting of hers so I can drop by your place"

Ntombikayise: "I'd love that very much" she smiled. They said their goodnight and each went back to what they were doing. Ntombi couldn't wait to see him. He was her best male friend and she was

glad he was at the bar that night. She wished the sex didn't happen but she was glad that it didn't stand in the way of a beautiful friendship. She was not in the mood for the business meeting with Liyema tomorrow but she had to go and appoint an acting CEO and she was certain that she didn't want the position. She couldn't wait for the kids to be old and qualified enough to step up during such situations. 

S2-INSERT 22

Yanda made a visit to his mother's house to take his niece some flu medication. It had been a while since he had been there so he made sure to go on a day when he had time to sit for a few hours. There was some tension in the house but he didn't bother asking what it was as he didn't want to be dragged into it. The baby was still healthy and the time to meet him got closer and closer making Yanda feel excited. Yamkela went to sit opposite her big brother looking nervous. Yanda

knew that he wouldn't like a word that came from her mouth.

Yami: "Bhuti, there is something that I should tell you" she shifted on her seat clearly uncomfortable.

Ma Mbuzo: "Oh Yanda hello" she walked in from her errands "Did this one tell you that she is pregnant again?" she looked at Yamkela.

Yanda: "I'm not even going to raise my blood pressure shouting at an adult woman. I hope that the father of that one will stick around because I can't be father

to yet another of your children with my own baby on the way" he looked at his sister.

Ma Mbuzo: "Tell him what you said you needed from him" she looked at Yamkela "She wanted to ask money for a scan" she added.

Yanda: "I didn't send you to get pregnant again. Ask the man who got you pregnant to pay for your scan"

Yami: "He doesn't have money, Bhut"

Yanda: "Then I guess you'll have to wait for the date you'll be given at the clinic to go to a

public hospital for a scan then" he put the matter to rest and watched Yamkela walk out sulking "Had she applied for that job she'd have gone on maternity leave with pay but no cleaning is below the Mbuzo girls" he shook his head.

Ma Mbuzo: "I hear that Rose got the job. What is Lisakhanya trying to do by keeping Rose close?"

Yanda: "Trying to help another woman feed her children that's what she's trying to do"

Ma Mbuzo: "Ow that's very kind

of her. So when last did you see Rose?"

Yanda: "I see her all the time when I go see my wife at work. We talk about general things. I have forgiven her and so has Nandi"

Ma Mbuzo: "Pity you are both married. So have you decided to give Nandi's engagement your blessings. The women in this family aren't lucky when it comes to marriage, Yanda. Just look at your sisters so please allow Nandi to get married"

Yanda: "Nandipha and I had a

long discussion and I met this boy decently so I have told them to do what makes them happy. I'm still not comfortable with her getting into marriage with nothing of her own but she promised she wouldn't be dependent on man for the rest of her life. I actually thought this boy is a polygamist but he assured me that he isn't and he looks younger than his age. I've decided to give him a chance"

Ma Mbuzo: "When the big day comes she must exit in her white dress in this house. I want the

neighbors to get jealous because I know you will design her a dress" she said with excitement.

Yanda: "I've been here for a long while, Mama so I'm sorry but I have to go. Next time don't switch your phone off"

Ma Mbuzo: "I don't know what the problem with this phone is, it switches itself off" she pressed the buttons of her phone.

Yanda: "Let me go to the toilet before going back to work" he stood to go to the bathroom.

Ma Mbuzo: "Hey, Yamkela why did you leave the TV on when no one

is watching it?" she shouted but got no reply from Yami "Acting like you buy electricity in this house" she mumbled to herself. She was angry at Yamkela for getting pregnant again because she knew that she'd be the one who struggles to help her daughter since Yandi's only mission was to buy groceries for them. She took the remote and pointed it to the TV but it wouldn't work "Things in this house break when I have no money to fix them" she said in frustration before clicking her tongue. Khumbul'ekhaya omnibus

was on and a young lady sitting next to an old man appeared. Ma Mbuzo was so busy banging the remote she didn't pay attention to the familiar face on the screen. Lady: "My name is Gina Makhambule" she introduced herself as a social worker at an old aged home that was in Pietermaritzburg "Next to me is Mr Yavela Mbuzo" Ma Mbuzo stopped what she was doing to focus on the screen "Mr Mbuzo came to our facility about five years ago. I wrote to the show because he is looking for his family

whom he says he left in Cape Town. He has a mental problem which makes him speak in riddles and he has forgotten most of the things in his life but on good days he speaks about family that he left in Cape Town. He says he has four children and a wife but his forgetful nature prevents him from remembering their names. If anyone recognizes Mr Mbuze please contact Khumbul'ekhaya so that he can be reunited with his family again. He cries for them a lot but because we don't know where to find them and what

their names are we can not help him. Please help this kind and gentle elder to connect with his family" Ma Mbuzo sunk to the couch but when she heard the toilet flush she quickly stood to go switch the TV off. Yanda appeared on e again and found his mother panting.

Yanda: "Why are you brething like you have just run a marathon?"

Ma Mbuzo: "I was chasing an insect. You know they lay eggs everywhere and then you've got an infestation" she answered quickly.

Yanda: "I didn't even get to watch Khumbul'ekhaya properly. I hope that we remembered to record today's programmes because that was the repeat and if I miss it I'll never see it again"

Ma Mbuzo: "It was nothing interesting" she brushed the show off "So even if you missed it, it won't matter" she added.

Yanda: "It's not an entertainment show so I'm not watching it for interest sake but because I like how they help families. Let me get going. Bye" he hugged his mother and was on his way.

Mambele the neighbor walked in.
Bele: "Heee ntombi, I just saw a story on Khumbul'ekhaya"

Ma Mbuzo: "I saw it too and I know what you think but it is not true. It's just a similarity in names and coincidentally his family is from here too"

Bele: "Are you sure?"

Ma Mbuzo: "I know my husband and that's not him, Mambele so yes I am sure"

Bele: "Oh what a pity because I thought I'd help you contact those people so he can come back home. That man didn't look good"

at all. One can see that he is about to die so I hope his family finds him"

Ma Mbuzo: "I hope so too. Please excuse yourself because I've got to clean since Yamkela didn't do anything"

Mambele: "Oh yes I heard she's pregnant again. Is it true?"

Ma Mbuzo: "Stop meddling in other people's business and go clean your house and yourself. Even now you smell of old pee so go, go" she said before pushing her neighbour out of the door She looked at the blank screen and

hoped that no one else who knew her saw it. Bele was the township gossip so people no longer believed a word she said. She also hoped that Yanda forgot to record it because she didn't want her husband home. If he returned and could remember everything that happened between them it could ruin her relationship with her children forever.

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When Ntombi returned to her office after lunch she found it decorated with flowers

everywhere that she looked. She knew that they were from Liyema because he'd been trying to get into her good books with gifts for days. He released an official statement and suddenly he was seen as a victim by the public so the clients decided to stay too. An acting CEO was appointed and Ndlovu Communications was back to business as usual again while the boss recovers. She dialed Liyema's number and he picked up after the first ring.

Liyema: "How is the rose garden?"
he smiled.

Ntombi: "This is my workplace, Liyema. That desk you had flowers be put on is my work desk"

Liyema: "I'm sorry, Lala. I just wanted to brighten up your day"

Ntombi: "Thank you but honestly all you did was inconvenience me I've got a lot of work to do but now I've got to first clear my workstation"

Liyema: "Please forgive me, Laksiwe"

Ntombikayise: "Why have you been doing this? First it was the human sized teddy bear and now

this" she looked around.

Liyema: "I'm watering the garden again"

Ntombi: "What?" she asked confused.

Liyema: "It's just my way of showing you that I mean it when I say that I am sorry. I really want us to be friends again, Lala and hopefully someday...we could be more again"

Ntombi: "You divorced me, Liyema" she snapped "I am not some old fling you reconnected with again but I am the wife you left"

Liyema: "And I regret that with

everything in me. I now realize my mistakes and I'm trying to rectify them but I need you to stop shutting me down please"

Ntombi: "Okay Liyema thank you for the flowers they are lovely but like I said I've got a lot of work to do so yeah..."

Liyema: "Have a great day, beautiful"

Ntombi: "Thanks you too" she hung up before he could say more. She looked around to take in the colourful beauties around her before taking off the ones on her desk so she could work.

Hlubi: "I'm all for side hustles but not when you bring the stock to your work, lady" she walked in holding papers.

Ntombi: "Would you like a bunch? Your brother went overboard so you can have as much as you want. Give some to Rose too and the men so they can give to their wives"

Hlubi: "You don't seem too impressed with the gesture" she sat down.

Ntombi: "How can I be when I would have loved it while we were married not now that we are

divorced. How do I blush at flowers sent by my ex husband?"

Hlubi: "Calm down, bestie please. Tell him to go slow on you if it's too much or if you want him to stop then tell him"

Ntombi: "You should have seen how happy the kids were when the teddy got delivered. I don't understand what Liyema is trying to do"

Hlubi: "I don't know but I can see he's getting a reaction. Are you angry because it's too late for him to do all of this or because you hate that you love it?"

Ntombi: "I don't know what it is when Liyema is involved, Hlubi. Please excuse me so I can get back to work. I've got a report that I have to finish" she took her files and opened them. Hlubi didn't want to push her to talk so she left the file she brought Ntombi and went on her way. A few months back Ntombi would have been blushing after receiving such a gesture but in that moment she sat feeling numb.

Lungile made sure that he visited his brother on a daily basis. Their

argument of that day was water under the bridge because he felt it didn't matter after Liyema's health scare. He could see that Liyema was recovering quickly since his mission to win Ntombi over again

Lungile: "Don't you think you are overdoing it? I imagine what you are doing to be so overwhelming, Liyema"

Liyema: "And you would know what overwhelms a woman, especially one that I was married to? Laxhiwe loves romantic gestures so I'm sure she's in her

office now smelling the flowers"
he smiled.

Lungi: "Okay let's say she gives you this second chance then are you going to do things differently?"

Liyema: "I plan to worship the ground she walks on when she gives me a second chance. She loves me, man"

Lungi: "Okay I hope that you are going to appreciate the second chance should it come"

Liyema: "When not should. I just have to remind her that I can be the man that I used to be. That

I love her still"

Lungi: "Ever heard the saying that a man marries a good woman but cheats with his dream girl? She brought up physical attraction so are you sure that she is your type?"

Liyema: "I want nothing to do with slay queens anymore"

Lungi: "She still has that body that you said is a turn off to you, bra"

Liyema: "Why are you bringing up things that aren't relevant?"

Lungi: "Well for this second chance to be long lasting you've got to be

honest with her about everything, Liyema"

Liyema: "When you love someone you keep certain things from them to protect them from hurting. So don't tell me to tell her things that will hurt her more"

Lungi: "Wow now this I want to see" he said softly while shaking his head "This I really want to see" he stood and left.

Liyema: "So you're leaving without saying goodbye?"

Lungi: "I don't want to be involved in all of this. You are not

honest with yourself about this physical attraction issue. You are not being honest with her about so many things and you know it. I won't be a part of the team to help you win her back only to see you two split again. After Elaine's saga you should know that honesty is the best policy" he shouted before walking out.

Mrs E: "He's right, Liyema" she leaned against the door.

Liyema: "Lakhiwe and I will sit down and talk properly about everything soon but for now I've got someone to try and find.

Hours went by and Ntombi went by Liyema's house to talk to him. She was glad that the kids were not there because what she wants to say would not have been a conversation for their ears.

Gladys let her in with a smile and Ntombi knew that she thought she'd come to fix things with Liyema. What Ntombi didn't expect to find was Liyema in the company of the man who officiated their unplanned wedding.

Mr Zyne: "Still as beautiful as ever" the elderly man stood to

greet Ntombi "Do you remember me?" he asked with a smile.

Ntombi: "How could I possibly forget you, sir" she gave a nearly robotic smile "Why are you here?" she looked at Liyema and back at him.

Liyema: "It turns out that he was checking on all of the couple's he married over ten years ago. I thought I'd invite him over since you said that you wanted to see me"

Mr Zyne: "Nothing saddens me then to hear about the divorce" he led Ntombi to the couch before

they both sat "Marriage is not easy and requires a lot of forgiveness" he added.

Liyema: "And I hope that she can forgive me"

Mr Zyne: "He told me that the two of you are trying to find your way back to each other again. A man who admits to his mistakes is a man of honor" Liyema stood to go kneel in front of Ntombi.

She was overwhelmed so no words could even escape her mouth.

Liyema: "I know that I am going to have to spend the rest of my life proving to you that I am

sorry but I'm up for it" he held his chest "I made mistakes and choices that don't make me worthy of you yet you tolerate me. I love how you love me, Lakhiwe. You are a beautiful soul and I was not worthy of you but please try to forgive me" he pleaded.

Mr Zyne: "There's a saying that love that returns after straying is true love. Here is a man asking you to forgive him and I can hear that he is true"

Ntombi: "Were you the one whom he left for another person? I feel

like most people around us expect me to welcome Liyema with open arms. This is not a man who cheated and then begged for my forgiveness, Mr Zyne. This is a man who divorced me just like that" she snapped her fingers "He was so quick to get rid of me that he gave me a fat settlement so I wouldn't waste time contesting anything. I had to run into him in stores as he and the other woman were shopping for their new house when it had barely been three months since he left ours. I had

to watch him go on vacation with her. Why on earth do people like you always feel sorry for the guilty one, Mr Zyne? Am I not worthy enough to have most of you people around me have empathy for me? I wanted this man to beg me like this the day that I kicked him out but he didn't. He walked out and left me crushed while he ran to another woman. I swear you guys don't regard my feelings and how much he has hurt me. Liyema is used to getting his way. I can assure you that if it were possible his

mother would have bought me for him just so he would look less depressing. Why is no one thinking about Ntombi? Is it because I am an orphan so I should settle for any kind of love that comes my way? These romantic gestures that he is doing were the same I was pleading with him to do while we were still married. I swear everyone around us do not emphasize with me at all. You guys see us serve couple goals when a few weeks ago I was nothing to this man. He called me fat. I still look like I did. Why am

I expected to go back to a man who insulted my body so much? What sex life will we have, sir? One where we switch off the lights while he fantasizes about another woman when with me? A man who loves me would not have said that I gained weight and it's a turn off to him. He would have recommended that I join him in the gym and try eating right. A few months ago I disgusted this man yet everyone wants me to go back to toxicity. Were you the one who took your clothes to the bathroom because

your bedroom was not comfortable enough to get naked in while he was there? Where you the one who couldn't even enjoy sex because you wondered if you were good enough for him? No you weren't but I was. Don't dare tell me about love when Liyema hasn't been loving me. To hell with the kind of love that this man served me in the past two years. Fuck it all man. I'm not going to get a thrill from other women wanting my man and get turned on by him cheating. I didn't fucken sign up for bad boy

tendencies when I married you. I married the good man. Not a man who will go sleep around, dump me, come back and then act like nothing happened and I should at least be grateful that you returned when you should never have left. This man knew cheating was a deal breaker because I was cheated on by the man I was with prior to him that I was left with no self esteem to love myself. So screw all of this. Go be a damn bad boy lover to women who are turned on by that" she wiped her tears and

ran out. Liyema knelt down for a long while before Zyne helped him up.

Zyne: "She is still hurt so please give her time. Such is never easy I've seen it with couples I council"

Liyema: "I'm sorry you had to witness that"

Zyne: "Nothing I haven't seen before and many have reconciled afterwards. Just you keep proving to her that you have changed but take it slow" Liyema nodded.

Ntombi was feeling nauseous as

she drove home. She had to keep wiping her tears. She managed to arrive home safely and went inside the house avoiding eye contact with the family.

Ntombikayise: "Greetings" she said in passing.

Makhulu: "Ntombikayise that's no way to greet us" she said but watched her daughter ignore her to run up the stairs. Makhulu nearly had a heart attack when she saw Ntombi lose balance and fall a few steps down.

Bukhosi: "Mama!" he called out desperately before running to her.

Tamkhulu also making his way to her as quickly as possible.

Ntombikayise sat down holding on to the stairwell. She didn't know where the sudden blurry vision came from that made her miss a step. The children were all around her and she suddenly felt hot.

Bubele: "Bandile call an ambulance" he shouted with fear in his voice that couldn't be missed.

Ntombikayise: "I'm fine. Just get me cold water and some space to breath" she pushed them away.

Amahle: "I'll get the water" she ran to the kitchen. Ntombikayise

drank the ice cold water and watched them give her space to breath. She stood still holding on to the handle.

Tamkhulu: "Let me carry you to the room" he offered.

Ntombi: "No, Tata I'm heavy. Your back" she was still disoriented. Tamkhulu didn't listen to her as he had her in his arms in no time taking her to the room. Makhulu was left alone downstairs as she couldn't go up and she was left in a state.

Tamkhulu came back down.

Tamkhulu: "She is complaining

about a headache" he said.

Makhulu: "Let us call the ambulance"

Tamkhulu: "She refuses" he looked up. The kids surrounded Ntombi as she laid on the bed.

Ntombikayise: "I need to be alone for now guys. The different scents coming from you guys are making me sick. So please let me nap alone for a while"

Banele: "But you'll be fine right?"

Ntombikayise faked a smile.

Ntombi: "Always" they all kissed her and left the room unwillingly.

Ntombi closed her eyes hoping

that she'd wake up feeling better. Hours went by and she woke up to complete darkness. No one had gone to bed as they were waiting to see her up and we'll again. She switched on the light on her bedside and sat up. She was even worse than before. She dialed Tamkhulu's number and instead of answering he was by her door quickly.

Tamkhulu: "Nto-Nto" he went to her.

Ntombi: "My left side is feeling weak, Tata and I can't see you properly" she said in a slur.

Tamkhulu didn't want to risk driving at night due to his own eye problems but he had to get his child to the hospital. His back was sore from lifting her up earlier on so he called the boys and told them to help him get Ntombi to the car. Tamkhulu explained to Makhulu what happened.

Makhulu: "Oh please God let my child not be having a stroke" she started to cry. "Bubele push me to the car. I'm not going to stay here while you all are at the hospital" she was frantic.

Ntombi's car was big enough for

her big family so they were all inside going to the hospital in no time. Makhulu was glad that the kids had finished writing exams "Ntombi, we are driving you to the hospital, Mntanam. Please, please don't let whatever this is get you down. Your children need you please" Makhulu added.

Ntombikayise couldn't even see them that well but at least she still remembered the voices and they were reassuring during such a confusing time. Her fear was leaving her children when they still needed her.

Ntombi: "Don't... don't tell the Elephants. Don't want them here" the slurring became worse. She spoke like a drunk person. Makhulu told the children to obey their mother. Tamkhulu managed to drive to the hospital and they had her attended too quickly while Bukhosi handled the admin. They all sat in the waiting room while praying. The doctor on duty came out after a short while.

Doc: "We are still running tests. The symptoms are similar to that of a stroke but we can't be sure until we get the results

back. Your daughter is in good hands and when there is more to tell I'll come. Please excuse me"

Bandile: "She can't do this to us. I know that she won't do this to us because she knows we need her more than we do anyone else" he started to cry.

Bukhosi: "Stop talking as though she'll die" he shouted at his brother.

Tamkhulu: "Bukhosi.... Bukhosi!" he looked at the youngster "Now is not the time for shouting at each other" he looked at all the kids. Mrs B got called out because

she was like family. She was there in no time consoling the children while she herself was worried sick.

Mrs B: "She was trying to hard to be okay. When emotions are suppressed the body is bound to suffer later on but it is Ntombi we are talking about so she'll be fine" she assured them.

Makhulu: "My baby can't have a stroke at such a young age" she shook her head.

Tamkhulu: "Let us all wait for the doctor before diagnosing her ourselves because we'll end up

making ourselves not well too" his word was final. All they could do is sit and wait for the doctor to return with hopefully what would be positive feedback. ❤️

S2-INSERT 23

The light in Ntombi's room was dim because she was sensitive to bright light and sound. The quietness around her was calming and even the pounding on the left side of her head started to show signs of fading. What happened to her was scary and she could only

imagine how terrified her family was. She hoped that they listened to her by not calling the Elephants. The doctor made his round and Ntombi was grateful to have her sight back after waking up partially blind.

Ntombi: "Doctor what is wrong with me? I have this urge to throw up but I can't" she said in a whisper.

Doc: "You have what we call hemiplegic migraine. Its a short period of paralysis or weakness on one side of the body. You might also feel temporary numbness,

dizziness, or vision changes. If you get these symptoms, it's important to know how to tell them apart from the signs of a stroke, which can seem similar. Good thing is your family brought you in on time" he smiled before checking the file.

Ntombi: "How long have I been here?"

Doc: "It's been a few hours. How are you feeling besides the urge to vomit?" he asked while examine her.

Ntombi: "Tired" she closed her eyes "Did you tell my family it's

not a stroke because I remember my grandmother praying that it's not on the way to the hospital"

Doc: "I told them and they are all still here. I'll send them all in shortly. Do you think you'll be able to handle the talking?" Ntombi nodded "I'm going to keep you here for observation for a few more hours. They told me that it's not a first that you got a migraine but it has never been this severe. Any stress triggers lately?" he asked all while examining her.

Ntombi: "Just divorce issues that

I thought I dealt with"

Doc: "Oh as someone who had been divorced twice I know how stressful it can be but you have to stay clear of matters which trigger stress from now on.

Maybe go on a vacation just you and get away from everything" he suggested.

Ntombi: "But I have kids and elderly people to look after"

Doc: "Teenage children who I am certain can be without you for a weekend and elderly who are strong looking. No use staying where stress triggers are and

risking leaving them for good. I'm sure they'd much rather you go away and return than you hold off and die"

Ntombi: "How did you handle two divorces, Doc. I feel everyone sees me smile and then when I have a low episode they think I'm weak or dramatic"

Doc: "You strike me like someone who put everyone else's needs above her own. You are so strong for everyone that they don't know what to do when you no longer can be strong. I got through the divorces with great difficulty. I'm

the typical "good guy" who women find boring so my ex wives got toy boys to keep excitement in their lives"

Ntombi: "I'm sorry to hear that"

Doc: "It's a social norm, Miss Poti. Women are turned off by good men, good women to be exact. It's like life is playing a cruel game of keeping the good men and women apart to pair them with those who don't think twice about hurting them" he sat on the bed after finishing his round "You are a beautiful young woman and I sense selflessness too but I think

it is time to be selfish with you. For now let Miss Poti be Miss Poti's and no one else's. Take that selfish time away. It's actually not selfish but necessary" he added.

Ntombi: "Do you still believe in love after being cheated on?"

Doc: "Oh yes the thing about people like me is that we are suckers for love. I hate being alone and that's why I married again. As I'm talking to you now I'm engaged again" he laughed but he understood Ntombi could only smile due to the pain.

Ntombikayise: "What hope do you have that this one will be different?"

Doc: "Perhaps I take comfort in the fact that she's been through similar. That's she's done with the games just as I am. My poor family are going to be attending my third wedding" Ntombi wanted to laugh but the pain got worse.

Ntombi: "So your cure is a selfish yet necessary time away on my own?" Doctor Potgieter smiled.

Doc: "Well though there's no cure for migraine yet you can do things to prevent them so yes I

recommend that. You don't have to go to some expensive hotel but to family who won't trigger stress"

Ntombikayise: "I know that would have been my mother had she still been alive. So when are you discharging me so I can be on my way to selfishness?" the doctor laughed.

Doc: "Let us see how you feel in an hour or so. I'm hoping that the sick feeling is going to subside. How bad is the headache?"

Ntombi: "The left side still feels like it has a heartbeat because it

has this throbbing sensation that I can't explain. I'm also feeling tired, doc"

Doc: "Should I hold off on the visits?"

Ntombi: "No just tell them to keep it quiet because if you don't my children will not listen when I say it" the doctor laughed.

Doc: "They've been waiting for hours. Let me go get them. I'll also tell them to not mess with the lighting because if that head still throbs strong lighting might make it worse". He left Ntombi and watched as the family jumped

up to meet him. The joy on their faces when they were told they could go see her was indescribable it was moments that made Dr Potgieter love his job. He gave them instructions before allowing them all to go see her. Usually he'd let visitors in two at a time but he could see all seven were desperate to see their loved one. Ntombi had closed her eyes after the doctor left to try and calm her aching head and soon felt the bed move as her children all wanted to be on it.

Makhulu: "Please don't hurt her,

my babies" she whispered.

Tamkhulu: "Nto-Nto" he held her hand.

Ntombi: "Tatam" Tamkhulu breathed when she spoke "They say it's a migraine" she added.

Banele: "But it's never been so severe though" she felt him rub her right foot.

Bubele: "You scared us, Ma yho. I was praying you'll laugh and say it was another prank"

Ntombi: "I'm sorry, bantwana bam. I think it got so severe because I didn't seek medical attention for the mild ones"

Makhulu: "The doctor said it is stress that might have made it worse. Is the new job too much, Nana?"

Ntombi: "Ha.a, Ma"

Bandile: "So when are you going home? It's morning already"

Ntombi: "The doctor said soon. You guys can go home and rest"

Bukhosi: "I'm not going anywhere" he said stubbornly.

Amahle: "Neither am I. The house will be quiet without you in it especially since we are on holiday"

Ntombi: "Have you all eaten?"

Bubele: "Classic mom who worries about us who are fully capable of going to the canteen to get a sandwich. We haven't eaten because we wanted to see you"
Ntombi smiled.

Makhulu: "It's what a mother does, putting herself second"

Tamkhulu: "You made me drive with an expired license" Ntombi couldn't help but laugh softly.

Ntombi: "Ouch" she held her head while laughing.

Tamkhulu: "Go call the doctor, Bandile"

Ntombi: "No, Tata just don't

make me laugh" she smiled

"Imagine if they arrested us all for driving with someone who can't see at night who also has an expired license" they all laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Let me go and get us all some food at the place next door. I have a feeling that we all will wait for you to be discharged"

Mrs B: "I will go with you, Tata. I'm so glad that you are okay, Ntombi. You and I need to talk but not here and certainly not now"

Ntombi: "Mrs B you're here too?"

she smiled "I'm talking with my eyes closed because the pain feels less that way. We'll talk"

Tamkhulu and Mrs B went to get some food.

Banele: "Why are your eyes closed? Last night you said you can't see"

Ntombi: "I can see, my boy but I'm just resting my eyes. Do you guys know how much I love you?" she opened her eyes but blinked a few times.

Amahle: "You show us everyday. I know we are a pain most times but you show us everyday, mom. Right?" she looked at her

brothers and they nodded.

Bubele: "That's why you scared us so much, we love you too. You have never taught us to live without you and it's a lesson that I don't want to learn" the siblings nodded in agreement.

Bandile: "You're our queen, Mama. Hence we give you the title of queen mother"

Ntombi: "I never knew love until I met you guys. My heart felt full when I held all of you for the first time. Yes sometimes you guys drive me insane that I admit but it's a crazy that I

don't mind because without it my life won't be complete. Thank you for being with me through thick and thin"

Bukhosi: "Oh please, Mom you're the one who is with us through thick and thin. The best gift that dad has ever given us"

Ntombi: "You guys are the best gift that he has given me too" she smiled "I suggest you guys go order the stuff you like.

Tamkhulu will see the prices and faint and Mrs B will buy you guys kale smoothies" the kids laughed.

Kids: "We'll be back" they said as

though they had rehearsed it.

Each gave Ntombi a kiss on the forehead before leaving them.

Makhulu: "Where were you before coming home yesterday, Ntombi?*" she wheeled herself closer.

Ntombi told her grandmother everything "Have you really been keeping feelings inside as Zim's mother says?"

Ntombi: "I don't want to burden you, Mama"

Makhulu: "I'm emotionally burdened by you lying on this bed. Why did you stop going to Make Bam? Is it money? Your

grandfather and I can pay her if you are struggling"

Ntombi: "I felt I've been dealing with everything well, Mama"

Makhulu: "You've been doing well in forgetting the things that you are dealing with. Since you don't want to burden us at least go talk to someone who is not going to feel burdened as they'll be doing their job. Do you know how scary it is to think your child is having a stroke and might wake up paralysed?"

Ntombi: "I'm sorry that you had to go through all of that, Ma.

I'm sure that it was not easy"
Makhulu: "I'm just glad you're
okay. I don't want you near
Liyema again"

Ntombi: "Okay, Ma" she said
softly. Makhulu didn't want to
fight Ntombi on the Liyema issue.
She was just happy that her
daughter was back to her usual
self. She got discharged late in
the afternoon and though she
was not 100% she drove them all
home. Everyone went to freshen
up and took a nap to get their
energy back. Ntombi had to sleep
in discomfort as she had to share

the bed with four tall boys and a clingy girl but she didn't mind. She woke up before everyone and felt energized after drinking her rooibos tea. She moved cautiously around her kitchen as she was busy making dinner. There was a knock on the door and she was in no mood to go open but she did. Dali was so relieved to see her that he lifted her up in a hug. When Mrs B told him that she was at hospital because of Ntombi being ill last night, he booked a flight for Cape Town as soon as possible.

Ntombi: "Oh come on. You act as if I knocked on death's door" she laughed softly.

Dali: "Well clearly I got wrong information because here you are looking fresh"

Ntombi: "And I'm cooking" she held his hand to lead him inside before closing the door "All the healthy people are still asleep because they stayed at the hospital through the night" she looked back to look at him as they walked to the kitchen.

Dali: "Superwoman much?" he raised a brow.

Ntombi: "How long are you in the city for?"

Dali: "Few hours" Ntombi's eyes shot open.

Ntombi: "Why?"

Dali: "Mrs Bam told me last night so I got a flight that only departed a few hours ago. So because I'm still new at my job taking extended leave is not wise. I called in sick today but tomorrow I've got to be back at work again"

Ntombi: "That's spending money unnecessarily, Xolo"

Dali: "I came to see a friend so

don't dare offer me money. I'm sorry I can't stay longer"

Ntombi: "Are you kidding me?

Even a second would have been appreciated" she went over to hug him. "Would you like anything to drink? Will you be able to stay for dinner?"

Dali: "I can do a drink but since you're still cooking I am guessing you won't serve the food now so I can't do dinner"

Ntombi: "So you really just flew from a different province to see me for an hour or so before flying back?" she laughed softly.

Dali: "No don't flatter yourself. I also wanted to come check if Cape Town is really as cold as you say" he joked and they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Stop making me laugh because I'll laugh straight to hospital again. So can I make you coffee since it's really as cold as I said it was?"

Dali: "That would be lovely. So what was the cause of the severe headache that left you feeling "stroky" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "I'm going to get you for the stroky part. But apparently

it's migraine that has stroke symptoms. Doctor Potgieter says it could be stress" she put the kettle on.

Dali: "What's stressing you?"

Ntombi: "I don't know" she did not want to say the pressure society is putting on her to take Liyema back was what stressed her.

"I'm thinking of disappearing for a weekend" she added.

Dali: "Alone?" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "This ordeal has made me realize that I don't want to be in a relationship whether with Liyema or any other man. Clearly

I've got some unresolved issues of my own and this weekend away from everything is going to help me identify them. Maybe I still love Liyema and that's why I'm so angry at him but I don't want any man in my life. No offence but you guys come with so much"

Dali: "Take that weekend away then and hopefully you'll come back feeling rested just don't have strokes far away from home" they both laughed and Ntombikayise threw a lettuce slice at him.

Ntombi: "Here is your coffee and

stop talking nonsense, Xhego" she looked at him with a smile "I appreciate you" she kissed his cheek "I appreciate you a lot, Daluxolo" she added with a smile. Dali: "And I you" he pulled her close in a hug. He missed her scent even though she only smelled of soap. They had their coffee while catching up and Ntombi loved how happy he looked. There was something about his aura that felt lighter and refreshing. He kept looking at the time after a while of being with her.

Ntombi: "You've got to go back?"
she asked in a whisper.

Dali: "The disadvantages of
working for others but I will be
back next month for that thing
Mrs B isn't telling me anything
about"

Ntombi: "I'm sure it isn't
something bad. What if she offers
you a better position with better
benefits. Would you move again?"

Dali: "The money was not the
main reason for my sudden moving.
I needed a change in scenery"

Ntombi: "And it's doing you good.
You look happier so keep doing

what you are doing. I guess I'll see you next month then" Dali nodded.

Dali: "Don't get sick again okay. You scared the hell out of me"

Ntombi: "I won't and I scared the hell out of myself too but I'm fine. The doctor booked me off so I will take it easy. I'd drive you to the hospital but the drive earlier on was not pleasant. Had this annoying buzzing sound in my ear"

Dali: "My brother is parked outside so don't worry"

Ntombi: "How rude of you to leave

your brother in the car, Daluxolo"

Dali: "He is a shy one. He prefers to prepare himself mentally for meeting new people but soon I'll introduce him to you. So are you strong enough to dance?"

Ntombikayise: "Haven't been dancing lately so take it easy on me. I do need a little fix me up so I'm game. I'm not changing my shoes" they both looked at her big, furry cat slippers and Dali laughed. Ntombi played music from her phone before waltzing towards him while laughing.

Dali: "You've gotten stiff" he joked

and she laughed.

Ntombi: "You say that because you can't handle this anymore" she reeled him in by wrapping one leg around him. It was a move she learned in the tango lesson.

Dali: "Woman please" he held her leg firmly "I can lift you to the sky and twirl you with ease but not now that you're fresh from hospital" they both laughed.

Ntombikayise lowered her leg to not get into a dance that's going to leave her feeling dizzy. Bukhosi was coming down when he saw Dali and his mother dancing. It

was not a touchy touchy type of dance but a free flowing and clearly freestyle dance. He sat on the stairs to listen to his mother laugh as she was swaying her way into her partner's arms. She was wearing pajamas but that's what made the moment more authentic. He stood and walked back up to not disturb them.

Tamkhulu clearing his throat did disturb so they stopped. Ntombi introduced Dali to the parents and the other boys were happy to see him again. Ntombi walked to the car with Dali to meet his

foster brother and could see what Dali meant when he said he's brother was shy. They said their goodbyes and Ntombi was not sad to see him leave because she was grateful that he made time to come though he couldn't stay longer. She knew her friends would also have come had she told them but Dali was the only friend she was willing to see that day because he lived far. She had to assure her parents that Dali was just a friend and they believed her because it was true. The kids helped her finish supper by

making her sit and give instructions. They finally finished and sat down to eat when they heard a knock on the door. Banele ran to open and Hlubi, Liyema and Mrs E walked in just in time to join them for dinner. Makhulu told Tamkhulu why Ntombi came home looking like a mess yesterday so he did everything to not jump Liyema with a fist. Hlubi heard Ntombi called in sick and that it was so serious she had to be given a few days to recover so she told her mother and they decided to go check on her. Both ladies told

Liyema to stay behind but he insisted on joining them to apologize to Ntombi. They were shocked to hear they weren't told of the hospital stay but knew Ntombi had her reasons. Amahle invited her family to stay for dinner even though there was tension between the two families or at least between their kids but they allowed them to stay. The food was served and dinner was had in silence. Liyema cleared his throat and all looked at him. Liyema: "I would just like to thank you for letting us stay."

Elders I never apologized to you for what I did to your daughter after taking her from your home and promising to continue taking care of her as you did. I am sorry for the pain that I caused you by hurting your child" he looked at the elders. Tamkhulu just stared at him without saying a word "Lakhiwe I'm sorry that I pushed so much for you to forgive me. Lungile did say I'd be overwhelming you but I didn't listen. I'm a faulted man, Lala but I meant it when I said I love you" he looked at Ntombi. "I

found love in you And no other love
will do Every moment that you
smile chases all of the pain away
Forever and a while in my heart is
where you'll stay This is why I
love you Ooh this is why I love
you Because you love me, You love
me This is why I love you. Ooh
this is why I love you Because
you love me You love me" he sang
a few of Major's why I love you.
Ntombi forgot that he could even
sing. Beside the singing in church
he hardly sang especially not for
her. It took her back to the old
times when she was still with old

Liyema. His singing used to make her knees melt but as she sat listening to him sing she felt anger build up. There was silence after he sang to her. Tamkhulu not wanting to override Ntombi in her own house but his hand was shaking with an anger build up of his own.

Bukhosi: "So if she didn't love you back would you have stopped loving her, Dad?" everyone looked at him. Makhulu was about to stop him but Tamkhulu said he must let him speak. Of all the kids Bukhosi had been the one

silent about his feelings on the divorce "I don't mean any disrespect but the song that you sang is a rather selfish one to sing. So you are saying that had she not loved you then you wouldn't have loved her. You love her because you love being loved by her. I've been observing Mom since you got sick and I see the others get excited about you trying to get mom back. I don't know if any of you around this table even noticed how my mother's spark faded" his voice started to shake "I know her so

I know that spark is no longer there. A spark that she managed to find after you left her dad" he wiped his tears off "A spark that would shine brighter when Bandile brings her veggies from his garden, one she'd have when she hears us laugh, when Tamkhulu says Nto-Nto. If non of you around this table realize that dad trying to find his way back into her life is making her miserable then I'm starting to question just how much my mother means to you especially the Elephant family. Or doesn't it matter as

long as your son is joyous. I've seen an improvement in dad's health since he started his mission to win her back yet at the same time I've seen my mom's health become shaky. I've been trying hard to understand what Tamkhulu meant when he said that we are all responsible for our own happiness. Mom created her happiness with great difficulty after you left and now I see you putting your hands in her happiness jar trying to take some of her hard earned joy. You are taking and taking, dad yet you

put nothing back in and that has diminished her spark. I say this song is selfish because you say no other love will do when just a few weeks ago another love did you perfectly fine, Tata perfectly fine. We all know as we are sitting here that had that love not turned sour you wouldn't be here right now. You'd be with that love being happy. Let us not pretend like we are not aware of that fact" he looked at everyone sobbing "I love you guys so much and equally so but you are sucking my mother's joy. You are empty so you are

relying on her to fill you that's why you can say you love her because she loves you. I don't know love but I imagine it's about giving and taking but you just take, take and take. I know that we hoped you'd fix things but I see my mother and she's not the laughing and dancing woman she was recently. If her spark dying is the cost that has to be paid to have you two together then it's too expensive. If my mother's happiness and health is on the line then your love is too expensive, dad. I don't

want you together if my mother's life is the price for that" he stood and ran out to the backyard. His siblings followed him and the elders were left speechless.

Ntombi: "He is right. I don't feel anything when you do what you've been doing for me. Instead of feeling romanticized I feel angry. My hospital stay made me realize that I don't want that. I love you, Liyema and I might never stop but I'm no longer in love with you. I've been listening to people tell me to give you a chance and that has made me confused

but I realize that I was trying to please people at my expense. You are a good man but after you've done to me it's not enough to want to be with you again. This time I am the one who is walking away. Those who think you are too manly to let go of can have you. I choose you as a co parent and nothing else. I hope you find that happiness you seek within yourself soon but I'm taking mine back. I suggest that you leave so they can calm down. Tomorrow once we're all calm, I will tell them there is no way I'm

getting back with you. I choose myself not a man". A frantic knock on the door disturbed them.

Tamkhulu stood to go open and a lady walked in looking like a mess. Mrs E and Liyema both jumped up from their seats as though it had an electric volt.

Portia: "I know that I promised to never show myself but I'm desperate. Abongile was air lifted to the Red Cross hospital. She needs blood but I'm not matching but since you're her father you might, Liyema please" she even went on her knees to beg. For

some reason Ntombi was not hurt but angry at being made a fool by Liyema. He looked at her with pleading eyes.

Hlubi: "What the hell, Liyema?"

she stood "Mama you knew about this?" she looked at her mother.

Ntombi: "Sisi, how old is your child?" she looked at the lady.

Portia: "She's going to turn two in a week" Ntombikayise nodded.

Liyema: "Lakhiwe, Portia was not even an affair. It was one time" he came over to her "It was one time and that baby isn't mine because I used protection" he

held her arm but Ntombi tried to free herself. Liyema felt a blow in his ribs so hard he was sure they had broken. Tamkhulu served him blows with his cane again before standing in front of Ntombi's.

Tamkhulu: "You don't hold my child like. Pasop! Not that nonsense with my child. I will bleksem you until your own mother doesn't recognize you" he hit Liyema again and it were no soft warning blows but hardcore ones that left his body feeling like it lacked air.

Ntombi: "Leave my house" she looked at Mrs E and Liyema. The

kids came back after the action of his father getting a beating but they found him leaning over the table holding his ribs and coughing. Hlubi was so humiliated that she had her family out of Ntombi's house as soon as she could. Portia was a one night stand from a time that Liyema went home for a traditional ritual in the Eastern Cape. He denied paternity of Abo so it was easy on him to forget that one night of forbidden pleasure. Portia had to dig hard to find him but her baby's life was worth it even if

she faced the risk of being turned away. Mrs E and Lungile knew about her that's why Lungile asked his brother if he'd be open to Ntombi about everything.

Ntombi felt more betrayed by Mrs E but then she remembered how she told Me Zyne that Mrs E would have bought her back for Liyema had she been a thing on auction so he'd be happy. So she was not surprised that Mrs E helped him cover up a child.

Suddenly she wished that Elaine did more damage to Liyema. The sympathy she had for him for the

Elaine saga left. She was glad that she walked away because she would have felt like a fool for finding out about the child later on after she'd given him a chance. She knew it was over with absolutely no chance of reconciliation but she mourned the failed marriage long ago which made the current news sting less. 

S2-INSERT 24 (NOT EDITED)
It had been a few days since the news of Liyema's illegitimate child

and after Ntombi sat the children down to tell them she was shocked to hear that they weren't surprised. It was as though nothing Liyema did, especially bad surprised them. He went from hero to zero in their eyes and it was a sad thing to witness because he used to be their long. Ntombi was still on her sick leave as the doctor advised. Life has been going on as usual for her and her family. She finally calmed down enough to go talk to Mrs E. There were a few questions that she had to ask

her dear ex mother in law.

Mrs E: "Khiwe" she said with a sound of relief in her voice. Ntombi let herself in without being invited.

Ntombi: "It's Ntombikayise, Ma Elephant not Khiwe or Lakhiwe or anything that will remind me of the time I was your daughter but in law. I trusted you like I did my own mother" she shook her head while looking at Mrs E.

Mrs E: "And I love you like you are my own daughter" Ntombi gave a sarcastic laugh.

Ntombi: "Is that why you hid a

child to protect your son, Zola?" she had never referred to Mrs E by name before so the moment came with shock to both of them "An entire child who is innocent in all of this" she added.

Mrs E: "I didn't want this to come out because I didn't want Liyema to hurt you by telling you about a one night stand. That child is not his" she said with certainty.

Liyema: "I really did use a condom" he said while walking in from the backyard.

Ntombi: "So condoms don't break,

Liyema? I can't understand that you of all people would deny a child. Why didn't you go to do a DNA?" she looked at him and laughed "Oh because you feared your little wifey would find out that you cheated on her" she said answering her own question.

Liyema: "I had a stupid one night stand that I can barely remember. I'm sorry, Ntombi and I will come talk to the kids too"

Ntombi: "No stay away from my children"

Mrs E: "Please don't keep his children away from him, Laksiwe."

I was hoping that they could still come spend the holidays here"

Ntombi: "My children are not going to come and face the man who has been breaking their heart and listen to his sorry excuses. I'll keep my children entertained thank you. What you can do is invite that baby you two have been hiding. Shame on you two shame" she pointed at both of them.

Liyema: "It's not my child"

Ntombi: "Why does that answer make me sure that you didn't go check in at the hospital, Liyema?"

he looked at his mother and took a deep breath "Have you always been this pathetic or is it some kind of midlife crisis? I can't believe that I've been married to this...this for so many years" she pointed at him with disgusted "Any love and respect that I had for you is gone. You raised a sorry excuse of a man" she looked at Mrs E.

Liyema: "It might just be a midlife crisis, Lakiwe I don't know. All I know is that I am extremely sorry and if you allow I'd like to show the kids how

much"

Ntombi: "I don't want a pathetic man around my young boys. My grandfather is man enough to be a role model to my boys"

Mrs E: "They are still his, Lakhawe and if you keep them away you'll force us into a legal battle"

Ntombi: "This one is emotionally, mentally and physically unfit to be given sole custody so bring that battle on Mrs E and you watch just how much I can fight for my children" she pointed at herself
"You think that you are the only

mommy bear capable of going to war for her babies well you try me and you see how I'm going to drag this one's imagine through the mud that no business would want to be associated with his. I've got a career so unlike you I don't need an inheritance from a man. Yeses I'll will have this one look like a damn feather-less chicken when I'm done with him. Don't dare test me as far as my children are concerned. I know that you are used to do dealings with the devil to protect your kids but both you and the devil

will sit down and take notes when I put up a fight. Not where my damn children are concerned. You think I'd give this thing of yours sole custody yerr you'd have to kill me, go to the afterlife and kill me there too before that could ever happen" her chest was raising quickly as she looked at Mrs E with furry filled eyes.

Liyema: "I don't want sole custody so please calm down. I clearly need some time out to go and clear my head. I want to be a better father again. The way Bukhosi spoke showed me that

I've fallen from grace in their eyes and I feel like the pathetic man that you see because I'm exactly that. I don't know the exact moment it happened but I changed and I'm sorry you and our kids were caught in the middle"

Ntombi: "I don't care so don't bother finishing with the pity speech. If your mother threatens to take my kids away again all hell will break lose. I will dig up all of your filth and you will regret ever crossing Ntombikayise Poti again"

Mrs E swallowed hard because she knew should Ntombi dig she'd

unearth plenty skeletons "I have just come to let you know to stay the hell away from me. I'm glad that you divorced me before your child could be revealed. You now have that six that you wanted so congratulations to the mighty four eyed Elephant. You disgust me" she knocked him out of the way and hit a painful spot that was left by Tamkhulu.

Liyema: "Lakhiwe please" he pleaded but she banged their door so hard that one of the glass pieces on it broke.

Mrs E: "Why should you always

lend yourself in difficult situations, Liyema. She is right. You are unfit to be a parent according to the law because those kids are old enough to say how much you hurt and traumatized them. Do you want to lose your children? She was not playing when she said she'll drag you to a point of no return and with such anger she's a ticking time bomb. I can not help you should she get for sole custody" she pushed him aside and went to her room. Liyema felt as though the walls around him were crumbling on top of him and he

could no longer breathe. The love in Ntombi's eyes was home and he was crushed by it. Should she decide to go for sole custody he wouldn't be able to cope.

Ntombikayise drove to a place that she didn't want to but her heart told her she should so she listened. She arrived at the Red Cross hospital and was pained to see all the little sick children. She went to reception to ask about a woman called Portia but they couldn't help. She saw Portia looking like the dead on one of the hospital benches so she went to

join her.

Ntombi: "Portia" she said before sitting down. She watched Portia straighten herself "I'm Ntombikayise Poti, ex wife of Liyema" she introduced herself.

Portia: "Please Sisi I don't have the strength to fight you. My daughter needs blood but they are out of her blood type as it's apparently not many who have that type

So please" she started to cry.

Ntombi: "I'm not here to cast stones. As a mother myself I know what you are going through.

One of my boys would just stop breathing when he was a baby so I know your fear"

Portia: "He doesn't even care" she wiped her tears "I didn't know he was married and I would never have gotten involved had I known but things happened and Abongile came. He was truthful when he said it happened once"

Ntombi: "Once too many" she looked at Portia.

Portia: "I'm so sorry for my part in it. I swear he never told me he's married" Ntombi could sense truth.

Ntombi: "I'm not here to discuss Liyema or his extra merital activities but the little girl who is innocent in this. What does she have?"

Portia: "Severe anaemia. It's a deficiency in iron" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "What's her blood type?"

Portia: "AB negative and I'm not a match" Ntombi took a deep breath.

Ntombi: "I'm not a match either so I can't donate even if I wanted to but I do have identical set of twins who are AB negative" Portia suddenly looked

hopeful "Let me go talk to my kids and hear if they will be willing to donate some blood to a baby in need" Portia was sobbing while holding Ntombi tightly before Ntombi had a chance to react. Ntombi could imagine the relief she must have been feeling "I'm not promising, Portia because they know how Abo came about and it's an issue that still triggers anger so they might say no" Portia nodded.

Portia: "Just you being willing to try, Sisi... I'm grateful that you're willing to cry" she continued

sobbing.

Ntombikayise: "Give me your number so I can tell you what they say. If it's good you tell the doctor to prepare for their arrival while I bring them. If they don't I'll see if we can get friends with the same type of blood" Portia nodded continuously. Ntombi stood to go talk to Bandile and Banele as they had the same blood type as Abo. It was not easy to talk to a woman who slept with her husband but baby Abo was more important than her anger towards her

parents. She had the boys in a discussion soon enough.

Banele: "So you want us to help the product of dad's cheating?"

Bandile: "No way, Mama" he agree with his brother.

Ntombi: "She is not just the product of his infidelity but also your little sister who needs some blood to live. She is innocent in all of this. Not even aware that she got rejected by her other family. Please think about it but not too long because she's still too young to be so sick"

Bubele: "It's just a bit of blood

guys so I ask that you help. She's not even two so yeah we can't be angry at her"

Banele: "I always said I wanted to donate blood so I guess helping a baby is as good as it gets. Okay I will donate"

Bukhosi: "That's my bro" he patted his brother on the shoulder. "Can we go see her?" he asked.

Ntombi: "I don't know, boy but go get dressed so we can all go.

Maybe Portia won't mind. Mama will you and Tata be fine on your own?"

Makhulu: "We are fully capable of being by ourselves. Go and stop stressing yourself" she smiled. The boys went to get dressed in warmer clothes.

Tamkhulu: "May God bless you, ntombam. What you are doing is admirable but I know it's not easy." he kissed Ntombi's cheek.

Ntombi: "It's actually not hard either, Tata. I am honestly no longer in love with Liyema. This news erased any confusion that I had. I'm just glad my kids didn't act out as they did after hearing about the divorce. You all are the

reason I'm standing today"
Makhulu: "Listen to your child,
Tata. Tell her we are standing
because of her" the elders
laughed softly and nodded "Go and
come back so I can give you guys
the winter knitwear that I made
for you. I made hats, scarfs,
gloves and those bed socks. No
winter is going to get to us"
Ntombi smiled.

Tamkhulu: "I also bought those
blanket jersey things that you
put over your shoulder. It looks
like I was wearing a blanket. On
those bad weather days we'll be

on those couches watching TV all warm and snuggly" he said with excitement.

Ntombi: "No one has ever sold me winter as you two just had. Now I am praying for snow too"

Makhulu: "Hayi, hayi, hayi we are too old for that yhu" she brushed her upper arms imagining the cold already and Ntombi laughed.

Bandile: "Ready" he shouted from the door. Ntombi left the elders and drove back to the hospital.

She told Portia they were on their way so on arrival both boys were received immediately. There

was no talking between them but when they were done Portia knelt down in front of the boys while sobbing.

Portia: "Thank you so much" she even kissed the noses of their shoes.

Banele: "You don't have to do that, Ma" he helped her up "Just tell Abongile to be okay" he added with an awkward smile.

Bukhosi: "Is it possible for us to see her?" Portia nodded quickly as though she'd been dying for an Elephant to meet Abo. The blood transfusion took about four hours

but they waited. Finally they could go see the little girl. Her mother explained she was a bit pale but Ntombikayise couldn't help but smile when she saw the adorable sleeping beauty.

Bubele: "She's definitely one of us. Check the nose, Mama" he laughed while looking at Abo's nose and theirs.

Bukhosi: "And Dabs Hlubi's big upper lip, bra" they all laughed.

Bandile: "Oh wow Amahle is not going to like losing her little princess title but surely going to high school won't make her mind

right?" they laughed again.

Bubele: "Don't dare tell her that.

Absolutely no reason why they both can't be princesses. Oh man

she looks like all of us and it's so weird" he whispered while

studying Abo's face. Ntombikayise

could see the anger faded and the big brothers responsibilities kicked

in. They were in love with her so

much that they all held her when

she woke up.

Ntombi: "You've got a beautiful

daughter" she whispered to

Portia.

Portia: "And you handsome young

sons. Thank you for this. From the bottom of my heart thank you. I was chased away so badly by Ma Elephant when I told her about the pregnancy. She told me to not pin a pregnancy on her son when I know I opened my legs to many men. I swear at that time Liyema was the only man I slept with"

Ntombi: "I don't know about that but I do know your child is an Elephant. I don't think they'd have forgiven me had I not told them they have the same blood type as her. They might be angry

right now but they are good boys who love helping.

Portia: "You raised them well"

Ntombi: "All of that is them. I just support in shaping them by instilling good values. I really hope I'm doing enough. I hope I'm not too soft not too hard. So how long will you guys be here?"

Portia: "The doctor said a few days"

Ntombi: "Do you have money for snack or airtime to call home?"

Portia: "I'm left with R20 but I'll buy a loaf and eat it for a few days"

Ntombi: "Here is R500. It's not much but it should be enough for food for the three to four days you speak of. It's also all I have on me in cash"

Portia: "I can't believe that I hurt such a kind woman. Thank you"

Ntombi: "You didn't hurt me but the man I was married to did. We've got to get going. You have my number so let me know when Abo is discharged. Also should you need DNA samples to prove she's his I'll gladly bring you that of one of my boys. He can't enjoy the

sex and run from the consequences. If he doesn't want to be in her life, he must at least pay so she can eat just as all his other kids are"

Portia: "Oh but what material are you made of that make you so kind, Sisi? Thank you"

Ntombi: "I don't know but it gets stronger and stronger each day" she smiled "Guys let's go" she looked at the boys. They said goodbye to Abongile and they were on their way back home. When Ntombi arrived Makhulu told her Amahle has locked herself in the

room. Ntombi went to check on her daughter and found her sitting on her bed. She went to join her.

Ntombi: "Did you and Pretty have a fight?" she held Amahle close.

"Mahle, you know you can talk about anything to me" she added.

Amahle: "Mommy, I came home because I had a blood stain on my panty" she said in a whisper. It

was not a first that Ntombi spoke about menstruation to

Amahle but she didn't mind

repeating herself "Pretty said that I was too young to have

such" she added in a shameful whisper.

Ntombi: "Well I got mine at age ten" Amahle's eyes shot open ""So I went home and lied to my stepmother by saying a wire had cut me down there because I was afraid she'd say I was naughty with boys. Needless to say she gave me a hiding for something that I had no control over because she said I'm costing her extra money with my sanitary pads"

Amahle: "That's not nice"

Ntombi: "That's why I promised

to be different to my daughter. So what mommy is asking now is that you take that towel off and go take a bath. I'm going to bring you one of my pads until I buy you your own. This is a normal process in a girls life. We are going to decorate a box and every month Mommy is going to put all that you'll need in there for you without fail. I'll also add chocolate as a mood enhancer"

Amahle smiled with excitement.

Amahle: "Don't tell the boys"

Ntombi: "I'm raising boys who must know that a woman's body

is different from theirs. You might someday spot when out in public with them and I don't want them to be shocked. I want them to be able to take their jackets off for you to cover you until you get home. This is nothing to be ashamed of that I promise you. Now go to the bathroom and shower and I'll wait for you right here to show you how a sanitary pads is used. If you have cramps we'll go have dinner and get something that will ease the pain."

Amahle: "I love you, mama" she

kissed her mother's cheek before hugging her.

Ntombi: "I love you too" Amahle went to the bathroom and shower. When she returned her mother showed her how to use a pad. It was uncomfortable but Ntombi assured her she'd get used to it. Ntombi had a discussion with the boys though she knew they learned about it in school but it started to hit home so she wanted them to know that Amahle was entering a new phase in her life meaning they also had to knock next time before

they go into her room. The boys all hugged Amahle in a playful way to let her know that things have not changed. She was still their buddy and that would never change. ❤️

S2-INSERT 25

When Dali got ready to attend the meeting that had been giving him sleepless nights with. Mrs B he was nervous. He couldn't think of what the thing is that would cause him problems in his current job but he hoped that it was not

good. He took a cab to where Mrs B said she'd be with the other panel and wished that he could turn around. He didn't know how long the affair of the day would be but he intended on going to see Ntombi before heading back. He nearly fell over backwards when he heard people shout "surprise". When the shock was over he took in the sight of the hall which had thank you banners everywhere. He had never seen all his "children" in one room before so to have all of his young clients come to greet him was overwhelming.

So overwhelming that his tears and consequently theirs flew but from a place of joy.

Peter: "Did you really think that we'd just let you go without a proper sendoff, Mrs X?" said the blond haired boy who was Dali's first client when he started to work for Mrs B.

Dali: "Since when are you guys so sneaky? I nearly wet my pants thinking I was I trouble" the youngesters laughed.

Sonwabile: "Come on, Mr X the King's seat is waiting for a king to warm it" said another young

former client. Dali allowed them to lead him to the white "royalty" chair that had the writing King Daluxolo. He felt like one as he sunk into it. The effort that got put into his farewell party got him emotional. As someone who grew up in an orphanage and then different foster homes his birthday's and achievements never got celebrated so to take in a party that was in his honor made him feel like he was living in a dream in that moment. The kids and their parents sat down around the long beautifully

decorated tables. Mrs B went to the corner where the microphone was.

Mrs B: "I am certain that this was the last thing that you expected" she laughed while looking at Dali as he nodded "Dali, before you came to my practice young people would try out therapy for a week or month at most but give up because they felt we didn't understand them. I'd apply all the training that I received but even that was not enough to reach young people. You came, Mr Xhego like a breath of

fresh air and suddenly the youngesters not only stayed but they multiplied. So much so that I had to stop assigning mature clients to you because of how in demand you are to the young group. You have something that can't be taught nor trained as it's a gift given to you by god. You can humble yourself to a point where these children feel safe" the young adults and teenagers cheered while clapping hands so she had to wait for them to finish. They didn't stop but instead gave him a standing

ovation that left Dali shedding tears of joy "That is how much you mean to them" she continued when they calmed and sat back down "Even this party was not my idea unfortunately but theirs.

They came to me, not all together but individually at first to ask what they could do to show how grateful they are. I then decided to call them in together as they had a shared gratitude. That's how this party came about.

These kids planned this in your honor and I know that they wish they could do more. I'm going to

hand over to Peter who was your first client if you remember correctly" Dali smiled and nodded. Mrs B went to sit down to give Peter a chance to talk.

Peter: "You thought we'd let you go like a thief in the night, sir" he joked and everyone laughed "Shuu what does one say to a man who did so much for me that no words are enough to thank him? I was one of the people who my mother would take from therapist to therapist but it never helped. But then I met a man who offered me friendship and not a

councillor patient relationship.
We've all started to get to know each other since you left, Mr X while planning this event. So everyone here knows how my mother shot my dad in self defense. You know how messed up I was about it. This man used to go get me in gangster filled joints at night when I asked him too. He stepped in and played the father role as best as possible. I've been his patient for four years and I've been clean of drugs for three years six months now because this guy never gave up on

me. Had you given up on me I'd have died in the streets, sir" he started to cry "I'd have died in the street but now look at me. I've got a job and I'm happy with my life. I thank God for the gift of a friend that I found in you. If I continue to list all you've pulled me out of we'll never finish so thank you. The Jozi youth are lucky but we wish you the best though our hearts are sore. May you never get tired, sir...never please" he went to shake Dali's hand before hugging him. A young lady stood

Mbali: "Uhm what I realized after getting to know your other clients, Bhut Dali is the fact that we all gave you a hell of a difficult time at first. Many don't know that I falsely accused this man of touching me inappropriately and for that he spent a weekend in jail until I felt the guilt eat at me and told the truth. I met Bhut Dali after my mother had just found that a family friend had been raping me since I was a child. So I wanted to make all men pay after I finally opened up about it and Bhut Dali got

caught up in my mess. I went to apologize to him and he told me that I'd be seeing a female therapist for my comfort but he never not once shouted at me or hurt me for letting him spend three days in jail. That day I found myself sitting down and I never wanted any other therapist again whether male or female. You have made me realize that not all men are rapists, sir" she wiped her tears "You were the first man I could genuinely hug after a while of being on the healing process. You told me that

healing is lifelong and I should take each day as it comes and I've been doing that. I can call you even now that you no longer work at your previous job. I remember telling you that I have met a man but I'm scared and you told me to not allow fear to block out love but if it feels wrong I should let it pass me until a love that felt right came along. That love felt right and I am now in my very first relationship and I'm happy. Had I not met you I wouldn't have because I trusted no man for most of my

life. Hollywood can keep their
superman because ours is the
best yet he has no supernatural
powers. I am in awe of the man
that you are, Bhut. I know you
battle with issues of your own yet
you never refused to help because
of it. We all here know this is not
just a job to you but a passion. We
need more people like you in
nursing, therapy, social working,
etc. People who aren't driven by
money but by the love of helping.
Like Peter I ask that you never
get tired. There is another Mbali
out there who needs you. We let

you go with heavy hearts but we thank you for dedicating even your free time to us. If I could I'd give you millions but even that wouldn't be enough. Thank you, bhuti" she blew Dali a kiss and he placed his hands together before bowing his head in thanks. He couldn't remember ever having shed so many tears. More youngsters came to give thanks. Some by song, some poems they wrote themselves, some letters and Dali didn't know what to do with himself. Even Bandile, Banele and Bubele gave their gratitudes

Dali was so caught up in the moment that he had not even noticed that Ntombi was amongst the parents who were sitting by the side table. A parent stood holding her own piece of paper and walked to the microphone.

Parent: "I'm here to give thanks on behalf of the parents of these beautiful young people. I'd firstly like to thank Mrs E and the other parents for choosing me to do this" she smiled "I'm out of tissues because I've been crying as I have been listening to the

young people speak. As a mother of a child whom you have helped I can confidently say that you are for the youth, Mr Xhego. You are able to keep us updated on the progress of our children without violating the confidentiality agreement you made with them. I have seen you go over and beyond for my child and others. I do not know what they call people like you but you are a rare breed of man. You are kind, gentle and a great listener. On behalf of all the parents I'd like to say thank you. Thank you for being a father,

friend, big brother and protector to these young people. I wish life had more of you so the world could be a better place. Thank you so very much" everyone clapped hands. The food was served and Dali took his plate to go sit with his group. He found that Peter had gathered everyone so they could start a youth programme for the upliftment of other people. Once the serious talk was over they all stood to dance and it was great. Ntombi snuck up from behind Dali and stood on her toes to cover his eyes with her mouth.

He was taken aback at first until her perfume hit his nose making him smile. He turned to look at her with a smile before hugging her.

Ntombi: "Cry baby" she teased and they both laughed "You have been such a great influence on these kids. Thank you" she whispered to his ear as they still stood in a hug.

Dali: "They made me a better man. I'm now more patient and understanding because of this bunch. These are my kids and I'm glad that they met and are doing

something good to help others" he broke the hug "So you let me stress about this yet you knew it's only a party?" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Apparently all parents except me were told because of the fact that you're my friend so they thought I would have snitched"

Dali: "Well it seems the party is going on without the man of the moment" he looked to the dance floor "Young people" he shook his head.

Ntombi: "Let's go get some air

while they are okay with letting you out of their sight. I have a feeling we won't get another opportunity because we can't stay long" she held Dali's hand and made it through the people to go to another room that was open and vacant. It had no chairs so they sat down on the mat. As usual they begin with laughter and Ntombi showed him her invitation to Reth's wedding.

Dali: "I think this is exactly what you need. Some time with people who won't stress you but do you trust you'll be safe with them?"

Ntombi: "My gut feeling says they are good people so yes. I will also start seeing Mrs B again. I don't know why I get angry when I see Liyema"

Dali: "Yes go and talk to her about it" he didn't want to give advice because his feelings for her would prevent him from being objective
"Also Kayise stop making his issues your business. Don't be giving his baby mamas money when it should be his duty to do so. You did good by saving the child's life but let it end there. You are now sticking your nose in

business that doesn't concern you. I've honestly never seen a woman go show kindness to a woman who slept with her husband. Please don't make yourself a doormat to this man's issues. You owe him nothing. The less of him you see the better" he advised as a friend and someone who loved her. He hated seeing her do things for people when they don't even deserve it "There is a thin line between selflessness and allowing people to take advantage. You gave the baby blood but now please stay out of this. It might

not feel like it now but someday you'll remember that the baby was conceived when you were still married to Liyema and it will trigger a flood of bad emotions that will land you in hospital again" Ntombi was looking at her fingers as she was fiddling with them "Hey" he said softly and lifted her head so she'd look at him "You don't deserve this so walk away from anything that triggers an emotional pain and right now it's anything associated with your ex husband" she looked at him for a long while without

saying anything before she leaned closer to put her head on his shoulder.

Ntombi: "I don't know what happened to him, Xolo. He didn't even give me a chance to mourn the Liyema that I loved being married to"

Dali: "Well do that and move on because he's going to move on and leave you clinging to what he might no longer be. Do as Dr Potgieter said and be selfish with Ntombi. You can't share her with everyone else but yourself. I get hurt when you are not okay and I

know your parents and children too so since you have difficulty doing things for yourself do it for them. Heal for them and be selfish for them" Ntombi tilted her head to look at him. She could feel his warm breath against her face which invited her to lean closer until she felt their lips touch. It had been so long since she felt lips pressed on hers that her body got excited before her mind could even take in the moment. She wasn't as absent as she was when they first kissed. Dali broke the kiss "Let us not

repeat what we did that night, Kayise. I don't want you to think I'm Liyema again because he is still stuck in your mind. You are not ready to be in another relationship. One has to get rid of baggage before they can do that and you are not there yet"

NTOMBI: "It would have been a selfish relationship anyway even if I was fit enough to be in it"

Dali: "What do you mean by that?"
they broke the kiss but their faces were still close to each other and it was torture for Dali. He wanted nothing more than to

give her a kiss so passionate that Ntombi would know how he felt but he felt to do that when she was in her current state would be taking advantage. He loved her lips and how they danced with his. Ntombi: "I think this time you deserve a woman with a womb" she smiled faintly.

Dali: "As someone who had a wife without the womb I had accepted that we won't have children naturally. As someone who grew up in an orphanage I know how many children need a home because I was once one of them.

I get a feeling that you'll be hard on yourself though by thinking that you stripped me off something so yeah... maybe it wouldn't have been a good idea to have a relationship"

Ntombikayise: "Plus that requires genuine feelings. Let us go before they think I stole you away" they both stood. Dali pulled her into his arms and held her neck gently.

Dali: "You are a beautiful woman and any man would be fortunate enough to have you but only a few are deserving of you. But you are not ready to be with any man

emotionally and mentally so don't go seek love to get over your failed marriage. Go to the wedding, have a great time and then come back to talk with Mrs B. You deserve people who worship the ground that you walk on. It's time that you teach people boundaries by not always being available to them. Learn to say no, Ntombikayise. Stay clear of anything that has to do with your ex because they are not your issues to carry. Your children want you to be okay again. I have seen you move forward but this man

took you ten steps back again. So please, Kayise please don't allow him to again" he kissed her forehead and felt her wrap her arms around his waist tightly.

"Also don't allow malaria to enter your body at the wedding" Ntombi laughed softly.

Ntombi: "Wow I wondered when you'd say something like that.

Let's go before you talk more nonsense" they both laughed. "Are you sure you don't want us to try that friends with benefits thing?" she joked.

Dali: "Nope" he said while walking

to the door.

Ntombi: "Haibo Daluxolo" she laughed as she followed behind. .

Dali: "Get a vibrator, Ntombikayise" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "You can be my walking vibrator" Dali laughed out loud. .

Dali: "With that innocent face you are hiding one dirty mind. Do you talk like this to your other friends?" she shook her head and laughed. Dali wanted nothing more than to be with her in any way a man could be with a woman. He couldn't tell her about his feelings either as it were not the

right time to do so. The two of them went back to the people just in time for Dali to get his his farewell gifts. After everything was done he went to the microphone thinking about words that were enough to Express his gratitude.

Dali: "This is the last thing that I was expecting when Mrs Bam asked me to come. You guys have made me feel loved and appreciated in a way I don't think I've experienced before. To have had the privilege to play a vital role in all of your lives was

amazing. Yes I admit there were moments I was in too deep and wanted to give up on some but I'm glad that I didn't. You guys do not need me anymore because you all know your worth and you all know that the choices you make come with consequences. I thank your parents for trusting me with you all. There are no words to express how you all have made me feel. I'm still just a phonecall away should you just need to chat. I'm also on the WhatsApp group you guys created now so we'll stay in touch that way too. To me you

are all my children and nothing bring me joy then hear you guys are doing well in life. Thank you guys, thank you" he said and his guests stood to clap for him once again while the boys whistled.

Dali was sad when Ntombi said that she was leaving because she and her kids had a date but he understood her reasons.

Mrs B: "Are you still okay where you are?" she pulled Dali aside "I would take you back any day and I'm sure they will be happy to have you back" she looked around.

Dali: "I need to be where I am,

Mrs B. They will be fine with you and the ladies because they've worked through the most issues already. I'm settling where I am thank you"

Mrs B: "So even a raise won't bribe you?"

Dali: "I just told a friend to be selfish with herself so I am going to practice what I preach too. Working with them meant I had to put myself last but now I have time for myself to do things that I neglected and it feels good. Being away has also made me work through things that I

had been running from. I feel good about myself now"

Mrs E: "Well should you want to return, you know where I am" she smiled. Dali knew that if he stayed he wouldn't be able to hide his feelings. She was not in the right state to be with anyone so he decides to not burden her with more things to think about and process.

Ntombi: "I've decided to take a weekend away alone guys" she looked at her children.

Banele: "Is everything okay?"

Ntombikayise: "Yes but I just need some time to think. I just need a break"

Bukhosi: "Do what you must to be 100% again, Ma. We're on holiday so we'll stay with the elderly"

Ntombi: "So you guys don't want to go spend the holidays at your grandmother's anymore?" they all shook their heads.

Bandile: "We are fine where we are"

Ntombi: "I'm going to go to a friend's wedding. I need to be around people who don't know the full details of my life so I won't

constantly be reminded of it. I'm not running from what has been going on but I am just doing what is best for me and for you. I'm your primary caretaker so if I can't take care of myself I'm not going to be able to take care of you guys"

Bubele: "We understand, Ma. We promise not to burn the house down"

Amahle: "As if Makhulu and Tamkhulu would allow it"

Ntombi: "Let's go because the movie is about to start. I hope it's not one with guns and killings"

guys. I'm yours for the rest of the day so enjoy it before I become selfish mom" they all laughed as they made their way to the cinema "You guys buy snacks with your money for a change. I've been buying since we started coming to movies together" she looked at them.

Bukhosi: "Ours is spent on taking our girlfriends out"

Ntombi: "You can't go spoil girls before you spoil your mom. Do all of you have girlfriends?" she looked at the boys.

Banele: "Let's rather talk about

something else before you ask to meet them" Ntombikayise smiled while shaking her head. They went to get snacks before going to sit down to enjoy their movie.

Mrs E called Hlubi and Lungile to her home after going days without hearing from them. They all sat in silence because Hlubi was still angry for the secret that they kept from her.

Lungi: "I told him when he heard that Portia was pregnant to have a paternity test" he said to break the silence.

Liyema: "Lakhiwe made me aware of something the last time she was here. I don't remember ever enjoying my youth because I was busy being the responsible one while Lungile was out having the time of his life. So maybe I am now making up for all of this with this sudden irresponsible behavior."

Hlubi: "Are you really going to use that as an excuse, Liyema? I never had a childhood let alone a young adult life but you don't see me throw away a life that I was fortunate to have"

Liyema: "We are not the same, Mahlubandile. So yes maybe Lungile was right I should have lived out my "hoe phase" before settling down. Maybe I'm now finally living as I should have but I couldn't because too much was dumped on me at a very young age. It's a pity that Lakhawe and the children had to be caught up in my midlife crisis but I admit that I've got a problem. To hear my son tell me that I'm empty didn't sit well with me but it did leave me thinking about a lot of things. So I think I need to get

away for a month or so to just find myself. Maybe I'll go on a cruise or something. Maybe I need to get out and enjoy life to the fullest as I should have when I was a young man"

Hlubi: "And the six children who need their father?"

Liyema: "Me going away to breath will be beneficial to them too as they'd possibly have a present father again. I think I've caged myself with responsibilities from a young age and I can't take it anymore"

Mrs E: "Where will you go?"

Liyema: "I don't know but anywhere where I can feel free and I will explain to my children"

Mrs E: "What happened to you, Liyema. Where is that responsible young man you used to be?" .

Liyema: "You and Tata never gave that boy a chance to be young, Mama. Maybe this is me living a life that you two took from me. Circumstances in this house made me grow up quick. So let me be the "child" I never was while Lungile was living his youth. Maybe that's why our roles seem reversed now. I regret walking

out on my wife and kids. So unless you can turn back the hand of time then there's nothing that you can do. I just need a break" he shouted "When I get back I'll deal with this Portia issue once and for all and I'll be a better father to my children but right now I'm toxic to them" he added. Mrs E: "You also need to see a therapist"

Hlubi: "You are to blame for him turning out like this. Lungile and I know this is your favourite. It's no wonder he felt obligated to step in for Tata because you

made him feel like he had to since you treat him better. You are the reason why Liyema chooses flight when things get tough. You messed him up by treating him like a child. So get a good look at your handiwork, Mama. Now there are innocent children suffering because you never gave your child a chance to grow some balls. When Liyema is concerned you are willing to kill and who knows what else just so you'd try to help him fix his mess. I hear that he never had a young adult life but my situation was ten times worse

yet here I taking responsibility for my actions and choices. Go and be the child you want to be and I hope you come back okay. I can't deal with this. My bladder has a short fuse, my feet are swollen and I'm hungry so I'm going. Plus I'm taking all these muffins for the time I spent sitting and looking at your faces" she took the bowl and stood.

Lungile: "Really now?" he looked at his sister.

Hlubi: "Yes I'm taking them all. My husband is waiting outside. Good day. Enjoy crèche, Liyema"

she walked out.

Mrs E: "Don't mind her. It's all the pregnancy hormones. I'm sorry that you felt you had to man up quickly because your father and I weren't mature adults, Ndoda. I actually understand where you are coming from. Take your break"

Lungile: "Oh for fu..." he took a deep breath "There you are going again enabling him, Mama. He is forcing his own sons to grow up quickly. We just thank God that Lakiwe's grandfather is there to take the father role so they

can continue being kid. So you're not going to tell him to sort the paternity issue out first before he can go on this cruise to live out his rebellion phase? There is a child that might be an Elephant and no one seems to care about it. I can't take this anymore. Wow at least try to hide your favouritism" he looked at his mother "Had it been me you'd even have stolen my DNA sample to go check if I'm talking the truth about it not being my child but with Liyema you just take his word for it. Yho hayi good day. I

can't deal with this. No one asked Liyema to be man of the house. I remember how he used to beat me for my rebellion because he was Mr Right and straight. In fact I should be the one doing the same to you right now. Please bring my big brother back and take back this imposter" he looked up as though he spoke to God "I'm out. Enjoy crèche indeed since you want to live out a childhood you say you missed" he took his keys and left.

Liyema: "Let me go check for places that will be good to go rest

at"

Mrs E: "Don't go overboard with this phase you want to revisit, Liyema. Don't forget that you are not young" he ignored her and made his way to the room to decide where to go. He felt suffocated and he couldn't take it anymore. He needed time to go breath and hide from society. He felt there were things he needed to do so he'd feel satisfied with his life and a time away would accomplish that. Mrs E was worried that this thing of Liyema would come with wild parties and

women but she felt it's best she let him go do what he felt his soul needed. ❤️

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Ntombi was sure to do as much research as possible about the culture of Ugandan people and she learned that there were vast clans just as in the Xhosa culture. She also learned that people of the same clan could not get married to each other as they are considered relatives. After a flight that was nearly five hours

she finally reached her destination. What she didn't expect was to find someone with her name written on a paper making her feel like she was important. Reth did explain that he'd be too busy to get her himself but he sent his most trusted people to do it. Ntombi couldn't speak Luganda so she prayed the lady and gentleman could speak English.

Ntombi: "Hello, I am Ntombikayise Poti. I think I am who you have been waiting for" she said with a smile and spoke as

clearly and boldly as possible.

Dembe: "Oh yes...yes I recognize you from the picture I was given. I am Dembe and this is David. Mr Reth sent us to take you straight to his home where you are going to be accomodated" she said with such kindness Ntombi felt home already. "David take her bags" David greeted Ntombi with the same amount of kindness that Dembe did. They were in the car going to Reth's home. They lived in a rural area and it was beautiful and reminded Ntombi of the Eastern Cape.

There was joyful chaos everywhere that Ntombi looked and her smile was bright as she waved to the people she and Dembe were passing. Reth made his way out of what appeared to be the main house in the large house and he went to greet Ntombi with an excited hug. The people around were looking in disapproval so Ntombi had to keep distance from him to show them that she was not there to steal the groom.

Reth: "South African Queen. I didn't think that you'd actually

honor my invite but I'm glad that you did. Welcome to my home" he looked around smiling.

Ntombi: "I am a woman of my word. Thank you and your home looks beautiful. Ease up on the hugs though because I don't think your people like a foreigner hugging you like that" they both laughed.

Reth: "You're African on Africa In soil so you can never be a foreigner here. I'm sure that the mothers are looking and liking what they see so they'd send cows to your father"

Ntombikayise laughed "I apologize but I will unfortunately not be able to stay because we are preparing for tomorrow.

You've met Dembe who is great help in this family. She is going to show you where you are going to be staying. If you are uncomfortable for any reason please tell Dembe and she'll sort it all out. You are not going to attend this wedding as a friend but as family so be sure to be a part of my family entourage together with my sisters and brothers"

Ntombi: "Reth go and do what you must. I can imagine how much you still need to do. Like you have said I've got miss Dembe here to look after me"

Reth: "Let me personally introduce yourself to everyone first so they know to that you are my honoured guest" he first introduced Ntombi to the people outside before doing the same to his family. He had a large family and Dembe revealed that his father has five wives. Ntombi loved how warmly she was welcomed by everyone even when Reth left they treated her with

warmth. She was shown the room she'll be accommodated in and it was beautiful she also didn't mind that she'd share it.

Dembe: "We have also taken it upon ourselves to have a traditional attire made for you for the ceremony tomorrow" Dembe said as she opened the wardrobe.

"Please try it on now so I can check if it is fitting" Ntombi stood to do as Dembe asked. Dembe helped her into it and it fit like a glove "Clearly Reth knows how to describe body size. I am his cousin by the way. I'm going to

translate to you what is being said so you won't feel left out. Please don't think it's an inconvenience because I volunteered" she said with a smile "You are looking beautiful, Miss Ntombi" she said with a smile. Ntombi: "Thank you and also thank you for being willing to help. So tomorrow it is the traditional wedding and the following day it'll be their white wedding?" Dembe nodded "I can't wait to learn more about your rich culture" Ntombi took the dress off and went to lend a hand where

needed. She loved how there was also dancing and singing between preparing gifts. There were plenty live chicken. Besides the language barrier she was having a good time already. It was the next day and Ntombi had to get assisted with her dress because the pleats and sashes made getting into her gomesi a bit difficult but fortunately Dembe was there to help. Once the dress was on she paired outfit with matching jewelry and a wedge for comfort because she heard that the affair might be the entire

day. Ntombi glided her fingers over the red sash tied around her waist and she felt like a part of the Ugandan culture indeed. As she made her way out with

Dembe she noticed that most of the men had a customary long dress worn by men on formal occasions and a blazer on top.

Ntombi: "Are they following Islamic religion?"

Dembe: "Oh no this is what we call the kunzi. It is worn by men during such occasions. Today is kwanjula meaning introductions. The kwanjula is one of the last

steps in the process, and it's when the groom is introduced to the bride's family" she explained to Ntombi with a smile.

Ntombi: "The colours are just so vast and beautiful" she looked at the various colours of ganesi the other women had on.

Dembe: "Yes our weddings are filled with colours and dancing. I know the languages spoken by both Reth and his lady's tribe and so I will translate all important things to you"

Ntombi: "Thank you" The MC explained that he spoke the local

language and knew the customs, and therefore he would ensure that the ceremony went smooth and Abbo's family had someone on their side doing the same. They drove to the bride's family home where the event would take place. Ntombikayise was a part of Reth's entourage as they lined up outside where the introduction would take place and asking to be let in. Ntombi was glad to see that Africans had similar traditions. What she was witnessing was no different than the lobola negotiation back home.

Women dressed in medical uniform came up to tgem and pinned little bows to their clothing, and another came to check their pulse. Ntombikayise looked at Dembe confused.

Dembe: "It's just a little humour" she laughed softly "They are checking if we are not sick with love" she added and Ntombikayise couldn't help but laugh. She was certain that cupid had not struck her with her bow. When that was over and it was determined that the groom and his entourage weren't "sick" they were allowed

entry. After they were seated and declared disease-free, everyone stood to sing the Ugandan national anthem. A prayer was said, and then the bride's family members were introduced. It was a process which lasted over two hours and Dembe kept whispering important information to NTOMBI so she'd enjoy the experience as much as the locals. Ladies in matching dresses would dance in, kneel and introduce themselves, and then be given 'appreciations' from the groom's side by means of money in

envelopes. After the introductions, the bride herself finally appeared and she was beautiful. Ntombi noticed that the bride and groom were not the center of attention in their own celebration. In fact Reth was sitting at the back of the lavish tent while his bride was not even with them until later. To not have the couple as the center of attention was strange but Ntombi but Dembe explained that it was mostly to unite the families and to check that the two were not related in any way.

After dancing in an sequined traditional dress that had a gold sash, Abbo was seated on a small platform in the middle of the large tent. The bride's paternal aunt then danced her way in and started searching for the Reth. After finding him seated at the back of the tent, she pulled him out and brought him to his bride. A lot of speeches and well wishes were made in Luganda, pictures were taken, and a basket of fruit and flowers was presented to the couple. The groom's sister's knelt before the bride and welcomed her

into their family. Once the sisters were done the bride danced out, and it was time for the groom's side to pay the "lobola". There were a lot of gifts and Ntombi wondered why there were so many live chicken. The bride's father was given a red velvet armchair that was fit for royalty. The gifts are traditionally given by the women from the groom's side to the bride's family.

Dembe: "Come she is calling both of us since Reth said you are to be treated as a part of the family" she held Ntombi's hand to help

her stand. Ntombi's heart started to race like no other.

Ntombi: "To do what, Dembe?"

Dembe: "Present Reth's gifts to Abbo's family. You put the basket on your head and do as the others ladies. Do not look so frightened" she laughed. Ntombikayise was lifted to her feet before she knew it. She carried a basket on her head filled with gifts and she couldn't remember the last time she had done that but she was a rural girl through to her bones so she carried it in heels without even holding it. The honor she felt

Reth gave her was out of the world. Once the gifts were presented, the bride's father sat in his new chair and blessed the couple. What made Ntombi sad was the fact that only the father got to do that.

Ntombikayise couldn't imagine Liyema getting all the recognition for their children but once again she had to remind herself that she was in a different country with customs of their own. Reth presented Abbo's brother with a chicken and only then could he have his bride. After the chicken

successfully went from the groom to his brother in law the food got served. Reth and his entourage were given a private room where they could feast. Ntombikayise was not left behind as she was a part of that royal entourage.

Reth received his own full chicken.

Reth: "I'm going to finish this. In fact I suggest that you bring me a second one, aunty" everyone

laughed "Are you enjoying yourself, queen?" he asked Ntombikayise

Ntombi: "I am and thank you for making me a part of your big day, Reth. It's nice to see how you

guys do things here" she smiled.
Reth: "My friends couldn't keep their mouths shut when they saw you. I told them that you are not here for a husband"

Ntombikayise laughed "But should you be just tell me now" he winked and Ntombikayise laughed. After eating, everyone went back to their seats to witness the couple's official engagement.

Traditionally they were married already but Reth and Abbo also chose to have a church wedding as well, the engagement was a promise that that would come.

Reth went on the classic one knee to give his bride a ring and Ntombi smiled when she saw the look of pure joy in Abbo's face when the diamond ring was slipped in her finger. Then the cake was cut and the real party could begin. Ntombikayise made acquaintance with the ladies around who could speak English and she was dancing like no other. A local dance which involved a lot of clapping was taught to her as she danced with members of royalty from different tribes. Public affection was not a big

thing but Ntombi felt like the most beautiful lady when several men would come give her compliments on her beauty. They danced well into the night but Ntombi was so happy that she didn't feel her feet had started to complain about her never ending dancing. She felt free and no sore feet would take it away from her. Everyone later formed a line under the full moon and bright lit stars as the guests danced their way to the bride and groom. Ntombikayise had never met Abbo until that moment.

Reth: "This is the South African queen that I told you showed me hospitality in her country" he said with a bright smile.

Addo: "My husband speaks so fondly of you, Ntombikayise.

Thank you for showing him kindness. I will not even say on foreign land because no African is a foreigner on African soil. We look forward to having you as a guest at our house soon" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "Thank you so much, Abbo. I've heard plenty about you too. You are so beautiful and it is an honor to be here to witness

your love. Please look after each other, Reth" she held both their hands.

Reth: "Apologies for not giving you much attention today" he smiled

Ntombi: "Oh stop because the person next to you is the one who must have your attention" they all laughed. Abbo pressed what they call favour into Ntombi's hand which was a box that had a piece of jewelry, some candy and a thank you note. Ntombi was in awe of the generosity of the beautiful bride. Dembe was right behind her and when they were at

a safe distance from the couple
Dembe stood closer clearly to
gossip.

Dembe: "I think that she likes
you" she smiled.

Ntombi: "I like her too" she looked
back to the couple.

Dembe: "You do not understand.
Reth has told the family that he
intends on taking another wife . I
think Abbo sees you fit to be a
sister wife and we can see Reth
is taken by you". Ntombikayise
nearly fell over backwards.

Ntombikayise: "Let us go before
you get us into trouble" she held

Dembe's hand as they both laughed. They ended the day in the night and Ntombi's feet felt like they had a heartbeat but there was no time to nurse them as she'd be attending the white wedding the following day.

It was the following day and Ntombi was glad she could wear a lighter dress to the second ceremony. She also helped Dembe put on make up and Dembe couldn't even recognize herself when Ntombi was done with her. She wanted to wear another traditional dress but Ntombi

borrowed her an extra dress that she had and both ladies took pictures. Ntombikayise was not one to post on social media but she captured beautiful moments of her stay since arriving in the country. She didn't show it but she loved how she was attended to like a Princess. Reth's sisters were not going to be as busy as they were yesterday so they were going to be the ones by Ntombi's side throughout the white wedding. Ntombi greeted Reth who looked dapper in his grey tight fitting modern suit. They

were in cars soon enough as they made their way to the chapel. Ntombikayise didn't have to be taken through the process of a white wedding so Dembe could spend the day enjoying herself too. The family escorted Reth into the church with a joyful song and though Ntombikayise didn't know the words she was sure to step to the beat of the sing sang while clapping hands. Reth had a large family as expected of a man who is from a house with five mother's. Mr Mukisa was clearly proud to have his son take a wife.

Soon Abbo was outside ready to walk down the aisle. Her dress was a mermaid dress that hugged her slim body perfectly. She was a true modern royal bride with a natural bun decorated with white pins and a soft veil over her face. Ntombi filmed her entrance until she reached her husband who stood with a bright smile waiting for her to join him. What shocked Ntombikayise was the fact that the priest's first question was about a chicken.

Dembe: "He is asking if the groom gave the bride's brother a chicken

yesterday" she whispered to Ntombi.

Ntombi: "What would have happened had he not?"

Dembe: "This wedding would most probably not have continued until it's done" Ntombikayise raised a brow and Dembe nodded. She wasn't sure if Dembe was telling the truth but the chicken was clearly important. Once witness was given that indeed Reth gifted his in laws with a chicken the ceremony begun. Vows were said and rings got exchanged until they were declared husband and

wife. Reth didn't care about the forbidden public affection as he kissed the dear life out of his bride until his father coughed and people started to sing. Abbo stood blushing at what her husband had just done. Reth was her very first boyfriend so he would be her first of many after that kiss. Once again Ntombi was made to feel like family when she was invited to take pictures with African royalty and diplomats. Abbo asked Ntombi for a few snaps just the two of them and Ntombi was busy striking poses

while Reth looked at both ladies with a smile. He saw the finest beauties of the African continent as he watched them together. He was attracted to Ntombi and he made no secret of it. He made sure she received first class treatment from the day she arrived. He could have had her accommodated in a hotel or with family friends but he wanted her in the royal compound as his guest of honor so to hear and see that she was having a good time made him happy. The reception area was great but Ntombikayise

couldn't help but notice the handsome dark man in his Kente attire looking at her. When it was time to dance and let loose the gentleman came to introduce himself as Prince Aliko of Ghana. His kente was wrapped so well around his upper body that it revealed his toned body perfectly. Just like Reth, Aliko was also a beautiful man. Ntombi agreed to a dance with the prince before taking pictures with him. His aura was regal and it was evident on pictures but the cold crown on his head made him fit his title

even more.

Dembe: "It seems you'll be a princess soon" she said with a sneaky smile and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombikayise: "Princess

Ntombikayise" she thought about it "It does have a nice ring to it

but no thanks for the

responsibilities of being a royal member. I imagine it to be hard work" she added.

Dembe: "Oh it is. All the people depend on them so it is but you would be fitting. Pity African royalty doesn't get recognition as the English ones because I know

you would have looked good on the papers and TV" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombikayise: "You though" she laughed while shaking her head. The reception was a time for even more dancing than the day before and Ntombi wanted to return home with blister filled feet to prove to the family how much she danced. The couple walked from table to table after the great celebration to thank their guests for coming. The bride gave a layer of her wedding cake to her mother in law and Reth did

the same thing and the rest was cut and shared with their guests. Ntombikayise noticed that many called Reth just Reth while they put respect to the names of the other members of his family and Dembe explained that Reth was for the people as he was easy going. Apparently a trait which made his father doubtful about him becoming heir. Reth had two brothers while the rest of his siblings were girls. His brothers married long before him because he was not ready to settle yet until a marriage was arranged for

him. Ntombi kicked her shoes off and started to get down when the DJ played songs that she knew. It was surely an experience that she would never forget. The couple got sent off to their car with song and dance by family and friends as they went to have a private celebration. The day passed and a new one came but Ntombi was too tired so she slept until late but the family understood. She realized that she didn't even know what Reth was doing for a living and she at lunch found out that both he and Abbo

were doctors. Ntombikayise wondered how the family business legacy would blend with a full time job as a doctor seeing as Reth was expected to take over from his father. Abbo stood and offered to give Ntombi a real tour of their home. Her arm was looped inside Ntombi's.

Abbo: "Thank you once again for traveling. I hope you had a good time and we made you feel welcome" she smiled.

Ntombi: "I had an amazing time that had great learning experience thank you. Shouldn't

you be spending time with your husband?"

Abbo: "He's going to take me on honeymoon soon. I must enjoy all of him before a second wife comes" Ntombikayise was shocked at how casual she was.

Ntombi: "And you don't mind?"

Abbo smiles and shook her head.

Abbo: "I knew from his family men having many wives that he'd be the same. He needs a big family especially if no boys come from me so I honestly do not mind. I see that he takes liking to you" she raised a brow at

Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Yet here you are walking like best friends with a woman you think your husband takes liking too?" Abbo laughed at Ntombi's facial expression.

Abbo: "I'm not an insecure woman so yes. Reth had too much love to go around" she laughed "So you'd never get into a polygamous marriage?" Ntombi shook her head quickly "Pity because you and I seem the same in a way but we respect that it's not for you"

Ntombikayise: "You are something else, Abbo. I'd have given me the

evil look all day had I been you"
Anno laughed "Plus I didn't know
Reth took a liking to me" she said
in a whisper.

Abbo: "He didn't tell me but I can
see it so don't be shocked to have
him ask in a few years. Okay let
me not scare you away" she
laughed "So you are going back to
South Africa later on?" Ntombi
nodded.

Ntombikayise: "Yes but I will first
go treat myself to a spa date
before going home. I've to get
back to work soon. You guys
inviting me and welcoming was

great. I also have five...five kids, Abbo so trust me when I say you don't want me as a sister wife" both women laughed out "I've got a life I've got to return to. One where I dedicate to myself, my parents and my kids. A man is the last thing that I want" she added.

Abbo: "Please do not give up on love. You just didn't meet the right man before but it doesn't mean they don't exist"

Ntombi: "My husband was a great husband until suddenly he wasn't. I'm now afraid to even try again"

Abbo: "My sister's husband was the same. He was great for most years but then he suddenly turned into a rebel who drank and cheated. That's why I appreciate the fact that I'm married to a polygamist because he won't cheat. He'll introduce me to the woman before doing anything with her because it's culture"

Ntombikayise: "I respect you for that and I can see you are not forced to say that. I wish you and Reth all the happiness and many babies" Abbo laughed.

Abbo: "Give me a recipe to have four boys all at once" they laughed again.

Reth: "You queens seem to be enjoying each other's company" he got between them and the ladies nodded "I've arranged for a car to take you to the airport later on. I'm sure Abbo and I will see you off" Abbo smiles and nodded.

Ntombi: "It's really not necessary. I feel you guys have treated me like a princess enough" Reth laughed.

Reth: "Treatment fit for yet another of the many queens in my

life. I'd do for you what I do for Abbo, my sisters and mother's.

Did you see how many mother in law's this one has to impress?" he laughed before looking at his wife and the ladies laughed too.

Ntombi: "Rather her than me. I have recently learned mother in law's are not too kind"

Abbo: "That's why I won't mind a partner to team up with against them" everyone laughed again.

Ntombi couldn't believe how casually Abbo spoke about welcoming another woman to share her husband with.

Ntombikayise couldn't picture it being her but she was flattered that Abbo and Reth thought she would have been a good fit in the family. Ntombi could already hear Dembe say the words "I told you so" because she saw from word go that Abbo found a sister wife in Ntombi. Hours went by and they were on their way to the airport after Ntombi said goodbye to the large family. She received gifts to go with too. The newlyweds went with her to the airport and waited until she boarded her nearly five hour flight back home

to reality.

Hlubi: "Oh wow my bestie is busy taking pictures with diplomats and royalty while Liyema is looking as dry as biltong" she showed Yanda the screen before laughing "She's going to get herself a true man here surely"

Yanda: "Lisakhanya, stop testing Liyema please"

Hlubi: "Too late I already made fun of him" she laughed. They were busy watching the recorded episode of Khumbul'ekhaya that Yanda missed. Yanda suddenly

shifted to the edge of the seat to get a closer look at the TV.

Hlubi: "What's up?" she looked at the TV.

Yanda: "I think that's my father" he looked at Hlubi.

Hlubi: "No but it looks like him. I don't have a picture because the man never took any but the name though" he started to breath faster.

Hlubi: "Call your mother and tell her to watch quickly"

Yanda: "This is a recording baby it's not live but let me call" he took his phone and dialled his

mother's number. Yanda was shocked to hear that Ma Mbuzo watched the episode but said nothing.

Hlubi: "What did she say?" she asked as soon as he hung up.

Yanda: "She said it's not him" he said in a whisper "Let me call Dabawo" he stood to call his aunt. He wanted to take his mother's words for it but something told him that he shouldn't. After searching for his father for so long he finally could have a solid lead and he was not planning on

letting it go until he was certain
it was not his father. 

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(NOT EDITED)

Yanda's sisters were very young
when their father suddenly left
home so they couldn't tell
whether or not it was their
father. Ma Mbuzo still stood by
her answer by saying that it is
not Mr Mbuzo that appeared on
the TV. Yanda's paternal aunt
came all the way from Qwa Qwa
to watch the episode herself and

like Yanda she was certain that it was her brother. The family decided against Ma Mbuzo's wishes to contact the TV program to go to Pietermaritzburg.

Yanda: "Will you and Nandi be okay on your own while I'm gone?" he asked as he was helping Hlubi pack a few of his things.

Hlubi: "Yes and I'm on maternity leave already so don't worry, baby. I wish I could go with you"

Yanda: "I know that you would if you could" he hugged her from behind and rubbed her belly. "Only

a few weeks to go and we will meet this little guy" he said with a smile before kissing his wife's neck"

Hlubi: "I can't wait because being pregnant is not as glamorous as they make it out to be on movies. I'm also glad that Nandi agreed for us to focus on the wedding after her brother's arrival. I like any other mother want to be with her every step of the way. I'm sure Rose is as excited as me" she smiled.

Yanda: "Can you believe she'll be the first to wear a YM originals

wedding dress? they both smiled
"I'm becoming more and more
excited now" he hugged her a bit
tighter.

Hlubi: "And there is chance that
your dad will be in attendance. I'm
glad you're becoming more excited
because she's getting married
whether we like it or not" she
looked back at Yanda.

Yanda: "At least I'll have someone
else to treat like a baby" they
both laughed. The two of them
went to the lounge where Yanda's
family sat waiting. To have to
record a scene for the TV was not

easy but it had to be done. Yanda would be accompanied by Dabs Nozulu histernal aunt and Yandiswa.

Dabs: "So Nolali are you telling me that you were able to go to a church conference in Limpopo but can't go see your husband?" she looked at her sister in law.

Nandi: "She said that her back is sore, Makhulu" Nozulu looked at Nandi.

Nozulu: "Are you now the spokesperson of your grandmother, Nandipha? You getting married doesn't mean you

can meddle when elders talk"

Nandi: "I'm sorry, Makhulu" she looked down.

Nozulu: "So?" she gave Ma Mbuzo a cold look.

Ma Mbuzo: "That is not my husband" she said with certainty.

Nozulu: "Heeee" she laughed and clapped once "So you are implying that I do not know my mother and father's child? What is it that you know that we shouldn't, Nolali?"

Ma Mbuzo: "You can think what you want but I have nothing to hide" she looked aside with

attitude.

Yandiswa: "Bhuti, now is not the time to do this. The TV people will be here soon and we can't embarrass ourselves by talking about such"

Ma Mbuzo: "And for you all to go show your face on TV is not embarrassment enough? So now the entire world should know that my husband left me?"

Yanda: "This is not about you, Mama. Yandiswa is right, we will discuss all of this once we've brought Tata home"

Ma Mbuzo: "Uproot the old man?"

Nozulu: "Heeee" she laughed out and clapped once again

"Lisakhanya my baby please bring that good you prepared for the road. I'm glad that it was not Nolali who prepared it because she clearly doesn't want the man who paid lobola for her so that means she doesn't want his family either" he stood.

Hlubi: "Yes, Mama" she went to the kitchen to get the containers. Ma Nozulu was afraid of flying so they would be driven all the way to Pietermaritzburg. They have not sat down and spoken about

what would happen when they bring Mr Mbuze but they would sort that out later. The TV crew came and another scene was shot before the three were on their way. Yanda was the one speaking on what they hoped the outcome of their journey would be. They made the journey to Pietermaritzburg with hearts filled with hope, excitement and anxiety. Yanda didn't have time to think about his mother's behaviour. Of all people he felt she should have been most eager to go see if the old man was Mr

Mbuzo. They finally arrived at their destination but because they arrived late they had to sleep over at a bread and breakfast. The following morning they got ready to go. Having cameras in his face was uncomfortable but it was a small price to pay for being reunited with his father. They went to the old aged home and asked for Gina Makhambule I. The receptionist led them to the boardroom where she asked they wait for Gina. A woman walked on and introduced herself Gina before

sitting down. She asked a lot of questions and fortunately Nozulu had the only photo that Mr Yavela ever took. Gina put on her glasses while studying the picture.

Gina: "Oh this is him" she said with a smile "It's definitely Mkhulu Mbuzo" she looked at the family.

Nozulu: "How did he end up here?" her heart was shattered. After Mbuzo left she was the only one of the ten children born to their parents left.

Gina: "He was referred to us by a

hospital. When he came he was already disoriented and couldn't remember much and the hospital couldn't tell us anything either. All he knows is that he had four children and a wife"

Yanda: "He has three children" she corrected her "Can we please see him?" he looked at Gina with pleading eyes. She told them to wait a while and stood to go get him.

Yandiswa: "Bhuti, do you think that he'll remember us?" she whispered.

Yanda: "I don't know,

mntasekhaya" he held her hand. Nozulu: "He is going to remember us. You wait and see" she held them both. Gina returned with the elder after a long while. Ma Nozulu stood up and looked at him.

Nozulu: "Bhuti" she stood to walk to the door. She held his face to take a good look at him.

Yavela: "Sisi" Ma Nozulu have h a kiss before hugging him. She was sobbing but was happy at the same time. Yanda walked closer.

Nozulu: "This is Yanda and Yandiswa. Do you remember your

children?" she asked. The elder took a long look at the two looking confused but soon the look of confusion was replaced by a smile. He went to hold Yanda's hand but Yanda hugged him instead. He shut his eyes as he hugged his father. Yandiswa had a vague memory of her father but she went to hug him with pure joy in her heart after their aunt confirmed that it was him.

Nozulu: "What is your name, Bhuti?" they sat him down.

Yavela: "Yavela Johnson Mbuzo" he gave them the details that he

remembered and Nozulu had to doubt that it was her brother.

Nozulu: "Do you remember your children Yanda and Yandiswa.

Yamkela couldn't make it"

Yavela: "They are now so grown but yes I know that I have children. Where is my other son?" everyone looked at him confused.

Yanda: "I am your only son, Tata" Mr Mbuzo shook his head quickly.

Gina: "He always spoke to us about four children. I am sure it's because he doesn't remember well. Maybe he is counting nephew too"

Nozulu: "And my son used to love

being around him. He and Yanda were like brothers so that would explain it. Thank you so much Mrs Makhambule for making effort to find us. We have been looking for him for so long" Yanda nodded in agreement.

Gina: "I am glad that he found you. He's always talking about his family but he doesn't remember the names and where he was from exactly. Mkhulu, are you happy to see your family?" she asked the elder with a smile and he nodded while smiling.

Yanda: "Is it possible for us to

take him home with us right away?"

Gina: "Yes we have prepared everything just in case you'd want that. Let me go call the sister in charge so she can explain his medical condition to you in detail"

Yanda: "Thank you". The sister in charge joined them and explained that Mr Mbuzo has dementia which affects his memory but physically he was as strong as an ox. The sister explained his treatment and care taking routine saying that elders love it when things feel familiar so they

should by all means try to keep to a schedule that he was used to. The family agreed to do as instructed.

Yanda: "Words failed to come but I am happy that we found the old man. My son is due in a few weeks so to have my father be there makes my heart overflow with joy. Thank you to Gina and the rest of her colleagues for making effort to write to the show. I'd also like to thank the show for everything" he spoke to the camera. The staff of the elderly home sang a song to say

goodbye to Mr Mbuzo and some were emotional so clearly they were sad to see him go. A prayer was said before Yanda and his family made their way back to Cape Town. a Nozulu couldn't wait to see Ma Mbuzo's facial expression when they walk in with the man she said was not Mr Mbuzo. The journey was long and exhausting especially for the elders but they finally made it back to Cape Town. Yanda had everyone join them at his house to welcome Mr Mbuzo and to discuss a way forward. Mahlubandile

couldn't help but notice kindness in her father in law's eyes. It was the same soft look that Yanda had while his mother had what Hlubi described as a death stare. She was sure to make food with the help of Nandi while Ma Mbuzo sat on the couch looking constipated. Yanda first asked that the food be served so they can talk freely since no cameras were following them. Ma Mbuzo kept on going on and on about them embarrassing her on national TV.

Yanda: "Mama, could you for once

stop making everything about you. Your husband is sitting here yet you worry about irrelevant stuff" he snapped.

Ma Mbuzo: "Did you find him another old age home here?" everyone raised a brow.

Yamkela: "Haibo Mama we didn't take him out of one to put him in another"

Ma Mbuzo: "He is sick and neither of us are medically qualified to take care of him". Mahlubandile could not help but notice how Mr Mbuzo preferred to keep a distance from Ma Mbuzo. It was

as though he knew something bad about her bit couldn't remember what.

Nozulu: "Yanda, I suggest that Bhuti comes with me to Qwa Qwa. I am now alone there since my husband died and my children have homes of their own. The two of us are going to live nicely"

Yanda: "But you are both too old to be living alone together. Didn't you say Thomas invited you to go stay with him?"

Nozulu: "And be treated like a child there? I'm strong enough to take care of my brother. I am

going to feed him well and maybe his mental problems will go away. Maybe the fresh rural air is exactly what he needs"

Ma Mbuzo: "No this is my husband do I'm going to take care of him" everyone looked at her shocked because a few minutes ago she suggested he be sent away.

Nozulu: "Just now you didn't want him...jiki jiki you want him. What exactly are you saying?" she said what everyone was thinking.

Ma Mbuzo: "I was just thinking about the overcrowding at the house already"

Yandiswa: "That's his house, Mama so if anyone will be crowding him it'll be us"

Ma Mbuzo: "If you two didn't have kids like dogs I wouldn't be complaining about overcrowding"

Yamkela: "Wow, Mama" she clapped once and kept quiet.

Ma Mbuzo: "You know it's true. I said I'm going to take my husband. What made me speak like that earlier on was the anger that I still felt for him leaving me"

Nozulu: "So you want us to let you have him so you can go take that

anger out where we wouldn't see?"

Ma Mbuzo: "No, Nozulu. We can even take this to court. Ask Lisakhanya, I'm sure the judge will say his wife must stay with him"

Hlubi: "Actually, Mama if you are not fit enough your role in his life won't matter. If anything the state will see you fighting and have him temporarily be placed in elderly care centres"

Nozulu: "That's why she wants court thing because she wants the law to convince us that he is

best with strangers. Bhuti, tell them that you want to go home where your parents lived" she looked at Mr Mbuzo.

Ma Mbuzo: "Let him be with me for a month. If you are not satisfied with how I care for him you can have him. Like Yandiswa just said, his house is here. Yanda allow me to care for my husband in what might be his last days. Maybe it's what we need to mend all wounds" she looked at him with pleading eyes.

Yanda: "I don't see what the problem is. I'll also go check in

every week to make sure that he is fine, Dabs don't worry" he looked at his aunt.

Nozulu: "Who is this forth child he speaks of that we don't know, Nolali? Did you have to do a blood sacrifice at your witch gathering and chose the child as the sacrifice?" everyone was shocked at the accusation.

Ma Mbuzo: "It would take a witch to know one right?" she shot back "I'm taking my husband finish and klaar" she put the matter to rest

Nozulu: "He's going to stay here

for the few days I'm here. I'm not going to go get myself poisoned by eating your food"

Yanda: "Yes it's okay, Dabs" he looked at Hlubi and she nodded "while he is here prepare for him there at the house. I don't know why you are speaking about overcrowding when you don't share your bedroom with anyone. This is your husband so share it with him" he looked at his mother.

Ma Mbuzo: "Being a woman is difficult. A man goes galavanting and then when he is old and sick

the poor wife has to share a room with him" she said softly.

Yamkela: "I can move outside to the backroom that Bhuti used with my son so that Tata can take the room we sleep in. I honestly don't know why Mama is making such a big deal of it. We are sorry that we asked you to share a room with your husband" she looked at her mother "Bhuti, please just organize a sail for me for the roof because there are drops coming in when it rains"

Yanda: "I'll have Mavusana come fix it up for you, mntasekhaya.

Thank you for giving your room up for him. As you can see we live in an apartment that has two bedrooms so he wouldn't have had his own privacy here"

Nozulu: "I still think Qwa Qwa was best but okay I will return after a month to check on him. You see he has no sounds and sores? One little bruise and I take my brother. My mother's child won't burden me at all. Nandi and I will sleep on the floor here in the lounge while they fix the house. I want to go see that room once it's done"

Yanda: "Can we now stop arguing in his presence? He doesn't even remember us well so can you imagine how overwhelmed he is by us shouting too"

Nozulu: "I'm sorry, Yanda and you bhuti" she looked at her brother "He remembers me. It's Nolali's frog face that he doesn't know" Nandi had to put her hand over et her mouth to stop herself from bursting out laughing. Mahlubandile looked at her daughter and she also had difficulty holding in her laughter but she had to.

Hlubi: "Let me go make tea. I made some delicious scones. I feel we need to cook a special dinner later on too. I'm so happy that Tatazala is home. Tata ka Nandi, we must buy a bigger place so he can have a room" she looked at Nandi.

Nozulu: "Oh yes hallelujah. Only then will I rest because I'll know he's taken care of. Do you have any tripe in the house, Khanyi? It used to be his favourite"

Hlubi: "Nandi can go with you to the butchery, Dabs. She drives independently now. While you do

that I'm going to knead dough. Nana, please go to that butchery where the tripe is clean already because cleaning it is a lot of work" she looked at Nandi.

Nandi: "Okay, Ma. Makhulu come let us go" Ma Nozulu stood with excitement. She held her brother's hand and he stood too.

Nazulu: "Come Bhut, maybe the drive around the city will make you remember. I know you used to know this city from the back of your hand" they followed behind Nandi.

Hlubi: "Mama will you have tea

now before I go be busy?"

Ma Mbuzo: "I actually just want to go to my house because I don't feel welcome here"

Yamkela: "We'll see you later then. No way I'm missing dumpling and tripe. Let me wash my hands, did Lisa so I can help you knead the dough" she offered leaving Hlubi shocked.

Yanda: "Yandiswa please go and make me some tea and ask Khanya for those scones. My wife's feet look like they are going to burst so go make yourself useful" Yandi stood to go to the

kitchen "Do you still think that it's not him?" he asked his mother when they were left alone.

Ma Mbuzo: "No now that he is here I see it's him" she said in a whisper.

Yanda: "Should I be concerned about him going home, Mama? That hug you gave him was not of a wife happy to see her long lost husband"

Ma Mbuzo: "Well excuse me for not being excited about seeing a man who left me only to return not having a clue who I am. He can't

even say where he's been so you all want me to welcome him in my bed? I'm angry, Yanda but since you people do not care about my feelings you will accuse me of all kinds of things. But I won't hurt him in his own house as revenge. I'm a woman of God so I am not capable of such"

Yanda: "Calm down. I'm sorry that you feel that way. We can still have him go to Qwa Qwa until Lisakhanya and I find a bigger place so he can come live with us"

Ma Mbuzo: "I said I'll take care

of my husband. You just have Mavusana fix the backroom because I'm not ready to share my bed with him after so many years of sleeping alone"

Yanda: "I can respect that, Ma. I'm certain he's not used to sharing a bed either. You guys will need to keep the gate locked at all times so he doesn't wander. We can do this together. Thank you for being willing to take him after he hurt you by leaving. I'm also sorry that Dabs treats you so coldly. I think I know why you treat Lisakhanya the same, you

know no better so you think it's how a makoti should be treated but the next time you feel you want to be rude to my wife remember how you feel when Dabs is rude to you. The chain has to break somewhere". Ma Mbuzo didn't say anything. Nandi and the elders returned after a long while with the tripe. Nozulu wanted to cook it herself because she didn't like how city people added to much spices.

Nozulu: "Please go and make a turn at the house when he goes to live with her, Khany-Khany"

she whispered.

Hlubi: "Yanda doesn't want me to drive now, Dabs"

Nozulu: "What is it with modern men and thinking their wives are also sick when they are pregnant. We used to work until the last day. I don't know why I don't have a good feeling about him going to live with her. Why did he run to begin with?"

Hlubi: "May his memory started fading back then so he didn't. the way back home. It's not impossible right?"

Nozulu: "True but go when you've

got time. I don't trust froglina"
Hlubi didn't want to laugh but
she couldn't help but to it.

Hlubi: "Froglina?" she laughed
more "No, Dabs that's not nice"
she wiped her tears of laughter.

Nozulu: "She used to want to
control him. It's a pity good men
get dragons for wives. At least
Yanda got lucky"

Hlubi: "Oh so you don't think I'm
a dragon?"

Nozulu: "Never. Do you think I'd
be so kind to you had I thought
you are. I don't know what her
problem is with you. Maybe the

dragon has to spit that burning fire somehow so you are the victim" Hlubi laughed until she couldn't anymore "Men like Yavela and Yanda usually get dragons for wives, you just notice when you meet a kind and gentle man. Usually he'll be married to a dragon who wants to sit on his head all the time" she shook her head.

Hlubi: "I'll ask Nandi to drive me there so we can go visit at least once a week"

Nozulu: "Thank you so much. So are you still angry at your

mother?" Hlubi nodded "I was hoping to see her" she added.

Hlubi: "Nandi can drive you to get house. For now I'm not ready to see her. I knew the type of person she was but I never thought she'd hurt Lakhawe after claiming to love her" Hlubi sometimes wished Nozulu was her mother in law. They had a good relationship.

Nozulu: "Blood is thicker than water, Lisa"

Hlubi: "You can say that again. Now Liyema had gone to find himself"

Nozulu: "Men are wired differently. Give him the time he needs so he can return well again. I am fond of Liyema so I hope he sorts his life out. Nandi should also take me to Lungile...oh my dear joker" they laughed.

Hlubi: "we've both decided to let Mama and get favourite child take care of things themselves. What makes parents have a favourite, Dabs?"

Nozulu: "It could be various thing. A friend of mine had two from different father's. The first borns father used to treat her

like trash but the second ones father treated her well so she'd favour the second child more"

Hlubi: "But the poor child is innocent"

Nozulu: 'I know. With Liyema it could be that he came at a time when your mother was happy in her marriage so she is reminded of that joy whenever she sees Liyema making her want to protect that proof of good times. We are psychologically very damaged and we don't even know know it. Favourism is bad because it divides siblings. Look you and

Lungile are now distancing yourselves from Liyema because you feel he has support enough in his mother. Hopefully Zola I'd going to fix things now that you two brought it up but your brother needs you, Lisakhanya. He didn't choose to be favourite in fact should this finding himself journey succeed he'll realize being favourite did him no favour at all. It only made him an emotionally dependant man"

Hlubi: "I have missed you, Dabs. You must come spend the December holiday with us. I wish

I could talk like this with Ma Mbuzo"

Ma Mbuzo: "I'm going now. We have to go prepare for Yavela"

Nozulu: "Are you sure you don't want to stay for my tripe? You know it's good"

Ma Mbuzo: "Dish up for me and have the girls bring it. I'm not feeling too well"

Hlubi: "Okay, Ma"

Ma Mbuzo: "I'll come again tomorrow so he can get used to my face"

Nozulu: "That's good, makoti" she faked a smile. Ma Mbuzo said her

goodbyes and left.

Nandi: "Makhulu you should cook the tripe at my traditional wedding"

Nozulu: "I heard that your tsiki (bride meat) is going to be mopane worms" they all laughed.

Nandi: "Mashudu said nothing about tsiki but he did cook them for me and they are not bad at all. Not all Limpopo people eat them either" she laughed.

Hlubi: "My baby is going to be a Mrs" they laughed on e again.

Nandi: "Yes, yes, yes honey" she said with pride.

Nozulu: "This boy better have enough cows in his kraal"

Nandi: "Don't now ask for all the cows in his kraal, Makhulu. We still have to eat after the wedding especially since he'll be the only one working"

Hlubi: "Just take the internship at the firm, Nandipha"

Nandi: "We are actually thinking of moving to Pretoria after the wedding" she said hesitantly.

Nozulu: "Once you're married you must go where he is. Just find a job or start a business at least. don't be a housewife who sits and

wait for her husband to return and when he doesn't you end up depressed"

Hlubi: "It seems you keep a lot from me. We'll talk about this Pretoria business later on". They finished cooking and had dinner.

Mr Mbuzo could hold a conversation and once Nozulu told childhood stories he laughed with them.

Ma Mbuzo sat in the stuffy hut looking at her sangoma doing what he was best at.

Fakaza: "You say you don't want him to remember anything? Well

this is the perfect muthi for that" he handed her a bag and gave usage instructions.

Ma Mbuzo: "If he remembers it'll be the end of me"

Fakaza: "Hmmm you just pray they don't find out that you are the reason why he has no memory to begin with. These western doctors can give it their fancy names but you and I know he is like that because you bewitched him"

Ma Mbuzo: "You said that muthi would last forever so why is he remembering?"

Fakaza: "I don't know. Maybe he is too strong for the muthi. Do not overdose him with the new muthi because it's strong. Too much will kill him and that sister in law will say she was right about you not being good enough to take care of him. Remember I didn't sign up to kill anyone but to help you make him forget again. If you use more and he gets sick and dies, that's blood on your hands not mine" he said as he washed his hands.

Ma Mbuzo: "I'm not stupid. You want the Mbuzo family to say I

killed him. I wish I could give this to Nozulu too"

Fakaza: "Hey, hey, Nolali that is for no other pets but the one you said you wanted to use it on"

Ma Mbuzo: "Okay I understand. Let me go before my daughters arrive. I've got to go get the house ready for that annoying man who could never stand his ground. I was hoping God would bless me with a real man after he left, not a softy but I'm too old now do that won't happen. Good night" she put the muthi in her chest before standing. She put

her shoes on and went home.

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Meanwhile Ntombikayise sat on the couch of a self catering spa and lodge laughing at the comedy that she was watching. She felt like her body was renewed after the full body massage. She was on the Western Cape but she was not ready to go back home. It was a cold day but the cottage had a fireplace so she could walk around in her underwear and oversized jersey. The time alone is doing her good because she even jotted down all issues that she

felt she needed to work on in order to move on. She was ready to reclaim her life by making an appointment with Mrs B again. She decided that she'd dedicate a day to herself each week to focus on self care and love. The selfish trip that Dr Potgieter recommend did her good. Her grandparents were doing well and she told the children to only call her should it be an emergency. She didn't go on any social media pages because the peace that she was feeling was better than stressing herself about issues

that were none of her business. She also realized which issues were not hers to burden herself with and when she made the conscious decision to let it all go it felt as though a mountain had been removed from her shoulders. She had some delicious snacks while watching the rest of the movie until she fell asleep on the couch. When she woke up she went to whip up a quick dinner before snuggling on the couch with a good book. Had she known that cutting the world out for a while felt so good, she'd have done it a

long time ago. She found herself smiling but not because of the contents of her read but because she felt good about herself. The selfishness felt revitalizing and she was addicted to it already hence she would have a date with herself at least once a week. In that moment she felt immune to the troubles of the world and she felt absolutely no guilt. ❤️

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Iviwe walked inside Ntombi's house feeling nervous. Her eyes

went around the entire floor before she turned to look at Bukhosi.

Ivi: "Are we alone? I thought that you said your brothers and their girlfriends would join us" she looked up the stairs.

Bukhosi: "Bubele is in our room with Pinky" Ivi's eyes shot open.

Ivi: "Are they...are they doing the deed...like sex?" she felt her heart beat faster when Bukhosi closed the gap between them to kiss her "Bukhosi, I'm not ready for sex" she said quickly before moving away from him.

Bukhosi: "I didn't invite you here for sex, Iviwe" he smiled.

Ivi: "I'm a virgin and I plan to be until I finish matric" she blurted out.

Bukhosi: "And I can respect that. I love your company already without the sex" he smiled before kissing her again "Also what Bubele and Pinky does is non of our business. Banele will be here with Hlumelo soon and so will Bandile with Bathandiwe. Our great grandparents are visiting family in Gugulethu so we have the house to ourself. What my

brothers do with their girlfriends has nothing to do with us. Are you comfortable?"

Ivi: "I am now" she smiled before hugging him "Your home is very beautiful" she added.

Bukhosi: "My mom's work"

Amahle: "Bukhosi, you still have not given me your R20 for keeping quiet about you guys bringing girls over to the house"

Ivi couldn't help but giggle softly.

Bukhosi: "Viwe, this is Amahle our capitalist young sister and

Amahle this is my beautiful girlfriend, Iviwe" he smiled.

Ivi: "Hi" she said in a shy whisper.

Amahle: "Hi" she smiled back "Your fee because pretending to be blind is expensive" she held her hand out to Bukhosi. He shook his head before giving her the money.

Bukhosi: "What will you do with so much money, Amahle?"

Amahle: "Mommy said she'll go open a bank account for me and teach me how to save. So I'm starting now because I have a prefect camp soon. Give me some snacks please so I can go lock myself in my room to not disturb you guys" Banele and Bandile

walked in with their girlfriends.
Bathandiwe was a boarding school learner so she came home during holidays. Banele had no luck with Owam so he went to ask for love back from Hlumelo.

Bandile: "Why can we still see you?" he asked Amahle.

Amahle: "Because" she rolled her eyes.

Hlumelo: "She can join us"

Amahle: "And traumatize my virgin eyes and ears? No thanks."

Banele: "What do you know about virgins, Amahle?" he asked in a stern tone.

Amahle: "I know that I'm one. We learn about these things at school. Bukhosi please give me some of the snacks so I can go" she looked at her brother.

Bukhosi did as she asked and they watched her walk up the stairs.

All boys feeling like proud big brothers after hearing that Amahle is still a virgin and clearly she proud of it too. They hoped she'd be like that until marriage.

Ivi and Hlumelo knew each other and they quickly made

Bathandiwe comfortable. Bubele and Pinky came down the stairs

doing the walk of shame.

Banele: "Did you use a condom?" he raised a brow as he went to get snacks with Bubele.

Bubele: "You think I'd risk a baby ruining my chance at having a rugby career? Of course I used it so relax" he patted Banele on the back. The couple's sat on the couches while eating popcorn and watching movies. It was a cold day so the ladies were sure to snuggle up close.

Bathandiwe: "This is so nice" she smiled at Bandile before kissing him. All the other boys were

already sexual active besides Bukhosi. The weird thing was most thought he was the playboy amongst them. Ntombi wanted to surprise the family with her unexpected arrival after they called her so many times to ask when she'd be back. She considered herself a modern parent but she was not sure how she felt about all her boys cuddling on the couch with girls. Bandile: "Mom" he said nervously and Ntombi watched them all stand up quickly.

Ntombi: "What is going on?" she

looked at the girls.

Pinky: "Hello, Mrs Elephant. I'm Pinky Rhadu, Bubele..." Bubele stopped her from finishing the sentence.

Ntombi: "So these are the girls you spend your allowances on?" she said as casually as possible. Pinky was the only one who looked at Ntombi with an excited smile but the rest looked down.

Benele: "We're sorry for not asking for permission, Mom"

Ntombi: "Uhm...where is everyone else?" she looked around.

Bukhosi: "The old people went to

the township, they were picked up. Amahle is in her room watching animated cartoons"

Ntombi: "Okay. Take my bags to my room" she said to the boys.

Bandile took the bags up "I'll just join you guys and get to know the young ladies. What schools they are in, where they live and such.

They are your friends after all" she went to sit down "All ladies on my left and gents on my right"

the kids looked at each other before looking at their mother.

They had no choice but to do as she said.

Bubele: "Told you to use the privacy while you still had time. Now look at you. Went through all this trouble but didn't get any reward" he whispered to his brothers.

Ntombi: "I know Bathandiwe because she's at the same church as us" Thandiwe couldn't even look at Ntombi "So what are your names?" she smiled and listened to the girls introduce themselves. She got herself comfortable to know her sons "friends".

Banele: "Mama aren't you tired?"

Ntombi: "All I've been doing is

rest so nope. Did they feed you anything other than these sweet things?" the girls shook their hands "Do we have bread?" the boys also shook their heads "Then all of you club in for bread and go buy it at the garage" she looked at her boys who didn't look too happy. Ntombi watched as they counted coins and went out as quickly as possible. The girls were their guest so she wanted them to take responsibility for hosting them with their own money.

Banele: "I bet you we'll find the girls gone by the time we are

back. Mom is doing this on purpose"

Bukhosi: "Well it's her house so ..." he shrugged.

Bandile: "That's why I can't wait to finish school and go live at university. I can then invite my girlfriend without hassles"

Bubele: "Honestly mom coming home has no negative impact on me already. I'm a happy man" he laughed at his brothers.

Bandile: "Whatever" he hit his brother with a gentle fist on the shoulder. They were fast walking to the garage while Ntombi sat

with her "daughter in laws".

Ntombi: "I'm glad that you girls seem to know what you want out of life. I know that I just met you but I'm no fool. I can see that you are the girlfriends" she said after asking them questions about what they'd like to do after high school.

Ivi: "We are sorry for disrespecting your home, Mrs Elephant" she whispered.

Ntombi: "Coming in here and shouting at you guys and shoving you out would not have stopped you children from doing what you

are. As a woman with life experience I just ask you all to use protection should any of you be sexually active with my boys or any other boy. The last thing that you want is to fall pregnant and delay your university dream. You girls know that we aren't together with their father right?"

Bathandiwe: "Yes, Ma" she also whispered.

Ntombikayise: "And who between me and their father is left being primary caretaker of the children?"

Hlumelo: "You, mam"

Ntombi: "Exactly and I am a person who uses my own life experiences and lessons when talking to young people about certain matter. So should any of you get pregnant you will feel the responsibility of raising a child more than them as the child will be staying with you at your parental homes and they only go to check in on weekends. I'm not against you children dating but keep it PG please. And dare I find that any of you disrespect my house by having sex in it, all hell

will break loose. If you're sexual active use condoms and have that sex far from my house" Pinky was most guilty and the other girls have her a side eye. The boys were shocked to find the girls still seated. Ntombi told them to go make sandwiches themselves as it were their guests. The boys did so and they all ate before the youngesters excused themselves. Ntombi could finally go up to greet her daughter who has headsets on. Ntombikayise kissed Amahle's face several times and watched Amahle giggle. Hours went by and

Makhulu and Tamkhulu got dropped off by Makhulu's cousin. Ntombi started to cook dinner with Amahle and Makhulu. Well Makhulu only kept them company. Makhulu: "So you're telling me that you have a sister wife" she laughed out.

Ntombi: "Don't start, Ma" she laughed too "I had a good time though but I enjoyed the days alone even more. Who knew alone time felt so good?"

Makhulu: "You do look rested, my baby. I'm glad that you decided to go. Has the headaches

returned?" Amahle looked at her mother

Ntombi taught her kids to never interrupt in adult conversation that had nothing to do with them but she could see that Amahle was concerned about the migraine returning.

Ntombi: "Not a single hint of pain, Makhulu" she said and watched Amahle continue chopping potatoes. "I also know what issues are holding me back and I'm not going to act like I can fix them by myself so I made an appointment with Mrs B"

Makhulu: "That's my girl. Make an appointment with the dance teacher too. I miss that dance entrance you liked doing after work" Ntombikayise laughed and noticed Amahle smile and nod subtly too.

Ntombi: 'Plus soon we'll go shopping for winter clothes for children. Do you want to join Mom and her friends when handing them out, Nana?' Amahle looked at Ntombikayise to check she was really talking to her.

Amahle: "Will there be babies?" she smiled and Ntombi nodded

"Then I'd love to come because I love babies. They smell nice" she added. Ntombikayise couldn't wait for the day they could pair actions with words. She and the ladies have been planning for a while so to implement brought them all great excitement. Next weekend they'd also have that sleepover and she was excited. She heard about Yanda's dad returning and she planned to go see Hlubi without taking on Hlubi's issues onto herself. Tamkhulu sat with the boys around the dining table playing cards.

Tamkhulu: "I hear you had guests over and they were so special that you had to wait until Makhulu and I were out of the house before inviting them over"

Bukhosi: "We are sorry for that, Tamkhulu. We apologized to Mama again too"

Tamkhulu: "Apology accepted but I will never again remind you that you're children in this house. When I was young I had to tell my girlfriend to meet me by the river and never at my parental house because I was not a man there. The only man who was

allowed to sleep there with his lady was my father because it was his house and he was married to my mother. Ntombikayise says she doesn't mind you children inviting them to watch films but no girl is to go up those stairs"

Bubele: "We didn't do such, Tamkhulu. They even used the downstairs toilet" he lied.

Tamkhulu: "Good because my child is not going to support your babies. With us black men it's worse. You've got to pay damages and the baby stuff too. You are all fortunate enough to be in

decent schools so don't be foolish. I know what it's like to be young and hot blooded but don't let the heat go up here" he tapped the side of his head with his finger. Bukhosi: "Plus you'll bleksem us?" they all laughed. They loved his sense of discipline because he first spoke to them like young adults instead of shouting at them without hearing the full story. They missed their dad but Tamkhulu could discipline them with ease because they had great respect for them. Tamkhulu: "Nowadays some girls

lie and say they are on
contraceptives to trap you
especially when they see that you
come from a financially stable
home. So be wise and condomize,
always carry your own because you
can't be sure they didn't poke
holes in theirs" the boys couldn't
help but laugh but when they
realised that he was serious they
straightened their faces "Trust
me, my boys it's best that a man
has children in wedlock. What
happens if you marry a girl who
hates your child from a previous
relationship? You all know your

mother's story. Not all men and women are kind to children who aren't theirs"

Bandile: "Yes, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "But other than that I'm glad that none of you are afraid of girls" the boys laughed "And you have all just lost to an old man again" he showed his cards and the boys looked at each other.

Bukhosi: "I give up" Tamkhulu laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Experience, my boys. .. experience" he stood "Let me go check what lies the news have

for us today" he went to the TV.
Banele: "Lies how?"

Tamkhulu: "Don't you know the media is good at portraying the victim as a perpetrator and the perpetrators as victims? You are yet to learn how the systems of this world works" he added. They followed him to the lounge to watch the news before they could have dinner.

Meanwhile Liyema sat at the bar having a drink. He explained to his children that he'd be taking a breather but he didn't think he'd

be drinking. It was a bar restaurant so a family with grown kids walked in and they looked happy. What he caught was the subtle bounce the husband gave his wife on her behind which left her with a naughty smile. They were much older than Liyema but he could see that the spark between them was still there. He couldn't help but think about his family dinners with his family and those moments he could slip his hand up Ntombi's dress and watched her give him the same naughty smile

the lady gave her husband. He wondered where all of that faded to in the last two years of his marriage. In those two years he suddenly just became bored with life, family life in particular. He once even regretted rushing the surrogacy process.

Bar lady: "Do you wanna talk about it?" she asked.

Liyema: "What's the point when nothing is going to change? So nope I don't want to talk about it"

Bar lady: "My shift ends in an hour. We could talk then and

maybe do other fun things" she flirted.

Liyema: "No thanks. I'm very cautious about entertaining ladies whose stories I don't know. The last one came with shocking revelations so for now all you can do is serve me another drink"

Bar lady: "Your loss. Will you be having the same?" Liyema nodded and she went back to work. Liroy who was a former client of Liyema was shocked to find him at the bar because he could remember him as a non drinker. He heard about the recent

happenings in Liyema's life but Liyema told him everything himself.

Liroy: "You'll be fine, man. As someone who has made the exact same choices that lead in my marriage ending I know how miserable you are right now. You wish you could have tried harder. With me it was worse when she finally met another man. She's glowing and is happy while none of the girls want me now. Thing about some girls who are after married men is the fact that you being married is what excites

them but when the wife leaves they do too. All I can do now is be there for my children and accept this new guy is treating her better"

Liyema: "Lakhiwe won't move on right now. She's not the type to jump from one relationship to another so I don't have to concern myself about that just yet. Except for the last two years before our divorce I treated her like a queen. I doubt that she'll forget the good moments meaning that man might not reach my standard. Shes most probably

always going to compare him to me. If I didn't make poor choices lately I'd still be home with them. I'm working on myself now"

Leroy: "By drinking? Try other means that have nothing to do with booze. Go talk to someone. Also don't be so certain that you were her best I thought the same arrogant thing yet here I'm miserably sitting next to you. All the girls are gone and soon my business will be gone too. All I'm trying to do now is be the father my children can still be proud of. I suggest you do the same. Man,

Melanie is glowing it's almost as though I was blocking all her blessings but now that I'm gone life is serving her the good stuff" Liyema and Liroy spoke more about sports and work because the talk about their divorces left them feeling more depressed.

Liyema felt like less of scum when he heard that Liroy's story was similar to him. Both sad drowning their sorrows.

Ma Mbuzo nearly threw Yamkela with a cup when she spilt the tea that she made for Mr Mbuzo. It

had been a week since he moved in and the familiar yet unfamiliar setting was taking time to get used to. He felt more at ease when he was at his son's house. He'd go to the gate and find it locked leaving his heart broken. He didn't know where he wanted to be but a feeling within made him certain that it was not in his old house.

Ma Mbuzo: "So now what must I do if you waste my tea so much? I should actually have you lick this tea from the floor" she said with anger.

Yandi: "All of that for a cup of tea" she mumbled before rolling her eyes.

Ma Mbuzo: "You don't even buy a single teabag in this house. If you want to say something be clear about it, girlie"

Yandiswa: "Well neither do you because it's Yanda who does. I'm sure he is not going to make a fuss over spilt tea. I will make another cup for Tata" she put the kettle on again.

Ma Mbuzo: "I will make it" she pushed Yandiswa aside.

Yandiswa: "No, I want to do it.

Let me do something for my father for a change. You want to do everything for him"

Ma Mbuzo: "Hey go get married and look after your own husband. This is mine" she shouted while clapping her hands in Yandiswa's face.

Yandiswa: "I'm going to make my father tea. The one you make him is clearly bitter because he ends up coughing. He is not my husband but he's my father so I will make him tea"

Yamkela: "Haibo Yandiswa and Mama I can hear you all the way

from the backroom. I will tell Yanda that you two are always shouting"

Ma Mbuzo: "Also tell him how this one acts like the woman of the house. Clean this up" she pointed to the floor.

Yandiswa: "I'm making my father tea so it'll have to wait" she continued and when she was done she went to give it to Mr Mbuzo. At times he asked things that they could give answers to but sometimes they'd see he was completely confused.

Mr Mbuzo: "Where is

Yakhikhaya?" he asked for the hundredth time. He gave all his children names and like himself they were Y.Mbuzo.

Yandi: "Tata remember that we told you there is only three of us. It's Yandiswa, Yamkela and Yanda. You do not have a son named Yakhikhaya. Bhut Yanda was your only son. Did you perhaps have another child after you left us?" she brushed his shoulder. Mr Mbuzo first smelled the tea "I made it, Tata. I know that Mama makes hers too strong for you" she added.

Mr Mbuzo: "Thank you" he smiled before shipping the tea. He didn't know that the tea his wife made had poison in it but he couldn't miss the faint scent that irritated his senses. He'd been pretending to drink the tea but when Ma Mbuzo turned her back he'd spill it into a potplant. Lately she'd been watching him like hawk and even tilting the cup so he'd finish. He hated the taste of her tea so to have a cup made by someone else was good.

Yandiswa: "Would you like to take a walk around the neighborhood

when you are done?" he lit up with a smile before nodding "Dabs says you used to love going to places where liver was sold so you could braai it yourself. I know such a place. Bhut Yanda gave me money so I'm sure that he won't mind if I use some to spoil you" she smiled. Both she and Yamkela loved having him home. Even his grandchildren warmed up to him.

Mr Mbuzo: "I had a friend named Patrick. Where is he?" he tried to remember correctly.

Yandi: "I don't know, Tata but we can ask around. I'm sure many

still remember you"

Mr Mbuzo: "Okay" he sipped his tea.

Yandi: "Is Mama treating you well when we are not here, Tata?"

Ma Mbuzo: "Heee Yandiswa you even have the courage to ask such? Go and get married. You can't keep men yet have the audacity to ask mine if I'm treating him well? What money did Yanda give you?"

Yandi: "He gave me nothing, Mama" she lied. Ever since her father arrived Yandiswa hated being around her mother "Come,

Tata let us take that walk" she took the cup from him and went to put it in the sink.

Mr Mbuzo: "Do you know, Patrick?"

Ma Mbuzo: "Hayi mxm" she clicked her tongue and walked away. She was tired of him and it was starting to show. He went with Yandiswa to find Patrick but there was no Patrick. Those who knew him would come greet with great excitement.

Ma Rhadebe: "How is your mother now? Hey Mntanam your father used to be abused in that house.

The entire community rallies behind an abused woman but if it's a man we keep quiet. I hope that old age has made her kinder" the elder left them. Yandiswa had no memory of any abuse so she brushed what Ma Rhadebe off as township gossip. She took her father to a tshisanyama where she ordered liver and made it for them. She always wanted to go out with her father and she was content in that moment even if he couldn't really remember her. She wanted to ask Yanda about any abuse between their parents

because what Ma Rhadebe said and how Ma Mbuzo acted earlier on suddenly didn't sit well with her. 

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A few weeks had gone by and after that conversation with Liroy Liyema decided to take control of his life once again. He returned to Cape Town and started seeing a therapist. It was in those sessions that he realized just how deeply scarred he was about his upbringing. It was during those sessions that

he decided that it was unfair of him to possibly take his children through the same thing. Mrs E was proud of her son and though it felt foreign to leave him to fix his own life it was good. Liyema drove to his old house that he once shared with his family and parked out for a long while. He finally stepped out of his car and headed to the door. Ntombikayise opened the door and Liyema could already see her face turn to that of someone who was annoyed.

Liyema: "Hi" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Hi" she whispered "They are all waiting for you in the

lounge" she said before making way so he'd walk in.

Liyema: "You look good. I hope you feel good too?"

Ntombi: "I'm great thank you. You?" she put her bag over her shoulder and grabbed a gift basket that was on a table by the door.

Liyema: "I'm not too bad. So you're leaving?" Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "A friend gave birth so I'm going to see her and her son" she referred to Poppy.

Liyema: "Knowing you you'll kiss the poor little guy to death" he

laughed alone "What time will you be back?" he added.

Ntombi: "Not anytime soon" she headed to the door "Liyema" she called out.

Liyema: "Mmm?" he looked back.

Ntombi: "They are in a good space so please... please don't take that away"

Liyema: "I promise" he watched her nod before closing the door behind her. When Amahle saw her father she jumped on him with a tight hug and held on for a long while.

Amahle: "I missed you so much, dad" she whispered.

Liyema: "I missed you too, Nana. Boys" he looked at them and watched them all get closer to shake his hand. Liyema wondered when the hugging stopped but he was not about to open another can of worms so handshakes had to do. They all sat down and Liyema looked at all of them. He first made small talk to catch up on what he had missed in their lives. He noticed that they were indeed in a good place and it was good to see. He felt a deep sense of gratitude to Ntombi for it. He took a deep breath before getting down to serious

conversation.

Liyema: "Firstly I'd like to thank you kids for giving me a chance to talk to you. I know that I do not deserve it after what I've put you through in the past few months. There is a saying that says something like "when giants fight, the grass gets hurt". I'm not sure if that's how it goes but I was the giant who stepped on you guys and ended up hurting not just you guys but your mother too. I'm not perfect but I am a better man than I was a few weeks ago. I've sought help and I'm making progress"

Bandile: "What kind of help?"

Liyema: "I'm talking to a professional who has been helping me iron out a lot of issues that I was not aware of but I am not going to burden you all with that. I am here to apologize to you and I promise that this time it's sincere. I love you guys"

Amahle: "We love you too" she looked at her brothers.

Bubele: "So are you back from the trip you said you needed to take or do you have to go back?"

Liyema: "I'm back and living with Makhulu for a while but soon I'll get a place of my own. I know

that moving from my place to mom's will be a great adjustment to you guys but once I've found a place I ask that you all come and visit. I miss having you guys when I'm watching games" he looked at the boys "And I miss watching those highschool musical movies with you, Nana" he looked at Amahle. .

Bubele: "We miss you too, dad. I mean Tamkhulu is here but he's not you and he's not trying to be because he knows you're still around. I'm tired" he wiped a tear off quickly "I'm so tired that I even consider asking you

guys to put me in boarding school so I can be away from all of this" he said in a shaky voice.

Liyema: "I am to blame for everything and I will work hard to make it up to you. If you still want boarding school next year we'll look into it but give me these remaining months to prove to you that I can do better as a father from now on"

Bukhosi: "So no surprise babies or other women?"

Liyema: "No surprises will come from me. I want to focus on my life, you guys and the business"

Bandile: "I'm glad that you feel

better, dad. To see you like you were was not good because you've been our hero for such a long time. I don't mind trying to mend a relationship with you because I need you. I'm not going to act like I do not need you because I do. I'm willing to meet you half way and all I ask is that you don't disappoint us again."

Bubele: "I miss you too because these Kaizer Chiefs supporters in this house are ganging up on me as I'm now the only Orlando Pirates fan left" he joked and Liyema laughed appreciating the humour.

Amahle: "I stopped being mad at you long ago. I can't wait for you to find a place. Please get one with a pool"

Liyema: "I'm getting a flat, my girl so I doubt it'll have one"

Bukhosi: "How are things between you and mom? If they are tense then we'll pick it up and nothing is as uncomfortable as that"

Liyema: "We just spoke and we are handling things like adults. We aren't the best of friends but we will never make you guys choose sides. If you are not ready to forgive me then I understand but

I ask that you not carry your mother's emotions towards me because she and I will iron out our own issues"

Banele: "Like Bubele I'm also tired. There are certain things that you did to mom that hurt us so you can't expect us to not carry her emotions when we are the ones on whom they spill on to. She tries her hardest to stay strong but there are moments that she fails to and we can see it. We love this woman like no other so we will go to war for her if need be. What I personally will try to do is separate my pain from Mom's. So

I'll try to mend things again to deal with my pain but I can't say I've forgiven you for the pain you've caused my mom but I'll work on it"

Liyema: "That's all that I ask for us to try and mend what has been broken together. It was unfair of me to dump so much baggage on you and forcing you to grow up quickly. I had to mature quickly due to what I know now to be trauma and I would hate for you all to experience that. I want you guys to live out your youth until you feel satisfied. Please don't ever skip a phase

because you'll want to return to it when the time is completely wrong. But also remember that there is a thin line between enjoying your youth and killing yourselves in the name of enjoying your youth. Be responsible always...always"

Bubele: "I appreciate you coming, dad. I appreciate the apology too. I can't speak for the others but I would like to spend time with you again. You and mom might not be together but that doesn't mean we have to sacrifice one to keep the other"

Bukhosi: "Your actions will

determine if I forgive you or not. Changed behaviour is the best apology" Liyema nodded. He knew he had a lot of work to do but he was up for it. The kids said that Tamkhulu is in the garden so Liyema excused himself to go talk to him. The last time he saw Tamkhulu he was beaten so he hoped the old man had calmed down. Liyema greeted and Tamkhulu gave a polite greetings. Makhulu was taking a nap.

Liyema: "Tamkhulu, I ask that you allow me to gift you with a cow to apologize for what I did

to your daughter" he pleaded.
Tamkhulu: "You can keep your cow, Liyema. Your duty is towards those children not me nor Ntombikayise. Set the standard of man that Amahle should aspire to date one day by being a great father. Be an example of the type of men those boys want to aspire to be by being a good father. You leave all else that involves Ntombi to me as her father. Your responsibility is in the house" he looked Liyema directly in the eye.

Liyema: "I will do my best to be that father, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "Be that father to all your children. Go be certain that other child is not yours. Trust me you won't want that child growing up resenting her siblings for getting a life she was also deserving of. Now if you do not mind, I'd like to take advantage of the hot winter day to finish up what I'm doing"

Liyema: "I don't mind, xhego. Thank you" he said before going to say goodbye to his children with a promise to see them soon. He dialed the number Portia had been using to send him the texts that he ignored. She ignored his

first three calls but finally answer on the fourth try. She was angry so Liyema decided it was best he get straight to the point after she asked what he wanted. Liyema: "I'd like to do a DNA test. If Abongile is mine I'd like to do right by my daughter and officially introduce her to my other children and the rest of the family"

Portia: "Mxm" she clicked her tongue.

Liyema: "Portia?...hello...are you still there?" the beeping sound was enough proof that she dropped the phone on him. He

tried again but her number went straight to voicemail. He exhaled loudly as he felt he deserved that response after what he said and done to her. Portia was a woman that Liyema found his body melt to when he met her. He pursued her and got what he wanted.

What made him feel bad about that night was not just that he cheated on his wife but he didn't feel much guilt for it because he was certain it was something Ntombi wouldn't find out. When Portia said she's pregnant he panicked and denying paternity was the first thing he thought

was best. He loved children so if Abongile was his he'd try by all means to do what's right. He was grateful to Liroy for recommending therapy because it opened his eyes to many things he was not aware of.

When Ntombi held Poppy's son in her arms she found herself in love with the cute little one wrapped in a blue blanket. So much so that she began to cry when she looked at him.

Poppy: "Ntombi, are you okay?"

Ntombi: "I am. I'm just so happy that you had a safe delivery and

he is so beautiful" she wiped her tears. She didn't want to tell her friends that she was sad because she too dreamt about holding another bundle of joy. Othu was the only one who knew what Ntombi was going through.

Othu: "We understand" she rubbed Ntombi's back.

Ntombi: "When are you guys going home? You gave birth naturally to all your kids right?" Poppy nodded.

Poppy: "We'll be going home tomorrow. Our new house is also baby ready so we are honestly so excited. My husband can't stop looking at his son" she laughed.

Hlubi: "I imagine Yanda will be the same" she smiled.

Yandi: "Oh wow soon we'll be here to welcome Hlubi's boy. All of this is just so exciting"

Alu: "You ladies are making me broody. I think it's time Lungile and I went for number two" they all laughed.

Zuko: "No broodiness here. I am still sticking to my one baby thank you" the others laughed.

Ntombi: "I would like another. I love babies. I would not mind if I even had eight"

Lucia: "Never" they all laughed
"I'm giving my husband his one

soon so whether it's a girl or boy he'll have to be satisfied with what I've given him because two is my limit"

Mandla: "I can't wait until mine leave the house so I can have my peace of mind back so my hubby better not expect more"

Ntombi: "I think he wants to feed Poppy" she smiled at the baby.

Poppy: "He's struggling to get it though. I don't know what's so difficult about sucking"

Othu: "Ba patient with my nephew please. He'll get it. Let me show you a trick I learned

when Phawu wouldn't latch"
Ntombikayise gave Poppy the
baby and Othu worked her magic.
Soon the baby was having his milk
properly for the first time ever"

Yandi: "So Hlubi how's your father
in law?"

Hlubi: "He seems to be doing well.
Yanda took him to the doctor a
few days ago and he is in perfect
shape. He's such a loving man I
wish we had a bigger house
already so we could take him"

Othu: "But he is fine with his
wife"

Hlubi: "Try telling my aunt in law
that. There is honestly no love

lost between those two"

Lucia: "No you don't need the added stress so let his wife take care of him. With a baby on the way you'll barely have time for yourself let alone your father in law. I do respect African people for not taking their elders to old aged homes though. We go put them there so we can travel abroad without hassle and its sad actually"

Ntombi: "I love having mine at my place. They help with so much. I'm sure my uncle's wife is sad to hear my granny can now walk short distances"

Poppy: "I'm sure that they already made loans with hope to pay it back with her policy money. The things that are happening these days"

Ntombi: "Even if she was fragile and ended up passing they would never have gotten the death certificate to go claim that money. They'd have to get it without it"

Hlubi: "I'm sure several already have my poor father in law in their policies"

Ntombi: "I know that money is tight for many but to try and cash in from the death of a loved

one is too much"

Nurse: "Ladies I'm sorry to interrupt but mommy and baby need to rest" she said with a smile.

Poppy: "You guys can come by the house from tomorrow. Thank you for coming and Hlubi brace yourself for the pain, girl. I even pooped myself this time" all the other ladies laughed. They said goodbye to Poppy and her nameless baby. Ntombikayise went home with Hlubi to avoid running into Liyema because she was not in the mood for him. She was not aware that he started

seeing a therapist.

Yanda: "What would you ladies like to drink before I be on my way?" he asked as they walked through the door.

Ntombi: "You can go, Bhut Yanda. I'll take care of your little one and lady" she smiled.

Hlubi: "Baby, don't forget to take the coat and jersey that I got for Tata. It's getting colder so he'll need it"

Yanda: "Totally forgot about them. Thanks for reminding me" he ran to their bedroom.

Ntombi: "It must be nice to have a husband who is so kind and

attentive hey?" she smiled.

Hlubi: "I'm blessed, bestie. It's not just the pregnancy that had him like this. It's just who he is and when I went to see Tata with Nandi the neighbors who were visiting said his father was exactly like him. I can still feel it I though" she sat down.

Yanda: "I'm out!" he shouted "If you have another Braxton Hicks I'm sure that Ntombi will know what to do"

Hlubi: "Did you take the sweets and nuts I got him?" she shouted.

Yanda: "Lisakhanya" he said as he

ran back to get what she said "I love you. I'll see you later" he ran out and the ladies laughed.

Ntombikayise: "Are you happy?"

Hlubi: "I'm more than happy. Are you?" she knew she might get an answer she doesn't like.

Ntombi: "The good days outweigh the bad" Hlubi nodded. That answer to her was better than hearing Ntombi say she wasn't happy at all.

Hlubi: "So you're telling me that you walked in on those four cuddling on your couch" Ntombi laughed when she thought about that moment "we hardly see each

other now that I'm on maternity leave. I've missed you. Like I missed us without the others. I know it's selfish but it's true" Ntombikayise: "I've missed us too. Do you have some wine? Or does Nandi at least have wine?" Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "As if Yanda would allow Nandi to stock wine. Go check where I keep my good stuff. I miss having a glass yho" Ntombi laughed while pouring wine for herself and juice for Hlubi "I'm actually sad that she'll be relocating after the wedding. Mashudu is already in Pretoria so

I can see she misses him. It would be selfish to be against the move" she added.

Ntombi: "I don't know how I'll be when all the kids are out. They've been talking about boarding school"

Hlubi: "Nooo they shouldn't dare do that to you"

Ntombi: "I also can't keep them for selfish reasons, Hlubi. Makhulu and Tamkhulu have moments of locking themselves up in their room and the kids would be out. I'd just feel so lonely in those moments" she looked down.

Hlubi: "That's when you call us

and come over"

Ntombi: 'All of you have issues of your own. At least Daluxolo is there to talk to when I need to talk" she smiled.

Hlubi: "You two have grown close"

Ntombi: "When they say male best friends are the best, it's no lie"

Hlubi: "Is he gay?"

Ntombi: "I don't think so.

Remember that guy I had sex with after Liyema and I ended things?" she asked in a shameful whisper.

Hlubi: "No way you two can be so casual with each other now when you had sex" she didn't believe

Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "It was him" she laughed while covering her face with her hands.

Hlubi: "So he is not gay and he is sticking around after the awkward sex where you called him by another man's name. Are you friendzoning this man?"

Ntombikayise laughed out.

Ntombi: "Xolo is in love yes but it is not with me. He has difficulty letting go of his late wife. I think that's why he felt he needed to get away from here. Maybe too much reminded him of her"

Hlubi: "Or he ran from you so he

wouldn't have to confess love to a woman who sees him as nothing but a friend"

Ntombikayise: "Don't be silly" she smiled.

Hlubi: "Okay let's say that he was not still hung up on his late wife and he told you that he loves you, what would you have said?"

Ntombi shrugged.

Ntombi: "He doesn't have a single child of his own, Hlubi. I can't expect him to experience fatherhood with my teenage five who might even give him attitude by telling him he's not their father. Had he had a child

and I was ready to date I'd have gone for it" she laughed shyly.

Hlubi: "But I married Yanda with his nearly teen daughter but look at us and he never looked down on me for not giving him more kids"

Ntombi: "I know but at least he got to experience the lack of sleep and all of Nandi's milestones. I can't take that from Xolo"

Hlubi: "Why do I get the feeling you're suppressing feelings?"

Ntombi looked to the side "Bestie, it's me so talk" Ntombi started to cry.

Ntombi: "It's just that I'm constantly being told I should be

alone for a few years. Tamkhulu keeps telling me to create my own happiness and I am, Hlubi... I really am but there is no one to share it with. Sometimes I find the house empty when I'm excited about something and by the time they all return I am no longer as excited to share.

Everyone keeps telling me that happiness is not found in a man and I agree 100% but they don't bother asking me if I'm happy. Had they asked I'd have told them that I am though I have bad days which is normal for anyone. So when I dare speak

about possibly dating everyone just assumes I'm doing it to replace Liyema. Yes, I want companionship because humans are not icelands. Why should my dating be under a magnifying glass just because I'm a woman?. I'm happy but I do wish to cuddle next to someone and share it with them and hear how excited he is for me. So even if I wanted to pursue something with Xolo or any other man I'd be accused of chasing happiness in him when it's not the case. I miss the forehead kisses and I admit to loving those of Daluxolo

because I can feel the warmth in them. So I prefer for people to not ask me about dating because no one wants to hear that from a recently divorced woman" she took a tissue to wipe her tears.

Hlubi: "Since when do you live for the approval of others?" she held Ntombi's hands "Hell even if you chase happiness in a man it's your business. Life is too short to be living like you are right now, Ntombi"

Ntombi: "Don't mind me, Hlubi. It's what I pay Mrs B for" she joked and laughed.

Hlubi: "As someone who has never

known happiness for most of my life. I found it in my husband and daughter and I make no apology for it because should I die tomorrow I'll die having known happiness. I created happiness when I was already with Yanda and he inspired it. So who is society to tell us that we can't find happiness in another person when we aren't happy? Truth is such is a gamble, you might find someone who doesn't inspire happiness at all and it turns toxic or like me be blessed to find a person who shares their happiness with you until you can

create your own. Other couples heal each other, Ntombi. So who are we to tell you that you can't go for Daluxolo when we don't even know if you two were destined to heal each other?"

Ntombi: "Let's drop it, bestie" she looked down.

Hlubi: "No let's not. It's clear that you are only now hearing someone tell you what I have which makes me wonder what Mrs B does. I know you wouldn't mind one or two more kids and you act as though surrogacy is not an option. You can give Daluxolo an entire soccer team should you

both want that. Stop acting as though we live in the stone age, girl please" Ntombi laughed softly "You were happy on your own without Liyema but he added to that so I refuse to believe he took that happiness with him. If he did you then lost yourself somewhere in that marriage so go look for yourself"

Ntombi: "I still have that happiness so don't worry. I've even started doing things to enhance it. I just hate how people around me make me feel guilty for wanting to date again. One would swear I'm saying I

want to get married again. But also there's this fear that the next man will also cheat on me"

Hlubi: "That's normal...very normal even for those who never married. Truth is we never expect those who love us to betray us but that doesn't mean we should let them block out love. Ask me I know good men exist. Yes Yanda has his faults but he is a godsent. I would bend over backwards for him because I know he will do exactly the same and even go the extra mile. I spent the first two years of our relationship fearing that he was

a scum bag in disguise because all I knew were trash men but look at us now. So that's why I say fear after being hurt is normal but can you imagine how much I would have regretted not agreeing to be with him now?"

Ntombi: "I can imagine, best of best"

Hlubi: "So again do you have feelings for this Daluxolo man?"

Ntombikayise shrugged "That's not an answer" she added.

Ntombi: "I feel safe with him.

There is literally nothing that he doesn't know about me, Hlubi. So I haven't given myself time to

think in depth about my feelings for him because of what people will think. All I know is that I love him and I love how he seems to care about me but not only me but my kids too. My mom was the only one who used to call me Kayise, so I love it when it comes from his mouth too" she smiled "But I know people will tell me I'm just attached to him and trying to replace Liyema because he would think so too. I don't know where this Ntombi who cares about the opinions of others come from but she exists. But most importantly I care about

what my kids will say and feel. Their lives have been rocked so much and a relationship might cause more turbulences. So don't worry, on those days I feel like sharing my joy with someone other than family and friends I'll just write it down. Let's talk about something else"

Hlubi: "Why on earth can't you be selfish for a little while? The lover needs to be loved, the supporter needs to be supported, the healer needs to be healed too"

Ntombi: "I know all of that. I might try internet dating next year" she faked a laugh "Poppy's

baby is just perfect. I wanted to ask her to give him to me" she smiled.

Hlubi: "Do I have to worry about you kidnapping mine?"

Ntombikayise laughed out.

Ntombi: "No but you might have to put a bed for me in the house because I will be here almost everyday after work. I swear I'll be his favourite aunt. I'm going to spoil him rotten"

Hlubi: "Hmmm now I'm worried"

they both laughed. Hlubi

respected that Ntombi wanted the topic of discussion to change.

There was a time when Hlubi

didn't love herself. A time when Yanda's love carried them both until she learned to see her own worth. She couldn't understand why people said you can't love someone else when you don't love yourself because she loved Yanda though she didn't love herself until she could love herself and him unconditionally. She hoped that Ntombi would free herself of the prison of other people's opinions. Love had no manual book so no one knew how to love right but we all know how the right love feels to us when it comes. Hlubi would hate for Ntombikayise

to let a love that feels right to pass her by because of the fear of gossips and fear of being cheated on again. Hlubi was at that stage where she no longer loved Liyema for Ntombikayise. She wished he would eventually find happiness but she could no longer picture him sharing that happiness with Ntombi. He did too much damage so their trust would possibly never be repaired again. She hated to see her friend start over again but she knew that Ntombi was slowly rising. She felt Ntombi's happiness and so did the other ladies and if she

wanted to share it with Daluxolo or any other man Hlubi would be her biggest supporter because she felt life doesn't deal us the same cards. Life was too short to be a prisoner to fear and she prayed Ntombi realises it soon.

Mr Mbuzo moved the "special" tea that Ma Mbuzo made for him.

Ma Mbuzo: "You think that your pension pays for groceries in this house? Well you are as useless as you used to be back then when you didn't have a stable job. Drink this tea or see where you'll get food from now on" she said while

banging the table.

Mr Mbuzo: "What did you do with Yakhikhaya?" he asked. Ma Mbuzo for the first time saw no confusion in his eyes. It were the eyes of a sane man"

Ma Mbuzo: "Hey, hey don't ask me about that demon that you made with another woman. You thought that I, Nolali would raise your bastard child huh?" she asked while hitting her chest.

Mr Mbuzo: "I will go and tell my other son that you took his..."

Ma Mbuzo: "Hey, hey" she said while pushing him back down to his seat as he tried to stand. It

was not the first time that she manhandled him. Back in the day he didn't hit back because he didn't want to hit a woman but in that moment he wanted to but he was not physically strong enough. When he finally stood she pushed him against a kitchen cupboard and watched him fall. The agonizing groan of pain coming from inside the house was what made Yanda leave all the things he had been unloading to rush inside.

Ma Mbuzo: "I tried to help him stand but he slipped and fell" she said with her hands on her head.

Yanda: "Tata, are you okay? Where does it hurt, xhego?" the old man was in such pain that no words could come out so he pointed to his hip instead "Since when does he need assistance getting up, Mama? Dammit man nothing that you touch stays good" he shouted "Tata, I'll lift you up. It'll be painful but I'm taking you to the hospital" he said to his father.

Ma Mbuzo: "I can rub that area with ointment" Yanda lifted his father up.

Yanda: "Go rub your slippery hands that let my father fall" he

walked pass her to the car. He had medical aid for Mr Mbuzo so Yanda hoped the hospital would give his dad the best care. Mr Mbuzo was admitted and the doctor came to tell Yanda that he fractured his hip. When asked how it happened Yanda explained as his mother did.

Doc: "I'll have to report this to the social worker, sir. Since it's an elderly person we must make sure that this was indeed an accident and not negligence"

Yanda: "I understand, doc. Will he be okay?"

Doc: "He's old so the pain will be

ten times for him but we've given him strong medication to ease the pain. You say his wife was with him when it happened?" Yanda nodded. "Is there a history of abuse of any kind between them?"

Yanda: "She used to speak to him anyhow when growing up but..."

Doc: "So a history of verbal abuse?" he cut Yanda's words short.

Yanda: "No...yes... I don't know" he said with frustration.

Doc: "Let me let the social worker deal with it. For now you can go see him because I see you are concerned" Yanda didn't know if

what he witnessed between his parents was abuse but he remembered how terrible it made him feel. He found his father sleeping and in that moment decided that he'd be discharged to his house and no where else. He'd talk to Hlubi about renting a bigger flat until they could finally find a house they like. He didn't have a plan but he was certain that he wanted his mother no where near his father without supervision. 

S2-INSERT 30

When the social worker had a talk with Nolali she denied any allegations of domestic violence.

She even shed a few tears to try and get some sympathy but it was only temporarily received.

When the social worker finally got a chance to speak to Mr Mbuzo she realized that the mention of Ma Mbuzo's name alone brought fear to him. She couldn't understand why he couldn't talk though because patients who have dementia could usually speak well but Mr Mbuzo seemed to

have additional speech problems too. When the social worker contacted Gina his former case social worker Gina told her that Mbuzo left them as strong as ever with no need to be assisted to get up. She also revealed that he couldn't remember much but he could speak well which was the opposite of the man the new social worker Ruth spoke to. A further investigation into abuse began but until then Mr Mbuzo got discharged into the care of his son. Yandiswa had started to feel disgusted by her mother

after the incident. She'd been hard at work trying to find a permanent job so she'd move out with her child. With Rose having filled the cleaning position she was left with deep regret of not accepting it when it was offered. It had been a week since Mr Mbuzo has been living with Yanda and Hlubi was looking for a bigger flat with great urgency.

Hlubi: "Aren't your ribs sore?" she handed Nandi a cup of tea.

Nandi: "Actually this sleeper couch is comfortable. What I miss is my privacy" she sat up to take the

tea "Thank you, Ma" she smiled.
It was a cold day so the tea was
a perfect way to start the day.

Hlubi: "You're welcome" she sat on
the other end of the sofa.

Nandi: "Mama, there's something
that I need to tell you and I'd
like for you to pass it on to Tata
on my behalf" she said in a
whisper. Hlubi braced herself to
hear something that she herself
most probably wouldn't like
"Mashudu and I have been
talking. We decided that it is best
I got to Pretoria and live with
him" she sipped her tea.

Hlubi: "Haibo, Nandipha Fezeka Mbuzo" she raised a brow.

Nandi: "I know it comes as a shock but I've already applied for jobs there. Clearly there aren't opportunities here. Plus it'll be good for Mashudu and I to get to know what it's like to live together before marriage. I read that many struggle in the first year of marriage because they aren't used to living with each other"

Hlubi: "Yanda is not going to like this one bit"

Nandi: "But you guys did it" she

looked down.

Hlubi: "Why the sudden rush, Nandipha? It's like you've been wanting to get out since the pregnancy. Do you feel that I might change should the baby come by treating you differently?"

Nandi smiled.

Nandi: "Really now, MaHlubi? It has nothing to do with that but everything to do with me growing up. It feels right to me" she held her mother's hand.

Hlubi: "Oh wow. When on earth did you become a woman? I guess I can't stand in your way. You're an

adult after all but I won't pretend like I'm not sad. I'll talk to your father. He might lock you up in the room to prevent you from leaving so best be prepared" they both laughed.

Nandi: "I'm going to be right here after that little one is born. I'm too excited about his arrival to miss it his first days"

Hlubi: "wait why do you talk as though you're leaving soon soon?"

Nandi: "End of the month" Hlubi's eyes shot open "Please give me your blessing, Ma" she pleaded.

Hlubi: "Let me talk to my partner

in crime first" her eyes became teary.

Nandi: "Are you crying?"

Hlubi: "Yes because I'm sad. I wanted both my kids under the same roof for a few years but now that won't happen. Damn age gap" Nandipha laughed before getting closer to hug her mom.

Nandi: "We'll be the best of buddies no matter where I am. I met Rose's kids but this one I'm most excited to meet because I've been praying for him since you got married. I love you,

Mama. Had you and dad not done a good job in shaping the woman that I am today, I wouldn't have been confident enough to want to be independent. You two should honestly be proud of yourselves because I am"

Hlubi: "Stop trying to make me feel less sad" she smiled through the tears.

Nandi: "You know very well that it's the pregnancy hormones making you cry so much not my news" they both laughed before hugging.

Hlubi: "I love you too". Yanda

leaned against a wall listening to the conversation in the lounge. He shut his eyes while taking a deep breath and realized just how much Nandi had grown. He felt as sad about the move as Hlubi did perhaps ten times more but he knew he couldn't stop Nandi from going. He had no legal authority to stop her so all he could do was hope that she was making the right decision. He always hoped she'd leave the house only after marriage and not to go cohabit but as Nandi mentioned he and Hlubi did the same. It was in

that moment that he realized that kids indeed don't do as you say but do as you do. He intended on being a better example for his son and do actions that he'd be happy to see his boy model someday. He went to Mr Mbuze's bedroom to help his father bath. It was an adjustment at first but Yanda realized that he'd want no one else to help his father with such. The formal investigation against his mother was weighing him down and he was praying that she was innocent of the abuse allegations.

because if she was guilty, he didn't think he could ever forgive her. Hours went by and Nandi and Yanda went about their daily commitments. Hlubi didn't mind spending most of her days with Mr Mbuzo as it was better than being completely alone. She made sure that he was comfortable and warm on the couch before handing over his tea and scones to him. He thanked her before she watched him dunk the scones in his tea and taking a bite. Someone was knocking on the door softly and Hlubi stood to go open. Yandi stood

at the door smiling and holding a lot new born car seat.

Yandi: "Oh my goodness it's freezing out there" she said as she walked inside the warm flat. Hlubi had the heater on so it was nice and cosy inside.

Hlubi: "I feel it just by opening the door. Is that Imi's carseat?"

Yandi nodded "You could have said it's ready for pickup. I'd have asked Yanda to make a turn at your house" she added.

Yandi: "I needed to get away from Babini. Don't worry just a little argument that I feel entitled to

be dramatic about" Hlubi laughed.
Hlubi: "I know exactly what you mean"

Yandi: "Friend, I hope it's still in good condition for you to use. I had it cleaned up so don't worry no baby puke on it" Hlubi smiled while looking at the seat. It looked brand new.

Hlubi: "I love it so much. Thank you so much, Yandi. Yanda said he'll outgrow the newborn one quickly so it's best we get a second hand one"

Yandi: "He is so right. This little guy is only needed for a few

months. I don't..." she looked over to the lounge where Mr Mbuzo sat quietly.

Hlubi: "Yandisa?" she watched Yandi go to Mr Mbuzo as though they were not just in the middle of a conversation. Yandi held Mr Mbuzo's hand while looking into his eyes.

Yandi: "Something is bothering him but he doesn't know how to be verbal about it. It's like he knows what it is but he can't exactly put his finger on it"

Hlubi: "Maybe it's his the pain in the hip. It's cold so I'm certain"

she sat down. Hlubi knew that Yandi was a traditional healer but she'd never seen Yandi in her element. She felt a bit freaked out but she remembered that Yandi uses her gift to help not to harm other.

Yandi: "Speak, Cirha" she held both his hands but still did break eye contact "Set your heart free, Ncibane by telling us what is in it. Do not fear, they will not do anything to you. Your ancestors didn't allow it then and they sure won't allow it now" Mr Mbuzo began to cry "Let it out,

Qhandolo" the intensity in the room made Hlubi sit back a bit. Mr Mbuzo: "She took my son away. The way she was treating me drove me into the warm arms of another woman. Nolungile used to give me the respect that I needed as a man so I ended up loving her. When Nolali did what she did to me I would seek refuge at Nolungile's house" Hlubi took out her phone to record what her father in law was saying. She felt it would be needed later on so Yanda could listen "Nolungile became pregnant and I promised

her that I would look after her and the baby. Back then I was a garden boy at the clinic so I had some income even though Nolali would take most of it. On the day that Nolungile was in labour I was luckily with her so I rushed her to where I used to work. I was excited to meet my baby. I had already had two with Nolali at that time. Hey ntombam, the nurse came to me after many, many hours and she told me that my love died due to bleeding out too much during childbirth. I remember feeling dizzy and nearly

fell but luckily there was a seat behind me so I sat down. After the shock I realized that it was true Nolongile died giving birth to our son. I did not know her family because she never spoke about them so I didn't know who to take the baby to. I knew that Nolali would be angry when I returned home with a baby but I had no choice. The nurses told me that I should bury Nolongile but there was no way that I could have a dignified funeral for her. A friend of mine Patrick helped me with a the costs of the burial

hole and because we were both men who were gifted with hands that could make anything we made a box for Nolungile. I told her neighbours what happened and the Reverend of the time said he'd bury her. So we managed to bury her that way but I had to go back for the baby. I took my son and went home with him. My plan was to save money and take the baby to Qwa Qwa because I knew he'd be better cared for by my family than my wife. I had planned to lie about whose it was but when I got

home Nolali didn't buy the lie. She would push me back trying to force the truth out of me and I nearly dropped my boy during that physical fight. I remember he let out a bitter cry because he was shocked. I told her the truth about his paternity and she hit me with a fist in the face" Hlubi sat back with her hand over her mouth "I could have hit her back but I was too good of a man to raise my hand at her and she knew it. So I turned around so she'd not hit my son but my back to let her anger out. Nolali is a

big boned woman so those blows were hard and my son was screaming at that time. She finally stopped and went to lock herself and our two children in the room. I took my son's bottle out of my pocket and I put it in his mouth so he'd calm down. He was small, fragile and innocent so he deserved none of that. I had also bought three towel napkins and a waterproof so I also changed his wet nappy right on the kitchen table just as the nurse showed me. I knew the saving would take too long so I decided I'd borrow

the money. There was a loan shark gangster so I decided first thing tomorrow I'd go to him. I took Yakhikhaya with me to go borrow the money but when I went with him to work my bosses said it was not allowed. It was either I take him home or I leave the job. I first tried the neighbors but non would help. When I got home Nolali was friendly which was rare. She cooked food for me and apologized and I should have suspected her but I was desperate to keep my job. So I asked her to look after

the baby and that weekend I'd take him to my mother and she agreed with a smile. I ate and with a heavy heart went back to work. I promised my boy I'd be home soon and kissed all three of them goodbye. Yanda, my eldest liked accompanying me to the gate so we had our usual short walk and I'd wave at him until I turned a corner. When I returned home I literally tore the house upside down looking for my son. We had an ugly fight with Nolali and for the first time I actually hit her. She had me arrested for it

even though she'd done worse many times before. I told the police my side of the story and because I had only given Yakhikhaya his name after I brought him home he didn't have a birth certificate yet but I was planning on sorting it all out but Nolali took my boy to who knows where. When we went to the hospital the police couldn't find record of Nolungile nor her giving birth there a few days ago and suddenly no one knew nothing even the midwife. The money I also borrowed was gone so I suspect

she bribed someone with it. She dropped the charges and told me to never mess with her again. I remained with the devil herself not because I loved her but because I prayed she'd tell me what she did to my son" he started to cry "Can you imagine not knowing what someone did to your child?" Hlubi shook her head crying because she couldn't imagine "An entire mother did something so evil" he wiped his tears "I went the extra mile to beg her so much so that I gave her the third child that she

asked for because after what she did we were no longer intimate but she said if I give her another child she'd tell me where Yakhikhaya is. Imagine sleeping with someone you hate just because they have what you need" Hlubi could imagine that because she'd done it many times before. Yandi felt her own shoulders feel lighter after he let out what had been in his heart. It was clearly something that has been there for years and Yandi knew that foul play was involved in keeping him quiet

Hlubi: "So how did you end up leaving, Tata?"

Mr Mbuzo: "I don't know, my child. I suddenly just forgot the way home and could never remember it again until I sat at the old aged home and suddenly remembered that I have a wife and four children in Cape town. Luckily I'd always been one to carry my ID in my pocket so that's how they knew who I was. I can't even tell you what I did with my life between the day that I left here and when I got to the old aged home. It's like a big part of my

life was wiped from my memory"
Yandi: "Would you and Yanda mind if I consult him?" she looked at Hlubi "Just look" she let go of Mr Mbuzo's hands and broke eye contact. Suddenly Hlubi saw that confused look in his eyes again. "It's not dementia but because western medicine don't acknowledge our knowledge they diagnose the person without even asking for advice from us. We are black people at the end of the day, Hlubi. We can't run from that so I ask for a chance to work with him since you tried the

western way" she looked at Hlubi.
Hlubi saved the recording.

Hlubi: 'Let me tell Yanda to come home immediately. I can not decide that" she stood to call Yanda. Yandi spoke more with Mr Mbuzo to try and determine where the sickness began and when. The way Hlubi sounded on the phone made Yanda jump in his car to go home. He drove like a madman but luckily reached home safely. He knew Yandi by seeing her at the house when the ladies gathered. Hlubi played the recording for Yanda and he felt his

heart break. Suddenly a memory flashed through his mind.

Hlubi: "Babe?" she held his arm

Yanda: "I think I remember a baby being in the house. Yandiswa was still a baby herself but that baby was brand new or at least that's how I described it back then. I remember his cries...he could cry" he looked at Hlubi

"There was a time I even promised Tata I'd look after my brother until he returned" his hands started to shake "Meaning I didn't keep the promise" tears flew down his cheeks. Hlubi

wanted to comfort him but he took out his phone to make a call. Soon he said that they'd be going to his mother's house to confront her. He didn't want Hlubi to be a part of that stress so he asked her to stay home. Fortunately Nandi came back at just the right time. Yanda had his father in the car soon enough and Yandi didn't mind driving with him just in case they'd need her. Yanda told Yandiswa to make sure that their mother stays home and that the kids are out playing. As soon as they sat down Yanda played the

recording to them and Yandiswa felt herself get sick. She had no memory of a baby as she was also just a few months old at that time. She was crying and the tears just kept flowing.

Ma Mbuzo: "So you believe your mad father who left you over a mother who raised you?"

Yandisa: "He was made mad and you know it"

Ma Mbuzo: "Who is this that you've allowed to come disrespect me, Yanda?" Is it your makhwapheni? You give your women freedom to disrespect me

so I wouldn't be surprised"

Yanda: "Where is my brother, Mama?" he asked calmly but felt his anger build when she ignored him "I asked where my father's child is, Nolali" he shouted. A vein popping on his forehead indicated how angry he was.

Yamkela: "Haibo Bhuti. We all know that Tata is confused. Why do we now shout at our mother who raised us when Tata abandoned us?"

Yandiswa: "You shut the hell up" she pointed at her sister.

Yamkela: "You think I'd let him

accuse my mother of such and on top of that claim to have been forced to have sex with her because Mama wanted me?"

Yandiswa: "Well since she forced herself on my father to have you maybe she wanted you to take over her witchcraft legacy. The way you speak up for her makes me wonder"

Yamkela: "Haibo Yandiswa I'm pregnant. How the hell could you say I'm a product of rape when I'm fragile at the moment?"

Yanda: "If you won't tell us the truth then maybe you will have no

problem telling it to the police" he walked to the door. He called the police because he wanted backup should things get ugly. The officers walked in.

Ma Mbuzo: "You are willing to send your own mother to jail, Yanda and Yandiswa?"

Yanda: "If my mother abused my father then yes. I'd have done the same had the tables been turned. Men are stepped on by women in this country yet South Africa is silent about it. Well if no human rights group will fight for men then I'm going to fight for

the man in my life. I remember the baby, Mama. I remember now how you told me to not touch "that thing". I don't know where the memories got lost but they've returned. I know Tata is telling the truth. Please just for once do something right and tell us what you did to him. Do not go with this to your grave and leave us with gapping wounds" he pleaded.

Yamkela: "Yho" she clapped once.

"I never thought I'd see the day a stranger suddenly makes my big siblings hallucinate and remember

things that never happened. It must be nice to love your father to a point where you accuse the mother who looked after you" she clapped again.

Yandiswa: "Where is Yakhikhaya, Mama?"

Mr Mbuzo: "Where is my son, Nolali?" he asked.

Yanda: "You heard the question. Where is he?" he added to the pressure.

Ma Mbuzo: "You want to know what I did with the demon?" she shouted while hitting her thighs "I buried it...yes that's what I

did, Yavela. I buried your little ugly bastard child and you will never know where. You think you can cheat and bring me proof to look at on a daily basis? Well I buried that thing alive. It was crying so much but I didn't care but I finally silenced it" Yandiswa broke down in tears. Yanda suddenly found that the air around them was not enough to help him breath and Yamkela just froze. "You are here to take me so take me" she put her wrists together so the police could cuff her "You wanted the answer but

now you are all looking like that?
Well there is your answer. I dug a hole, put that thing in there and let it go be with its mother who could just open legs to my husband and think that there would not be any consequences. Well there was and her child felt them" the police cuffed her after the confession and arrested her. The community had gathered to witness it and some were saying that it served her right. The elderly were certain that she hurt Mr Mbuze on purpose as she'd done many times so to see

her be put in the back of a police vehicle was victory for them. The Mbuzo family remained with never ending tears.

Yanda: "Can't you help us locate where she buried him?" he looked at Yandi.

Yandi: "If I get a vision then I'll let you know but I don't choose what I get shown" Yanda nodded.

Yamkela: "I can't live in this house anymore. I know I'll have a miscarriage if I continue to. I'm going to live with Thabiso" she stood and went out. To hear that she was conceived after her

mother blackmailed her father into having sex hurt her. It was no better than to hear that she was a child of rape. Yanda agreed to Yandi helping his father. Hours went by and Yanda took his father home before heading to the station. The social worker who had been investigating was also there.

Ruth: "I have been talking to the people who lived near your parents and all of them have witness to a history on not just verbal abuse but also physical abuse coming from your mother.

The interrogation officer couldn't get through to your mother as she'd just stare at him without saying a word. They referred her to a psychiatrist for psychological evaluation. They say that she is showing signs of psychopathy but they'll only be sure once I've done the necessary tests. I know that this can't be easy on you and your family but we will all work together to find out from her where exactly she buried the baby because she says that she'd rather drink rat poison and die with the secret than show you

where. Clearly she has deep emotional scars of her own"

Yanda: "People leave a cheating spouse, Ruth. They don't take the spouses child and go bury it alive. That is just...that's..." he broke down "Psychopathy or not she is nothing to me as of today. Is it possible to just forget something and remember it after years?"

Ruth: "Yes especially when it's a child who is constantly told that what they remember didn't happen. It's easy for you to store the memory in your subconscious

mind until someday it returns. I'll keep in touch with her progress. Some emotional pain drive people to insanity, Yanda"

Yanda: "My mother was not the first to be cheated on, Ruth and she won't be the last either. If all of the people who had to deal with the same did what she did then I imagine we'd have been one sick country. If I feel this way then I can not imagine what my father must be feeling. I might have vague memory of him too but I know that he loved us all. There was no way he'd endure

all that abuse all those years ago to just up and leave us so my mother had a hand in this"

Ruth: "I don't believe in superstition. So I'd like for you to accept that your father suffers from a medical condition. I know that you want to blame your mother for everything but she couldn't have had control over his mental problem. I will keep you updated with the case. I'm truly sorry to hear about your brother and I pray that she reveals where she buried him so that you all can begin the journey to healing

and find closure"

Yanda: "Thanks" he said and watched her walk out. Yanda went home to find Yandiswa clinging to their father.

Yandiswa: "It explains why she hated sis Lisakhanya so much. She couldn't understand how Lisa could love Nandi so much when she failed to even look after her own husband's child for a day. I remember that sis Lisakhanya saying that what Mama does to her was non of her business as it was a reflection on issues Mama is dealing with. Now it makes

sense. She couldn't be a stepmother hence she hates all who can. She always told us to never marry men with kids while growing up because we'll never love those kids as we would our own. How did we miss the signs, Bhut?" she looked at her father. Yanda: "We were grateful to her for raising us so we overlook her flaws but now I'm wide awake. I'm glad I always defended my wife when Mama made accusations. They say she's a psychopath"

Yandiswa: "I could actually believe

that" she said quietly "I need to get home and take Yamkela home. She's hurting more because I basically told her she's a product of rape. I spoke out of anger and I must apologize"

Yanda: "We can't afford to let this come between us. We fight a lot but we love each other. I'll even arrange therapy for us" he held his father and sister's hand.

Yandiswa: "Can't we tell Dabs Nozulu not to come month end? I'm not in the mood to deal with her Bhut"

Yanda: "You know she will come so

best just prepare" Yandiswa exhaled. Hlubi walked in.

Yandiswa: "Sis Lisa once again I'm sorry for all the ill I spoke to you and against you. Mama recruited Yamkela and I into this hate campaign that she has against you so we believed you were bad"

Hlubi: "It's okay. I forgive you"

she sat down "Baby, so this will go to court clearly. I don't even know if I should offer

representation to Mama or Tata"

Yanda: "I don't want you offering it to any of them because we spoke about you working on

stressful things, baby. I'll sort this out" Hlubi nodded.

Yandiswa: "Let me go, Bhut" she stood to hug then all before calling her child. Sanda went to hug his grandfather too "So our mother is a murderer?" she looked back at Yanda and he nodded. .

Yanda: "Let's just pray that she has some heart so she'd tell us where she buried him. If you guys need me just call" Yandiswa nodded before leaving. Yanda went to kneel in front of Hlubi.

Yanda: "How are you?" he rubbed her belly.

Hlubi: "Are you kidding me, Mbuzo? I'm the one who should be asking you that" she kissed him.

Yanda: "I'm not the one who is carrying a baby" he smiled.

Hlubi: "But you are the one who has just heard that his mother killed his baby brother, babe. So how are you?"

Yanda: "Sad that I couldn't protect my father and sad I couldn't keep the promise of looking after his other son" he put his head on his wife's belly "People like Mama make me afraid for my baby now" he whispered. .

Hlubi: "He'll be fine and safe because he had the best father ever" she kissed his head. "Baby, help him to his bed" she looked at Mr Mbuzo who had fallen asleep.

Yanda: "Do you believe in this witchcraft thing?"

Hlubi: "I don't know but I do know that with Yandi around he is a totally new person. So she might just be right. Maybe western medicine doesn't know everything. My grandmother used to say that we are from a rich spiritual heritage so I believe that Yandi is an extension of

that"

Yanda: "Let us allow her to do her thing then. I love you so much" he gave her a passionate kiss.

Hlubi: "I love you too. Go put Tata on his bed so I can give you a massage" Yanda smiled.

Yanda: "Mmm I think I might need more than a massage to take my mind of things. If it's not Nandi wanting to cohabit in another province, it's my murderous mother. Today is not my day". Hlubi felt her heart break for him. He pushed his father to the room so he'd take a

nap after that exhausting afternoon. After the incident that day it seemed Mr Mbuzo's mind just decided to go blank again. Yanda partly blamed himself for not stopping his mother but he couldn't even remember when Nolali took the baby away that day but he does remember that she did it the same day Yanda promised his father that he'd look after his little brother and that's why he felt guilty. Suddenly all the Mbuzo children shared their father's grief of Yakhikhaya Mbuzo who

died a tragic and undeserving death. They also wished they could put a face to the name Yakhikhaya after learning that he was not just a fregment of their father's imagination but that was not possible because he laid somewhere in an unidentified grave having been stripped of the chance to grow beyond his new born stage. It was a pain that would surely never go numb. 

S2 Insert 31

(NOT EDITED)

Ntombi unloaded the groceries and felt herself get annoyed by the children not coming out to help her carry it though she'd been calling on the top of her voice for them to come out. She held a tray of eggs in one hand and a shopping bag in the other ready to give all five of them a piece of her mind.

Guests: "Surprise!" a group of people said and Ntombi got such a fright that she dropped everything that was in her

hands. The eggs certainly broke but once she took in what was happening she realized that it was a surprise party for her. Her birthday was a few days ago and the day begin with breakfast on bed by the children. She felt special enough on the actual day so to see that they planned a party for her made her emotional. She started to cry between laughter and watched her children walk to the door to meet her. Bukhosi: "You're shaking" he said as he held her hand "Sorry for fright, queen mother" he hugged

her.

Ntombi: "When?" she looked around and saw her friends.

Bandile: "Remember those moments when we'd suddenly keep quiet when you walked into the room? That's when" he also hugged her before going down to pick up what his mother dropped.

Amahle: "I told them how to decorate it, Mom. I really hope that you love it" she smiled.

Ntombi: "I love it, Nana. You should consider events planning or interior design" she looked around at the young yet classy

decoration.

Bubele: "Now go in and greet your guest. They are starting to wonder why you have been frozen on the spot" they laughed.

Banele: "We'll take care of the rest of the bags" he went out to the car. Ntombi went to greet her grandparents first before going to her friends and the other guests.

Ntombi: "So who of you is responsible for nearly giving me a heart attack?" she asked her friends and they all laughed.

Hlubi: "Actually my nephews and

niece did all of this with help from the elders of course"

Ntombi: "What? They didn't say anything when I greeted them. Oh my goodness having grown kids have its perks" she looked around.

Othu: "Mmm hopefully they'll rub whatever it is that makes them think of doing such on mine" she joked and they laughed.

Ntombi: "Please excuse me. I'd like to go say thank you to them" the ladies nodded and watched her go to where her family was. It was going to be an intimate lunch with

close friends and family only and Ntombi loved it that way. She hugged each of her kids and gave them each a kiss of the forehead before doing the same with her grandparents.

Tamkhulu: "Planning this for you was not easy at all. You've been complaining about feeling left out since we began and we had to make excuses. Never again"

Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I am grateful to you all for this, family. I have also forgiven you guys for not coming out when I called" all the kids

laughed.

Bubele: "We were laughing at you for that until tears rolled down"

Bukhosi: "Bubele, Bukhosi, Bandile, Banele, Amahle!" he said trying to imitate how his mother called out before they all laughed again "You'll go and buy your own food if you don't come out in the next three seconds" he continued and the laughter started all over again.

Tamkhulu: "Hey don't make fun of my daughter" he pointed at them playfully while laughing softly.

Makhulu: "I hope we didn't miss

anyone, Ntombi. We don't want your friends thinking you have favourites" she looked around.

Ntombi: "Everyone who is close enough to be here is here, Mama. Let me go and make myself pretty"

Bandile: "You're beautiful already. What else must you add?"

Amahle: "You won't understand. Go and do what you must, Ma" she looked at her mother.

Ntombi: "I'll be quick" she quickly ran up to her room. All guests were wearing classy yet simple winter wear so Ntombi changed

out of her casual jeans and sneakers into something else. She touched up her make up and was down just in time to welcome Dali to her home. He looked dashing and she found herself running into his arms as though no one was watching. She was excited to see him and clearly couldn't hide it.

Dali put the gift where the others were before going to greet the elders.

Tamkhulu: "Oh madoda" he looked at Dali's coat before rubbing his thumb over it "Mmm I remember this make because it was made

during our times. I haven't seen another like it in this generation. Where did you find this gem, Nyana?" he looked impressed.

Dali: "It was a gift, Tata" he smiled.

Makhulu: "It was expensive too. I didn't know they still made them."

Dali: "I don't think so, Makhulu because it used to belong to someone before it was mine. I actually only found the courage to wear it now because it's been in my wardrobe since I received it"

Tamkhulu: "It looks good on you,

Nyana. Keep looking after it. I'm certain you are the only one today who has that make. Only whites could afford it back when it came out"

Ntombi: "Would you like to meet my other friends?" Dali looked at her and nodded. The two of them walked over to the ladies and all of them gave each other "a look". What they first noticed was Ntombi's smile around Dali.

Ntombi did the introductions and the ladies all greeted Dali.

Zuko: "Uhm...did we miss the colour theme of the party?" she

pointed at Ntombi and Dali. They only then realized that they had on the same colours. Both had on all black with a nude coat over it. Ntombi and Dali laughed at themselves.

Dali: "Copy cat" he looked at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "It's that great minds think alike thing, Mr Xhego" she smiled.

Dali: "Oh?" she nodded and he smiled. The ladies looked at each other smiling.

Hlubi: "You actually look familiar but I don't know where I think I

have seen you before" she looked at Dali.

Dali: "I must have one of those faces"

Lucia: "Good looking face at that" she raised a brow and Dali looked down while smiling.

Dali: "Thank you"

Bukhosi: "Attention everyone" everyone looked at him "Could everyone please make their way to the table. Lunch is about to be served. It is a very hearty meal and since we are just broke teens we cooked ourselves following our great grandmother's recipes" the

guests laughed. They did as the hosts said and Ntombi was seated at the special seat with a sash "birthday lady" on it.

Bandile: "Before we eat I'd just like to thank everyone for coming today to help us celebrate my mother. I know that it's not the most elegant party but it is one that was created with love. To our mom please don't ever grow too old. We wish you long life and we promise to try by all means to be the kind of kids deserved by a kind hearted mother like you.

You've been going through a lot

lately and I know all here know what I mean by that but you've remained our rock non the less. All that we want is to see you happy and we hope that all the people that we invited today are a part of the group that adds to your joy. Your big five loves you so much, queen mother" Ntombi was crying between the smiling. She was proud of them and she felt proud of not just herself but the "village" that helped her raise them. Soon they all played waiters by serving what was indeed a hearty food that was

perfect for the weather. The conversation was flowing because everyone had been comfortable around each other. The food was amazing and the mulva pudding served for dessert was even greater. Ntombi stood to thank her family and guests.

Ntombi: "Wow I honestly can't believe that my kids are grown enough to put such together. You guys are honestly the best thing that's ever happened in my life. We might fight but I'd never trade you for anything. The party is lovely and you invited some of

my favourite people and I know Poppy and Yandi would have come if they could. To my parents I wish that you were forever people because I wouldn't have gotten through many of the things life dealt me with without you two. It's so strange that I met most of my friends during a very low moment in my life. Had I not gone through that process I don't think I'd have you all here right now. If there's anything good that came from that low moment it's the great friendships formed. You are all so important in

my life and I hope that I'll celebrate with you guys for many more years. Thank you so much for this my munchies. Mom loves you guys so much" she blew the kids a kiss and the boys caught it and placed it on their heart while Amahle blew one back to their mom. "Now can we please have some music so we can dance a bit. I think we are enough to have a party" everyone laughed.

Mandla: "Oh yes" she raised her glass of wine before standing.

The music was indeed played but not at a loud volume out of

respect for the elders and neighbors. The ladies planned to have an afterparty of their own where kids and elders weren't allowed. Ntombi first danced with her children and tried by all means to catch on to the dance trends they were showing her. Dali sat with Tamkhulu but his eyes were on her and Tamkhulu just smiled while shaking his head occasionally.

Tamkhulu: "So tell me Daluxolo. Which clan are you from, son?" he sat back to distract Dali from looking at his daughter too much.

Dali gave a summary of his story and Tamkhulu felt himself feel sad "I'm sorry to hear that. I can not imagine what it must be like for a man to not have a name to pass on to his children" he added.

Dali: "I think that is the one thing that still bothers me, Tamkhulu. A child regardless of their gender holds their father's clan name and no marriage will change it. To know that my kids will go blank when asked which clan they belong to scares me"

Tamkhulu: "Is that why a man

your age has no kids. Are you afraid of putting them through that?" Dali laughed softly but not out of disrespect but at the fact that Tamkhulu thought he's too old to be childless. He told Tamkhulu about his first marriage "Oh madoda, you have gone through so much for such a young man. We usually think that experience come with age yet here you are with life experience is that an old man like me can't begin to imagine. I'm glad that you keep on keeping on" Tamkhulu added.

Dali: "There is honestly no other way, Tamkhulu. It was either I go on or I die and I'm not ready to die yet. I feel like the best things in my life are yet to happen"

Tamkhulu: "Spoken like a true man. We are resilient and I am proud of you for choosing life" Dali felt warm inside to hear an elderly man say he was proud of him. It was a first and it felt good.

Dali: "Thank you, Tata" he smiled.

Tamkhulu: "I see you dying my Nto-Nto" he said while brushing his beard "Don't look so shocked.

I'm a man and her father at that so I must be observant especially now after she's been hurt so much. I'm not against her being in a relationship but I don't want it to be now. So if you are serious about her then you will wait until she is ready. She might think she is ready but she's not. She should learn to be comfortable with her own company before inviting someone else to her space"

Dali: "I hear you, elder. But isolation can become addictive and before you know it life has passed

you by. I do agree with you as far as Kayise is concerned though. She still has a lot to work through and that's why I've kept my feelings to myself"

Tamkhulu: "Let us say that you two do come together. How sure am I as her father that she's not going to be unhappy with you as you might still be in love with your late wife?"

Dali: "I've gone to Joburg to get away from her when I felt my feelings get stronger. I knew that she would have to compete with the ghost of Gugu but since

the move I've been making choices to heal from the loss. I can't just erase my late wife from my memory, Tata and I don't want to because she's a part of my story" Tamkhulu nodded "But she no longer has a hold on me as I allowed before. I've learned to let go and live again and it feels good. It's good to not have triggers anymore" Dali added.

Tamkhulu: "Good... good. Nto-Nto can't have children either. You are a childless man so how exactly do you think a union of such will work? Next thing you cheat and

impregnate a woman and you come to my child and make her feel like she's to blame when you pursued her knowing what you let yourself into"

Dali: "I'm a one woman man, Tamkhulu. I've always been that way but I understand your concerns. I know that she'll have the same fear should there be something between us. After Gugu's operation I had already accepted that I'm not going to have children naturally. After that we spoke about adoption and I know personally the amount of

kids who are in need of homes. Many Amahle's out there who need a Kayise and a Liyema to give them homes"

Tamkhulu: "Mmm but I know that blood means a lot to a man. Especially a man who like you has no one close who shares your DNA. I imagine you wonder how it must be to have someone with a bloodline like yours. You give me good answers now but things might change"

Dali: "I'm not denying that, Tamkhulu. Maybe it's good that I have never been open about my

feelings to her then"

Tamkhulu: "But to do that you start a war within yourself.

Unspoken words leave us with many what ifs. I'm no God so I don't know what a union between you and my daughter or her with any man will result in. I'm trying to make you see things from different angles. I'm trying by all means as a father to see the red flags on behalf of her so I'd warn her before she steps into something. I see my grandchildren like you and clearly respect you and I like that. I see a natural sense

of fatherhood in you"

Dali: "Thank you for the compliment, Tamkhulu" Tamkhulu nodded. Dali got a text "Meet me outside" it read from Ntombi. He waited a few minutes before following her out. It was a chilly day but not too much.

Ntombi: "I thought I'd save you from my grandfather" she laughed.

Dali: "Well thanks Superwoman but I was actually enjoying myself. Today was great and your other friends are good people"

Ntombi: "You aren't a porn star in

your free time right?" Dali looked at her shocked and she laughed "Hlubi likes it so I thought maybe that's where she must have seen you" Dali laughed out.

Dali: "When I'm with a woman I want it to be just us. Not us and a camera crew so no I'm no porn star" he shook his head laughing.

Ntombi: "You need to stop wasting your money by flying here just for the small unimportant stuff" she stood closer.

Dali: "The small stuff are actually the most important, Miss Poti" he smiled and Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "True" she smiled. "Well if you needed no saving then let's go back in" she turned around.

Dali: "Not yet" he held her arm "You're beautiful" Ntombikayise smiled and nodded before thanking him.

Ntombi: "So this coat that my grandfather clearly wants" she got close to him again "Where can I get it as a gift to him" she felt it. It was strong material.

Dali: "Can you believe that it was actually a coat that I was wrapped in when I was found? Well the social worker said so"

Ntombi looked at him.

Ntombi: "Do you think it belonged to a man in your family? My grandfather said that it only could be afforded by the wealthy so could your family have been well off" Dali shrugged.

Dali: "I didn't wear it before but I made sure to never lose it. It was just a link to my family somehow but that's the only link"

Ntombi: "Hey" she closed the gap between them and Dali felt his heart race "We live in a small world and if you are meant to meet someone from your family

nothing is going to stand in the way of destiny" her hands were cold she she put them in his pocket for warmth because she didn't have her own coat on.

Dali: "I needed to hear that" he whispered with a faint smile.

Ntombi felt her own heart race as she felt his warm body against hers.

Ntombi: "So will you be here for a few days or today only?"

Dali: "I'll be leaving tomorrow. I want to go visit the kids at the orphanage, it's been a while"

Ntombi: "Can I take you out for

dinner tomorrow?"

Dali: "I'll take you out for dinner or I could cook for you" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "You don't have a kitchen in Cape town"

Dali: "But my brother does and he's away with his family to his wife's family event. I know where he keeps his spare key"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "So we'll be breaking in?"
they both laughed "How exciting"
she moved her brows.

Dali: "It sounds so bad when you put it like that but I actually like

the sound of it"

Ntombi: "Your coat's pockets are torn and I think that I found a note and it's finders keepers" she put her hand deeper in his pocket.

Dali: "Do you realize how old this thing is? That money is most probably not even valid anymore so keep whatever you find"

Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Got you" she finally got the slippery note. "You should check your pockets more"

Dali: "You literally just touched my ass to get it so clearly you went too deep"

Ntombi: "I like deep" she smiled.
Dali: "Damn..." he smiled as his mind just went to a dirty place for a while "Get it out already, Kayise. I'm sure it won't look appropriate if someone sees us" he laughed. Nto-Nto held a small white note in her hand and was disappointed to see it's not money.
Ntombi: "All of that for nothing"
Dali took the note. Clearly the recent dry cleaning done on it had its effects. Dali had searched the pockets before but found nothing so clearly the note had been hiding in places it had no business being

in. Having never worn the coat as he had that day he had no time to inspect it. He opened the note that seemed to have stuck together carefully "It looks like an old picture" she looked at it.

Dali: "It is but I can't see anything. The wash clearly ruined it but it's a black and white of a woman"

Ntombi: "And you've never seen it"
Dali shook his head "Since it was a coat you were found in, it might be your mother, Xolo" they looked at each other. Dali suddenly felt himself get hot so he took the

coat off. Ntombi took it to check for more clues but that was the only thing in it.

Dali: "Nolu" he read the writing behind it.

Ntombi: "It could be Noluthando, Nolusapho, Nolungile or any of those kinds of names. Let me see" she looked at the picture. Only half of the woman's face was visible but it too was washed up "Why don't you men ever inspect your pockets before washing the clothes?" she asked with frustration. Dali asked himself that same question after each

laundry session he's had.

Dali: "It could be my mother's and she might have been a Nolu something. I regret never inspecting this coat properly. This could be my only clue, Kayise"

Ntombi: "So this might have belonged to your father" she looked at the coat.

Dali: "What's the use, Kayise. I was told I'm an orphan so they are clearly dead"

Ntombi: "But they didn't fall from the sky, Xolo so surely they have family. We could research where these coats were sold. My

grandfather said that there weren't many of them so how hard can it possibly be?"

Dali: "And then what?" Ntombi raised her shoulders "I've put this chapter behind me, Kayise so let us drop it. Let's go inside because it seems to be raining" they both looked up. Ntombi felt helpless but she respected his decision. Once the party was over the ladies went home to wear something more comfortable for the night they had planned. Yanda came pick Hlubi up but first came inside to greet everyone. When he

shook Dali's hand there was literally an electronic sensation for both. It was not strong enough to electrocute them but it was enough for them to quickly break the handshake to look at their hands.

Yanda: "That was strange" both men laughed before explaining to the ladies.

Hlubi: "It's happened to me a few times when I stir a pot with a steel fork"

Dali: "It's a first for me but it was good meeting you, bra" Yanda smiled and nodded.

Yanda: "Likewise. So are you ready to go?" he looked at his wife and she nodded.

Ntombi: "Thank you for coming, bestie. I'll party on behalf of both of us later on" Hlubi gave her a look and Ntombi laughed. The couple left.

Dali: "I've got to get going too I'll come pick you up for that dinner later on tomorrow" the two of them walked to his car.

Ntombi: "So you'll just let that picture go?" Dali nodded and so did Ntombikayise. He opened his arms for a hug "You want to

electrocute me too" they both laughed.

Dali: "Oh come on" Ntombi went to give him a hug. It was longer than their usual one. Ntombi waved as Dali drove off before going back inside.

Ntombi: "I have the best kids ever" she ran to them to kiss them but they ran off and she chased them one by one to get sweet kisses all over their faces.

"And the best parents" she did the same with her parents and everyone in the house laughed.

Dali kept looking at the picture

and he wondered what the name on it was. He knew that it could be nothing but he also knew that it could be the first puzzle piece in his incomplete story but he had no idea where to start looking for the other pieces. ❤️

S2-INSERT 32 (NOT EDITED)

Mahlubandile put in the final touches to the new flat that they got a few days ago. It was more spacious than their previous one which was perfect for Mr Mbuzo's wheelchair. Mr Mbuzo started to remember things well

again but that meant that raw emotional wounds were opened again.

Yandi: "Cirha, please try to eat something" she pleaded. The elder had been eating poorly since he started regaining his memory but it got worse yesterday when he refused to take any food in.

Mr Mbuzo: "I feel like dying. I am useless anyway. I couldn't protect my child and I just walked out on my other children and never looked back" Yanda sat next to his father.

Yanda: "You are here right now because you did look back, Tata. I

refuse to believe that Mama is so evil that she'd go with whereabouts of Khaya's grave to her grave. Please you must eat so that you can be strong for us and be here when we go exhume Khaya's remains to give him a proper burial. Please, Mcirha" he pleaded and watched his father open his mouth after a long while. Yanda gave him the bowl so he'd feed himself because he didn't want his father feeling like more of a failure.

Yandi: "He is feeling the pain all over again. The years lost made it easier on him to not think

about what happened but now he remembers and he's mourning all over again. Please don't see him as less when he doesn't want to eat again. Elderly become like children in their golden age and that requires us to be patient with them"

Yanda: "So he remembers everything?"

Yandi: "He remembers what's important and since you all were important to him he feels like a failure of a father for abandoning you. You guys just need to keep reassuring him that you still love him and see him as the father

you remember him to be. When I consulted with him in my home I had a dream that night. I kept searching for a baby amongst your ancestors who showed themselves to me but I didn't find any"

Yanda: "Now you've lost me, MaDlomo" he looked at her.

Yandi: "What if your mother lied about killing him? What if she just wants to see him suffer until he dies for cheating on her?"

Yanda: "And she's known for holding grudges so..." he turned his head to look back at his father. Where does one even begin

to look?" he turned to look at Yandi again "I want this to be behind us by the time Lisakhanya gives birth. I can't imagine my baby wanting to be with me when I'm so stressed out. I read they are sensitive to negativity" he added.

Yandi: "I wish that there was more that I could do but if information is not revealed to me by my ancestors I'm as useless"

Yanda: "No...no, sis wam. You've helped us a great deal. Thank you so much. You've just made me aware of something that never crossed my mind. The way Mama

said what she said with such meaning and hate made me believe it"

Mr Mbuzo: "Yanda, please take me to Nolungile's grave, son. I want to go clean it. Maybe she's going to show me in my dream where our son is buried"

Yanda: "Do you still remember where it is?"

Mr Mbuzo: "I remember which graveyard she is in but not the exact spot of the grave but I made her a big white cross and wrote her name on it and "Loving mother" too. I know that Yakhikhaya would have been loved

had she lived. I'm sure he'd have been something big like you are.

My son never even got to take his first steps or sit on a school desk" he sniffed as tears rolled down.

Yanda: "Let me help you dress warm so we can go then, xhego"

Yandi: "I have to go home. My son had a tummy bug so I have to go help my husband"

Yanda: "Thank you so much. Yes please go look after your boy because you've dedicated so much of your time to us already" Yandi smiled and nodded before going to say goodbye to Mr Mbuzo. He was fond of her so he was comfortable

to be with her. Yandi walked to the door.

Yandi: "Bhut Yanda" she turned to look at him. She walked closer to him again "My husband has a gift of finding things that you and I can't possibly dream of finding. Maybe he is the one that you need so he'd go to places like Yakhikhaya's birth clinic to find out more. I honestly refuse to believe that traces of a baby and his mother could just be wiped out like that. Remember that your mother had no means nor power to do such. She could have bribed one or two but not the entire

staff on shift that day. If you want I could ask him to call you"

Yanda: "I'm sure that he is expensive too but I'll talk to Hlubi about it. Thank you"

Yandi: "Fortunately he does this as a hobby. Babini finds thrill in finding things so trust me he will jump at the chance to do it because his life has become a bit grey as he puts it" they both laughed "Plus he's become fond of Mr Mbuzo from his visits at our house. He was actually the one who offered his services but I told him that you guys are not people who made use of such a

"gift" but I'm going to tell him to go wild" she smiled.

Yanda: "Thank you so much. Give him my number and I'll make time to go with him"

Yandi: "He's a lone wolf so just allow him to go sniffing around alone" they both laughed.

Yanda: "Oh you're a godsend" he put his hands together and looked up "So he might actually be alive with kids and a wife and adoptive parents he doesn't even know are not his?"

Yandi: "It's possible but do not tell him that and end up getting his hopes up" she pointed to Mr

Mbuzo "For all we know your mother did indeed kill him" she added and felt her heart sting at those bitter words.

Yanda: "So you are gifted with finding spiritual truths and your husband physical truth. What a combination" they both laughed "But I would still like to pay you somehow" he looked at her.

Yandi: "Is a YM original too much to ask for?" she tried her luck.

She loved his clothes very much.

Yanda: "Not at all. I'd be happy to share my talent with you as you do yours"

Yandi: "Let me get going. My

phone is already vibrating so Babini must be panicking" she took her phone out and said goodbye before answering while walking out. Hlubi walked inside the room.

Mr Mbuzo: "Ntombam, please stand closer" Hlubi did as he asked. He put his warm hands on her belly "May blessings be upon you, Ncibane. You will grow up to be one of the leaders of this family. Many generations will come from you. Camagu" he put his forehead against the belly and Hlubi has to blink away the tears when she felt her baby kick. She

quickly called Yanda over and he put his hand on her belly too.

Both of them smiling.

Yanda: "Camagu" he said with a smile. Suddenly all of Hlubi's fears that she adopted from people telling her that her birth would have complication were gone.

Yanda dressed his father and the two of them went to graveyard that Nolungile was buried in. Mr Mbuzo could not exactly remember where the grave was so they spent an entire hour looking for the white cross until they finally found it. The paint had started to wear off and the wood was

rotting but the writing was clear. "Nolungile Qwabe Loving mother" it read indeed. Mr Mbuzo started to cry so Yanda had to wait. He started cleaning the grave on his father's behalf. It was strange doing it because he felt he was supposed to hate Nolungile as much as his mother did but he didn't. Somehow he felt grateful to her for making his father feel loved and respected when his own wife could not.

Mr Mbuzo: "Mamdane, Tutuse, Mdimane. It is me Yavela. I am sorry that I've left your grave unattended but it were

circumstances beyond my control. I come with a heavy heart, sthandwa sam because Nolali revealed that she had our son killed" he took a long pause "She refuses to tell us where she buried him so I ask that you lead me to our boy so that I can give him a proper burial. Maybe we can have him buried on top of you, Lungi that way you'll have a chance to feel your son craddled on your chest and he can know what it feels like to feel his mother's embrace" Yanda had to stop to take in those sad words. So much that he felt a tear roll over his

cheek "Both of you were robbed of life too soon especially our boy. I am here with my eldest, Yanda. You know him because I spoke about him and Yandiswa a lot. I still love you, Nolungile and the only piece of you that I had left was taken by an evil woman I used to share a bed with. She took our son, she took my sanity, she took years of my life and she continues to take by not telling me where she buried him. You were always a giver and I ask that you give me a clue as to where our son is"

Yanda: "She heard you, Tata...she

heard you, Ncibane. Let me quickly fix this grave because the sand will make it difficult. When I'm done you can put the flowers we brought on it and next time we'll perhaps save for a tombstone"

Mr Mbuzo: "Thank you, son".

Yanda did the best he could to fix up the grave and let his father place flowers on the grave.

Ma Nozulu didn't tell the family she was on her way because she wanted to make a stop where Nolali was held first. After struggling they finally allowed the visit. She sat waiting for Nolali to join her. When Nolali walked in she

looked like she'd been to hell and back.

Nolali: "Ndodakazi" she said with a smirk before sitting.

Nozulu: "Hey fusek, I'm nothing to you. I knew the day that Yavela bought you that you are a witch. I told Mama that this is a witch but they said I'm just jealous but now look. What did you do with my nephew's remains?" she shouted and Ma Mbuzo laughed "You think that you are the only one who is capable of being crazy huh? You made my brother walk until he reached other provinces. But why, Nolali?"

What has Yavela done to you?

That's someone's son" she broke down.

Ma Mbuzo: "The way he is weak I thought he was a daughter. I told them that they will have to find that grave without me and I meant it. The demon is in the ground where other demons are"

Nozulu: "What have we done to deserve such cruelty from you? A child? A newborn child, Nolali?" she continued to cry.

Ma Mbuzo: "You think crocodile tears will move me?" she laughed "Go and mourn but I will never tell you where he is buried" Ma

Nozulu jumped on Nolali and choked her. The guards came quickly but Nozulu wouldn't let go. When they finally managed to get her off she broke down and ended up fainting. The authorities called Yanda and he was shocked to hear his aunt had gone to see his mother.

Hours went by and Ntombi was dressed and ready to go have dinner with Daluxolo. The children had gone to spend the rest of the weekend at Liyema's place as he finally found a stable place to stay. Things were going well for him and he was back at work

again. Ntombikayise was glad that he got his act together for his children and she could see that they appreciated his efforts.

Tamkhulu and Makhulu had their own romantic dinner planned. Both were dressed in their Sunday best and Ntombi was glad that she would be out to give them space.

They are a very affectionate couple but it was a first for Ntombi to witness a dinner for two for them. Tamkhulu went to open the door and Ntombi knew that it was Dali.

Tamkhulu: "Nto-Nto, your friend has arrived my girl" he shouted.

Ntombi: "Coming, Tata!" she shouted back. She looked at herself in the mirror and wondered if she looked okay. After Tamkhulu called out again she took her jacket and bag and went down to them. Makhulu wheeled herself in looking as beautiful as her granddaughter and Yanda gave the bunch of yellow roses to Makhulu.

Dali: "I just thought that you would appreciate them, Ma"
Makhulu accepted with a smile.

Makhulu: "Oh thank you, Nyana"
she smelled them.

Tamkhulu: "Do you always go

around giving women you have no business giving gifts to roses, Ndoda?" he took the flowers and gave them to Ntombi "That is the woman that you have come to get, not this one" he pointed to Makhulu. Ntombikayise nearly burst out laughing.

Dali: "I meant no offence, Tamkhulu. I'm terribly sorry" he humbled himself.

Makhulu: "Tata" she said softly.

Tamkhulu: "Don't Tata me, mkam. It's my duty to make you feel good not his. I will bleksem a forward person" Ntombi could no longer contain her laughter.

Ntombi: "Please don't bleksem him, Tata. He still needs to drive" she said while still laughing.

Tamkhulu: "These movies have you children doing funny things. The only gift you give a woman's mother is a cow during the lobola negotiation to thank her"

Dali: "I will never do it again, Tamkhulu. We are too modernized indeed but we are grateful for elders like you who still lead us right. Thank you for that lesson, mntu omdala"

Tamkhulu: "Apology accepted. Now you children go because I want to have dinner with my wife"

Ntombikayise hugged them "Bring her back in one piece, Xhego" he said in a stern voice and Dali nodded quickly. Ntombi laughed out when they were finally in the car.

Ntombi: "Don't go woo my grandfather's girl next time. Pasop" she warned and they both laughed.

Dali: "I swear the man is grown up goals" he drove off. They spoke all the way to his brother's place. The house smelled lovely and it was very neat. "These are the flowers that I got you but now you have two" he gave her

her favourite.

Ntombi: "Thank you. Aren't I a lucky girl? So what did you make? I hope it's not salads and braai meat, Xolo"

Dali: "Could you behave like a guest?" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Well you're a guest too so while the actual owners are gone you and I are equal since we are both guests. Wow your brother has a beautiful family" she looked at the pictures on the wall where Dali was in some.

Dali: "He does indeed. So what will you drink?"

Ntombi: "Hot chocolate. I know

where kids are there's hot chocolate" she took her jacket off. Dali loved how comfortable she was.

Dali: "I don't know how to make that. Even my nieces make funny faces when they drink mine"

Ntombikayise gave him a disgusted look.

Ntombikayise: "How's your food?"

Dali: "Great" he said with confidence. "Come make your hot chocolate while I finish up cooking" she smiled and follow behind. They never struggled with conversation and it was amazing. Ntombikayise made hot

chocolate for herself and coffee for him. Dali hadn't finished cooking so they had to wait a while.

Ntombikayise: "So why haven't you finished cooking?"

Dali: "I went to the gravesite with a few of the other kids at the orphanage. One of them got hit by a car a year ago so we went to clean the grave. I actually saw Yanda but I didn't want to disturb because he was with an elderly man who seemed to be crying"

Ntombi: "I'm sure it's his father" she told Dali Yanda's story.

Dali: "Damn to bury a baby alive i... wow" he was lost for words "May they find healing and may the mother find peace in her heart and let go of the hate. Wow poor old man. The things that others go through is just extreme while we think we have it worse" Ntombi: "I know right?" she shook her head.

Dali: "No we aren't getting depressed tonight. Come let us go and do that lip syncing battle that we said we would while we wait for the food" he held her hand and led her to the lounge. They both lived classics and since

Tamia was Ntombi's favourite she chose "You put a move on my heart". Dali kept on making thumbs down to his competition but it only fuelled Ntombi's dramatic side more as she was putting on a performance. She was laughing at herself through it all. Dali played Luther Vandross's "Buy me a rose". Ntombi: "Boooo" she said before he even began singing and he laughed. He started to perform and she acted like she was bored. He also laughed at the moment but he tried to put up a performance as she did. It was

when he sang while looking at her that she got lost in the song for the first time "That was so lame" she lied.

Dali: "Jealous much?" he sat next to her "Okay you won this round I give you that. What do I owe you?"

Ntombi: "Extra meat" Dali laughed and nodded. They joked and laughed until the food was ready. They finally had dinner and Ntombi was blown away by the great food that he prepared. After dinner they danced and neither were sure if it was the heater that made the room too

hot or the body reacting to having someone close after a long while.

Ntombi: "This is nice" she whispered.

Dali: "I know" he held her closer Ntombi didn't protest but instead eased into his arms. She hated how right the moment felt. So right that she tilted her head up to look at him. At first he just returned the prolonged eyes contact but soon leaned forward to kiss her. That kiss was like Mon of the ones they've had before. Dali lifted her against the wall and Ntombikayise was left

shocked. She'd always pictured him to be the slow and gentle man but she loved how erotic he was in that moment. So much so that she lost all her senses. The voices and advices of people suddenly faded and her heart screamed for her to not stop and her body had gotten lost in the moment long ago. Her zip got pulled down and soon her arms were no longer connected to the dress. She didn't know when he took her bra off but clearly he had a gift that she didn't know about. Just when she thought he'd get tired of holding her up he

held her higher so he'd explore her warm breast with his mouth. Her body was filled with goosebumps and she didn't know if it were the sudden nakedness or if it were her body reacting to his touch. He traced kisses up the side of her neck before reaching her lips again.

Ntombi: "Xolo, please stop" she broke the kiss and as difficult as it was for him he did as asked. He gently put her down but had to take in a moment and Ntombi knew it was to fill his mind with things that had nothing to do with sex "I'm sorry" her vision

started to blur. He looked at her.
Dali: "It's okay...it's okay. Put your arms through" she was covering her breasts with her hands and he watched her slip her arms in the sleeves of her dress
"I'm sorry" he whispered.

Ntombi: "I want this so bad" she confessed "But I can't. I can't start something that going to affect my children"

Dali: "Kayise, I understand. I really do" he wanted to kiss her again and do things to her that would leave her body remember that it was loved for days to come. He loved her scent and he

loved how soft her skin felt.

Ntombi: "I've got to go"

Dali: "I love you" he blurted out his confession.

Ntombi: "Let's not ruin the friendship, Xolo. I'm going to call a taxi so that we can both just calm down". He promised her grandfather he'd bring her back in one piece and that meant seeing her go inside the house with his own eyes. The drive was quiet but they arrived at her house. Ntombi was out of the car before he could say another word so he had to go home not knowing where they stood. Ntombi ran to

her room in tears like a teenager whose had a bad date with her crush. Their friendship was important to both of them and Dali was sure his confession ruined it. 

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When Ntombi heard the doorbell ring at 5am in the morning she knew it was Liyema and the kids. Her grandparents no longer wake up as early as they used to because the days were colder and nights longer so she got up to go open. She switched all the lights

on her way to the door and when she opened felt a cold breeze hit her face and all sense of sleep faded. The kids greeted her with a hug as they walked in.

Ntombi: "Quiet guys, the old people are probably still sleeping" they all nodded "Please go get ready immediately. I'll put the heater on so long" she added.

Bubele: "I don't even feel like going to school" he sulked.

Liyema: "Well to bad because that's where you are going"

Ntombi forgot to invite him inside so she did that. The children

went to their rooms to get ready for school. They all felt the holiday was too short. Ntombi went to light up her grandfather's paraffin heater and waited for it to warm the house.

Ntombi: "Uhm...are you waiting to take them to school?" Liyema shook his head "Then I suggest that you go get ready too because you'll be late for work" she added. For a second there her words felt familiar to Liyema's heart because she's used those words when he was still living

with them so many times before.
Liyema: "I still got time. So you guys stopped using the electric heater?" he tried to make conversation. He knew Ntombi wouldn't go get ready until an hour after the kids.

Ntombi: "Tamkhulu says it's too weak and I actually agree with him"

Liyema: "I'm sure he threw a fit when you told him I'm keeping the kids on a school night?" he faked a laugh.

Ntombi: "He knows that you are their father, Liyema. Him being

here is not to replace you in their lives but to enjoy some peace with his wife away from my greedy uncle. Tamkhulu doesn't meddle in our parenting but he does step in when needed" Liyema nodded and followed her to the kitchen. She wished he'd say he was going but clearly he had no intention to go "Would you like coffee?" she turned to look at him and he nodded.

Having coffee with him was the last way she thought her day would begin but she was not going to chase him out like a bitter ex because she's past that stage.

Last night proved to her that her heart got captured and it was not by Liyema. She laid awake at night thinking about what could have happened. What it would have felt like to be in Dali's arms most of the night. What he looked like when he's sleep and if he snored.

Liyema: "Lak... Ntombi!" he held her hand gently "You just put eight spoons of sugar in my coffee" Ntombikayise looked at the cup. She scooped out four spoons as Liyema took his coffee with four spoons of sugar "where

is that mind of yours?" he laughed softly.

Ntombi: "Somewhere dangerous clearly because I nearly killed you with sugar overload" Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "I'm glad that we can be like this, Kayise" she wanted to stop him from calling her that. There was a certain someone who already did and she wanted to give that someone's mouth exclusive rights to calling her that. She gave Liyema dry ingredients coffee "Your mind really isn't here. Let me pour the

water myself before you burn yourself" he stood to tend to the boiling water. Ntombi put her hand over her face "But you have always been one to be disoriented when woken up so that explains it" he laughed and gave her her coffee.

Ntombi: "Thanks" she warmed her hands by holding the sides of the hot cup for a second "why didn't you just drop them and go, Liyema? I don't mean to sound rude but yeah...you know" she took a sip.

Liyema: "I realized just how much

I miss the chaotic mornings. Yesterday I took them on an early hike so we had to get up early. They were all over the place. During the week it's just so quiet"

Ntombi: "I hope you won't ask me to let you rent a room here"

Liyema laughed "we're a full house already" she added.

Liyema: "No but I just needed familiarity. You still have your morning tea and just listen at the complaints and arguing coming from the rooms" he smiled.

Ntombi: "It's the little things we

end up missing indeed but please don't tell me that you'll be doing this on the daily" Liyema shook his head and she breathed.

Liyema: "So any new developments in your life? The kids are secretive about your life"

Ntombi: "Because they know that it no longer concerns their father. I'm now more involved in charity and I've gotten new friends"

Liyema: "So I won't be invited to anything special like the lunch yesterday?"

Ntombi: "You should have taken that up with those five, sir not

me. They invited close friends only and you and I might never reach that point"

Liyema: "So the therapist is a close friend? You've never had a male close friend before"

Ntombi: "Aha...so that's why you are here. You want to know where Dali fits in" she could not help but laugh.

Liyema: "Our dating affects them, Ntombi. So I'm just concerned"

Ntombi: "You are a few months too late, Liyema. You should have thought about that when you

dated while you had a wife. Please we have been doing well so don't ruin this. Whether I sleep with Dali or not it's none of your concern"

Liyema: "I said date... I didn't mention sex"

Ntombi: "Well I like being intimate with the man I'm in a relationship with. You should know that"

Liyema: "I'm abstaining so could we please just not bring more people into their lives that might hinder their healing?"

Ntombi: "Uhm let me see. It's Elaine, it's Portia and Abongile

that's the people you've brought into their lives and caused emotional wounds that I had to work damn hard to stitch up so don't come here with righteous talk"

Liyema: "Okay I'm sorry but I was sick back then so now I'm making better choices. I'm sorry it came out the wrong way. I want to have a DNA done on Abongile..."

Ntombi: "Liyema I really don't want to hear it. Do not drag me into your business because I know that you know I'll pity you and

offer help so don't. Go talk to your mother, the Reverend or your therapist. I'm just the mother of your children so let there be boundaries from now on. If it has nothing to do with the kids that I share with you then it's none of my business. You think just because I let them donate blood I'm suddenly friends with your baby mama? Well I'm not but I didn't want an innocent child suffering that's all. What concerns children who are not mine is not my business please. Learn to respect boundaries from now

on"

Liyema: "Fair enough" he said in a disappointed whisper. "Let me get going before I'm really late" he stood and she nodded "You'll always be the one who got away, Ntombi...always" he bit his bottom lip and left. Setting boundaries with him left Ntombi feeling satisfied. She finished her coffee before going to get ready for work. The kids loved spending time at their father's and it made Ntombi happy. Their transport arrived and they were gone. Ntombi was so happy that

Amahle got accepted at her brothers school. At least she'd have them to look after her for the last year of their schooling. She wanted to sit down with them and ask what exactly it was they wanted to do after school. She still hasn't told Amahle that modelling might not be such a good idea for someone with her short height. She went to knock on the elders door just to be sure they were fine. They both said they were fine so Ntombikayise drove to work. She wondered if romantic nights for them also

meant intimacy but she dismissed that thought and wore a disgusted expression. Rose was always the first face they saw when they arrived. Ntombikayise noticed that she had started to glow and when they caught up Rose revealed that she was just happy. The receptionist called to tell Ntombi a Mr Xhego was there to see her and she was not expecting that because she thought he was in Joburg long ago. She suddenly felt need to make herself pretty by making sure her hair was good and her

dress had no stain. Dali walked in after a brief knock and Ntombikayise was certain her heart could be heard by the entire office because it was pounding. He suddenly looked more handsome and his scent became her favourite too.

Dali: "Hi" he stood in front of her.

Ntombi: "Hi" she whispered "I thought you've left" he stood closer.

Dali: "I'm sorry again about last night, Kayise"

Ntombi: "The setting was just way to... comforting so I

understand why it happened. I don't know about you but I was last with a man when you and I had that mistake so my body gets excited about anything really" Dali held her waist and sat her down on her desk "Xolo, this is my work so please..." she whispered.

Dali: "Trust me had I come here for sexual reasons you wouldn't still have all those layers of clothes on" he leaned closer.

Ntombikayise got those goosebumps again. Dali was the typical nice guy but Ntombi had a

feeling that he was as erotic as they come in private. She wondered if he was like that the first time but she couldn't remember. All she knew was that the warmth between her thighs indicated that her body loves his advances "The day that I met you I was sitting in the corner of that bar having a not so good day. When you walked in all of that was suddenly gone and I just had to know you. I was first attracted to your beautiful facial features and then your breathtaking body. When you

spoke I fell even more in love with you. I didn't want to have that sex with you because I didn't see you as a one night stand type of woman but an every night cuddled in my arms kind of woman. But I also knew that it would most probably be the last time I get to be with you so I selfishly took the chance. I lied about not being present, Kayise. I was with you that night and no other woman occupied my mind because it was lost in you. That's why I nearly had a mental breakdown

afterwards because I felt that I betrayed my wife because suddenly after saying that no woman could compare to her you came along and proved me wrong. Truth is you don't compare, you make me feel things I swear no other woman has. I was present that day as any man in love with the woman he's intimate with would. I wasn't even aware of it until I became honest with myself about it. I wanted to believe that I was not aware but I was. When I kissed your breasts the feel of them didn't

shock me because I took all of you in already but last night wow...you are a breathtaking view"

Ntombi: "Daluxolo" she had nothing else to say. What could she say after such a mouthful that left her weak in places that she didn't even know could feel sensation. She wanted to kiss him and go on that first date to see where it led "I've got baggage" she added.

Dali: "I know that you can't be referring to your children so I'll assume you are talking about the womb issue and perhaps

unresolved issues with your ex husband. I'm not afraid of swimming in deep water with someone and help them up to the surface but I do understand your fears as far as your children are concerned. And for that reason only I'll keep my distance"

Ntombi: "But I do not want you to"

Dali: "Nothing is going to change. I don't want to lose this beautiful friendship and maybe when your kids are ready to welcome a new person in your life we can try" they both smiled.

Ntombikayise hugged him and he held on as tightly as she did.

Ntombi: "That might take forever, so don't put your life on hold for me please. I don't want to lose this friendship either. I love you too more than I care to admit but yeah wrong timing I guess. I was not present that night but last night all of me was in that moment. I found myself fantasizing about what could have happened" Dali laughed softly. He broke the hug.

Dali: "Was I any good in the fantasy?" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "You gave me multiple orgasm... literally because I masturbated at the thought of you" she said shamefully and he couldn't help but laugh until she laughed too.

Dali: "No woman has ever said that and I doubt any has done that while thinking about me so I'm actually flattered and one hell of a horny man right now so let me go before things happen, Miss Poti. You are honestly just something else" he looked down before looking at her with a smile "I'm glad that this can still

happen. Laughing after a serious conversation. If I was a friend with benefits guy I'd have made those orgasms reality but I'm not"

Ntombi: "Let's stop because yho"

Dali: "Because I'm making you wet" Ntombi's eyes shot open and she blushed.

Ntombi: "Oh wow...yho wow I'm not going to answer that" she laughed "How do we know that this isn't just a sexual attraction?"

Dali: "On my side it's not. I was attracted to you before we could

be so open with each other" his phone buzzed "Reminder to go to the airport on time. I've got to go" Ntombi's smile suddenly faded. "Keep on taking good care of yourself okay. I'll see perhaps after a few months now"

Ntombikayise gave a disappointed nod "We're okay right? No one is going to avoid the other's calls and texts?" Ntombikayise shook her head before feeling his lips on her forehead. There was that forehead kiss that made her feel like she's found a home once again, a warm and safe home. "Maybe

the time will be right someday"
he smiled.

Ntombi: "Maybe" she whispered
and gave a faint smile "I'm
actually more sad to let you go
this time around"

Dali: "I'll be back" he said in his
best terminator impersonation
and Ntombikayise laughed "I'll see
you soon and yes I'll call when I'm
home" they both laughed.

Ntombikayise leaned forward for
a kiss. One that was filled with
passionate intent. She was
certain that their attraction was
more than physical too. They both

knew whatever was between them could no longer qualify as just friendship. Dali's body was starting to feel the torture so he had to stop the kiss. She kissed his chin and could feel how aroused he was as his manhood was poking her. In a perfect world they would have cleared her desk in one arm sweep and made love on it as done on the movies but they were not scripted as their feelings and chemistry was real. So no one would shout cut and watch them go home as though nothing happened. He said

goodbye when the reminder went off again.

Dali: "Oh you forgot this at the house last night" he gave her her bra and she laughed.

Ntombi: "Thank goodness it was found by you and not your brother's wife. Can you imagine the trouble he would have been in" they both laughed. Dali ran out because time was really not on his side. She missed him already and he felt like he left a part of him behind. Both wondered if the right time would ever come or if there was even

such a thing but they hoped so. Both had to do something with the chemistry between them at some point.

The state lawyer put in charge of Mrs Mbuze's case sat opposite her going through heaps of papers. She had a feeling that he was not interested in her case at all. She thought that Yanda would get her a private lawyer but none of her kids had gone to visit her since her detention.

Lulonke: "Okay let us get this case wrapped up once and for all.

I have millions of other cases waiting for me so really I can't waste all my time on you, Mrs Mbuzo. You are going to plead insanity and with that look you are rocking together with the mental evaluation from the psychiatric hospital it'll be a piece of cake"

Ma Mbuzo: "I am not guilty"

Lulonke: "Honestly I don't care whether you are or not. Win or lose I get my salary. I don't care if you buried the child for real but since you said you won't tell them where it is we are going to take

advantage of that. So you are going to tell the court that it's not that you don't want to tell them where the child is but you don't remember because you didn't feel like yourself after you found your husband not only cheated but impregnated the side"

Ma Mbuzo: "So you want me to plead guilty?"

Lulonke: "Your confession didn't help much so we must work based on what we have. But no, you'll plead not guilty because you will say that you don't remember anything from that time.

Continue with the crazy you are doing now. Spending 5 years in a mental institution is much better than spending 25 of your life in jail and with your age I don't think you even have 25 more years left. So what will it be crazy and hospital or sane and jail?"

Ma Mbuzo: "I guess a hospital is not so bad"

Lulonke: "Good I'm glad that we are on the same page. Mr Mbuzo's cheating which was continuous from the day you married finally drove you over the

edge. You don't even remember the details of that day. Even your confession was made from a place of deep pain and trauma from Mr Mbuzo's abuse and cheating ways because you wanted to hurt him as much as he did you. You don't remember burying a baby because you went totally blanked from the day he brought the baby up until the baby went missing. Someone might even have come and stole the poor thing but because you don't remember you made up any story to hurt Mr Mbuzo. You are guilty of insanity but not killing an

innocent baby"

Ma Mbuzo: "But it was the first time that he cheated and I abused him not the other way around"

Lulonke: "The world doesn't have to know that. Nomandla is the prosecutor and she's going to give us hell so you best do a I say"

Ma Mbuzo: "I have to appear in court in a few hours. You've been neglecting me since you got my case. How do you expect me to be prepared?"

Lulonke: "Now you sound like a jealous lover. I was neglecting you

because you are not my only client. I'm here and here with a strategy so be grateful". They spent time going over their defence and Ma Mbuzo felt her head spin. It was time to appear in court and Ma Mbuzo could see Yandiswa seated but she didn't even look at her mother. The court session began. Dr Steyn the psychiatrist was first called to the stand.

Lulonke: "Dr Styen, is it possible for a person to have temporary insanity when they are emotionally and mentally

traumatized by abuse?" he asked the psychiatrist handling Ma Mbuzo's case.

Dr: "Yes it is, my lord" she look at the judge.

Lulonke: "So it's possible that Mrs Mbuzo was not in her right mind when she found that her husband has cheated on her yet again after doing so numerous times before?"

Nomandla: "Speculation, your honor" she stood.

Judge: "Rephrase your question, council" she looked at Lulonke.

Lulonke: "Apologies, my lord. This

was a woman who had just found out her husband was cheating and to make matters worse he left his child from that cheating with her. So is it possible that Ma Mbuzo reached the edge and it led to her not being in charge of her own actions as she was too hurt to even know what was going on?"

Dr: "We've dealt with such cases yes"

Lulonke: "So, my lord it is also possible that Mrs Mbuzo was so out of it that she didn't even notice a stranger coming in and

taking her child. This is a woman who clearly struggles with occasional mental dilutions caused by the pain she suffered in her marriage. Seeing this man after he abandoned her with young children brought back raw emotions and from those came a confession that she made when she was not in the right state of mind once again. My client does not know what happened to that child that's why she didn't want to say where she allegedly buried him because she is not sure what happened to him. It would be

wrong of the court to send Mrs Mbuzo who is not only suffering from mental health but also old age to prison when she should be given more psychiatric care. Dr Steyn's reports support what I'm saying, my lord. Thank you" he went to sit down. Nomandla had Yanda be called to the stand. Ma Mbuzo felt betrayed.

Nomandla: "Mr Mbuzo I understand that you remember what happened the day that baby Yakhikhaya went missing. Could you please tell the court what you know?"

Yanda: "I was still young myself so the memory is vague but I do remember a baby crying and my mother telling me to not touch him whenever I wanted to make him quiet. I had promised my father I'd look after him so that's what I was trying to do"

Nomandla: "And you say that you and your sister were in the house?" Yanda agreed "Do you remember if you were washed and fed, Mr Mbuzo?"

Lulonke: "Objection, my lord. What relevance is that to the case?" he stood. The high allowed

Nomandla's question.

Yanda: "Yes my mother actually bathed my sister and I before feeding us so yes we were"

Nomandla nodded.

Nomandla: "That will be all, your honor"

Judge: "Do you have any questions for the witness, council?" he looked at Lulongke.

Lulongke: "No, my lord". Yanda left the stand and Ma Mbuzo was called.

Nomandla: "Mrs Mbuzo you've just heard your son. I'm no psychiatrist, my lord but I am

almost certain that a person who is not in her right mind doesn't do things that sane people would like feed her children and bath them as her thoughts would be too disoriented"

Lulonke: "Objection"

Judge: "I'll allow it"

Nomandla: "How is it possible that you can't remember what happened to a crying baby yet you remembered how to care for your ones?" Ma Mbuzo looked at Lulonke.

Ma Mbuzo: "I don't know" Lulonke covered his face with his hands.

Nomandla: "You were in the right state of mind, Mrs Mbuzo. You just decided you'd ignore the hysterical cries of what was possibly a starving baby and took care of the ones that you birthed. You got so tired of his cries that you took him and killed him"

Lulonke: "That is speculation"

Nomandla: 'How is it speculation, my lord when it is a sworn confession made by the accused? Those were her words and suddenly she doesn't remember what happened to the baby because she just remembered

that she was crazy for a while. I'd like to believe that our justice system gives children especially the justice that they deserve. She confessed to killing that baby, your honor and it is this court's duty to be the voice of justice for that baby who was stripped off the chance at life due to jealousy. She belongs in jail like any criminal and not in a mental institution. People who are mentally ill don't remember that they were mentally ill at that point and that point because I read that everything becomes a blur. I'm

sure Dr Styen can support that statement. She killed an innocent child and she deserves to get the sentence deserved by a child murderer regardless of age and circumstance. That baby had nothing to do with the issues going on between the grown ups. Even if the baby got kidnapped she should be charged with negligence because she agreed to looking after that child when her husband asked. That will be all, my lord" she was fuming because she was a mother. She couldn't separate her mother role and

prosecutor role in that case. She imagined should someone do that to her child. Her innocent child who didn't ask to be brought to the world.

Lulongke: "I'd just like to remind the court that no evidence of a baby even being in that house is present. No records of his birth are found. This child could be but a fragment of Mr Mbuzo's snr imagination and Mr Yanda Mbuzo said himself that his memory is vague. We can't sent a woman to jail based on a confession she made during a moment of anger

while no evidence is found, not a single piece of evidence. My client should have been granted bail when she first appeared in this court, my lord" he sat. Ma Mbuze suddenly had a breakdown as planned by her and her lawyer should the pressure become too much so the judge called for a recess. She was declared unfit to return so the court got postponed until Dr Styen said it was okay. Even Lulonke was impressed by his client's acting. Yanda and Yandiswa went home and both knew that what their mother

was doing is acting. What they didn't expect to find was Yandi walking around the backroom while feeling the wooden walls.

Yanda: "Yandisa?" he went to her. Her eyes were that of person who was panicking.

Yandiswa: "Sisi?" she went to touch Yandi.

Yandisa: "He's crying. He is crying" she started to cry "Shhhhh" she added while tears ran down.

Yanda: "I think I know what is going on. Yandiswa go and call the police" he shouted.

Yandiswa: "Bhut" she said

fearfully.

Yanda: "Do as I say" he went inside the room and moved Yamkela's things out. He had his neighbour come help him demolish the room. Soon the police were there and when they heard what could possibly be going on they called for help. The community curiously gathered when the police and their dogs arrived. Yanda was glad Yamkela was not there. The concrete floor was difficult to break but with the extra man power they finally tore all of it down. They started to dig

randomly and after hours of work Yanda found a blanket but the police told him to stand back.

When they opened it it were indeed the remains of what was clearly a baby. Yanda went on one knee and sobbed and Yandiswa let out a bitter cry that could be heard by all.

Yandisa: "He stopped crying" she looked at the remains. She hoped that he had been out there still alive but he was not. Nolali indeed did what she said she did. The community was so shocked that some of them wept with the

Mbuzo children. The police tried to keep Yanda away but he fought to hold the blanket.

Yanda: "Mcirha, Ncibane, Qhandolo. I am sorry that I couldn't protect you, mntakwethu. Please forgive us. Our father had been looking for you and you've been at home all this time. We...we are sorry, Ncibane. Please silence those newborn baby cries you never had chance to outgrow. We love you"

Police: "Sir, this is now officially evidence and your home a crime scene"

Yandiswa: "My brother is not evidence!" she pushed the officer.

Police: "It's evidence and DNA has to be tested to determine he's really your relative. We are deeply sorry but we must treat this as any murder scene please" Yanda let go. He held on to his sister as they both wept watching the police take what was their brother and treat him like "evidence". Yandi was in mourning of her own. The cries she was hearing got silenced and she hoped the baby's soul found rest. The community threatened to

burn Nolali alive should they ever see her again. After it was all over, Yandiswa and Yanda went to their cousin to ask her to look after the kids for a while longer. Yandiswa would also be staying at her cousin's. They told Yamkela and were concerned about her because she was most vulnerable as she was pregnant but she promised them she'd be fine. Yanda had no better way to break the news to his family so he went straight to the point. Ma Nozulu had a breakdown. Nandi helped her mother calm her

grandmother. Yanda attended to his father.

Mr Mbuzo: "Take me to him" he felt a pain that he never thought was possible to feel. He felt a hate that he never thought existed towards Nolali. Yanda didn't protest and Ma Nozulu pulled herself together to go support her brother. The police had no choice but to allow an old man a chance to see what used to be his son.

Mr Mbuzo: "It is the blanket I wrapped him with when I came home with him. It was warm in

my arms back then because it had life in it but now it is just dust and bones" he sobbed. Yanda cried all over again when he watched his father cradle the remains while crying "Thank you for showing us where our son is, Lungi. I know that it was you who went to Yandisa. Take care of him in the spirit realm, sthandwa sam. I hope that you feel his warmth where you are. Thank you, Tutuse for the beautiful gift even though it was taken from me too soon. Yakhikhaya Mbuzo, I set you

free. Go be with your mother, son.
This world never deserved you.
Rest, Mcirha. Your cries have been
heard so hush, my boy and never
cry again. I'm going to lay your
remains on your mother's chest,
so hush, Ncibane" Yanda was
shaking with emotions. He had
started to feel excited when Yandi
told him his mother could be lying
but she was not. He felt the
same hate for her as his father.
They gathered around the
remains and asked the Cirha
ancestors to welcome their
grandchild home. Mr Mbuzo knew

that it was him from the blanket he was wrapped in so he didn't need DNA to prove it. As sad as he was he felt a sense of peace too.

Yamkela: "Tata, I'm sorry for everything that I said"

Mr Mbuzo: "It doesn't matter now, Ntombam. I am with all of you. I know where all of you are so I'm at peace"

Nozulu: "If I was a witch I'd send the strongest lightning to, Nolali. Such cruelty. Oh what have we done for this woman to hate us so much that she'd take

one of us at such a young age?. This person was supposed to have a wife today and children yet here he lies. Ohhhhh, Nolali, ohhhhhh, Nolali what sin are we guilty of so that we can apologize?" she also held the remains while crying. The police conducted the DNA test regardless of the fact that Mr Mbuzo was sure. They said a prayer too. The elder complained about a pain in his chest and had to be rushed to hospital immediately.

Babini rang the doorbell of what was Matron Weber's house in such an annoying way that the elder swore while walking to the door. Matron: "I'm not interested to buy anything" she said as soon as she saw him.

Babini: "I'm not here for that"

Matron: "Then get lost anyway. I'm in a lot of pain to entertain people who didn't call before coming"

Babini: "Funny you mentioned the word lost because I'm one of the children you sold" he said with a cheerful smile and the elder nearly

had a heart attack "Oh I'm kidding, granny. I'm not but I'm sure you don't mind my unexpected visit now" he laughed and let himself in. The matron looked out to see if anyone was close to hear what he just said and when she saw no one she closed the door "Don't even try to deny it because I've got proof. I'm actually just here to hear the truth from the horse's mouth" he sat down and made himself comfortable.

Matron: "Have you come with the cops?"

Babini: "Nope" he smiled "But you

better talk because you really don't look good. I wouldn't want you dying on me now. If you cooperate you might be pardoned by the courts so let's work together. What exactly was happening in that clinic when you worked there, Matron?. The truth please" he put a recorder on the table.

Matron: "Well like you said I'm knocking on death's door so I might as well tell you. Maybe then will the death angel finally take me and free me from the pain I'm in"

Babini: "That's my girl. First state your name and then speak"
he turned the recorder on. She stated her name and place she used to work at.

Matron: "I used to be the ringleader of a child gifting syndicate. I once had a patient's baby die while another in the next room gave birth to twins. I was so saddened by the unfairness of life that I decided to give one baby to the mother who lost hers. In those times women were under fire for not being able to give their husband children so I

saved another woman's dignity by giving her the son that would make her husband happy that he married her" Babini felt his anger rise as it reminded him of him and Otha.

Babini: "Do these women you gave children to know they aren't theirs?"

Matron: "The first one didn't know. She thought it was the baby she gave life to. The other woman was so out of it because of the drugs she was fed she didn't know that she had two. Scans were not a big deal

especially in black communities so both women went home happy"

Babini: "And you thought you'd cash in on it afterwards?"

Matron: "The pay was lousy so yes. Soon the operation was running and I had a group of staff nurses that were my helpers. There were women who needed kids and those who had one too many so I didn't see what I was doing as a problem. Caring is sharing"

Babini: "The fuck? You don't get to play god and bless people with babies who belong to others."

What kind of demonic people are you?"

Matron: "Call me what you want but I choose to see it as helping. Chances are those others wouldn't have been able to take care of two babies. The pay was not even good so I did it out of love" Babini's fist clenched.

Babini: "There was a woman by the name of Nolungile. Her partner came to get her son because apparently she died of complications" the matron looked like she was in deep thought.

Matron: "I only had one mother

die since I've been matron so I remember her. She also gave birth to two boys. In her case it was easy to separate her babies because the man was not in the ward when she gave birth. We gave him his son and the other we found a woman in need of a child to have him. It was all good but he started to get sick so the woman feared he'd die. She had faked a pregnancy so she wanted to go home with a baby in her arms but not a sick one. Since we had no woman to take the child and we already told the father he

had one son we had to think on our feet. So we wrapped the child up in a coat that his mother had on when she came in. It was bitterly cold as it was winter so she came in wearing a beautiful coat. One of my allies wrapped the child. We wrote a note "orphaned" and put it in the coat with the baby"

Babini: "So where is the child?"

Matron: "I don't know. The person who took him died without telling me so I don't know. I just know he was left in a busy yet safe area where someone would

find him because that's what the man I sent to take him away said but he said it was best I not know for my own good"

Babini: "So he might have killed the baby but you don't care right as long as your tracks were covered? wow" he shook his head.

Matron: "Look at it whichever way, sonny but I was helping childless women in marriages live a happy life"

Babini: "Why were no records of Nolungile found when her partner went for them?"

Matron: "Because on her file we

made a mistake by actually recording two babies instead of one as we should have. Had the authorities found her file we could have been in a whole lot of trouble. We got rid of her file and pretended to have never helped such a person give birth and since there were no death certificate and birth certificate issued yet it was easy. The man was supposed to have returned so I'd help him fill out the form for the death certificate and birth certificate but when he came he came with the cops so we had to act fast"

Babini: "So you were not bribed by a woman named Nolali Mbuzo to get rid of the files?"

Matron: "I've never heard of that name and I'm good with names"

Babini: "What bothers me more about this is how casual you are about this. You clearly see yourself as some saint who helped women have children. There might actually be a couple out there who smile when people tell them that they look alike not knowing that they are non identical twins. Do you ever think about that?"

Matron: "What are the odds of that happening? You got your truth and I actually feel free now that I've spoken meaning I'll finally die as I'm free"

Babini: "People like you are disgusting"

Matron: "There are couples celebrating over 30 years of marriage because I gifted them with a child. Women were left in our days for not having children so I did what I could to prevent that. I don't feel guilty about it because there are families who are happy because of what I did."

I didn't have to work at a township clinic but I loved helping the less fortunate so I did just that and even went the extra mile. Surely God sees that I did it with pure intentions" Babini decided it was best that he go before doing something he'd regret. The news hit home for him so he had to go breath. He saved the recording and went straight to the police station. The news were filled with the story of Nolali and Babini couldn't wait to tell them that there was another. In some sick way the

matron saved the other twin's life because had she not done what she did two baby remains would have been found. Babini was not sure where he'd begin to look for the other baby who was now possibly a grown man but he was going to try by all means to get a trace. Perhaps he is still alive and his life could bring healing to the Mbuzo family after having just found the remains of their loved one. ❤️

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Babini's been working day and

night to find the other baby by going to each orphanage that he could find but he got no help at any. He knew that the baby was not a Mbuzo because he had no birth certificate so he could still be an unregistered person who was lying under a bridge or something. After he spoke to Mr Mbuzo who got discharged from hospital about the coat the old man couldn't believe it. It was his coat which was gifted to him by Nolungile. She was a domestic worker so her employer gave it to her and she decided it would be

perfect for him. A picture of her was always in the pocket and because he kept it at Lungi's place Nolali never had chance to touch it. On the day that Nolungile was in labour Mr Mbuzo drapped the coat over her shoulders because he remembered that day to be very cold. Babini bought ad space in a local paper and had the story published. He made sure that the detail of the coat was as precise as Mr Mbuzo described it and also added that they were looking for the baby that was found wrapped in it. A

part of Mr Mbuzo didn't want to believe that there was another son because he couldn't imagine people trading babies as though they were lifeless things. He didn't want to believe that humanity was so cruel but then he remembered what his own wife did and it hit him that such evils were indeed possible. The fact that they hit home made the experience even more bitter. Yanda and the rest of the family put the article on all social media pages they had accounts on because they knew many would

share the story. When Ntombi read about it on both Yanda and Hlubi's timeline she nearly choked on her tea. She called Hlubi immediately and she heard the entire story. Her shaking hands dialed Dali's number but it rang and went to voicemail so she called his office but was told he was with a client. She knew that it could have nothing to do with Dali but the details given matched with Dali's story. When Dali heard that Ntombi had been trying to reach him and saw the fifteen missed calls he started to panic so

he rang back.

Ntombi: "Daluxolo" she said with a sense of urgency making him more worried.

Dali: "What's wrong, Kayise?" his breathing quickened. She started to tell him the story in a shaky yet excited voice and Dali sunk into his chair to take in all of it. He took his cellphone to look at the article that she had sent him. The make, brand name and colour of the coat matched his but what got his heart racing at an alarming rate was the detail of the picture inside. He'd always

wondered what it would feel like to find his family but he never imagined it would feel as though he was on the brink of a heart attack.

Ntombi: "Xolo?" she started to get concerned when she could hear him breath but didn't speak "Please say something, Daluxolo please" she pleaded.

Dali: "I'm blank" he whispered.

Ntombi: "Is there someone near you that I can talk to?" she wanted to ask that person to take care of him in his moment of shock. She wished that it was

her but she was too far. A lady came to the phone and Ntombikayise asked her to make some sugar water for him because she heard it helped with shock "Hey, I know this is shocking but I also know you've been wondering what type of people your family are. This might be the rest of the puzzle pieces you've been hoping to add after we found the picture. Can you make it to Cape Town soon?" she asked.

Dali: "I don't have money to make another visit especially one that

I didn't budget for" he said honestly.

Ntombi: "That's okay. I still owe you for that bet I lost against you remember? I'll pay you with a ticket" she knew that the chances of him accepting were small but she had to try. Dali had been avoiding taking money of that bet everytime Ntombi brought it up. He didn't want her spending money on him at all "Xolo, please accept" she pleaded.

Dali: "Okay" he whispered after a long while "But it's a loan" he added. After years of battling

with debt he finally paid all of them off and had been debt free since but he would rather make a debt than have Ntombi spend money she should be spending on herself and kids on him. Ntombi told him she'd make the booking and send him the flight details. It was still morning and she hoped he could be in Joburg by late that day. It was a Friday so Dali went to ask to work half a day and could see that his boss was not happy with that at all. When Ntombi sent him the flight details which were for the

afternoon he felt his heart skip a beat. He didn't know what he would do first when he landed. He went home to pack a few things and felt himself get a headache from all the thinking. The time to depart came and Dali had so much on his mind he felt like his head would explode. When he arrived he found Ntombikayise waiting for him. When she hugged him he felt a little better but he knew that it would not last.

Ntombi: "Where do you want to go first? I haven't told them anything because it's not my place

to. What we do next is totally up to you" she said as they sat in her car..

Dali: "Are they all together?"

Ntombi: "Hlubi said that they are all at her place. How are you feeling?" she held his hand.

Dali: "Numb" he looked at her ""I actually thought I'd be rushing to meet them but I'm scared"
Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "You don't have to do everything today, Xolo. My kids are with Liyema so I can fix the boys room for you" Dali shook his head.

Dali: "I have a brother

remember" he smiled faintly "So don't worry about me. Let me do it and get it over with. I even brought the coat for them to see. If I postpone today I'll postpone tomorrow too. Thank you for coming to fetch me"

Ntombikayise smiled and nodded. The drive to the Mbuzo house was silent until they arrived.

Ntombi told Hlubi she was on her way and that she's not alone but she didn't go into detail. It was not a matter that could be discussed over the phone. She told Dali that they've arrived when

the car stopped moving and gave him time to prepare himself. He said he was ready to go inside after 15 minutes of sitting in the car. Ntombi walked ahead of him to the Mbuzo apartment but turned to look at him when they reached the door. She was shocked to see Dali raise his arm before hitting the door with his knuckles a few times. Somehow feeling Ntombi's hand hold his brought some comfort. The door flung open and Ma Nozulu appeared.

Nozulu: "No, I must have gone

back in time to when my grandfather was a young man" she looked at Dali. He was like a younger copy of his grandfather and since Ntombi didn't tell them who she was coming with she was certain that indeed Dali was a Mbuzo because Ma Nozulu could see it without even knowing who he was. Dali looked at Ntombi who wore a subtle smile.

Ntombi: "Hello, Ma. This is Daluxolo Xhego"

Nozulu: "No, Ntombikayise who is this person that you have brought who looks like my

grandfather and has his name too?" she put her hands over her head. She took Dali's hands and studied them "These are Mbuzo hands" she started to cry. Yanda came to check what the hold up was and was surprised to see Ntombi with Daluxolo. Ma Nozulu took Yanda's hand and held it against Dali's. Apart from the shade of colour they were identical. Ma Nozulu kissed both hands before crying. Yanda let them inside where the other family members were. Ntombi finally got a chance to introduce

Daluxolo properly and told them what his business at the Mbuzo house was. Soon almost everyone in the room was sobbing and Dali felt himself get overwhelmed.

They all saw a piece of themselves in Dali's face which made them sure that he was one of them.

Mr Mbuzo: "Mcirha..." he stood up from his wheelchair for the first time since his hip injury. The joy that he felt numbed the physical pain. Yanda held him firmly just in case but his eyes were fixed on Daluxolo "Ncibane, Qhandqolo,

Nojaholo, Ntswentswe, Mgcaleka" he praised his son with tears rolling down his cheeks. Dali looked at the white ceiling while blinking trying to stop the tears from coming out. He always yearned to hear someone call him by his clan name. When friends would boast about their identity proudly he'd be quiet because he had none. Even at the orphanage most children had identity. There was a deep sense of belonging after Mr Mbuzo praised him "Daluxolo Mbuzo, the second in the family because it once belonged to my

father" Mr Mbuzo added. Dali went on one knee to cry it out. Ntombi wanted to comfort him but she suddenly was not sure if it were her place to since he was surrounded by family. Yanda knelt down on one knee too and took Dali's hand in his. That spark happened again but neither let it separate their hands. Their foreheads were touching as both men just cried. Yanda always wanted a brother. When his mother was pregnant with Yamkela he wished that she was a boy. There he knelt down with

the brother that he always wanted. Everyone in the room was in tears both from a place of joy and pain. Joy because their son had returned but sad because they missed out on years of his life.

Yanda: "Whatever pain that you went through due to not having your parents around we apologize for. I know that we do not have to wait on a DNA test because you are us. You don't realise just how much you've wiped our tears, mntakwethu. I do not know the circumstances in which you grew

up in but I am glad that you never went home with our father because had he taken you home, you most probably wouldn't be here right now. We are going to help you wipe the tears of what I imagine to be an unpleasant upbringing. We love you, Mcirha and we welcome you home. I am your big brother and I will do everything in my power to make you feel at home" Yanda gave Dali a tight hug. Yanda was so happy that he let out a laugh while patting his brother's back in a manly way. The two stood after a

while and Yanda introduced Dali to everyone properly.

Mr Mbuzo: "You have you mother's eyes" he smiled when he looked into the familiar eyes. "I never abandoned you nor threw you away, son. I didn't know of your existence" he told Dali the story. When Dali heard the story of his twin brother and what Nolali did he understood what Yanda meant when he said he was glad his father never brought him home. Dali had seen the story about the remains of a baby being found but he never imagined that

it was a person he once shared a womb with. They had to give him a moment to take in the news of his brother's death.

Ntombi: "Let me get going" she whispered to Hlubi. She felt so out of place.

Hlubi: "No... you're the only one he knows in this room, Ntombikayise. I'm sure that he'll need you"

Ntombi: "He's with family, bestie. He knows where my house is. Let me allow the family time. Please take care of him" Hlubi nodded and Ntombikayise silently left. Dali was too emotional to be aware of

his surroundings so he didn't notice when she left. He found that his brother would be reburied on top of their mother. Mr Mbuzo had Yanda bring a little steel case that he came with. Inside he took out a picture of Nolungile and gave it to Dali. He could indeed see that he had her eyes. Dali wanted to be 100% that he was the person they were looking for so he asked to have a DNA test done. People looked alike yet have no relation to each other all the time. He didn't want to get attached and

find out that he was not the lost son. The family understood why it was important to him so they agreed though they were certain that he was the right person.

Dali gave Mr Mbuzo back his coat after finding out that it belonged to him.

Mr Mbuzo: "I'm sure that Lungi would have wanted to to have it and I also want you to keep it"

Dali: "Thank you". Ntombikayise was wrong, he noticed her absence as soon as he calmed down but understood she had a life of her own. Dali asked for the family to

take him to where the remains of his twin were kept but he asked they go to a testing centre first to to the DNA test. Mr Mbuzo's DNA was to be tested and after that was done they drove to where the remains were kept. To see that his brother fit in an evidence box pained Dali as much as it pained the family. But until the police get the DNA results to prove that it was indeed Mr Mbuzo's son the family could not do anything about it since the authorities have to release the remains first. Dali was told the

baby's name was Yakhikhaya and he was glad to hear that his brother had identity. He took a long look at the remains that were laid on a steel table as though it were the remains of someone who had just died. Dali wondered if the two of them were identical or not. He leaned forward over the remains and watched as his tears fell on it. To know that the person who once was his twin and was supposed to be a man today with a life and family of his own pained him. Dali: "Why did your mother kill

him?" he looked at Yanda.

Yanda: "She changed her statement. She says she didn't kill him. He was apparently sickly but she didn't pay attention to it because she was angry at Tata. She says she thought he'd finally fallen asleep after hours of crying but when she got a closer look she realized that he had changed color and was cold. She panicked and buried him" Dali felt his chest burn as he listened to Yanda.

Dali: "Hours of crying? Who let's a baby cry for hours and pretend they don't hear anything?" he

shouted "This was someone's son, someone's brother. We didn't ask to be products of your father's infidelity. We didn't ask for it" he shouted between tears "You think we'd choose to be born in a situation that would have one of us die a few days after birth and the other ending up being dumped like garbage? Why did we have to suffer because of your father's infidelity?" he cried while pointing at Yanda.

Yanda: "None of you deserved it" he started to cry too "You didn't deserve to be dumped and he

didn't deserve to die" he sobbed.
Mr Mbuzo: "Though we didn't know that there were two of you we were excited about the pregnancy. We looked forward to it and it would have been an even more joyous occasion had we held you both in our arms. Your mother and I were not a one night stand, Daluxolo. I loved her deeply. We didn't plan for her to die. Our plan was to raise you together with the same love that I gave my other children. Had she not died, you would never have been thrown away and your brother would

never have died. She used to rub her belly and sing and we'd feel such powerful kicks so clearly you two loved her voice. I've been asking myself why it happened as it did and all I can think of is that she had to have at least one of you and I the other. Maybe that's why God allowed it all because he knew that your mother was weeping where she was so he comforted her by reuniting her with her son. As I've been weeping yet I am here with you and I'm comforted by meeting you. I feel like the

happiest man alive right now. My other boy is with his mother and the other with me. Lungi and I have both found rest. I love you and your siblings so much. I know you are angry and have every single right to be. You might have been conceived in a situation that was not supposed to have happened but love existed in that situation. Lots of love and mutual respect existed between your mother and I. She left knowing just how much I loved her and I love you so much. You too, Yanda" he looked at his eldest.

Yanda: "I love you too, Tata"

Nozulu: "Please find it in your heart to forgive, Daluxolo. Of all the names the people who found you could give you, they gave you your great grandfather's name. That to me, my boy proves that you have been walking with your ancestors since the day you were born. Daluxolo Mbuzo was our grandfather and you look like him. If I believed in reincarnation I'd have said an ancestor has returned. You have clearly never been lost to us because our ancestors were with you and they

led you to us. I could kiss Ntombikayise's feet for bringing you home and once things have calmed I'm certain I'll do it. We love you. I don't need that DNA because you are ours. Let God deal with Nolali whether or not she killed him she is guilty of hiding him and prolonging your father's pain. You have no idea how much you've stitched together our wounds. Oh we love you. You are Daluxolo Mbuzo of the amaCirha clan. We are from Qwa Qwa where you will someday step on barefooted and feel where

your forfathers once walked. I know that Bhuti likes his children to have names starting with the letter Y and had he known about you you'd most probably have been a Yakha or something" Mr Mbuzo laughed softly "But the name Daluxolo was chosen for you and it suits you well. I sense peace when I'm around you. You could have sworn at us but you came to us with peace and we are grateful. As you are the creator of peace we pray that we will be able to help you find peace within yourself. You have an older

brother and sister and a younger sister. A father and an aunt. If you want we can even put in more effort in finding your mother's family. I want you to know that you have family"

Dali: "No part of me feels at peace. I'm angry and sad but not at peace at all. A part of me is even hoping I'm not your child because what this woman did to this baby is cold and evil. To hear that my mother possibly died giving birth to me also stings. No child wants to carry the burden of thinking they killed their own

mother in order to exist. So until the results are out I'm not going to attach myself to this draining situation. You all look like good people but I can't" he left the room. Yanda ran after him but Dali ordered him to leave him alone. He didn't want to be a part of all of that. He prayed that the results were negative so he'd continue searching for his family, a family that won't come with so much emotional burden and trauma. Suddenly he regretted going to Cape Town. Yanda went back to where his family was.

The investigative officer came in to give them the results of the baby remains and it was indeed those of Yakhikhaya. The body would finally be released to the family. Nolali would also be sentenced for her part in the tragedy and so will the staff who worked at the clinic at that time. Mr Mbuzo: "We are going to bury him with his brother present. That is a Mbuzo" he said with certainty.

Nozulu: "There is no doubt about it. We are going to heal. I know that we are going to be fine. He's

going to come home once he hears that he is indeed family. Yanda, please have Lisakhanya ask Ntombikayise for Dali's number. I want to call him myself when those results are out. I must go see Ntombikayise and hear more about my nephew. They seem to be very close"

Yanda: "Let him be the one who comes to us, Dabs. Let him be the one who tells us about himself and not Ntombikayise. You said he's one of us and once he's sure he'll return. That's a man who has just found his family, heard his

mother died giving birth to him and his brother was murdered by his father's jealous wife. It's a lot and all we can do is pray he doesn't do anything stupid"

Nozulu: "Then call Ntombikayise, man. I saw that he is calmer in her presence. I don't know why you all let her go home to begin with. Have Lisakhanya call Ntombikayise so she can call Dali. I'll sleep better when I at least know where he is" she looked at Yanda.

Mr Mbuzo: "Thank you for bringing both our boys to me,

Lungi" he whispered "I'll take care of this one, sthandwa sam. I'll dedicate the years I have left to give him the warmth of a father. That I promise you" he added in a silent whisper "You take care of our other son. Dali and I will see you two when we are meant to meet again" he smiled. Nothing would be done until Dali accepted that he was one of them. Apart from the emotions the family were happy too. When hours passed and Dali had not returned to the Mbuzo house Hlubi dialed Ntombikayise's

number again.

Ntombi: "I think we should now call the police, Hlubi. It's been hours and this man is in no state to be alone right now. I shouldn't have left" she walked up and down in her room.

Hlubi: "Maybe he's with his brother, the one you mentioned"

Ntombi: "I've been there already but his brother didn't even know he's in Cape Town"

Hlubi: "Let us give it more time. Please tell us when he shows up there and we'll do the same should he come here. Also don't

blame yourself. I love you"

Ntombi: "I love you too" she hung up. Ntombi tried Dali's number again but it went straight to voicemail. Dali was walking around in the rain with no sense of direction. He just wanted to process everything without any pressure. He knew it was late and that Ntombi was worried sick but his phone died. He passed a bar and had to resist going inside and drinking himself into a coma. A taxi parked by the sidewalk so he decided to get away from any alcoholic temptations by getting

into the cab. He told the driver where he was going and watched the cab head to his brother's place. He knew that he needed to be somewhere where he'd feel like he was home. When Ntombi looked out of her bedroom window after hearing the faint sound of a car hooting she saw a car by the gate. She knew that going out was dangerous but she knew it could be Dali. Without thinking twice she ran out into the rain to see what was going on. She ran back into the house to get the keys of the gate when she saw

Dali. She jumped on him in a hug when she finally got the gate opened. The cab drove off and Ntombi locked the gate again. She was glad that her children were not at the house because they usually watched movies until late in the night.

Dali: "My shoes will make your floor dirty" he said when they reached the door. It was cold and they were both wet so dirt was the last thing that Ntombi was thinking about. Dali took his shoes and socks off and Ntombi only realised then that she was

wearing socks only. They were soaked.

Ntombi: "Let us go to my room. My grandfather is going to ask too many questions should he wake up and see you and I'm sure that you don't want that" she whispered before quietly leading him upstairs "You can go and take a shower to be warm. You can give me your clothes so I can go spin them dry"

Dali: "I'm sorry for coming here. I was going to Zu..."

Ntombi: "Daluxolo, I'd rather you be here than somewhere I don't

know. There are towels in the bathroom so you can use those to cover yourself but you must get out of those clothes. Wait I still have your bag in my boot. I'll go get it quickly" she turned but he held her arm.

Dali: "Its freezing and you aren't exactly dry yourself. We can get it in the morning. For now please get out of the wet clothes yourself and get yourself warm".

Dali was cold so he took the shower offer. He took his clothes off and gave it to Ntombi as ordered so she could get them dry.

Ntombi took a towel from her wardrobe and dried herself while Dali showered before changing into dry pajamas. She moved quietly to get to the washing machine and thankful Dali had on all black so she could dry all the items in one go. She warmed some of the left over dinner for him and made two cups of coffee. When she entered the room she found him standing by the window looking out at the rain in nothing but a towel wrapped around his lower body. He went to help her with the tray when he saw her.

Ntombi: "Something just tells me that you haven't eaten all day so I brought you something" she smiled. Dali felt like he was imposing but he thanked her. He first took the coffee and Ntombi took her cup too "Are you going to sleep over?" she looked down.

Dali: "Is the boys room still on offer?"

Ntombi: "No because I am not going to tidy up all that mess they left in there. Can you believe that I found a dirty plate under one of the beds?" Dali laughed "And I swear there is the smell

of old dirty socks in that room" she added.

Dali: "All of what you described sounds familiar because I remember my room that I shared with my foster brothers being the same and also reeking of old feet so trust me I don't mind" Ntombikayise wore a disgusted expression.

Ntombi: "Well I'm not going to accommodate my guest in such. You can sleep in here. It'll be easier that way to sneak you out in the morning. Tamkhulu does this thing of inspecting the house to

check if anything is in tact and since the kids aren't here he'll check their rooms"

Dali: "Are you trying to get me to sleep half naked in your room, miss Poti" Ntombi laughed out and he did too.

Ntombi: "Speaking about nakedness let me go get your clothes. We'll hang them in the room and I'm sure they'll be completely dry in a few hours" she went out to get his damp clothes, at least they weren't dripping rain water like before. She was glad to find him eating. She

wanted him to be the one to bring up the happenings of that day not her. She sat to finish her coffee as they sat in silence. He was clearly not ready to talk and she was not going to push.

Dali: "So where am I going to sleep?" he looked at the floor because the armchair in her room didn't even look comfortable to sit on let alone sleep. Ntombi stood and went to open her bed covers and patted a spot and Dali looked at the bed for a long while before looking at her "I really don't mind the smelly feet" he looked at her.

He didn't want to have to go to the bathroom all night due to arousal.

Ntombi: "We'll put pillows between us. Your side and my side" she smiled before going under the covers. Dali put the tray with the empty plate and cups aside before hesitantly walking to his side of the bed. It was strange for Ntombi to have another man in it too. Both of them eased up after a few minutes.

Dali: "I don't want these people to be my family" he whispered "I don't want to have to deal with a

loss of a brother I never got to know. Like it would mean we've met each other, Kayise but we never got to know each other"

Ntombi: "You always told me to take it a day at a time, Daluxolo. So I advise you do the same.

Truth is there is a big chance they are your family. So process what you can now and do the rest once you get the results. The Mbuzo family are good people" she watched Dali lie down on his back. He looked at her.

Dali: "I'm sorry that I'm dragging you into all of this. I

should have gone to my brother's place and I was but I couldn't get out of the taxi. I didn't want to hear him tell me that I'm lucky I found my family so I should be grateful"

Ntombi: "I'm glad you are here" she covered her body with the blankets.

Dali: "Your room is icy by the way. I feel like I'm in a morgue" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "As if you'd know what it feels like to be lying in a morgue. That's what the blankets are for Daluxolo" she moved closer and

covered him.

Dali: "I knew this is what you wanted all along. Take advantage of my vulnerable state" he said with a smile while she was over him and she laughed.

Ntombi: "I think that we should deal with the fire going on between us once and for all but not tonight"

Dali: "Are you afraid that my mind is filled with too much and it might make the moment unpleasant?"

Ntombi: "That and that we don't have any protection. I haven't

gone for the follow up test after Liyema. Truth is I'm afraid I'll get bad news. I can't trust his word of saying he used protection with the other people" she said quietly.

Dali: "If you're afraid to go alone then we can go do it together. Heck we can go to a pharmacy tomorrow and get it over with" he kissed her lips. Those random kisses that made it seem as though they were in a relationship. Clearly the line between friendship and relationship were blurred and no

one wanted to bring it up. Both had strong feelings for each other but Dali was working on Ntombi's pace.

Ntombi: "Deal with the issue of your family first"

Dali: "I don't want to see them until after the results. If they are my family I'll sit down with them and talk about a way forward but if not then I'll actually be glad"

Ntombi: "Don't say that" she held him and they laid cuddling.

Dali: "I'm just being honest. I shouldn't have come, Kayise."

Tomorrow I'll be on my way back again. I'll borrow money for a bus from my brother"

Ntombi: "Just come back to Cape Town. Clearly this place has a lot of unfinished business with you" she looked at him.

Dali: "Would you like that?"

Ntombi found herself nodding with ease "I'll think about it" he took a deep breath. Joburg really had nothing for him. He found himself missing his clients in Cape Town, the children at the orphanage, his brother and his kids and Ntombikayise a lot. But change

was exactly what he needed a few months ago.

Ntombi: "Can you please leave on Sunday at least? Tomorrow we can find things to do and I can clean the boys room for you so you wouldn't have to sneak in like a thief in the night. And if you were serious about going to test with me then we could go do that too"

Dali: "I was serious about that. Please tell your friend that I've left though"

Ntombi: "It seems you are still in denial but I'll do things your way. I'm actually certain that you

have found your people. No family is perfect, Daluxolo. Step mother's like Nolali exist unfortunately. Ask me I know. I'm sure Nomvula would have killed me too if she knew she'd get away with it. Please work on accepting them should they be your family and learn to forgive them. Mr Mbuzo is a kind man. Clearly his sons take after him with that. You guys are gentle men who absolutely love to laugh and make those around you smile". Dali didn't say a word but just smiled instead. The two of them held

each other until they both fell asleep. Ntombi got woken up by a knock before someone turned the doorknob.

Tamkhulu: "Nto-Nto, it's unlike you to still be asleep at this time. I'm worried about you. Are you fine?" he knocked again and Ntombi sat up.

Ntombi: "Uhm... I'm fine, Tata just tired but don't worry about me"

Tamkhulu: "Okay then go back to sleep, my baby. You work hard so you deserve the rest" he said before leaving. Ntombi looked at

Dali who was laughing.

Dali: "You snuck a man up to your room" he spoke as though they were teenagers and Ntombi was in big trouble.

Ntombi: "It's 11am" her eyes widened when she looked at the clock "Why don't you snore?" Dali laughed.

Dali: "So you were hoping to be woken up by my snoring?" Ntombi laughed and nodded.

Ntombi: "Okay, I'll sneak you out again. Then you'll wait for me to finish and we'll go out for the day. Later we'll return together and

you can come spend the night the right way with everyone aware of your presence"

Dali: "I love this innocent teen girl thing you got going" he tickled her and she tried not to laugh too loudly.

Ntombi: "I just don't want to be asked a million questions" she brushed his beard as he laid on top of her.

Dali: "And you are respecting your elders which is very cute" he smiled.

Ntombi: "What's not cute is your morning breath" they both

laughed.

Dali: "Look who is talking. Okay sneak me out. I've never been snuck out by a girl in my teen years so this is such a turn on" he stood. Ntombi was shocked to see him get dressed while she was watching. He was a beautiful man and she didn't feel guilty for looking until he covered himself. "You're drooling" he joked and laughed.

Ntombi: "I am. I'm not about to pretend I'm not because I really am. Let me go check if the coast is clear so I can go get your bag

in the car"

Dali: "My toothbrush is in one of the side zippers. So for now only bring that and deodorant which you'll most probably find in the same side". Ntombi did a quick run to the kitchen and went to the garage to get his essentials. She found what she wanted and went back to her room. For some reason it was exciting to be hiding a man from her parents. Dali freshened up quickly and was soon ready to go. When Ntombi walked down the stairs she found the elders sitting in the lounge. Tamkhulu

greeted her but Ntombikayise gave an awkward wave.

Makhulu: "Tata, please push me out to the garden" Ntombi smiled.

Tamkhulu: "It is too cold to go out. Next you'll be saying your knees are aching"

Makhulu: "Please, myenam. I need fresh air" she pleaded. Tamkhulu pushed her out and it was not a pleasure at all. Ntombikayise went to get Dali and they safely made it out of the door without being seen.

Ntombi: "Give me a few minutes and I'll join you" she smiled.

Dali: "I'll be around until you're done". Ntombi promised to be quick and they went their separate ways. She quickly went to shower and get dressed. She hated lying to Hlubi by saying Dali is back in Johannesburg but she didn't want to break his trust. Makhulu was waiting for Ntombi in the kitchen.

Makhulu: "There is no need to hide your male friend from us, Ntombi. This is your house so we can't tell you what to do" Ntombi wanted to explain herself "I saw him arrive last night. I'm not going

to tell your grandfather because I'm also not in the mood for the lecture he'll give you as if you are a child that's why I distracted him so you could get your friend out. If you want to talk I'm here. I know you are a daddy's girl but there are certain things that I know you can't talk to him about" she laughed softly.

Ntombi: "Thank you for covering for me, Ma. I'm going to be out with Daluxolo. He's going through a difficult time so I want to make him forget a bit. I'll accomodate him in the boys room

tonight"

Makhulu: "Thank you for telling me who you are going with. Go have fun and I hope whatever made him come here so late at night is solved soon. I'll cook so invite him over. Also pray with him, Ntombikayise. Nothing beats prayer"

Ntombi: "Yes, Ma. Have a good day" she kissed her grandmother's cheek before saying goodbye to her grandfather. She found Dali not so far from her home and the two of them first went to get

breakfast. The window period for the HIV test was over long ago but Ntombikayise pushed it to the back of her priorities due of fear. When she heard that her results were negative she smiled before taking a deep breath. Dali knew his status but he wanted to do it with her to ease her fears. The two of them spent the day doing fun things and Dali knew he couldn't run from the reality of his life but it felt good to be doing things that took his mind off things. When he heard that Makhulu knew that he

spent the night in Ntombi's room he decided to go sleep at his brother's place but he agreed to honoring the dinner invite. His plan was to return to his life and only once he sees the results will deal with everything that has happened. It was unlike him to take flight when things were too much but he didn't have the strength to deal with everything while he was not even sure if the burden was his to carry. Too much has happened in a short space of

time and he needed to take it all in on his own time. 

S2-INSERT 35

Ntombikayise was surprised to get a call from Mrs Williams who is the social worker who helped them adopt Amahle. Mrs Williams sat in the lounge while Ntombi was making tea. Liyema called to apologize for being late but promised he would join them soon. Makhulu and Tamkhulu went out for the day to an elderly church gathering and the boys were out

with their girlfriends. Mrs Williams asked that Amahle be at home so she was in her room. The tray was shaking because Ntombi suddenly felt nervous. When Liyema knocked Ntombi told him to enter and like her he had a frightened look in his eyes. Clearly he also had no idea what the visit was about. Ntombi served tea for all of them before sitting down. Williams: "Thank you meeting with me today. I can see that you are both anxious to know what brings me here unexpectedly because this is not the usual date of my

evaluation. I'm going to get straight to the point. Vusimuzi Gala who is Amahle's biological father as you both know has come to me" Ntombi just knew she wouldn't like what Mrs Williams had to say "Mr Gala has approached me regarding Amahle. He wants custody of his daughter" Ntombi's heart skipped a beat. She looked at Liyema with blurry vision but blinked the tears away.

Liyema: "Well you tell him that he can't have custody of our daughter. She might be his

biologically but in every other way she is ours" he raised his voice.

What he just heard angered him.

Mrs Williams: "Mr Elephant please call down"

Liyema: "You have just told me that the man who didn't want much to do with Amahle for

thirteen years suddenly wants her. Don't tell me to calm down.

Where was he when my wife and

I found a baby in a dumping

sight? Why did he not fight for

her during the adoption process?"

he shouted.

Mrs Williams: "We all know that he

was not aware of her existence until he was told his baby was found dumped. I think we can all remember how hurt he was to hear what his ex girlfriend did. He couldn't take care of her back then so that's why he was not against her having a better life. He feels he is stable enough now to raise her. He has a house, a wife and is working a stable job"

Ntombi: "That still doesn't mean that he will be a good parent to our daughter. We give this man chance to see her twice a month and I'm sure that we can sit

down and talk about him seeing her more but to want to take her. No, I'm not going to let some man take my child just because he now feels mature enough to be a parent. This is a man who didn't even pitch for some of the appointments he had planned with Amahle in the past. So no" she wiped her tears.

Mrs Williams: "This is not easy on me either. If it were up to me I'd have Amahle stay here until she's an adult but I'm not a judge. He wants full custody of her and he is threatening to go

the legal route should we not be able to come to a settlement"

Liyema: "Tell him to bring in on. We are going to fight this until our bank accountd run dry. He's not getting full custody of our child" Ntombi was nodding in agreement.

Mrs Williams: "Mr Elephant and Miss Poti, I have been talking to Amahle about the divorce. I do not think you two realize just how much it has affected her"

Ntombi: "We are doing our best to help her and her brothers deal with this. We can't be the first

adoptive parents to divorce, Mrs Williams"

Mrs Williams: "You are not but it's rare for a couple to divorce and at the same time have a biological parent fight for custody. The court goes with what's best for the child. Right now you two are not creating the stable home that was the reason why the adoption was approved. He on the other hand now has that stability and should the court feel Amahle would be better off with him and his wife then they have a good chance at winning custody"

Ntombi: "Better off with people she does not even know?"

Mrs Williams: "Clearly Amahle did not tell you what I'm about to as I advised her to do. It turns out that she had spent time with Vusimuzi without you knowing. She's also met his wife. I think it is best that you call Amahle so she can explain herself"

Liyema: "Amahle! he shouted "Amahle Elephant!" he raised his voice louder. Amahle soon appeared looking like someone guilty of something.

Amahle: "Dad" she said in a

whisper.

Liyema: "What is this that I hear about you meeting with Vusimuzi without us knowing?"

Amahle: "I'm sorry" she started to cry.

Mrs Williams: "Please calm down, Mr Elephant. We don't want to scare her"

Liyema: "If meeting a man she barely knows secretly didn't scare her then being asked a question by the one she knows as her father should be easy" he looked at Mrs Williams and back at Amahle "Wipe those tears, sit

down and explain" he pointed to the chair and watched her walk to it before sitting down.

Ntombi: "Nana, please tell me that you didn't meet people you don't know without our permission" she was more gentle than Liyema.

Amahle: "I'm sorry, mom. He first came to my netball practice and took me out for ice cream. I told you that Pretty's mom drops me off after practice but it was him. He did it more often and then he came with his wife sis Asakhe and they both took me out" she

whispered while playing with her fingers.

Ntombi: "So you are not going to take any action against this man for having secret meetings with our daughter when the court ordered that he sees her only when we give permission? This man could have kidnapped my baby for goodness sake"

Amahle: "They are nice people"

Liyema: "You keep quiet because you are in a lot of trouble. What did we say about trusting strangers, Amahle? Didn't we say it's dangerous?"

Amahle: "You did, dad but he is not a stranger. He is my father too"
Liyema felt his chest sting.

Mrs Williams: "Why did you keep doing it though you knew it was wrong, Amahle" Amahle shrugged "You can tell us. You are in a safe space" she held Amahle's hand.

Amahle: "Because they are together. When we go out there is a mother and father together. I miss that" she sniffed "I miss having both a mother and a father. I also did it because I like them. They are nice people" she wiped her tears "Plus my

father has another daughter now. A real daughter. So it feels nice to be with Bhut Vusi because I know I'm his real daughter" she added.

Liyema: "Amahle but you know that having Abongile in my life won't change anything. I'm not going to love her more than I love you. Do you feel like we love your brothers more than you?" he calmed down.

Amahle: "No, dad"

Liyema: "Then where is this real daughter thing coming from?. You are my real daughter. I changed

your nappies, I took you to school on the first day. We love you so much"

Amahle: "I love you too but I also miss having you and mom under the same roof. Bhut Vusimuzi and sis Asakhe make me feel like I am a part of that again. A real family. A complete family"

Ntombi's heart broke.

Ntombi: "Go back to your room, Nana. We have grown up things to discuss. I'll come up now so we can talk" Amahle apologized again for the secrecy before going to her room. Ntombi felt guilty for

not realizing that her child had been meeting strangers behind her back. "I want to lay a complaint against this man and woman for not telling us that they are meeting our child" she added.

Mrs Williams: "Are you willing to hurt Amahle even more? You heard that she says she likes spending time with them. If you lay a complaint against them they might be served with a retraining order. I know you are angry and hurt but let us not do things that will derail Amahle more"

Liyema: "Whose side are you on? So what these people are doing is not derailing Amahle? Trying to take her from the only home she knows is not derailing her? I get the feeling that you don't want us to have Amahle"

Mrs Williams: "You best believe that I told them what I thought about them meeting with her privately without our knowledge. He knows that it is wrong hence he stopped. I did tell him what the consequences of such might be but like I've said I can't decide. I wouldn't have

given a review favouring you had I not wanted you guys to have Amahle. I'm on Amahle's side, Mr Elephant and you have just heard that the instability in her current home is affecting her. I will not be biased towards you nor Vusimuzi but I will be just and fair on Amahle"

Ntombi: "Have you ever dealt with such before? I know you said it's a rare occurrence but have you?" Mrs Williams nodded "Has there been a case where the biological parent gets back custody?" Mrs Williams took a

deep breath.

Mrs Williams: "Yes there has, Miss Poti especially in such situations where divorce happened. Some parents fight so much that they forget they must be civil for the kids. Some kids don't cope with divorce. Amahle is not coping with divorce and I spoke to the therapist that you hired for her and she too can give witness"

Ntombi: "But Mrs B didn't say anything to me"

Mrs Williams: "She's not supposed to unless Amahle gives her permission too or if it's life

threatening. Amahle gave her permission to tell me and that's how I know"

Ntombi: "But she seems so happy"

Mrs Williams: "Some of us are good at hiding behind a smile, Ms Poti.

Please do not blame yourselves.

Like you said many couples divorce but not all kids deal with it the same. She is seeking stability and

she feels that when with her biological father and step mother.

I have to conduct an evaluation on you two, your new living setting and one on Vusimuzi and his wife

too. I will do a thorough evaluation and an unbiased one but that's all that I can do. The court will decide what to do with my evaluation and Mrs B's one. You must remember that we are professionals in this situation so we have to be honest and if that honesty works against you two it's nothing personal. Is it fine if I go speak to Amahle before I leave? I'm also going to ask that you be free on days that I want to see you. I also want to see where you live now, Mr Elephant. So many factors go into this. All

parties involved will take a lot into consideration before deciding and unfortunately Amahle showing eagerness to be with her biological father might help the judge decide. May I go up?"

Ntombi nodded and watched her go to Amahle's room.

Liyema: "I'm not going to let this go. I'm going to fight this"

Ntombi: "I wish you fought the temptations to cheat as much as you say you will now. You are the reason why our kids have to deal with coming from a broken home. Your temporary pleasures are

what brought us to this point so I hope it was all worth it. She is after a father who is at home with her all the time with a mother. I'm sure this is not easy on her too but she is a child so of course she'll chase stability. Your Portia and Elaine are gone and I am yet again forced to deal with the mess that was caused by you, Liyema. Bukhosi was right, you just take and take. If this man wins this then I want you to know that you took a huge piece of me and I don't know if I'll ever be able to forgive you for that. So

you best use your own legal knowledge and that of the best lawyer to fight this"

Liyema: "I take blame for my part in this. How could you not notice that she has been having meetings with this man, Ntombikayise?"

Ntombi: "Don't you dare. You are a part time parent so don't you dare act as though you know what it is like to be primary caretaker of five children" she snapped. Mrs Williams saw the little argument

Mrs Williams: "I'm here for my

own" she walked pass awkwardly before going back to Amahle's room.

Ntombi: "Great now you just gave Vusimuzi more leverage"

Liyema: "There you go again blaming me for everything. This is no time to play the blame game. We must stand together on this and fight as a united front"

Liyema watched her walk away. He let out a deep grunt before kicking the table. He immediately dialed Mr Dudumashe's number because he knew that he'd have to deal with Vusimuzi's lawyer

after Mrs Williams's visit. They knew that Vusi had been requesting more visits and they had no problems with that but they had to wait for Mrs Williams to do her evaluation on his life. To hear that he wanted full custody was too much to handle.

Ntombikayise also called Mr Dudumashe but heard that Liyema already asked to see him. When Mrs Williams left she went to Amahle's room.

Ntombi: "Mahle, is living with Vusimuzi something that you really want or is it something

that he told you to tell us you want?" she sat on the bed.

Amahle looked down "It's okay, I won't shout" she added.

Amahle: "I was the one who said I wished I could stay in a house with a mother and father again" she said quietly. She felt she was betraying her parents but she had to be honest "They then told me that they'd love to give me that. They really are nice people, mom. I wouldn't have kept seeing them if they weren't. I am sorry for going behind your backs though"

Ntombi: "So should the authorities decide you are better off living with them, would you be okay with that " Amahle's nodding nearly gave Ntombikayise a stroke "Is our setting so bad, Amahle?" she had to ask.

Amahle: "I'm not adjusting to being here during the week and at dad's over weekends. I tried but I'm not, mom. I love you and dad but I also love you together not apart. I don't want to lose you guys so I'd come visit all the time"

Ntombi: "It seems you have made

up your mind already"

Amahle: "I don't know but I do know what I feel" Ntombi nodded. She gave Amahle time to also process things. She was glad to see Liyema had gone because she was not in the mood to see him. She remembered having a fear of adopting a child and having that child choose her biological parents once they were grown and her fears were coming true. She was going to fight for her daughter but she felt it could go either way. That was the last thing Ntombi expected the divorce

would come with but she knew she had to be strong for the fight ahead.

When Hlubi walked inside her bedroom that evening she found candles lit in the room and rose petals on the bed. Yanda held her hand and led her to the bed.

Hlubi: "So that's why you ran that bath for me?" she laughed "You knew I'd take forever as always giving you time to prepare all of this" she looked around.

Yanda smiled before putting her feet on his lap. He drizzled some

massaging oil on his hands and Hlubi felt she was in heaven when his fingers glided beneath her feet. She took more pillows to put behind her and relaxed to enjoy the moment.

Yanda: "I'm aware of the fact that I've been neglecting you since this issue with my family started but not tonight. Tonight I want to show you how much I appreciate your support"

Hlubi: "we will get through this, baby. I know that your mother getting 25 years imprisonment will take a lot of getting used to

but we will be back on track again. The results will be out soon and if Dali is your brother you'll work together and heal the family"

Yanda: "I'm hoping he's my little brother. I swear I always wanted one" they both laughed "So what's up with him and Ntombikayise?"

Hlubi: "All I can say is that their friendship is growing" she looked at him.

Yanda: "It would be weird should they date though. She was first your sister in law and she might

be mine someday. Just like a scene from the bold and beautiful" Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "Don't compare my friend to the likes of Brooke Logan. That woman was a whore period.

Ntombi met Dali way before we did so she didn't know he could be related to you. Clearly she and I are destined to be together too" she smiled.

Yanda: "We'll be meeting someone soon" he held her belly. He changed the subject. Yanda didn't want to meddle in Dali's love life as it might cause division should

Dali be his brother.

Hlubi: "I want him to come already. Everything is sore and I'm bloated. It's good to see Tata up and going though. Clearly the Dali matter has made him excited"

Yanda: "Part of the reason I'm hoping that Dali is family. The news gave the old man strength. Once the results are out, we can bury Yakhikhaya and move on. We have too many good things on the horizons to dwell on the bad. Our son is due any day now. Nandi's in laws sent us a letter so we must

set up a date for the negotiations. And I want Dali to be a part of it all. I want him to know that he's family and is important. And what better way to tell an uncle he's valued than making him a part of his niece's lobola negotiations?" Hlubi loved how excited he was.

Hlubi: "You are right, sthandwa sam. Too much good too look forward to so let us endure the uncertainties and the pain because God had better days for us all" Yanda smiled before kissing her. It felt good on both of them

to have alone time after the chaotic past few days. He slipped off her pink gown to reveal her freshly bathed naked body. Sex was now a strategic business because the usual positions were impossible with a huge bump between them. Hlubi undresses her husband while they kissed and felt his kisses all over her warm body. After days of not being intimate they were both hungry for each other. Her moans left a satisfactory smile on Yanda's face as he laid side by side behind her as they moved with gentle

thrusts. Hlubi would tilt her head backwards to kiss him but would break the kiss during moments of intense pleasure. She loved how his hand travelled from her chest, to her belly and to the sensitive love bud between her legs. Both of them unable to hold the pleasure of any longer reached a powerful climax at the same time. Yanda held on to her as they were both trying to catch their breath.

Yanda: "I think we must have as many of these moments before the baby comes" he kissed her

neck.

Hlubi: "I am sure once my body has healed after birth we will be able to steal such moments" she gave him a passionate kiss.

Yanda: "I won't say no to that. I also love how bigger your breasts have gotten" he held one in his hand and Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "You're such a man, Mbuzo" she playfully hit his hand away and they both laughed "We should also get that house, baby. This renting is a no. We've saved enough over the years to finally be able to buy our home"

Yanda: "Agreed but I don't want to talk right now. I want to sex you up all night" Hlubi laughed out. Yanda could never talk dirty to her so she was not surprised he said that. He kissed her and indeed did as he pleased with her body and Hlubi was more than happy to submit because he knew just what to do to make her feel like she was on cloud nine. ❤️

S2-INSERT 36 (NOT EDITED)

When Dali got the test results stating that he was Mr Mbuzo's son he cried once again. He couldn't

lean on Ntombi because she herself had the Amahle issue to deal with. Mr Mbuze bought a plane ticket with his pension money for his son. Dali took family responsibility leave to take care of whatever personal business he had to deal with. When he told his boss the entire story he was told to take as much time as he needed because as a therapist he also had to be good in order to help others. When Yanda offered Dali accomodation he felt himself torn between the foster brother he knew his entire life and his

blood brother he had met just a few days ago. For his own sanity he decided it was best to find the cheapest backpacker that he could find. Mr Mbuzo was happy to hear that he has a piece of Nolungile again. When Dali arrived at Yanda's to discuss a way forward he met Babini on the way. They made acquaintance when they realized they were going to the same flat. Dali realized the big role that Babini played on putting all the puzzles together and he thanked the big man.

Babini: "I'm not going to stay because I'm sure that you have a lot to talk about. Matron Weber called me back to her house and gave me a box filled with files. I actually witnessed her take her last breath. I found your mother's file and indeed a twin birth was recorded. She had a medical condition that made her bleed more than the average person so the childbirth was too much. There was nothing the staff could have done at the time with the resources they had. It had nothing to do with you two

because you'll see in her file that she had the condition since childhood. In the file the matron gave me I also found a picture. It turns out for each twin she separated she took a picture of them together first. She'd write the name of the mother on it too. This is the one that I found in your mother's file" he gave a picture to Mr Mbuzo. It was blurry but it was clear that the boys on it were identical twins. Mr Mbuzo: "The one on the left is Yakhikhaya. He had a mark on his head so I know. The one on the

left is you, Daluxolo" he said with a smile before giving Dali the picture. Dali's mouth curved up on a smile but his tears also came quickly. His question about whether they were identical or not was answered. They were identical. Dali brought the picture to his lips to kiss his little brother. When he was done he circulated the picture around the room and everyone was smiling while crying.

Yandiswa: "It's so good to finally put a face to the name" she laughed softly while everyone was

nodding.

Yamkela: "And the fact that they were identical is the cherry on top because we can look at Bhut Dali and know what he would have looked like" she smiled at Dali.

Yanda: "I don't know how I can thank you, Babini. You and your wife have helped us so much.

Please tell us how we can repay you"

Babini: "Repay us by rebuilding your family. That's why we did this. They gave away four other babies and I'm going to work hard to trace them. Pay us back

by rebuilding your family please"
he looked at them all.

Hlubi: "And don't forget my
friends dress please, Mbuzo" she
looked at her husband.

Babini: "Oh damn thank you, Hlubi.
Yes, that dress please" they
laughed. "Let me get going. I
wish you all nothing but the best.
I'm sure that we are going to
see each other around since our
wives are friends" Yanda stood
with him and they shook hands.
Mr Mbuzo and Dali also stood to
shake Babini's hand "I know
what it feels like to have to

adjust into a family you don't know but it is possible. Maybe we can do beer and just talk like men" he said while holding Dali's hand. He was not one to offer such but if hearing his story would make thing easier on Dali he was up for it.

Dali: "I will definitely take you up on that offer, man. Thank you".

Babini said goodbye again before leaving. Ma Nozulu started to sing a song which said that the devil is is a liar and soon the family was singing with her joyously while hugging Dali. Dali

couldn't help but smile while singing along. Ntombikayise was right the Mbuzo's were not so bad. When he got a chance to look at his mother's details he learned that Babini took liberty to trace her family too but all that was there was that her family was originally from Zimbabwe and that there were no surviving family so Dali put that matter to rest. He was hoping to find at least a sister but he felt grateful for having his father's family. He looked at the baby picture of him and Yakhikhaya once again and

smiled. He would have loved to have had a partner in crime. He had never met Nolali but when he is ready he wanted to.

Yanda: "Tata, you mentioned that you made a coffin for Mama yourself. I'm sure it was good but I would like her to be reburied in a proper one with cushions in it and I want Yakhikhaya to be in that same casket with her and not in a separate one on top of her. I would like a proper burial for them please. I want to say goodbye to them properly and have a tombstone be done for

them" he looked at his father.

Mr Mbuzo: "I have nothing against what you have just requested, son"

Yanda: "I just ask that you please allow me to help you carry the costs. Tata is a pensioner so he doesn't have money and I don't want you to do this alone. I'm your big brother so it's my duty to" Dali smiled.

Dali: "Thank you, bhuda" Yanda smiled proudly when Dali called him Bhuti.

Yandiswa: "You should also call me sisi because I'm a few months

older than you. This one is the baby" she pointed at Yamkela and they both laughed.

Yamkela: "I'm just glad that I'll have another big brother to be a cry baby too. Bhut Yanda was starting to get tired" laughter once again.

Dali: "You guys must just be patient with me. I'm still trying to get to know you" he smiled.

Nozulu: "Yho you have so many cousins in Qwa Qwa. I can't wait to officially introduce you to everyone"

Mr Mbuzo: "Easy, Nozulu. He's not

going anywhere. You know that Mbuzo men don't adjust easily so please don't overwhelm him. We are going to do everything at your pace, Ndoda" Dali nodded.

Dali: "I always felt like a piece of me is missing and since I know I had a twin that feeling is gone. He might be gone but I love him. I hope that he and Mama are looking down on me"

Mr Mbuzo: "Yanda, I've also decided that it is best I return to my house now that the police are no longer busy there. I will have a prophet cleanse it first"

Hlubi: "But Tata you don't have to go"

Mr Mbuzo: "There can't be two bulls in one kraal, ntombam. As reserved as Mbuzo men are, we are also extremely stubborn" both Dali and Yanda could relate to that and they laughed.

Yandiswa: "Don't worry, I'm going to stay with him and look after him. It'll be good to have my father all to myself" she laughed.

Yamkela: "No yho, I'm coming back home"

Mr Mbuzo: "I don't mind that at all. I know I will be at peace.

That is your home too, Daluxolo. Whenever you are in Cape Town don't ever feel like you have to stay at places you have to pay money to be in because your father has a house. That house is for all of you and your children. It's not big but it's home" he smiled while looking at all four of his children. He felt a peace he never had before.

Dali: "As much as I will take a bit to get used to having an entire family I am happy. I said I don't want you guys to be my family but I'm actually glad you are. A

good friend told me no family is perfect but if love exists then it's enough. I feel loved and belonging so thank you. I'll definitely remember that I have a home, Tata"

Yanda: "Mbuzo" he patted his brother's shoulder while laughing "Your niece is getting married soon so I want you to be chief negotiator" he added.

Hlubi: "Baby, now is not the time to ask" she whispered.

Nozulu: "It's his brother so he can ask now. Oh Daluxolo Mbuzo the second" Dali laughed out.

Mr Mbuzo: "He even has Tamkhulu's laugh"

Nozulu: "I'm telling you, bhuti Tamkhulu has found a way to return" they all laughed.

Dali: "And I always felt like I have an old soul" he joked and they laughed "I will also introduce myself as Daluxolo the second from now on" the room was filled with laughter again. Hlubi could see what Ntombi meant when she said Dali could make people laugh after having a serious conversation. There he was in the mist of uncertainty cracking jokes.

Nandi: "Tamci, I also cooked a special meal for you so that you can brag to my in laws about what a gem they will get a a daughter. I have a degree in law so add that too" she joked and Dali laughter until tears came out.

Dali: "Write it all down, Mchana. Give me the entire list of your achievements and I'll make sure they know they are getting one in a million" the room was filled with nothing but laughter.

Mr Mbuzo: "Come let us pray. We have so much to thank God for"

he held out his hands and they all held each other's hands before bowing their heads. Mr Mbuze have a prayer of gratitude for being united with his family.

Ntombi on the other hand sat opposite the Gala family and their lawyer. Both families were not backing out and Ntombi knew that the matter would end up in court.

Vusimuzi: "I didn't know Fefekazi dumped my child at a dumping site. I didn't have the means to take care of her back then

because I was a child myself. I was sixteen but now I am ready. I've fixed my life for Amahle"

Ntombi: "So what were we all long, Vusimuzi? Do you even care about what this is going to us?"

Vusimuzi: "Ma Elephant, I hate doing this to you. I'm not doing it out of spite but because I want to be a father to my child. I love her so much...we love her so much" he looked at his wife.

Liyema: "So what am I if you want to be her father?"

Vusimuzi: "You are her father too. Just because I want custody of

her it doesn't mean I'm taking her from you. I'll bring her to visit you guys whenever she wants. I'll invite you to all the important stuff in her life. I'm sorry for the meeting her in secrecy and that was childish of me but I missed her too much to wait on Mrs Williams to finish her report. Please I really love my child. If I had the stability I have now back then she wouldn't have even known you but I am glad she did because you raised her well"

Mr Dudumashe: "You do realize

this child is used to having certain things that many can't begin to imagine. Will you be able to afford her private school fees?"

Vusimuzi: "I'm not going to lie and say that I can because I don't have the money the Elephants do and I told Amahle that. We will however enrol her in the next best school as our budget can afford. A child needs love and stability not the best materialistic things"

Ntombikayise: "So you really just want to take my daughter from me?"

Asakhe: "We don't, Sisi. Amahle can never forget you and we don't want her too. Like my husband said we and the rest of the family want her home where her blood is. It was impossible for a sixteen year old boy to look after a baby when he himself lived in poverty. Her mother was fifteen hence the immature choice to throw a baby away. Vusi is now the father that Amahle deserves and so is Mr Elephant. Why can't she have the best of both worlds? If she wants to live with you we ask that you allow us more

access to her and if she wants to live with us we'll never give you rules on when to visit because this is your child too"

Liyema: "Bull shit, that's our daughter and us bring divorced doesn't change how much we love her"

Gala lawyer: "Then I guess we are going to see each other in court and let the court decide. We tried doing this our way but we clearly need assistance. Let us go" she looked at her clients. Vusimuzi and Asakhe stood and so did everyone else.

Asakhe: "My husband and I are struggling to conceive, Sisi. I might never get to give him a child but I can by helping him raise his and love her as my own. Please don't take that away from us" she whispered to Ntombi.

Ntombi looked at her for a long while before leaving her.

Liyema: "What would happen if we could provide a stable home for Amahle again?" he looked at Mr Dudumashe.

Dudumashe: "I hope that you two are not planning to act like you are trying to make things

work again. If you start that then you will have to keep up pretence until Amahle is legally an adult" he looked at both of them.

Ntombikayise: "What are our chances of winning this honestly and with transparency because I'm not going to sleep in the same bed with Liyema for the next five years"

Liyema: "Is it too big of a price to pay for keeping our daughter, Ntombikayise?"

Ntombi: "Way too much of a price to pay"

Dudumashe: "It doesn't look good

for us, Ntombi. Mrs Bam's testimony, Mrs Williams recent testimonies after her talk with Amahle since the divorce and Amahle actually showing interest in being with her real father is working against us. Honestly this might go either way. At least they aren't cutting you guys out of her life"

Liyema: "I'd do whatever it takes to keep all of my children. Will you?" Ntombikayise just looked at him. She left without giving him an answer.

Dudumashe: "What are you playing

at, Elephant?"

Liyema: "Compromising to keep my child, Tata"

Dudumashe: "She's the one who'll have to do the compromising.

This is just a chance for you to get back into her life because you realize that you miss them. I'm really hoping this is not from a selfish place, Liyema. We'll talk" he walked to his car. Liyema got a call from Portia saying she was in town and had no place to stay. He drove to the bus station to fetch them. He kept looking at Abongile to see if she had their features

but he was failing.

Liyema: "We must get this test done so you guys can go back. Now is not the right time for my daughter to see me with Abongile" he said while driving.

Portia: "Wow after weeks of begging me you say that first? You are an asshole, Liyema. I'm not going to stay at a hotel with a child who has a picky eating plan"

Liyema: "Okay, my kids aren't coming over this weekend so you can stay tonight then tomorrow we do the test and I'll book you

two a flight back. Please Portia this is important" Portia decided to keep quiet. She would not have been there had it not been for her mother encouraging her to go. Her mother was happy to point out that Liyema was now without a wife so he was available and Portia couldn't believe she allowed her mother to get to her. Ntombikayise drove to the backpack Dali said he's staying at. She was in no mood to go home so she wanted to hear about Dali's day for distraction. She found herself smiling when he

opened the door wearing a big smile on his face and took her in his arms to dance with her.

Ntombikayise moved in a happy rhythm with him taking in all of his joy as it rubbed off on her in that moment. Dali told her all about his meeting with the Mbuzo family and that they begun the process to have his mother's remains dug up. He also told her about how much fun he had with the family and they went to pray at his mother's grave.

Ntombi: "You were one ugly baby"

she laughed as she looked at the picture "May your children not look like you" Dali laughed. He lifted her off the chair and held her close.

Dali: "What does a man give a woman who had given him so much? An entire clan" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Nothing because I didn't give you anything" she laughed softly "I'm so happy to see you this happy. Your smile I'd more authentic and your shoulders are more relaxed" she brushed his shoulders.

Dali: "You were right. I just

needed to give myself chance to know them. They aren't bad at all. Will you be at my mother and brother's reburial next week?"

Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "You think I'd let go of a chance to see you cry like a baby" she joked and they both laughed.

"I'm kidding. Of course I'll be there. I'm really happy for you, Mcirha" she smiled.

Dali: "Please say that again"

Ntombi: "Mcirha, Qhandolo, Ncibane, Mgcaleka..." Dali kissed her before she could say more.

There was something about how

she said his clan name that made him feel warm and fuzzy inside.

Dali: "How are you? I think I know when my lady is not okay" he held her face.

Ntombi: "Your lady?" Dali nodded with a smile "I'm not okay but I don't want to dampen your mood. I'm still dealing with the consequences of my divorce,

Daluxolo so I can not be your lad. That family you now have are also looking forward to welcoming grandchildren made from your seed and I can't be your lady for that reason too" she whispered.

Dali: "I thought we spoke about the children issue, Kayise"

Ntombi: "I don't want to adopt, Xolo. As we speak Amahle wants to go be with her biological family. So I'm not going to put myself through that again. Sad thing is a part of me understands why she'd want to go. Liyema and I can barely be in a room long enough to have a meal and there she'll have two parents who love each other. Blood is thicker than water at the end of the day. I don't want to adopt again" she cried "So please just forget about

whatever this is because I'm going to end up hurting you unintentionally. I can't give you children and I don't want to adopt either. Just enjoy your life with your family and find yourself a nice woman to settle down with because I'm not her for so many reasons"

Dali: "I love you, Ntombikayise"

Ntombi: "I thought that the feeling was mutual but I now realize that it's not. I'm sorry for leading you on" Dali kissed her again and she kissed him back.

Dali: "A woman like you don't kiss

a man like that unless she had feelings for him. I told you I'm not afraid to swim in deep water"

Ntombi: "I don't want you to. I really don't want you, Daluxolo. Focus on your family and job and find another woman. I'm sure Jozi is filled with beautiful women. I have to go. I'll see you at the funeral but after that I suggest we keep our distance until the feelings between us calms down. I'm sorry and bye"

she ran out of the door. Dali sat on his bed feeling disappointed. He was hoping to end the day with

him and Ntombi being official but that was not going to happen. Too much has been stopping them from being together and Dali was beginning to think that it was indeed best that they keep distance from each other. It would be hard on both of them but perhaps it was for the best, at least they both tried to convince themselves of that. When Ntombi arrived home she heard that the boys were isolating Amahle after hearing what was going on. Ntombi knew that it would give Amahle more

reason to want to leave them and she was not in the mood to deal with it. She asked her grandparents to please talk to the boys while she went to comfort Amahle and help her with homework. Parenting was not easy sometimes and that year was the most testing year of Ntombi's life. 💖

S2-INSERT 37 (NOT EDITED)

It was the second week of court for Liyema and Ntombi against the Gala's. Ntombi once again felt as drained as she did during the

divorce process. Since Mr Dudumashe was their lawyer and her boss he understood that on certain days she had to be in court. Ntombikayise got dressed in her best looking suit to prove to the magistrate as best as she could that she was indeed a woman who had it all together. Tamkhulu called her to the backyard first because he needed help with something.

Ntombi: "What do you want me to do, Tata?" she looked at her grandfather.

Tamkhulu: "I have different

plans for this tree, Nto-Nto"
Ntombi looked up at the big tree
"You'll see when I'm done with it
but for now please grab that
rope I wrapped around it. I will
push the tree and you are going
to pull on that rope as hard as
you possibly can. I'd ask the boys
but they already left for school as
you know and I want to finish my
plans while you are in court"

Ntombi watched as he put the
thin blue and red rope that was
bound around the tree in her
hands.

Ntombi: "So I just pull? Won't the

tree fall on one of us, Tata?"

Tamkhulu: "I'd never give your grandmother reason to kill me so trust me it's safe. I just want to change something. It's a skill I learned from my father"

Ntombikayise nodded. She looked at the tree again and she knew she could trust her grandfather with her life. She had no knowledge on plants but

Tamkhulu did so she couldn't question his plan. Ntombikayise watched Tamkhulu go stand behind the tree. "1, 2, 3...pull, Nto-Nto" he instructed. Ntombi.

She watched him push the tree and she pulled until her slippers dug themselves into the moist soil. Her knuckles were pale and she pulled until she nearly laid on her back. She finally let go after giving it her all.

Ntombi: "No, Tata I'll get someone to come help you" she blew into her hands. Tamkhulu came to her.

Tamkhulu: "What's wrong?" he held her hands in his and rubbed her soft palms with his fingers. "

Ntombi: "My hands started to get a burning pain so I really couldn't

hold on anymore. I gave it my all but the tighter I held on the more painful. There is a gentleman at work who won't mind extra money so he can come help you tomorrow"

Tamkhulu: "I don't want to do anything to this beautiful tree" he looked up "It just helped me prove to my daughter that it's sometimes best to let go. I read a quote on it in a paper but telling someone and making them feel it themselves are two different things hence we just did what we did. See as soon as you let go I

was able to come and rub these beautiful hands to try and lessen the pain so they'd heal. I couldn't help you ease the pain while you still held on to what hurt you.

Now Tamkhulu can kiss his little girl's hands" he kissed each palm

"The healing has now begun because you chose to let go of what caused injury and prolonged healing. When you are in that court today I want you to remember how painful it was to hold on and the relief you felt when you let go. Makhulu and I will always be here to kiss and rub

the aches away as I'm doing with your hands now but we cannot do that...we can not help you if you are prolonging healing by holding on to the rope that is tearing into your skin" Ntombi's tears had long run down her face. Tamkhulu took a cloth from his pocket and wiped her tears. Ntombikayise was mostly crying because of how blessed she felt to have her grandparents around. She asked God every single night to take them once she herself is in her old age. "Now go get dressed so that you won't be late. I love you" he

kissed her hands again.

Ntombi: "I love you too, Tata" she hugged him. She went inside to finish getting dressed and found Makhulu ready with breakfast.

Makhulu: "Eat so you can have strength" Ntombikayise sat down to eat "I'm proud of you for not giving into Liyema's compromise. No use looking good in pictures when you are dying inside in his presence. We are proud of you and our every night prayer is for you to finally be free, content and even happier"

Ntombi: "Thank you, Ma" she smiled and ate quickly. She stood when she was done and thanked Makhulu again "I'm going now. Sis V will be here now now. I should be back in a few hours. I love you guys" she said while putting her plate in the sink.

Makhulu: "Come let us pray" she held her husband's hand and Ntombi's before saying a prayer Ntombikayise took her stuff after saying amen and headed to court where she'd been about three times already. She hated sitting in those cold chairs while

her child's fate is in some woman who didn't even know Amahle's hands. She found Liyema waiting for her outside and the two of them went inside. The court proceedings of the day begun and soon the judge had Amahle on stand. Ntombi liked how gentle the magistrate was with Amahle taking into consideration that she was a child. Amahle told the magistrate what Ntombi and Liyema had already heard. She sought stability.

Magistrate: "So do you think that you are going to find the stability

that you seek with your biological father?" Amahle looked at Ntombi and Liyema.

Amahle: "Yes, mam" she whispered.

Magistrate: "Heaven forbid but let us say that your biological father and your step mother go through the same thing that your adoptive parents are going through, Amahle. Would you go seek stability elsewhere after that too?" Amahle kept quiet to think long and hard about the right answer.

Amahle: "I love my mom and dad

who raised me but I have always wondered what it would feel like to be with my real parents"

Magistrate: "My dear baby, real is not always blood. The Elephants have felt as real parents for you for over thirteen years. So I want you to be sure. Of all the witnesses and testimonies yours is the most important one"

Amahle: "I will visit them and I love them. But my dad's real daughter was here last week so he told my brothers and I we shouldn't come. He thought we don't know but we heard the baby

cry and her mother calling her by name while we spoke to my father over the phone. So if his real daughter is with him, I shouldn't be with him"

Ntombikayise looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "Your honor, that was not why I didn't want them to come"

Mr Dudumashe sat Liyema down because he knew very well he spoke out of turn.

Magistrate: "Do you realize that your life is going to change. You'll go from a private school to a public one. You will go from the suburban life to the township"

Amahle: "Bhut Vusimuzi already explained that to me. I do not mind" the magistrate nodded.

Magistrate: "Thank you, Amahle. You may leave the stand and go with Mrs Williams to the office again" she said with a smile.

Amahle felt terrible but she couldn't avoid the strong urge to be with her biological father.

Ntombi was called to the stand and the Gala lawyer tried by all means to make her seem unfit to raise Amahle but Ntombi was prepared for war so she gave it to him hot. Liyema sat with a

smile on his face as he listened to her smart comebacks. The Gala lawyer asked Ntombi why she felt Amahle was better in their care. Ntombi: "I think she's better off living with us because" she paused. Her mind going to the exercise so she closed her eyes for a second. Dali was sitting in the audience and was concerned about her health. The last thing he wanted was for migraine to make her collapse again.

Magistrate: "Miss Poti" Ntombi opened her eyes to look at the judge "Are you fine? Do you need a

break?" she asked calmly.

Ntombi: "No, mam" she whispered "I could list all of the reasons why I think Amahle should live with me. I could list the suburb living, the private schools and occasional vacations but that's not what the child is asking for right?" she looked at magistrate "She's looking for stability and everyone knows that we can't give her that. I was so desperate to "win" her that I actually considered getting back with my ex husband to give Amahle this stability. That means sleeping with a man

I fell out of love of for the sake of a child. I think that would have been an even more toxic environment to Amahle because I'd have ended up one angry mother. Truth is I can't give Amahle the stability that she wants. I've been giving her and her brothers the next best stability that I could after their father divorced me. And that meant putting aside any bitterness that I had towards their father so they could keep seeing him. So since the legal system now sees me as unfit to

raise her because I'm a divorcee
I can't do anything about it. You
heard Amahle, your honor. She
wants to be with her biological
father. If I stand in the way of
that, if we win this case and she
comes home. I'm going to be the
one who lives with a teenage girl
filled with resentment while my ex
husband sees her on occasional
weekends. So once again it'll be me
Ntombikayise Poti who has to cry
herself to sleep after an
argument with Amahle and let me
tell you Amahle has some
attitude so I can already imagine

those argument. Liyema's place will be the place where she'll be able to let out steam meaning she'll be much calmer there and he won't feel what I am feeling on a daily basis. I know this child, I raised this child. Surely us being here today and all the other days before proves to Amahle just how much we love her. We are willing to fight for her but she does not want to be fought for because she has chosen a side already. I'm tired, your honor...tired of fighting to keep people in my life when they won't do the same for me"

she looked at Liyema "I know that many will call me different insulting named after this but let that be. They can't surely break me more than those that I love have already broken me. This year has been filled with people walking out of my life as though I meant nothing to them. I let some go and I'm willing to let go again. I'll take more months to get over the loss but at least healing will begin sooner rather than later. I'm a woman who lost her mother at a young age so you best believe that I can deal with

whoever walking out on me now. If I could live after losing my mother who was the most important person in my life then to have everyone else leave won't kill me. If Amahle lived with my stepmother she would have known just how much I love her. I don't just tell them but I show them. So grant her her wish because I don't have the strength to deal with the consequences of her not getting what she wants. She can visit as much as she wants and all I ask is for the Gala's to take care of

her. She'll always be my child but what I give her isn't enough anymore. Thank you" the magistrate had to blink away her own tears as Ntombikayise wiped her. She called for a short break afterwards.

Liyema: "Now I'm wondering if you would have fought for our boys had we been on the brink of losing them"

Ntombi: "Oh poor Liyema didn't get to manipulate Ntombikayise into inviting him back to her bed" she said in a cry baby tone "Thing about my boys is that they'd

fight for me as hard as I'd fight for them So you best believe I'd go to war for them. You and Amahle on the other hand don't know what fighting to keep those who love you in your life. You thought I'd pretend to love you to keep a child happy? Even the boys know that I won't and unlike Amahle they won't force me to by guilt tripping me. Perhaps you think I'm lying to you when I said I fell out of love with you. Well I wasn't. You think I love myself so little that I'd forgive you sleeping with two women while

married to me? You think I love myself so little that I'd get back to you and have to look at your child from your side chick every school holidays? You think that I Ntombikayise Poti love myself so little that I'd be happy to pretend to play house with you? Clearly you don't know me well. I rise from the flames over and over again no matter what the fire stripped from me. I rose after my mother died, I rose after Nomvula treated me like nothing, I rose after Bonga raped me and turned me into a

punching bag, I rose after my father died, I rose after you treated me like dirt after losing my womb giving birth to your children, I rose after you cheated on me and divorced me, I will rise after Amahle has left. I will always rise as a powerful woman does. I'm a power. You might see weakness when you look at me but I'm a power. My mother would be ashamed of me if she had to witness me staying on the ground due to selfish people. Yeses I'm my mother's daughter and if you knew her you'd have known

the power I'm from" she stood and left him speechless. She tried by all means to avoid Dali too. She was in no mood to stroke male egos. The judge returned and Ntombi was not shocked to hear that the Gala's got Amahle. It was clear from the beginning.

Ntombi: "I'm proud of you for going after what feels right for you. Your brothers will come around don't worry. You can always come to the house because I meant it when I said I love you, Mahle"

Amahle: "I love you too, Mom"

they hugged. Liyema stood at the corner of the office crying "Dad, I'm sorry" she went to hug him.

Liyema: "All of this is my fault. I'm sorry that I failed you and your brothers" he wept.

Amahle: "You and Mama didn't fail me" she held her father.

Ntombi: "She has a problem with her tonsils so make sure you always have those pills to soothe them. I'll show them to you. If you can make pancakes on Thursday morn for breakfast please do that She carries lunch to school because she hated the

pies sold at school" she started to cry too. Asakhe hugged Ntombikayise.

Asakhe: "Anything I'm not sure about I'll ask from you. We meant it when we said you are still her parents regardless of the fact that she lives with us. I know stepmothers can be a horror but I promise to look after her. You'll see yourself when you see her" she whispered to NTOMBI and Ntombikayise nodded.

Liyema: "Her fees for this year are paid for and so is her transport. We'll give him her new

address. They said you have a decent job so get her into a model c school so the change from a private school won't be too much. She can remain on my medical I don't mind. I'm not going to abandon my fatherly duties"

Vusimuzi: "We can sit down and discuss who takes care of what, sir. We know this is not easy on you and once again we are sorry. We love her and we'll take good care of her. She can come to you guys during weekends"

Ntombi: "Uhm...let's go help her to pack then. I'm sure her things

will all fit in the bakkie. Are you sure you want to leave today?"

Amahke: "The sooner I go the sooner I can get used to my new surroundings"

Asakhe: "Your room is clean and ready for you to move in. Finally we'll have some life in that house" she smiled. Ntombikayise

wondered if Asakhe would say that after she's gotten a real taste of Amahle's attitude. They went home and helped Amahle pack up. The emptier the room got the more real it got to Ntombi but she was tired of

fighting. Both her and Liyema saw how excited Amahle was to go with her family as much as they didn't want to admit it.

When the boys came from school their parents told them what was happening. Typical Bandile cried and Banele felt betrayed.

Banele: "Don't come running to my mother when things aren't going well for you there"

Liyema: "Banele" he said in a stern voice.

Banele: "Don't Banele me, dad. You are as guilty of doing that. From now on leave my mother the hell

alone. You both decided to leave so stay the hell out" Liyema was about to take his belt off but Tamkhulu stopped him. Banele went up to his room.

Bandile: "Don't be a stranger, lil sis. Come visit" he hugged his sister and Amahle was glad that at least one of them was not as mad.

Bubele: "Now we can separate. Two in one room and two in Amahle's. The room was starting to feel too small for us all anyway" Amahle's heart sank "All the best, Amahle. We'll miss you but

hey..." he shrugged before going to his room too.

Ntombi: "They are hurt, Nana" she held Amahle close. "They love you so they'll forgive soon" she added.

Bukhosi: "I'm actually not surprised by her move. Had dad married the Elaine woman Amahle would have gone to stay with them. So Mama just know it's not you, it's her. Amahle is good to all other mother figures but fights you on everything"

Amahle: "That's not true"

Bukhosi: "I'm not accusing you nor

am I gossiping about you. I'm saying what we all know to be true. Even Makhulu got more respect than Mama. When Mom tells you to do things you first give attitude but when Makhulu tells you to do that same thing you stand and do it. Honestly I was getting tired of you disrespecting my mother. I'm not angry. I actually get why you'd want to be with your blood but as Banele said don't be bothering my mother when things don't go well. I love you so really do come visit. You'll sleep on the couch as

visitors would" he hugged her before joining his brothers.

Vusi: "Maybe it's best she visits only once they've calmed down "

Tamkhulu: "They will calm down.

My boys and I have an understanding so one conversation with them and they'll be fine.

Mahle, please don't be a stranger, baby. Tamkhulu is going to miss having you around. We love you so much"

Amahle: "I love you too, Tamkhulu and you Makhulu" she hugged them both.

Asakhe: "Shall we go?" she asked

with an excited smile. Amahle said goodbye once again. She went to say goodbye to the boys and they all came down to help her pack her stuff in the bakkie. They were hurt but they all hugged her. Liyema also left to go process everything.

Bubele: "Funny how two people left this house this year and two people came to live with us"

Ntombi: "You guys will forgive her eventually right? I saw the place she'll live at and it's not bad at all. Please let us not throw Amahle away"

Bukhosi: "Like the biological parents who she just chose over us did? No we won't" he said sarcastically.

Tamkhulu: "Let us have lunch".

Everyone watched as Ntombikayise set up for Amahle at the table. She realized what she did herself and let out a laugh before crying. Tamkhulu went to hug her.

Tamkhulu: "We are here, Nto-Nto. The healing has begun, Mntanam" he whispered.

Banele: "Plus you've got four spares, that's not so bad right?"

he joked and Ntombikayise actually laughed.

Ntombi: "No it's not" she sat down.

Bandile: "When I have a child it'll be a daughter and I'll give her to you so you can raise her"

Ntombikayise gave him a look

"Relax I didn't impregnate

anyone" he laughed. Ntombikayise pointed a spoon at them all to tell them to not dare do such yet. She had a feeling Amahle would stay well with the Gala's. Like the divorce the custody battle was short but it was best because to

hold on to people who didn't want to be held onto hurt her and prolonged her healing indeed. As painful as it was to not have Amahle around the table it felt like it was the right thing. Not for her nor Liyema but for Amahle who felt she finally found a sense of true belonging. When they arrived at her new home she first had to get used to the size of the house as it was smaller and also the constant noise outside. She missed her adoptive family but when Asakhe and Vusimuzi both hugged her she

felt she was home there too.

The following day was the funeral of Nolungile and Yakhikhaya.

Because the story was so public the community hall was packed as the community came to bid farewell to two lives lost too soon.

The family had Yakhikhaya's image from that picture be enlarged and also that of Nolungile so the people could know who they were saying goodbye to. It was a dignified ceremony that was short but touched hearts.

Dali was sad because of how

Ntombikayise avoided him but he was not one to push.

Dali: "I am the twin brother of the baby that is lying in this coffin with our mother. I'm sad but at the same time happy to have gotten a chance to say goodbye to them. Mama, thank you for giving me life and I know had you lived I'd have gotten the love deserved by a child. I wouldn't have moved from family to family seeking belonging and Yakhikhaya wouldn't have been in the coffin with you but it is done. I love you both. Until we meet

again" he said with a smile. Ntombikayise could sense he was in peace. Yanda stood to give thanks to the community for their support and soon it was time to go to the gravesite. They'd be buried in the same burial hole Nolungile was in. The family cried as they watched the casket be lowered. Dali didn't want to see his mother's remains as he preferred to imagine her as the beautiful woman he saw in the picture. Mr Mbuzo held Dali's hand all through the process up until their tombstone was

erected. Both their names were written on it and "Beloved mother and son" written on it. Mr Mbuze also felt peace and could look forward to new beginnings. He still couldn't remember what he did with his life after leaving the family but he was grateful to have been able to return. Dali asked to be left alone at the grave once all was over. He sat on the tombstone for a long while while looking at their pictures. Ntombi: "Dammit you didn't do an embarrassing cry like I thought you would" she joked and they

both laughed.

Dali: "I thought you didn't want to talk to me" Ntombi sat down as the chairs were still there.

Ntombi: "I just came to check if you are alright. Why are you sitting here?"

Dali: "I wanted to be alone with them. It sounds crazy but yeah"

Ntombikayise: "It's not. I used to sleep on my mother's grave on nights Nomvula kicked me out"

Dali felt his heart break.

Dali: "It's sad that we had to suffer so much as kids but here we are right?" Ntombikayise

nodded "Plus I was sitting here telling my mother about you"

Ntombikayise laughed softly.

Ntombi: "I used to tell my mother everything too. It was as though she's listening so hope you said good things about me"

Dali: "As if there's anything bad to say. I'm going back to Jozi next week"

Ntombikayise: "All the best with life, Daluxolo. Please invite me to your wedding"

Dali: "I won't have to if you are the bride" Ntombikayise blushed.

Ntombi: "Well since that won't

happen don't forget my invite. I want to see you happily married someday"

Dali: "You really made up your mind about us. As sad as the outcomes make me I'm going to accept. Not because I give up easily but because you are going through a lot right now. You are one powerhouse, Ntombikayise Poti" Ntombikayise laughed as she told Liyema the exact same thing. Ntombikayise: "You are one strong man too, Daluxolo. Many would have been drug addicts or alcoholics yet here you are dealing

with more crap life served you
with a smile"

Dali: "I wish that life stops
dealing us crap. I think we've had
our fair share now"

Ntombi: "It's always the
undeserving who get the most
crap. Life is just like that but we
are strong motherfuckers right?"

Dali laughed out. He couldn't
remember hearing her swear so it
was strange.

Dali: "You bet ya" he smiled.

"Mama this is the woman that I
was telling you about ke" he held
the tombstone and Ntombikayise

laughed softly.

Ntombikayise: "Xolo, it looks less crazy when you are doing it alone trust me" Dali laughed. He stood and sat opposite her before leaning forward to kiss her.

Ntombikayise shut her eyes to take it all in "I've never been kissed in a graveyard before" she whispered and they both laughed. Dali: "Please take care of yourself. Be kind to yourself. Learn to adopt the word no and know that you hold a big special place in my heart. I get that two broken people can't try something as

beautiful as love while they have pieces to pick up but I'm hoping that someday we'll both be whole. I don't want to serve you the broken Daluxolo, Kayise. I want to give you me who is whole."

Ntombikayise: "Dali please stop hoping that would happen because you might be whole again while I'm not. Move on and find a love that's going to serve you good. Please I beg you. Go pick up the pieces and find someone to love with the "whole" Daluxolo. Please" she pleaded. She knew that she'd regret it but she felt

it was what's best for him.

Dali: "I can't say I'll do that but I hear you. I love you"

Ntombi: "I love you too" she said honestly. She really did. He kissed her forehead and she held on to his cheek so he won't part his lips with it too quickly. He smelled good. His scent had started to be one of her favourites too. Dali looked at her while smiling. Her beauty always got him from the first day they met to the day they sat in the graveyard it hit him. She was in every single one of his prayers and all that he asked

God was for Ntombikayise to be unconditionally happy as she deserved even if he wasn't a part of that happiness. Dali felt like that was goodbye to their friendship too because they'd both struggle to forget their feelings for each other if they kept as strong as a bond they share as friends. They stood and walked to the cars as there would be lunch served to the attendees but Ntombikayise snuck away to go take a breath. She went to a nearby park and bought herself icecream. She did go on a date

with herself each week as she promised herself she would. At least she would not hurt herself though she felt she was by distancing herself from Dali. She sat in the park and could see a tree start to have pink little flowers. She smiled at how nature always died during cold seasons but managed to live once again in a new season. She felt she was entering a new season and she was looking forward to blooming like the tree before her. 

S2-INSERT 38 (not edited)

When Ntombi found her parents, Mziwakhe and Nobandla dancing she wore a bright smile on her face. She couldn't remember the last time that she saw them together and happy.

Ntombi: "Mama...Tata" she walked closer and they both turned to look at her smiling.

They looked younger and free from any kind of pain Ntombi had to witness them be in during their last days.

Nobandla: "Kayise ka mamakhe"
Ntombi couldn't help but she'd

tears but her smile didn't fade. It was though she was looking back at her own reflection when she looked at her mother.

Mzi: "We are together and we are happy with our great grandparents, mntanam but your tears are making it difficult for us to be at peace"

Nobandla: "We are always close. Those days when you pick up my scent, I'm close. But you need to live for Mama again, my baby. For as long as your heart is still beating I want you to live. I don't want you to exist but I

want you to be alive. I miss you so much but I am not ready to have you join us. Tell Mama and Tata that I say thank you to them for looking after you. Tell them I'm not ready to have them here either because they are my gift to you"

Mzi: "We are together and together we can look after you better. Just because you can't see us it doesn't mean that we aren't here. You sense us and you see our signs everywhere. I know that you recently saw my birth date I was there" Ntombi

sobbed. "We love you" Ntombi felt them both kiss her cheeks and when she opened her eyes tears were indeed rolling down her face. She smiled at the thought of the happy dream. It was a first for her to see them in a dream together so for it to happen so soon after she'd gone through so much comforted her. She sat up and held her cheeks, closed her eyes and smiled. She grabbed hold of her tablet and made a few arrangements. Being one person short was still an adjustment but it had been three weeks already

so it was not as bad as before. She'd started going out with friends again and she visited Amahle who seemed to be adjusting well in her new home. The boys had also calmed down and started to text and call Amahle to check on her. Makhulu was not completely independent of a wheelchair and only made use of a walking stick. She and Dali still kept in touch after they both thought their friendship was over. Ntombi hopped down the stairs and found her family looking at her strangely. She was not

surprised though because she had been looking depressed over the past few weeks so to see her so joyful in the morning was foreign.

Ntombi: "Makhulu and Tamkhulu, Mama said I should give the two of you get regards and she says thank you for looking after me" she kissed them both.

Bukhosi: "Mom, you cool?" he raised a brow and Ntombikayise smiled like a teenager while nodding.

Makhulu: "She is fine. Her guardian angels just paid her a visit" the elder smiled and the

kids nodded.

Ntombi: "Also we are going to that camping trip that you four have been begging me for. The days are warmer so why not"

Bubele: "Yes" he said victoriously
"Thank you, guardian angels...thank you grandparents"
he looked up and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Everyone is going. I researched the place and it's elderly friendly. It's out in the bush Tata so picture lakes, greenery and birds singing"

Tamkhulu: "Oh madoda...when are we going?" he said with

excitement.

Ntombi: 'This afternoon, Tatam. Don't worry, Mama you won't sleep in a sleeping bag. They have lodging there. Those who want to set up tent can while myself and my grandmother will sleep in a comfortable bed like the ladies that we are" she was excited.

Bukhosi: "I can't wait. Must we go to school today?"

Ntombi: "Yes, my boy" all four sulked and she laughed.

Banele: "Friday is at least not bad, bro. Let the thought of the trip keep your fire burning

throughout the day"

Bandile: "Mom, you are not joking right? We've been begging you to go camping with us. So what's changed?"

Ntombi: "You think I'd get my grandparents excited for nothing. I'm not joking. My parents told me to live so I'm not going to disobey them even when they told me beyond the grave. I'm going to go buy everything to make the weekend nice and fun" she did a dance up the stairs and they all just looked at her with a smile.

Makhulu: "It would be good to go

out. It's even better to see my child so happy"

Tamkhulu: "Nobandla clearly made her realize is still worth living.

Let me go and pack. I wonder if they have fishing at this place"

Ntombi: "They do, Tata and you get to cook the fish you caught on open fire" she said from above.

Tamkhulu: "Oh it'll be great. I'm going to teach these boys a new skill over the weekend. I hope you are not afraid of sleeping under the stars because none of you will make use of those fancy lodgings like the women will"

Bukhosi: "We are men, Tamkhulu so you best believe that aren't afraid. We will show you how to camp" Tamkhulu laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Listen to these boys, mkam" he laughed louder.

Makhulu: "They clearly don't know that you've been sleeping outside and hunting before the modern times could classify it as camping. Teach them what real camping is, myenam"

Banele: "I can't wait!" he shouted. A night under the stars with our old man eating fish we helped him catch" he sat back.

Bandile: "Now that sounds like life" he also sat back imagining. Ntombi smiled while looking down at them. She was just as excited. They got ready for work and school and soon all went about their daily lives. Ntombi didn't take her lunch break so she'd knock off earlier to go buy what she thought they'd need. She found the boys waiting at the mall to help her. Once they got everything from the list they drove home so she'd pack her most comfortable items. Once the car was loaded with essentials a

prayer was said, the alarm system got activated, doors were locked and they hit the road.

They'd still be within the province but at a place so isolated and beautiful it felt they were leaving town. When they arrived they found three other families who would enjoy the weekend with them. Tamkhulu helped the boys set up their tents on the lawn not so far from the rondavel that Makhulu would share with Ntombi.

Camp owner: "Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My wife and I

would like to thank you for choosing our camp and we promise to make it worth your time and money. I'm glad to see that the tents are up and that those who booked into the cottages got comfortable. Tonight we'll just get acquainted with each other but tomorrow the real fun starts" once he introduced himself, his wife and staff properly each family member were given binoculars so that they'd take on the birds around them. Tamkhulu and the boys were so excited. Makhulu befriended tanie

Betty who was an elderly who also came with her son and his family Ice breakerer exercises were done but Ntombikayise could see it was not enough to get the families socializing. Dinner got served by the staff to welcome everyone. It was simple bush food consisting of braai meat and rolls. Ntombikayise stood to go to one of the families.

Ntombi: "Hi, I'm Ntombikayise Poti and that over there is my family. Since we'll be seeing each other all weekend I thought we'd get to know each other" the lady

smiled as she introduced herself. Priya: "Hi, I'm Priya and we are the Naidoo's" Ntonbi shook her hand and then her family's smiling. Suddenly both ladies went around introducing themselves and all the families soon sat around the same fire just talking. The teenagers were busy showing each other things on their gadgets. The men spoke about anything in general and the woman related on family matters. Ntombi asked her boys to play a dance track and they were all shocked to see their mother

getting down as though she was a young adult. They stopped counting the amount of "voshos" Ntombi didn't Tamkhulu stood to join his daughter and soon those who weren't shy got up to join those in the dance circle. No one cares if the other was as stiff as a pole because they weren't comparing dance moves. Soon a simple step was created and all danced the same dance. Even the staff at the facility and the owners for the first time got in on the fun that was a first for them. Ntombikayise hoped her

mother and father were dancing too as they looked at what they inspired. There was something intoxicating about dancing around by a fire with friends. Seeing her grandmother move her feet as she sat clearly enjoying herself. To see her grandfather doing a traditional dance to modern music. To see her boys dancing as though tomorrow was not promised. It all suddenly happened in slow motion and she was laughing as she took in the moment. She felt her soul feel alive again and perhaps it was a

first it ever felt that way. There was no sadness around her just laughter from her family and the strangers who had just turned into friends. Her hands were in the air and when it was time to sink low she got as low as her body. She was putting true definition to the saying "flaunt what your mama gave you". They all went to bed in the AM's and Ntombikayise made such an impression on loosening up the once tense guests she got offered a job but she assured the owner that she was not as extroverted

on a daily basis. Saying that day was a special occasion. As late as it was when they got to bed they had to get up early for the hike before the sun came out. Ntombi was grateful for the modern camping facility that had showers. Camping was not her thing but it was one of the few things that she could compromise on to have fun with her boys. They were told to wear swimsuits beneath their comfortable clothing as they'd be a swim in the lake.

Makhulu: "You all enjoy the walk.

Bettie and I will sit here and look at the beautiful river while having tea and scones" she looked at her family "Tata, are you sure that you want to go walk with youngesters?" she looked at her husband concerned.

Tamkhulu: "There is no way I'm letting a chance to stretch my legs out in God's nature pass me by, Ma. I'm a strong Xhosa bull don't let this cane and grey hair fool you" the boys laughed.

Makhulu: "Ntombi look after him please" she whispered and Ntombi nodded. Soon Jake led the way on

their trail and would explain unusual trees and insects to the group. A brown snake slithered by. The ladies screamed but Jake said they should stop and let the creature pass saying it was a harmless house snake. Ntombi suddenly felt afraid so she made sure she was between her boys and grandfather. Everything else was amazing. They finally made it to a rocky area and Jake said those who wanted to climb should but Tamkhulu sat that one out. Ntombi went up with her boys and they took pictures.

Jake: "One of the fun things to do here is jumping from this Rick into the water" he stood his clothes off to demonstrate. The youngsters got excited when Jake jumped in. They were all given life jackets and soon those brave enough to jump from a high to the low into the cool water did as Jake did. Ntombikayise got to scared.

Tamkhulu: "You can do it, Nto-Nto" he said from below. He didn't want fear to make her miss out. Ntombikayise took her clothes off to reveal her bathing suit.

Boys: "Yeah, mom" they cheered and whistled from below in the water and Ntombi felt charged up. She put her lifejacket on and stood back a bit before running and jumping off when she reached the edge. The water was colder than she expected but it felt great. It was daring and she was glad she was up for the adventure. Many pictures of her swimming with her boys were taken.

Jake: "Now that we all seen dry from that wonderful swim we move in to the next adventure.

Who has been kanooying before?" some hands went up and other not.

Tamkhulu: "What's that, Nto-Nto?" he asked quietly.

Ntombi: "It's getting into those yellow boats and using those sticks to row, Tata" she explained and he nodded.

Jake: "We are going to kanoo back to camo but those who aren't comfortable with it can walk the trail back with Sindy. Everyone is to have a lifejacket on. I'll do a quicke demonstration on how it's done and what you should do in

case your kanoo capsizes"
everyone nodded. All eyes were on Jake and his lessons. It was not a first for Ntombikayise and her boys so she knew exactly what to do and so did they. "I know that we are here as friends and relatives but I'll ask that those who know how to kanoo please partner with someone who has never done it before regardless of whether you're related or not. It's easier for first timers to know they are with someone who's done it before. Those who have done it please stand aside

and those who haven't please choose an experienced partner". All the young people have done it so each person got an experienced partner. Ntombikayise grabbed her grandfather. Soon all were in boats ready to follow Jake's lead and those afraid turned around with Sindy.

Ntombi: "Tata, are you sure you want to do this?"

Tamkhulu: "It's never too late for an old dog to learn new tricks. Plus I trust my partner with my life" he said from the front of the kanoo "You just tell me which side

to row and I'll do as you say. Look others are ahead so let's catch up" he said with excitement.

Ntombi did as asked by telling him how to row. They got stuck in long Reed but Tamkhulu listened to Ntombi's instructions and soon were right behind the leader.

Bandile's partner panicked causing their boat to capsize.

Ntombikayise was proud of how he got himself and his partner on again and managed to calm her.

She did a thumbs up at him and he smiled at raised his thumb.

They all looked at each other and

raised thumbs to tell her they were all still fine. The scenery around was breathtaking and Tamkhulu was glad he agreed to come with. Ntombi's phone was waterproof so she was able to capture a lot of the moments. She captured her boys in their boats and took a selfie of her and Tamkhulu while rowing.

Tamkhulu: "Such places should not be privatized for the privileged. God wanted all of his people to enjoy his creation not just those who can afford it"

Ntombikayise: "I agree, Tata but

what can we do?" Tamkhulu shrugged and looked around. They finally made it to camp and before those who were on foot Makhulu couldn't believe her love experimented with something new. They went to put on dry clothes before having lunch.

Bubele: "Honestly nothing beats being with you guys away from home. Thank you, mom" he smiled.

Ntombi: "You're welcome. We should have more of such low budget outings"

Bandile: "Amahle is missing out" he shook his head.

Bukhosi: "It's non of our business. She chose her life so she must be content with it. So, xhego are we still going to fish?" Tamkhulu sat on a camp chair with his eyes closed.

Banele: "Are you sleeping?" he laughed.

Tamkhulu: "I'm meditating to calm myself. Animals sense tension so they won't come if I'm not relaxed" the boys laughed out.

Bukhosi: "No, no, Tamkhulu now you're exaggerating" he shook his head.

Tamkhulu: "Mmm" he said in a low

tone. When the time to go fishing came Tamkhulu was the only one who managed to catch a few but he didn't mind sharing. Each family wanted their privacy as a family so they sat around their fire while Tamkhulu taught the boys how to braai fish.

Bukhosi: "I take everything that I said back, Tamkhulu. You are clearly a natural camper. What can't you do?"

Tamkhulu: "Nothing so far because if I can't, I learn like that kanoo thing. You think my old age has stopped me from

learning. I make it a point to learn something new everyday"

Makhulu: "Now that I can give witness to. I hear most things from him and he learns without the internet" the boys looked at Tamkhulu and he was suddenly a superman.

Banele: "I want to grow up to be just like you, Tamkhulu. Less strict but yeah" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Me too strictness and all" she smiled.

Makhulu: "So soon you four will be in matric" the boys smiled.

Tamkhulu: "And they are all going

to university afterwards right?"
he looked at them. Banele looked
down.

Banele: "I want to get into the
defence force"

Ntombi: "What?" she said shocked.

Banele: "I can study while I'm
there, Mom. I am a physical guy
so it's best for me. Being a soldier
is not as bad as the movies make
it out to be especially in SA so
relax"

Ntombi: "I'll have to read up on
it. I know I said I'd support all
your dreams but when they
involve guns yho" the boys

laughed.

Bandile: "It's not so bad. I'm going to study agricultural studies. I'm now certain"

Bukhosi: "Law" he looked at his mother "I want to be the next generation Elephant at Elephant Attorneys"

Tamkhulu: "It's good to continue a legacy" he nodded.

Bubele: "Is playing for the Springboks too big of a dream? I will go to varsity though but I want to be a professional rugby player"

Ntombi: "And all of this will

happen soon meaning you all will be out of the house" she took a deep breath.

Bukhosi: "I'll be at UCT, mom so I won't be far"

Bandile: "No matter where we are we'll visit as often as possible. You are our anchor so no way we'll stay away"

Bubele: "I could always stay at home and be that bum of a son who does nothing with his life but play games" Ntombikayise raised a brow "Kidding" he laughed.

Banele: "I'm sure we'll someday fight over who gets to take care

of you in your old age too"
everyone laughed.

Ntombi: "Mmm you lot will take
me to an old aged home. Your
wives will say I crowd you"

Bukhosi: "I'd rather leave that
wife than send my mother to an
institution. Where would I say I
learned to do that when you have
been a great example? We see you
on the daily taking care of your
parents and if my future wife
didn't get the same principles
instilled in her I won't allow her
to change mine. That is a promise
that I make to you today and I

can even write a sworn statement" he was dead serious. Tamkhulu was just nodding and the other boys too.

Makhulu: "Or you could find yourself a nice man to grow old with" she looked at her husband smiling but the boys suddenly coughed and cleared their throats before standing to help Tamkhulu. "They'll soon realize that you are far too young to spend your life alone. For now just take in these moments because when they are out of the house you won't get much of them. Part

of raising kids well is feeling proud of yourself when they go carve their own way. I wish you find yourself a man who like you grandfather does for me will keep you young at heart. Who is going to kiss those wrinkled hands and thighs" Ntombikayise coughed.

Ntombi: "Thighs, Makhulu?"

Makhulu blushed.

Makhulu: "Yes, I'm married so I must make my husband happy as he does me" she whispered.

Ntombi: "Too much information, Ma" she laughed softly "Tamkhulu kisses your...you know what let me

go get the bread" she stood quickly and Makhulu laughed.

Dinner got served and Tamkhulu indulged himself with the fish.

Ntombikayise sat back enjoying a glass of wine watching Tamkhulu and Makhulu dancing to the sounds of cricket insects while the boys updated their social media pages after taking pictures from Ntombi's phone. She found herself laughing alone at her grandfather kissing his wife's wrinkled thighs.

Bubele: "A glass too many?" he looked at his mother.

Ntombi: "Hey, I'm not your peer" she pointed at Bubele and he laughed. She asked for her phone back and dialed Dali's number. Of all the people he was the one she wanted to share the wrinkled thigh kisses joke with and he cracked out laughing.

Dali: "I swear I'm making those two my pre wedding councilors" he wiped his tears.

Ntombi: "The way she said it. She was blushing. I was like noooo what the hell" they laughed.

"Dali" a lady said on the other end of the line. It was late so Ntombi

knew what it meant. She was the one to tell him to find someone so she had to be okay with it happening. "We'll talk again. Have a great evening. I'm sorry that I called at the wrong time"

Dali: "Nonsense, I'm glad that you did. A pal hooked me up with his cousin and I swear the girl speaks of nothing but herself. I needed that laugh"

Ntombi: "Xolo... Daluxolo" she pretended the line was bad and hung up quickly. She went back to her family and saw the notifications from the boys social

media pages. They indeed had a blast of a day and it was surely the first of many. She didn't know why she called Dali but she had a joke to share and he was the first person who came to mind. They sat in their camp chairs each drinking their preferred drink and there was nothing but contentment in the moment.

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Mrs E: "I can't believe that Lakhiwe took the children when weekends are Liyema's. I was hoping to take them shopping" she looked at Hlubi. Hlubi finally

forgave her mother. Her brothers also came over for dinner.

Lungile: "You might soon have another grandchild. Alu and I are hard at work trying" he smiled and everyone gave him a look.

Liyema: "Speaking of grandchildren. Abongile is mine" he looked at all of them.

Hlubi: "We actually knew that. You and your mother were the only ones in denial"

Mrs E: "I hope this girl won't keep her away from us. In fact you should fight to have full custody of her. With Amahle

behaving like an ungrateful brat after all you've done for her I want you to have all your children close"

Hlubi: "Or he could just pay maintenance and visit the child. No need to rip a child from her mother to give your son a replacement daughter"

Mrs E: "Are you starting another fight?" Hlubi raised her hands up.

Hlubi: "I have to get going.

Hubby is on the way to get me"

Liyema: "I swear you've been pregnant for eleven months now" he laughed.

Hlubi: "You mind your pale jeans, Liyema. Haibo just because you're divorced it doesn't mean look like a hobbo. Clearly Ntombi left with all the Vaseline" Liyema's smile faded.

Mrs E: "Not tonight"

Lungi: "It's like this with them all the time"

Hlubi: "Whooo bestie took the kids camping. It looks like they're having a blast. Look, hobbo" she stuffed the phone in his face.

Lungi laughed "Chom yam iwongo iswenke kakhulu uwrongo.

Myekeleni sanumbamba uright

ewrongo. Her hard work done paid off kengoku kutheni ezophoswa? Makavume nje nge boss athi uzobuya ngomso" she remixed uwrongo by Busiswa and rude Boyz while dancing in front of Liyema to annoy him. Her water broke while dancing and her brothers both laughed. Mrs E made sure she was at the hospital in no time. Yanda and Nandipha met them there and Yanda like a proud father to be joined his wife. She was in labour for over six hours but after those painful contractions baby Mbuzo

was finally born. Hlubi wept as she held him for the first time due to the joy they felt.

Yanda: "Mcirha, Qhandolo, Ncibane, Mgcaleka" he said proudly. "Thank you, baby" he kissed his wife.

They were both happy to have had a birth without complications and their boy was healthy. He was perfect and Yanda called Dali to tell him the good news. Dali was so happy that he danced when he heard about his nephew's arrival. Finally

something good after all the
pain. 

S2-INSERT 39 (NOT EDITED)

When Amahle's best friend Pretty visited her at her new home for the first time, she couldn't help but look around shocked. Pretty was from money. Most of her family members were in politics and her grandfather was a member of Parliament. She was even hesitant to sit on the leather couches that seemed to have been somewhat worn out.

Amahle: "Why are you still standing?" she asked as she came from the kitchen holding two glasses of juice. Pretty sunk to the chair slowly and wiggled a bit before settling. She was a typical snob who got everything that she wanted.

Pretty: "Are you sure you want to live here, Amahle? I swear I just saw a cockroach" she looked at the floor exaggerating. Amahle put the glasses on the table and rolled her eyes.

Amahle: "Sis Asakhe is too much of a neat freak for that to be

true. We don't have cockroaches,
Pretty. It must have been a
cricket. Here is your juice"

Pretty: "Thanks" she took a small
sip first and wore a look of
disgust "It's tastes like sugar
water" she looked at her friend
"We never used to drink diluted
juice at your mom's" she put the
glass on the table.

Amahle: "Did you come here to
visit or to compare houses?"

Pretty: "What kind of a friend
would I be if I don't make you
aware of how low your life is now,
Mahle? she looked around "This is

like a matchbox" she took another look around.

Amahle: "Home doesn't have to be a mansion. At least I'm living with my father, Pretty when you don't even know where yours is" she shot back.

Pretty: "If he came and wanted to take me to the life that you are living now I'd say no thanks. My mother provided more than enough for me and so did your parents. I don't know why you would choose these people. They buy you your favourite ice cream and you suddenly leave the

parents who gave you everything? If you could leave people who raised you then I'm questioning your loyalty as a friend too" Amahle was annoyed by Pretty already.

Amahle: "Well I'm loved here"

Pretty: "Girlfriend, don't talk as if you were abused by your mommy and daddy" she said with attitude "So next year you are leaving our school? Do you know they will enrol you in a school that has 70 learners per class?" Amahle's eyes shot open.

Amahle: "Stop exaggerating"

Pretty: "What if this man is a perv and rapes you, Amahle?" she whispered "Your daddy kept you safe for thirteen years so why would you trust this man when we young girls are being raped so much?" she looked at Amahle

Amahle: "Here is your bag. Call your driver to come get you because now you are out of line, Pretty" she stood and shoved Pretty's bag on her chest.

Pretty: "Okay, okay I'm sorry and take it all back" she watched Amahle sit back down "I'm just looking out" she rolled her eyes.

Amahle: "Thanks but I don't call your grandfather a rapist, Pretty so to hear you accuse my dad hurts"

Pretty: "I take it all back but I can't sleep over here as I did at your previous home. My uncle said he heard gunshots around here when he came to party"

Amahle: "This area doesn't have a gang infestation. I'm actually settling in well and I've got a friend who doesn't look down on my home and the drink that I serve her. I know that your family is rich but really learn to be humble."

My dad found me a good school so don't talk nonsense about my schooling either"

Pretty: "Anyhow have you seen your brother's timeline? They went camping with your mom and grandparents. I'm so jealous but my mom promised we'd go too" she showed Amahle the pictures.

Amahle felt her heart break because she wasn't invited "What did you do during the weekend?" she sipped the juice to not hurt Amahle's feelings any more than she already had.

Amahle: "We went to my father's

mother and had a great time with my cousins"

Pretty: "So you're not bothered by them not inviting you?" Amahle shook her head quickly.

Amahle: "I'm sure had my dad gone I'd have been invited"

Pretty: "Do you still believe your mother was jealous of your closeness with your dad?" she laughed.

Amahle: "I don't expect you to understand"

Pretty: "Maybe you are the perv" she joked and laughed "Your relationship with your dad and

your mom's relationship with him are two different things. So get off your high daddy's girl horse please" she said with attitude.

Amahle: "Leave, Pretty"

Pretty: "I'm going to wait for my uncle to come get me at the gate. I'm not waiting for him anywhere else but inside here where he left me. I told him already so don't worry"

Amahle: "Go wait outside" she pulled Pretty up and Pretty put up defence and soon the teenagers were fighting. Asakhe heard some screaming so she ran

into the house to break them apart. A car hooted at Pretty was certain it was her transport. Pretty: "Don't you dare speak to me at school again. You remember you need me because I have plenty of friends whereas you only had me. Mrs Elephant did good by kicking you out of her house"

Asakhe: "Hey watch your words. Don't talk to my daughter like that"

Pretty: "Hmmm you clearly don't know how rude Amahle can be. You'll wish you left her where you found her" she took her little red

bag and went to the car where her uncle was waiting. Asakhe asked what it was all about and Amahle explained.

Asakhe: "You should have called me when she accused your father of being a rapist, I'd have dealt with her well. Who the hell does she think she is?"

Amahle: "Granddaughter of a minister" she sat down "My mom already enrolled me in the school my brothers are at for next year. Why can't I still go there?"

Asakhe: "With money that comes from where? All the other schools

they recommended were too expensive and full so we got you a spot at the school around the corner. School is school, Amahle. Matric certificates all come from uMelusi whether you're in private or public school. Also please learn to say sis Ntombi to her and Mama to me. I'm your mother after all"

Amahle: "Okay, Ma" she nodded. "Can we go out this weekend?"

Asakhe: "Heee Vusimuzi's child thinks money grows on trees" she clapped once "Amahle, I'm not going to lie and say we will try

because we can't. I'm a housewife and your father has to support this home and his mother. My child, you should lower your living standards or else you are not going to be happy. We told you when we met up with you that we can only offer you so much. Our life is not bad because we are not poor but we aren't as rich as your adoptive father and his family"

Amahle: "I understand" she whispered.

Asakhe: "we can go to the shopping center and I'll buy you a chocolate slab" she offered with a

smile and Amahle smiled.

Amahle: "I'll go put my shoes on."

Asakhe: "I love you"

Amahle: "I love you too, Ma" they hugged. Amahle didn't like the idea of downgrading much but she knew it would happen because Asakhe and Vusimuzi told her that her honestly but she imagined it would be easier to do but it was a case of "easier said than done". She was still content with living with her father and his family treated her good. The one thing that would be most challenging would be to go from

private learning to public learning. She asked Asakhe to buy her data rather than chocolate because she wanted to take a good look at what she missed out on.

Amahle: "Invite me next time" she typed in the comment section with a laughing emoji.

Banele: "I'll ask my mother what the price of such was so she'll tell your mother. I'm sure your mother is "stable" enough to pay for you" he replied sarcastically.

Amahle was so hurt and offended that she deleted her comment.

She had the family stability at the Gala's but it seemed financially they weren't as stable as she thought they were and it made her miss the life at the Elephants but she made her choice so all she had to do was take Asakhe's advice on lowering her standards.

When Dali walked inside of Hlubi's hospital room to meet his nephew Ntombi blushed like a teenager. His entire family was also there so she couldn't go and hug him as she usually did.

Nandi: "Tamci, who is your boss so I can ask them for work because wow you have flexibility at your work clearly" Dali laughed.

Dali: "Mmm I'm using all my leave days so you guys better not expect me during the December holidays"

Yanda: "Stop coming for small unimportant stuff. You could have met the little man during the holidays"

Dali: "It's the small stuff that matter, Bhut" he smiled. Ntombi knew exactly what Yanda meant but she stopped telling Dali that

as he seemed to like being present in everything.

Dali: "I also decided to change my surname. Xhego means absolutely nothing to me as it was some random surname but I'm keeping my name"

Mr Mbuzo: "Music to my ears, Nyana. I was hoping you'd say that but I wasn't expecting it so soon. It must of course come with a proper introduction at our homestead so please leave a day or two of your leave for those rituals"

Dali: "I will, Tata"

Yandiswa: "Tata, we must go. You promised Tat Zondo that you'd help him choose a sheep for his ceremony on Saturday"

Mr Mbuzo: "Oh yes...thank you, Yandi. Makoti, thank you for the healthy edition. We love him and I foresee great things for him. We are going to come see you tomorrow when you two are at home. Yanda, Ndoda" he held his son's hand "You did well" the two men shook hands before Mr Mbuzo and his daughters left. Ma Nozulu went home to prepare for Dali's visit in a few months. When

Dali walked around the bed to Ntombi's side she smiled thinking he was coming to her but she forgot she had baby Mbuzo in her arms.

Dali: "Hi" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Hi" she said in a sudden shy whisper that left her feeling stupid.

Dali: "May I hold him please?"

Ntombi: "Oh...yes" she looked at Hlubi who looked as though she was going to burst out laughing. Ntombi carefully transferred the cute bundle from her arms to Dali's "Careful, Daluxolo support

the head" she said quietly.

Dali: "I've got him... don't worry"
he whispered back "He is brand
new indeed" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Don't say it as if he is a
thing with a pricetag" they
laughed.

Dali: "He is not a thing but he
does have a tag to prove just
how new he is" he pointed at the
baby's bellybutton and they both
laughed softly. Nandi tapped her
mother softly and smiled. The
three of them looked as

Ntombikayise and Daluxolo were in
their own little bubble with baby

Mbuzo. So much so that Ntombi held on to Dali's waist as the two of them looked at the child having a conversation only they could hear and laughing secretly too. When baby Mbuzo opened his eyes looking like one who had just been woken from a deep sleep even going as far as stretching his fingers a bit Dali and Ntombi looked at each other and smiled. Ntombi: "Let's steal him" she joked and they both laughed. Dali: "I know a guy who can organize us fake ID's so we can cross the boarder" Ntombikayise

laughed out.

Hlubi: "Guys I hope you guys aren't making fun of my baby. Mbuzo you'll deal with them if they are right?" Yanda laughed.

Yanda: "Mbuzo men have never been ugly" he said confidently.

Ntombi: "What?" she looked at Yanda "Bhut Yanda, you clearly have not looked at Dali's baby picture well" Dali cracked out laughing and so did the others

Dali: "Really?" he looked at her "I don't even have a comeback so good one" Ntombi laughed "I might not be good looking but I

promise you that my cows are"

Yanda: "Aww, madoda... Ncibane has spoken" he said proudly.

Ntombikayise stood blushing.

Ntombi: "I didn't say that you're ugly now, Mr Mbuzo. I said baby you was ugly"

Dali: "Then make sure that my children aren't affected by my ugliness by being their mother"

Ntombi: "In a perfect world" they made prolonged eye contact but Liyema, Mrs E and Lungile walked in "I've got to get goi..." Lungile lifted her up in a hug before she could even finish and Ntombikayise

laughed "Lungile Elephant put me down" she ordered playful and he did. Ntombikayise hit his shoulder playfully.

Lungi: "Damn I've missed you. Please join Alu and I for dinner tomorrow. Bring the entire household too. I know that we aren't legally family anymore but don't throw me away, sis

Lakhiwe. Throw those two away but not me" he pleaded before laughing.

Hlubi: "Yho Liyema is already in the rubbish bin" she laughed alone and Yanda gave her a

disapproving look "I'm kidding."
she laughed.

Ntombi: "Let me get going. I'll see you guys tomorrow. Makhulu said she'll see the child after ten days as not too many people are supposed to be around him yet but I couldn't help it" she hugged Hlubi and went to kiss the baby.

Liyema: "May I?" he held his arms out to Dali.

Dali: "Sure" he put the baby in Liyema's arms. Liyema suddenly felt jealous when Dali ran after Ntombikayise but he didn't show it. Ntombikayise unlocked her car

doors when Dali knocked on the passenger window.

Dali: "We don't live in a perfect world but we can create a perfect world for ourselves right?"

Ntombi: "Now you've lost me"

Dali: "Kayise, you've just said you can only have kids in a perfect world. Can we talk about this baby issue that seems to be one of the major factors why you don't want to give us a chance?"

he looked at her "You don't want to adopt and quite frankly the Amahle situation scared me too so I respect and accept that it's

not an option for you" he added.

Ntombi: "Xolo, I do not want to talk about this"

Dali: "I'm a communicator, Kayise. I prefer to lay it all out on the table and I encourage the other person to do the same. It's the only way we can iron out misunderstandings. It's the only way we can understand each other. So can we please talk about this or at least listen to what I have to say" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "Okay" she whispered. .

Dali: "Hypothetically speaking,

let's say that you and I give us a go and it becomes long term leading to marriage. I then ask that we have a child. Would you be up to the task at being a new mother again?"

Ntombi: "I love babies and I would have loved to have another who is mine. So yes" she looked at him. "I wouldn't mind starting all over again" she laughed softly while shaking her head.

Dali: "Then help me understand the procedure you underwent. You have all your reproductive organs besides the uterus?"

Ntombikayise took a deep breath before nodding "Then why do you keep using the baby issue as an excuse as though you can never have a biological child ever again? I'm not against surrogacy. I know it's a daunting and costly process but I'm not against it at all. Should we get to the stage where we want to have a child, I do not mind that route"

Ntombi: "But you said you wanted to be an attentive father to be"

Dali: "I can still be by making sure the surrogate has a comfortable pregnancy. All those rubbing my

woman's belly and feet things are unimportant stuff. I won't cry over missing the opportunity to do that because once we have our little one in our arms the important stuff begin"

Ntombi: "Are we still speaking hypothetically?"

Dali: "That's up to you, Kayise. I have never hidden the fact that I have feelings for you. You keep throwing this baby topic at me so I thought I'd make you realize that it shouldn't be an obstacle. You don't mind having a newborn someday and I don't mind if that

newborn is carried by another woman because she will be ours biologically and any other way.

Just imagine a little you"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "You're silly"

Dali: "So since you can't hide behind the baby issue anymore we are now left with how your children will feel and react. Have you ever spoken to them about you possibly dating again?"

Ntombikayise shook her head

"Then how can you be sure that they are against it?" he asked.

Ntombi: "The topic makes them

uncomfortable, Daluxolo. Makhulu brought it up and they couldn't get away fast enough"

Dali: "So does them being uncomfortable mean they are against it, Kayise? You were uncomfortable when Makhulu said Tamkhulu still kisses her thighs because any thought of them doing sexual things repulses you because we are not raised to imagine such. Teenagers have graphic imaginations. So sometimes when you bring it up they get uncomfortable by the thought of their mother being intimate with

someone. Sometimes it has absolutely nothing to do with them hating the idea"

Ntombi: "I never thought of it that way" she admitted "I'm also not comfortable with having that talk with them yet" she said softly.

Dali: "I don't mind being your dirty secret until you're ready"

Ntombikayise laughed and looked at him "I feel like there is more than what we have just discussed. Talk to me" he held her hand. She kept silent for a long while.

Ntombi: "You are too good to be true, Daluxolo. I'm afraid that you'll show me colours I didn't know you could flash someday"

Dali: "Okay it's a reasonable fear to have but what causes it?"

Ntombi: "You're being a therapist, Daluxolo" she looked at him.

Dali: "I'm being a man trying to understand the woman that he can't get out of his mind. Part of that is knowing her fears, what motivates them so I can understand"

Ntombi: "My previous partner Bonga was like this. Too good to

be true and because I was naive, I fell for it. With Liyema I at least knew his angry and frustrated side because we used to have fights after he found that I tried to con him and after he found that I didn't tell him I'm pregnant. I haven't seen you angry"

Dali: "Firstly I'm extremely slow to anger because most battles are never worth it. I get angry, Ntombikayise I'm not going to lie and say that I don't but I honestly can't describe myself during such moments but that

doesn't mean that I'll someday turn around and slap you across your face. Gugu has made me angry at some points and I'd just leave her alone so we can calm down"

Ntombi: "I didn't tell you everything about my past" she looked at him. He knew that Bonga physically abused her but it was the first time he heard that he sexually abused her too. For a second he looked like he had teleported to another planet as he looked at her with neutral eyes. Every word stung to Dali

only fueling the fire that burned inside of him. He didn't know what was stronger his anger or his sadness but he realized that sadness had won. He looked at her share the story without shedding a tear and knew she had healed that wound but it was raw to him and he only heard it a few seconds ago meaning his pain was raw. He'd never known someone who had been sexually abused so personally though he dealt with many clients who experienced the same. That day it hit home, home because that's what Ntombi felt

like. He felt like he had was home when with her. He felt her warm hands in his and he realized that he'd started to shake "Daluxolo" she called out softly and he let go of her hands so he could use his to wipe his wet eyes. Ntombikayise didn't expect such a reaction especially since she could tell the story without crying "I'm fine" she unbuckled her seatbelt to sit closer to him but she could only get so close. She did what she felt was not wise but she moved carefully to sit on his lap.

Dali: "I'm cool. I'm just..."

Ntombi: "Angry... you're angry at a man you never even met" he adjusted the seat so they'd be more comfortable "I'm sorry and I don't know why I told you. Maybe it's another scare tactic" she raised her shoulders. His hands travelled along the side of her thighs so he'd support her better. Ntombikayise could sense how cautious he was in touching her and perhaps that's why she told him. She wanted to know if things between them would change.

Dali: "I usually have so much to

say to my clients who experienced the same but now..." he looked at her.

Ntombi: "I don't want you to council me, Daluxolo. I've done that long ago. I just wanted to tell you my complete story with men. I can already feel you are afraid to touch me" she tried to get off of him but he held her firm.

Dali: "Not because I don't want to, Kayise. But because it's a first I hear about it and I don't know how it might still be affecting affecting your life"

Ntombi: "It's not affecting my life at all. That I promise you"

Dali: "Okay I'm glad that it's not. I'm still not scared of though" he smiled. Ntombi shifted back to her seat.

Ntombi: "But I am and I don't imagine that changing anytime soon. So as beautiful as the hypothetical situation sounds it's too soon" Dali sat back on his seat looking defeated. He felt like she was putting more bricks on her wall just as he demolished a few. There was nothing more he felt he could do.

Dali: "I guess this is really goodbye then. I'll find a way to force my mind to stop thinking about you. I don't think I can try to make you see just how much I love you, Kayise. I think it's really best that I keep my distance before I annoy you by sounding like a broken record"

Ntombi: "I won't make it to your welcoming rituals in QwaQwa later this year. Liyema wants to send the boys to initiation school in winter so we'll be busy preparing for that"

Dali: "I think it's best because

we'll end up having a similar conversation and we will go back and forth" Ntombi nodded "I wish you all the happiness that this life has to offer, Kayise" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Same goes for you" he smiled too. He kissed her cheek and left her car. When Dali entered the hospital again he found an angry Liyema waiting for him.

Liyema: "You might not have enough respect for her and treat her like some whore who has sex in parking lots but some of us

actually respect her to know that it's unlike her" he blurted out.

Dali: "You are the last to speak about respecting her. Just the fact that you think we were having sex in a damn parking lot shows the little respect you have for her. I don't have time to deal with regretful ex husbands so excuse me" he walked away to kiss his nephew goodbye as visiting hours were over.

Yanda: "Don't you think it's best you find a woman with less issues?"

Dali: "No disrespect, Yanda but

Mahlubandile was not exactly without issues when you met her either"

Yanda: "And perhaps that's why I advice you to look the other direction. There were days that I wanted to give up on Mahlubandile because to date a broken and unhappy woman is not easy"

Dali: "Ntombikayise is neither of those. Her heart is broken but not her spirit and you best believe she is happy. If she's not she seeks it out"

Yanda: "Okay you're right. I'm

comparing oil with water but I would like to see you happy"

Dali: "I am actually" he looked at his brother.

Yanda: "A man can't be alone this long, Daluxolo"

Dali: "Well you'll be happy to hear that I'm going to give dating real attention again because the woman that I want keeps turning me down"

Yanda: "I've got an employee who..."

Dali: "I don't want a long distance relationship"

Yanda: "Then what would you and

Ntombikayise have done had you dated?"

Dali: "That's Ntombikayise. I would have made it work but since I won't be with her, I'd rather have my woman close"

Yanda: "You do know that Liyema will always be a part of her life right? Even more so now since I'm married to his sister and you are my little brother who is dating his ex wife"

Dali: "Bhuda, Ntombikayise and I are not happening. I'm not afraid of Liyema and his harmless barking but like I've said

nothing's happening between Kayise and I and nothing will ever happen"

Yanda: "You are really hurt. I'm sorry, bro" he patted his brother's shoulder. Mrs E was the last one to leave the hospital.

Mrs E: "Mahlubandile put an end to you humiliating Liyema in front of others. In fact stop it all together" she warned "Why do you have to kick family when they are down?" she added.

Hlubi: "You know I would have stopped had he been the one telling me to. This is the reason

why I don't stop. The sooner Liyema learns to let go of your skirt the better, Zola. Don't think that I forgot that you killed a woman for him. Don't come at me with that you did it because Zingisa cheated with Tata. We both know you killed for Liyema because you see red when he is hurt. I'm shocked you haven't dragged poor Ntombi but I know that you won't because she's as protective of her kids as you are of Liyema so she'll fight until her fingers bleed for her kids.

Difference between you two is

that she's protective to a certain limit because she's grooming men. You don't have limits and that's why you raised an imposter of a man who had poor Ntombikayise fooled thinking she found a true man but only to find she married a boy. Between you two I'm going to go to her for advice on being a mother to a boy because you will make me raise a dependant man. You went and bought him jeans after I pointed out that his are worn out. Really, Mama? How do you expect him to stand and accept the divorce when you baby

him? Now he still has this entitlement thing going on someone's daughter. Ntombikayise is not his, she was but she's no longer his and I'm going to rub it in until he stops feeling entitled to her. Sit down and have a talk with Liyema where you tell him you are finally cutting the umbilical cord by letting him deal with the Abongile matter on his own. Get a man, Mama and be happy" Mrs E walked out without answering. Hlubi was not bothered by the silence as it was what her mom does when she

didn't get her way. "Mama might not know much but she knows she doesn't want you to be a cry baby until adulthood. I want you to be strong like your father yet as gentle enough to be kind. May I never repeat your grandmother's mistakes because I don't want you to feel you can't live without me. I'll be there to catch you at all times but I will first allow you the chance to try and solve problems on your own. I love you" she kissed her son on his forehead as he was breastfeeding "My little Mivuyo" the baby let out a

sound "You like that name? Mivuyo Mbuzo" she said in a soothing baby voice. She was in love with him and she knew part of showing that love was to allow him to fall down occasionally so he'd learn how to get back up again. Mrs E went to the bathroom and cried. Since Lungile and Hlubi didn't give her chance to meddle in their lives she felt valuable when Liyema did it. She couldn't remember what living her life was like anymore because she kept herself busy with anything concerning her family. She wiped

her tears and went to the car where Liyema sat and waited. Liyema: "Are you okay?" Mrs E nodded "I don't trust this Daluxolo man. I can't just allow a man in my children's life without checking him out first. He lived in the streets and being Yanda's brother won't change that. Who knows what he learned from that life?"

Mrs E: "I'm sure Lakhiwe won't allow anyone dangerous close to them"

Liyema: "How when she's thinking with any part of her body but her

brain? Please have your investigator look into him"

Mrs E: "No" her heart started to race. To tell him no was a bit foreign "I'm not going to go dig up Yanda's brother's past and risk Mahlubandile finding out and banning me from seeing my grandson. You know how she is. Lakhawe is no longer your wife, Liyema and you are to blame. Who she takes her pants off for is none of your business because you took off those of other women while married to her. Please just grow up and accept that she's not

returning"

Liyema: "Yho"

Mrs E: "Be that man that I know you to be again please. Even if it was a front I know you can be him for real. I can't keep helping you. Next thing you'll ask me to frame this Dali by telling Ntombikayise that he was abusive to his wife just so you'd get your way. Your children need you to be that Liyema again. Surely he can't be lost"

Liyema: "I just... I just really regret my actions, Ma. I admit that I really do"

Mrs E: "Good use it to learn a lesson. Should you get married again you'll do better but stop making Lakhawe upset. Of course you must regret letting such a woman go but find yourself the next best thing because that ship has sailed. I'm also not going to help you get custody of Abongile"

Liyema: "Where is this coming from?"

Mrs E: "I'm ripping my skirt from out of your grip"

Liyema: "What?" he looked at her confused.

Mrs E: "Once Mahlubandile's baby

is a few months I'm going to go on a long holiday. It might even be six months long"

Liyema: "But, Ma you are the person that I can speak to about everything. Who am I going to talk to now?"

Mrs E: "Yourself, God, the Reverend and your therapist" her chest stung at her own words.

Liyema: "Okay" he was upset but Mrs E had to stand her ground.

She looked out the window to avoid looking at his hurt face. She felt she was a little too late to give him the tough love but

rather late than never. After the Amahle saga Liyema felt he needed a shoulder to lean on. He couldn't help but think about how easier it would have been to deal with the loss had he still been married. In that moment he felt like hosting talks to men who are cheating on their good wives to advice them to stop because it was not worth it, even advice women who cheat on good men the same way. No one night stand pleasure with Portia was worth it. No spontaneous and exciting sex with Elaine was worth it

because he couldn't stand watching Ntombikayise being touched by another man. He was filled with regret and he knew there was absolutely nothing he could do about it. All that was left was for him to try find a woman like Ntombikayise or who was at least close enough to being like her. ❤️

S2 S2-INSERT 40 (Fast forwarded)

As Ntombi drove like a madwoman to get her boys to the places

they needed to be at she realized just how much can happen in a year. The quads were no longer the babies that she still saw them as a year ago but young men. She was thankful for the fact that they all returned from initiation school alive after the horrific stories about young boys dying while there. The school was understanding towards their dress sense after that rite of passage to manhood but Ntombi was busy helping them get ready to go celebrate yet another milestone. It was the night of

their matric farewell and Ntombi was sure to take the day off to help them prepare. They all opted for the same tight fitting suits but in different colours. Bukhosi just had to be dramatic by choosing to drape a coat over his shoulders and having a cane in his hand. The family would come over to see the young men off to a night they would never forget so Ntombi made sure to buy a few platters to feed the guests. She also hired a photographer because she wanted each moment captured. As someone who never

got a chance to go to the matric dance she lived the moment out through her children. There was a knock on the door and Ntombi was shocked to see Liyema holding Abongile in his arms. She knew that it was his child and that he stepped up but the memory of how the child got conceived still bothered Ntombi but she put that aside to let them in.

Liyema: "I thought I should bring her so she'd take a few pictures with her older brothers" he said with a smile "You don't mind right?" he asked. He looked

dashing in a three piece suite ready to capture moments with his sons. Suddenly he looked like the old Liyema again.

Ntombi: "I did say family and she's their family right?" Liyema nodded with a smile. Ntombikayise would have preferred to not have Abongile there that night but she didn't want to seem petty not when it's an important night to her children. The boys loved Abongile so for that reason Ntombi had to accept the little girl would always pop up during occasions concerning her boys "Is

Portia coming too?" she asked.

The thought of having Liyema, Portia and their child in her house proved to be too much.

Liyema: "I wouldn't do that to you, Ntombikayise. She's nothing to the boys but Abongile is. Vusi said he'd drop Amahle off soon so she can be here too" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "She seems to be truly happy there. Yes, the new school was a struggle at first but she has settled which makes me think letting her go was for the best indeed"

Liyema: "I actually agree with you. I know that I gave you a hard time accusing you of throwing our daughter away but I also see now that it was for the best. I really want to put everything behind us, Ntombikayise. I'd like to be your friend again and just meet up and chat even if it has nothing to do with the boys"

Ntombi: "I don't think Portia is going to like that" Liyema's eyes shot open "Relax, I know that you two have gotten close.

Mahlubandile mentioned it" she

smiled.

Liyema: "I'm sorry"

Ntombi: "You owe me absolutely nothing, Liyema. I hear you found Elaine and forgave her too"

Liyema: "Is there anything that Mahlubandile doesn't tell you?"

Ntombikayise laughed "Yeah after I calmed down and dealt with everything I decided to forgive her. It seems she's been waiting to hear me say it but I told her that I still don't want her in my life. A lot has changed since Mama left actually. I think you were all right, she was my enabler"

Ntombi: "Yeah but it's good to see you back on your feet again. You even got new glasses" Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "I do feel bad for moving on before you though when I was the one who messed up. Hence I didn't tell you about my thing with Portia"

Ntombi: "I've been single for over a year now and it had been great." she said honestly "Let me go and get ready. Please watch that Abongile doesn't break anything, you know how curious toddlers are" she looked at the

toddler move about in the house. She was certain she would never have been able to accept a love child. Had Abongile been born before her marriage to Liyema, Ntombi was certain she'd have loved the child as her own but because she was conceived from an affair Ntombi doubted she'd have been able to be around the child all the time as she was a reminder of how much Liyema humiliated her. Portia and Liyema didn't make her jealous or angry at all but it did make her feel as though life was unfair. She went

up to her room to get dressed and put make up on She and Dali hadn't spoken in months because he was also on a new relationship and the lady was sure to flaunt him on social media and tag him so his friends could also see. Seeing Daluxolo with another woman stung but she made the choice to not be with him and it was a choice she had to live with. Once she was done she went down to find her friends already waiting and so did the rest of the family. Alu was pregnant with a baby girl and Lungile couldn't wait to hold

his princess in a few months. When the boys finally made their entrance by walking down the stairs Ntombi put her hand over her mouth shocked at how handsome they all were. The suits clearly tailor made just for them as a gift from their uncle Yanda. Each having a haircut that suited his personality. One could see they were quads but no one could miss they were individuals with their own personalities and style. While others wore formal shoes Banele wore a sneaker. While others wore the entire suit

Bubele only wore the pants and rolled his shirt sleeves up. Bandile was the only one with shorter pants to show off his colorful "happy socks" and Bukhosi wore the attire like a model from a vintage fashion show. The photographer took as many pictures as possible of them together and individually before they all called their mother into the snaps. Ntombi felt like a queen mother indeed when she sat down and the boys were surrounding her. Liyema soon joined in on the pictures and so did

the rest of the family.

Makhulu: "Look at your handiwork" she smiled at Ntombi "You raised responsible young men and for that you should be proud of yourself" she added.

Ntombi: "Where has the time gone to, Ma? They don't need me much anymore"

Makhulu: "A mother is the one person a child will always need. I know that you're heartbroken by the fact that they'll be out of the house soon but they'll never forget what you taught them and did for them" Ntombi nodded.

When their girlfriends got dropped off as all eight of them would be going to the venue in one car Ntombi smiled because they were all the still the girls that she knew. They clearly all coordinated with their respective partners because everyone was matching with their girl. Amahle finally arrived just as the boys were about to leave and took pictures with them.

Amahle: "Sis Ntombi, please have bhut Yanda also design a dress for my matric night someday" Ntombi had long gotten used to being

demoted from mom to Sisi by Amahle. At first she was shocked but after a year of hearing it it sounded normal.

Ntombi: "We'll see once we cross that bridge, Nana. You are looking good. Are you still happy?" Amahle smiled before nodding. The Gala's kept their promise to love and care for her. They didn't once try to keep her from Ntombi and Liyema but they felt like an uncle and aunt rather than parents to her.

Tamkhulu: "You children should go before you miss the party. Young

men, look after the young ladies as their parents trusted you with them for the night. No touching them in ways they don't like"

Bandile: "Never, Tamkhulu" he looked at Bathandiwe with a smile. Her matric was the month before and she invited Bandile to attend as her plus one. The rest all went to the same school as their girlfriends.

Ntombi: "Please look after yourselves and each other at the after party. I know booze will be put in the punch so please don't get too drunk. I love you. Take

many, many pictures and just be safe please" she hugged all of them.

Bubele: "Will do, Ma" she whispered as she hugged him. .

Banele: "We love you too"

Liyema: "My phone will be on all night so if you kids need a ride just call. I trust that you will all make responsible choices because I know how crazy such a night can make one. Here are condoms in case you don't have any of your own"

Ntombi: "Haibo, Liyema" she whispered.

Liyema: "Chances are they are sexually active already. I don't want to be a grandfather yet or have to remind one to take treatment for an STD" he looked at Ntombikayise and she nodded "Take them" the boys looked around embarrassed before each took their pack from their father's hands. More pictures were taken before the boys and their dates were off in their hired care ready to celebrate the end of a 12 year schooling career. Liyema: "We didn't do too badly" he said as he stood next to Ntombi

waving.

Ntombi: "Not at all" Liyema's phone rang and Ntombi knew it was his girlfriend. She left him when the car turned the corner and went inside.

Tamkhulu: "I think that it is best that you leave now" he said to Liyema when he ended his call "The boys were what brought you here and they are now gone" he added.

Liyema: "But I was hoping..."

Tamkhulu: "Liyema, you come here with your love child and you think she's really okay with that

reminder? A year is just a few months so don't expect her to just forgive and forget. You celebrated with your sons they have left so nothing is keeping you here"

Liyema nodded. Tamkhulu went I side to join the guests after that talk and Liyema followed. He found Ntombikayise sitting with her friends having snacks. He hoped that it would be the night that she told him she'd completely forgiven her but after Tamkhulu spoke to him he realised it was not. He was not even sure if he was in love with Portia but he

loved having his daughter close. He quietly took Abongile from Lungile's arms and left.

Othu: "Damn they grow up so fast" she said as she thought about her twins who were at varsity and Chulu was about to get married.

Hlubi: "Tell me about it. Mivuyo is a year old already. Soon he'll be like his cousins" she smiled.

Everyone was looking at Ntombi who seemed to be deep in thought. Mahlubandile tapped her arm gently while smiling.

Ntombi raised her face to look at

Hlubi before looking at all her friends who were starring at her.

Lucia: "Was seeing your ex husband with his child too much? I can imagine it wasn't easy"

Hlubi: "I told him to not bring Abongile. Liyema makes me so mad sometimes" her jaw tightbed.

Ntombi: "No, it's not that" she said quietly.

Poppy: "It's him moving on. Why should the one who messed up always be the one to find happiness first?" she asked sounding frustrated.

Ntombi: "I don't care about what Liyema does with his life, ladies. Yes, I admit I feel life is unfair because deep down I actually wanted him to suffer for the way that he hurt me but my grandmother told me to not do something that was not a part of my character. I'm just..." she looked down "I'm thinking about the fact that they'll be out of the house in less than five months. Bandile and Bubele will be at NMU in Port Elizabeth, Bubele got accepted at UWC because he didn't make it to the defence

force as he hoped, Bukhosi will be at UCT" she said with a smile.

Zuko: "At least two are still going to be here in Cape Town" she said hoping to make Ntombikayise feel better.

Ntombi: "They want to go live at the varsity residences. I'm guessing they want a bit of freedom to learn to be independent of me. Am I wrong to be heartbroken by them leaving the nest?" Othu stood to hug Ntombikayise.

Othu: "Not at all. I cried when I took mine all the way to Gauteng

as they chose to study there. It's normal to be sad and wonder when they became young men when they were just little babies. Chulu and Qhayiya are about to move too because Imange has begun the lobola negotiations. So Craig and I are absolutely shattered yet so proud of them" Ntombi nodded.

Yandi: "I think it's easier for you since you have Craig, friend" she said sounding almost afraid to speak out loud.

Alu: "Maybe it's time you got back onto the market again" she raised

both brows like one afraid of whatgat Ntombikayise would say.

"What happened to the Daluxolo guy? You always lit up when you spoke about him" all the other ladies nodded in agreement.

Ntombi looked at Mahlubandile.

Ntombi: "I had to let him go, ladies. He's now in a happy relationship"

Poppy: "How sure are you it's a happy one?"

Othu: "Poppy" she reprimanded her sister.

Poppy: "Social media happiness doesn't always mean real life

happiness, sis"

Ntombi: "I don't want a man" she shook her head.

Yandi: "To have someone to share the load with is nice, Ntombikayise"

Ntombi: "I don't have a load to share. I'm actually much happier single. The reason why I'm sad is because my kids are all going to be out of the house soon, not because I'm lonely"

Mandla: "Girl, at least get yourself laid because it's been more than a year now" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "I have a little helper so I'm sorted"

Poppy: "A dildo is not the same as real dick" she blurted out and Lucia put her hand over Poppy's mouth and they laughed once again.

Zuko: "Dick is overrated and used right a dildo can give you more orgasms than a man"

Poppy: "Unless you're lesbian don't listen to her. You need the D, Ntombi" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombi: "I'm no lesbian but I agree with Zuko though. My toy has never disappointed me, not

once"

Zuko: "Yeah, girl" they toasted
"But having someone to cuddle afterwards is good though so yeah" she added.

Ntombi: "You're supposed to be on my side, Zuko" Zuko laughed.

"Let's talk about something else. Mahlubandile when are the wedding invitation coming our way?" she looked at Hlubi.

Hlubi: "Get this" she looked at her friends "These kids want to know if they like each other enough to stand living with each other for a year. So they concluded that they

do after nearly a year of cohabiting. So we are only to start with the lobola negotiations in a week or so" she added.

Yandi: "I actually like what they did I think had Vuyo and I did it I'd have saved myself a lot of trouble"

Hlubi: "At least Nandipha has found a job as a junior arbitrator so her father is happy that she won't be a housewife. I think the wedding will either be late this year or early next year. They now want to speed things up"

Ntombi: "I can't wait for wedding

day" she said with excitement.

Lucia: "You'll be the only one without a date. Your grandfather is going with his woman" Ntombi looked at the elders and laughed.

Ntombi: "What do you suggest then, Felicia?" she raised a brow.

Lucia: "Othu has that handsome quantity surveyor who recently started working there" she threw a hint while coughing.

Othu: "Xolani Juku?" she looked at Lucia "I'm not hooking my employee up with my friend. I don't want him thinking I'm his friend and end up giving me poor

performance work"

Poppy: "I do not mind. I actually think that he's perfect. He's got three kids so you don't have to feel pressured to give him any. He's also never married so he might be looking for something serious"

Ntombi: "Why didn't he marry the mother of his three kids?"

Othu: "Good question"

Poppy: "Well it's actually from three different women".

Ntombi: "No thank you" she said quickly "Imagine dealing with three baby mothers" she shook

her head "I told you guys I'm fine. I don't mind dancing alone at the wedding" she stood.

Aku: "Are you running from the topic?"

Ntombi: "You bet I am. I'm not going to burden myself with a man when I now have peaceful sleeps at night knowing no one is cheating on me. Please excuse me" she left them.

Othu: "Guys stop stuffing that she's the only single one in the group in her face. Lucia honestly you pointing out she'll be the only one without a plus one at the

wedding was unnecessary" she looked at her friend.

Lucia: "I didn't mean it in a bad way, Othu. I'll go apologize"

Othu: "Yes please do. Clearly she's content with being single because if she wasn't she wouldn't have lasted over a year as a single woman. She spoke up about being sad that her kids are leaving home soon so I don't know where the finding a man topic adds to that. No one is hooking her up with Juku nor any other man for that matter" she put her foot down.

Hlubi: "I was actually hoping that she and Daluxolo would find their way to each other but yes Othunyiweyo is right. She seems happy so let us let go of this habit of thinking a man will be her savior when she clearly saved herself long ago"

Poppy: "I'm angered by the ex husband finding happiness and rubbing it in her face by bringing the love child. She should have been madly in love while he dies alone"

Hlubi: "Life" she shrugged "You guys will bring the kids to

Mivuyo's party right?" she smiled and looked at those with younger kids.

Yandi: "As if I'd let my three miss it. Zuri is also talking about it non stop"

Zuko: "Hey that one" she laughed while shaking her head "we'll be there, friend. What does one buy a one year old boy?"

Mandla: "If you aren't sure. Get a gift card so his mommy can go choose for him. These days I give everyone a gift card because I never know what to get them"

Yandi: "We should also buy food

stamps, guys. For the groceries we'll be giving out at the children's homes this festive. Are all of you going to your husbands homes this December?"

Othu: "Craig and I will be going to KZN for Christmas only"

Yandi: "Same goes for Babini and I. We can do something fun together with our families for the new year"

Lucia: "Sounds like a plan". Hours went by and the ladies first helped Ntombi clean up before saying their goodbyes. Tamkhulu and Makhulu called it a night so

Ntombi decided to make herself a cup of coffee before sitting down to watch a movie. She couldn't help laugh out at the funny parts of the movie. She checked the boy's social media postings and she was happy to see that they were still having fun. She took a deep breath after looking around at the empty big space. She would have to get used to it because soon it'll be that way for good. Everyone seemed to be concerned about her singleness besides her because she was not lying when she said she was

happy without someone.

Portia: "Liyema" she watched him look at her "Are we serious or are you just passing time?" she sat next to him.

Liyema: "Let us not label it yet, Portia. Let's take it a day at a time"

Portia: "Childless me wouldn't have minded but Abo doesn't need instability. I'm not asking if you'll marry me. I'm just asking if this is officially a relationship or not".

Liyema sat quietly clearly thinking about an answer.

Liyema: "I guess we can call it that. I don't like having my daughter far from me and I don't like the idea of taking her from you either. So yeah I guess we can call it that" Portia smiled.

Portia: "Are you okay? You've been quiet ever since you came from the matric pre party"

Liyema: "I'm cool. Just don't post any family pictures of us and tag me. I do not want to feel like I'm bragging to Ntombi"

Portia: "I respect her so no problem. "Let me go and sleep. I'll see you when you come to bed" she

stood but Liyema stopped her to kiss her. The kiss led from one thing to another and both ended up sleeping on the couch without any clothes. It was the first time he had sex with Portia again after Ntombi found out about his one night stand. He had nothing to feel guilty about but he couldn't shake the feeling of guilt as he took in the sight of one of the women he betrayed his ex wife with. He wondered if dating Portia would add salt to Ntombi's wounds and if he should have chosen to move on with a

complete stranger instead. He knew that he was not good at being alone so he hoped that his children would understand why he was once again the parent with a new partner when their mother had been alone for over a year. ❤️

S2-INSERT 41 (Not Edited)

When Ntombi got asked by her boys to attend a meeting in the lounge she suddenly got worried. Her first thought was that one of them had impregnated a girl during the matric farewell

celebration. Sat sat on the single seater couch facing all four of them. Each starting to grow their beard and Ntombikayise really couldn't believe she was the mother of four grown young men. She couldn't help but give a subtle smile at how beautiful they all were. Her prayer was for them to chase their dreams and find purpose in this life and she was confident that all of them eventually would figure themselves and life out.

Ntombi: "Who is pregnant?
Hlumelo, Pinky, Thandiwe or

Iviwe? Please don't tell me that it's all because I will have a stroke and die" they all burst out laughing.

Banele: "You just had to assume that we want to talk to give you bad news" he shook his head still laughing.

Bandile: "My girlfriend is not pregnant, Ma. I don't know about theirs though" he looked at his brothers and they all raised their hands in surrender to show they were innocent.

Ntombi: "Then why did you call the meeting? I'm usually the one

calls such so you're all making me so nervous" she spoke quickly.

Bukhosi: "We have just thought that we should tell you how much we love you. I don't think any of us tell you that enough". Ntombi felt her heart smile "I've also decided to abandon Res living and continue living here" Ntombikayise smiled.

Ntombi: "As much as I'd like that but I can't let you do that, Khosi or any of you for that matter.

You guys don't realise how proud you make me and part of that process includes being proud to see

you all be independent men. So go and live at the university residence if you feel it'll help you grow" she looked at all of them. Banele: "He's not staying to be your keeper, Mama. You know that of us all Bukhosi is the who likes his space more"

Bukhosi: "Some guy took me to his room to see how they lived and I honestly don't picture myself sharing space with a stranger who'll occasionally steal my food" Ntombi laughed because she remembered those annoying varsity moments very well "After

eighteen years of sharing a room, I really look forward to being alone" his brothers all mumbled something and he laughed.

Ntombi: "Only if you are sure. You guys could ask dad to rent flats for you guys" the boys shook their heads.

Bubele: "I don't want to be known as a rich man's son there. Dad already organised for Bandile and I to share a room at Res so we're good right?" he looked at his brother and Bandile nodded.

Ntombi: "And you?" she looked at Banele.

Banele: "Trust me I'm better off out of sight because I plan to enjoy university life to its fullest"

Ntombi: "Code for binge drinking, sex and little studying, Anele. You forget that I was once a student" she raised a brow.

Banele: "I'm not going to overdo it"

Ntombi: "Stay with your dad. His place is closer to campus and I'll rest easier"

Banele: "Heck no...not with his girlfriend coming almost every weekend. I promise I'll be good, Ma"

Ntombi: "I hope so because trust me you'll regret not focussing on what's important. Are you sure about doing information technology though?" Banele nodded "Everyone is sure about their choice?" they all nodded. "Then you guys be sure to study hard for the final exam. If there's a subject you're struggling with tell me now" she looked at them.

Bubele: "All good" they all agreed.

Bandile: "That's actually not the only reason we wanted to speak to you" Ntombi waited for him to

finish before jumping to conclusions again "Uhm...we just wanted to tell you that if you want to...you know..." he suddenly ran out of words.

Bukhosi: "Since dad has moved on twice already since the divorce...we won't mind if you know...?" he shrugged. Ntombi looked at them all confused.

Ntombi: "I don't know"

Banele: "Find yourself a person, Mama. You just had to make me say it" he said quickly and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Not that I needed your

permission but I do appreciate your blessing" she smiled.

Bubele: "We know you didn't date because of us. We sat down and had a long discussion about it so we promise to be open minded about it. It's easier with dad because we can choose not to see him and his girlfriend but with you it's just different"

Ntombi: "I understand"

Bukhosi: "Make sure he treats you like a queen because that's what you're accustomed to from the men in your life" Ntombikayise contained her laugh.

Ntombi: "I assume that would be you guys and Tamkhulu?" they all nodded simultaneously "I will let whoever know that the men in my life set the bar high so he must know that I won't accept anything less"

Bandile: "Okay that's that" they all suddenly breathed as if the topic suffocated them.

Ntombi: "Are you all going to Mivuyo's party?"

Banele: "To a one year old kid's party? Heck no, Ma. I've got training most of the day. Bring us food though"

Ntombi: "I don't feel like going"

Bubele: "Let's do something then. The beach" he suggested with excitement.

Banele: "Well now I don't want to go to training anymore" everyone laughed.

Ntombi: "Do you guys think they'll be offended if I don't go?"

Bukhosi: "No because you don't have a baby or toddler to take to the party. So you'll be at the beach with your young men"

Ntombi: "I'm yet to get used to this men phrase. In fact don't use it when I'm around. Who is

going to drive" all four raised their hand and Ntombi laughed. They've been driving for a couple of months but with learners and with her present in the car or Liyema but all were good at it. Bandile: "This is why I don't want more than one kid at a time. Now I can't say I'm driving because I'm the oldest one" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Everyone will have a turn. Soon you'll drive independently as you'll have your licences. So the beach it is?" they nodded "Let me tell Amahle that

her parents should take her straight there" she said while pressing her phone.

Bukhosi: "I actually don't miss having her around anymore. It's like it's always been us"

Bubele: "Right?" the others nodded "Just when you think you can't live without someone time proves that it's possible" he added.

Bandile: "Makhulu and Tamkhulu are quite the travellers lately"

Ntombi: "They have a grown son, grown grandchildren and great grandchildren so nothing binds

them to the house. They should enjoy it. Plus they haven't been to a church conference in a while.

Makhulu doesn't need a wheelchair anymore so she is like a child who is excited about walking for the first time"

Bukhosi: "I'm glad that they've decided to come live here. I don't know how many lessons Tamkhulu has taught me. The man is like a box of wisdom" he said with administration.

Ntombi: "Okay Amahle is sorted. Should we carry snacks or won't we stay long?"

Bandile: "Snacks because it's too beautiful of a day to not be at the beach most of it"

Ntombi: "You guys really don't have things planned right? I mean Banele you can go to your training"

Bukhosi: "Mom, relax and stop thinking that you are imposing on our plans because you're not. Anele was just trying to get out of the baby party with the training thing" Ntombikayise smiled.

Ntombi: "Remember when you guys used to wear Speedos to the beach. Those red Spiderman ones"

the boys shook their heads embarrassed and Ntombi laughed. "Bandile's one always used to end up between the butt cheeks" tears formed as she laughed. Bandile: "Wow, Mom" he said with an embarrassed smile "well thank god we no longer wear such" they all laughed. Ntombikayise called Mahlubandile to tell her that she'd only be dropping off Mivuyo's gifts from herself and his cousins. She thought that Hlubi would be hurt but Hlubi understood. She and her boys went to get dressed for a beautiful day at the beach.

A picnic basket was packed with snacks they already had in the house and Bubele first drove to Mahlubandile's place to drop off the gifts. Nandi and Mashudu were also visiting because their car was parked outside the yard. Yanda and Hlubi's home was perfect for a small family. All of Ntombi's friends had children who'd enjoy the kind of party that Hlubi was hosting even Othu as she brought Qhayiya along with her. Their husbands also came out to help Yanda braai for a group of children and their

parents. Ntombi picked Mivuyo up and gave him a few cheek kisses that left the little boy giggling. Hlubi: "Daluxolo is here" she whispered to warn Ntombi "He's alone" she felt she needed to add that detail too.

Ntombi: "It's good that he came to celebrate with this little bubble" she tickled Mivuyo and he laughed out "You are growing so fast, Mi-mi" she kissed his cheek.

Bubele: "Mom, I'm sure the beach won't be empty. Many will want to take advantage of the day"

Ntombi: "He just wants to go

drive" Ntombikayise laughed. "Let me go say hi to the other ladies and kids then I'll be with you guys" she said as she walked to the kitchen where her friends were.

Othu: "So why are you in beach wear" Ntombi told Othu about her plans for the day and they all looked disappointed.

Poppy: "You look hot in a swimsuit though and that lace cover is just perfect. It doesn't show much but it doesn't cover much either" she said sounding impressed.

Ntombi: "Thank you, Poppy" she

did a sexy twirl "Plus my boys told me that they don't mind mommy playing again and honestly I think it's what I have been waiting for. I might go find myself a hunk at the beach" she flashed some thigh and the ladies cheered.

Yandi: "You go, girl" she snapped her fingers.

Ntombi: "Let me love and leave you guys. My bodyguards are waiting for me" they all laughed Portia walked in holding Abo's hand and the room went silent "I'll see you" she waved at the ladies.

Portia: "Sis Ntombi please do not leave because of me. I heard that the ladies were this side so I thought I'd come say hi"

Poppy: "The other ladies are outside, dearly. I'm sure we were not what you came to look for"

Zuko: "Poppy" she said softly.

Poppy: "No, I'm going to say what I know you all are thinking. Part of the reason why this friendship has lasted is loyalty and Ntombikayise is our friend and not Portia. I'm not going to pretend like I'm comfortable with socializing with the woman who

got pregnant with my friend's husband child while they were still married whether she knew or not. Honey I've dated married men in my stupid years so you can't tell me you didn't see that pale mark on his ring finger when you fucked him" she said with attitude.

Ntombi: "Uhm...bye" she walked out quickly. She wasn't going to stay for drama.

Portia: "I'm clearly not welcome so I'll leave" she said in a whisper.

Poppy: "You're welcome just not in this circle. We closed applications to the stokvel long ago. We've got

enough members" the other ladies took a sip of their wines. Othu forgot how Poppy could get for a second.

Hlubi: "Ummm...come Abo, the other kids are playing outside, Nana" she said to the toddler with a smile. For a moment she forgot that she was the host "Portia, the parents are outside. These are just my friends I managed to bribe with wine to help me sort out a few things. Come I'll show you where" she led the way out.

Othu: "Really?" she looked at

Poppy as Portia followed Hlubi out. Poppy didn't have an inch of remorse.

Poppy: "I'm taking nothing back" she tied a ribbon on one of the party packs. Ntombikayise couldn't believe that Poppy showed her loyalty like that. She indeed was in no mood for all that came with the adults at the party. Dali saw Ntombi run walk out quickly and he wanted to follow her but found her car reversing out the yard already. Ntombikayise watched him stand by the door and she didn't tell

Bubele to stop because she didn't want to.

Yanda: "So you saw her? I didn't want to tell you that she brought gifts"

Dali: "You knew and you just kept quiet, Yanda?" he sounded upset. "I would have liked to say hi" he added.

Yanda: "Lisakhanya told her you're here so if she wanted you to do that she'd have come to you. Let this go, Daluxolo"

Dali: "Shy didn't she stay though? She loves Mivuyo"

Yanda: "I'm going to pretend you

didn't just ask that stupid question. Her ex husband was obviously going to come since his child is Mivuyo's cousin and the chances of him coming with his new lover were big and he indeed did just that"

Dali: "The bastard isn't even sensitive to her feelings"

Yanda: "They've been divorced for a year and about five months so he doesn't have to anymore. You honestly have to let go of this crush because you're single again because of it". Daluxolo hated it when Yanda called what he felt

for Ntombi a crush. He doubted that a crush lasted that long so he left Yanda standing by the door to not hear what his big brother had to say. Yamkela gave birth to a little girl and soon Yanda's family arrived too. Mrs Mbuzo was still in jail regardless of the many attempts to try and appeal her case. Yamkela was the only one who visited their mother while Yanda and Yandiswa weren't ready yet. Mr Mbuzo recovered completely and lived well at his house and at peace for the first time in years. He and the families

of other young people got together to sue the department of health for the pain they suffered under their staff.

Liyema felt he was not welcome in the gentlemen group just as Portia felt she wasn't in the ladies group but at least Liyema had Lungile there to keep him company.

Lungi: "Oh get off your high horse, Liyema. These parties aren't fun for adults with little kids can you imagine how much torture they are for an adult with no children to accompany.

She didn't choose to go do other things because of you" he looked at his brother "She honestly doesn't give a fuck about you" he said honestly.

Liyema: "I'm well aware of that trust me. I was just wondering".
1. Mivuyo's party officially started and he was clearly mesmerized by his cake as he kept wanting to touch it. Portia was sure to keep distance between herself and Poppy because Poppy kept giving her cold looks. The birthday boy got sung to and he was so excited he clapped hands while laughing.

He liked it so much that his guests had to sing to him three times as he'd cry whenever they stopped.

Yanda: "You messed the kid up with liking attention" he said as he distracted Mivuyo with something else and Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "It's his day so we gotta bow to the prince of the day" they both laughed.

Nandi: "He believes he's royalty indeed this one" she picked her brother up "Goodness I miss you when I'm not here" she kissed his forehead "He'll be the type of

uncle who plays in the same sandbox as his niece or nephew" she laughed.

Yanda: "Are you trying to tell us something?" Nandi smiled.

Nandi: "Not at all but we are planning to have a soccer team Mashudu is number three of ten kids and as a child who grew up alone all her life, I want a big family too"

Yanda: "Let's see if our families will be able to unite next week, Nana" he kissed his daughter forehead. He missed her but she was not going to come back home.

Nandi: "Tata, please don't be difficult"

Yanda: "Tell your uncle's that. I'm not difficult at all" he laughed..

The food got served and it was a perfect afternoon for the little children in attendance. They had games to play and enough food to eat themselves into a coma. Hlubi was sure to cater for the parents too so they won't be bored watching their kids have fun. The ladies could feel that they were not complete but there was nothing they could do. Perhaps they'd later go join Ntombi at the

beach too.

Bandile: "Mom really now?" he looked at Ntombikayise as she threw a coin in the water as she'd always done before her boys could go into the ocean for a swim.

Ntombi: "I know it might be a myth but I'm not taking chances. The elders saying that you guys will drown if I don't do this scared me enough to never forget to do it" the boys laughed.

Bukhosi: "Thanks for always looking out, mommy" he held her close. The five of them went into

the cool water and it felt great. Ntombikayise loved the ocean. There was something about walking on the sand and occasionally feel the water hit her feet that healed her soul. To be with her children at the beach was way better than having to deal with the brewing drama at the Mbuzo house. She went to sit under the sun umbrella and left the boys in the water.

Bubele: "Do you guys think she's happy?" they all looked at their mother who caught them staring. Ntombikayise waved and they did

so too.

Bandile: "She looks happy" he tried to think about Ntombi's actions.

Bukhosi: "She's happy. When she's not happy her eyes just change. I can't explain it but I know what I mean. They become tired in a way and I haven't seen that happen in months. So she's happy" he said with certainty.

Banele: "I wish I could kick Amahle for leaving. At least mom would have had someone with her when we are gone"

Bukhosi: "I'm glad Mahle won't be

alone with mom because she'd have been even more disrespectful. I'd have been more worried had Mama been left with Amahle" the others nodded.

Bubele: "I'm angry at dad for leaving. They should now have been travelling the world together seeing as their kids are out of the house soon"

Banele: "Don't tell me about your selfish dad who thought bringing Portia to the party was a wide idea. I love the man but I swear sometimes he does not use his brain"

Bukhosi: "You can say that again, man. When I saw him with his new family I was like "what the fuck?" he tapped his head "Good thing we brought our mom here instead" he added.

Bandile: "At least she won't be alone alone. The elders are there most of the time. I say let's just study hard and make mom proud of us. Life will sort itself out.

Everyone is going to get what they deserve at the end and I believe our mother has put out good so good will make its way back to her. It's just the way of

life"

Bubele: "Okay, Dalai Lama" they all laughed. "Yho I can't wait to go meet varsity honeys. Glad we went to the bush in winter.

Imagine entering varsity gates with a red painted face" they laughed.

Bukhosi: "I'm just glad Ivi will also be in Cape town. Have to softsoap mom into allowing me to use the backroom because I have a feeling that Iviwe and I will need more privacy"

Bandile: "So you finally popped that cherry" he sounded

impressed and Bukhosi nodded before they all laughed.

Bukhosi: "I think she's the one" his brothers all hit the back of his head.

Banele: "You're far too young to talk such crap" he pointed at Bukhosi "You saw how your father ended up being" he joked and they laughed "So don't skip a phase" he added.

Bubele: "Imagine speaking about the one at she 18" he shook his head in disapproval "Get out of my brother you old man" he shook Bukhosi like one trying to get out

a demon from a possessed person. Bukhosi chased him and tackled him when he was close.

Ntombikayise stood thinking they were fighting but she heard them laugh so she sat back down. They were great swimmers but she didn't want then getting in too deep because the sea was a mystery.

Snethemba: "Being a big sister to boys sucks, I know" a stranger say next to her. He introduced himself as Snethemba. .

Ntombi: "And you would know that how?"

Sne: "My daughter is sure to remind me everyday that I shouldn't have bothered having her two younger brothers"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Well I can't relate because I'm the mother in this case not the sister"

Sne: "No way" he scanned her from head to toe "You're one hot mom then. Most women just let themselves go after having children" Ntombikayise looked at him.

Ntombikayise: "You men brag about the children you managed

to make but don't appreciate the bodies that had to undergo traumatic changes to give you those kids. Yes, our bodies change after childbirth and we don't care because having our children healthy and alive makes it all worth it. Just for once respect the body that gifted you children to continue your bloodline, man. You think we don't miss out old ore baby bodies sometimes? Men just reminding us how our bodies have changed is so insensitive. Put some damn respect on it, man" she stood and left him. She was in

no mood to hear a man talk down on women who struggled to get their presence baby bodies back because she felt that body never really returns anyway. She still had her scar from the operation of giving birth to her boys and she was not going to be ashamed of it. Just as she thought Sne was not too bad he had to open his mouth and talk what she regarded to be crap. They spent hours at the beach because they wanted to stay for the sunset. When she went to the car to get a bottle of water she found

Yanda's car parked next to hers and Dali appeared. Had she not come with kids she'd have gotten into the car and drive off. He greeted and Ntombikayise did too. The closer he got the more she moved back because she didn't want to be manipulated by her feelings. She knew there were a lot of great men out there. Her ladies told her there were men far greater than Dali and Kuye and Ntombikayise knew that but why didn't they make her feel like Dali did. Both thought distance and breakage in communication

would make them forget about the other yet there they were looking at each other as though they have not parted.

Ntombikayise had to remind herself that he was taken.

Dali: "I couldn't go without saying hi"

Ntombi: "You said hi so you can now go"

Dali: "I miss you, Kayise. The more I go on dates with other women the more I know that I will never get you out of my mind"

Ntombi: 'Well your girlfriend won't like gearing that, Daluxolo. I'm no

relationship wrecker"

Dali: "When last did you see those posts? I called that off long ago"

Ntombi: "I don't want to hear "

Dali: "We never had a last dance. So can we do that tomorrow night and maybe I will find closure. I'm not a man who moves on quickly, Kayise. You know that so..."

Ntombi: "We didn't date, Daluxolo so you don't have to move on from anything. You looked like a man who moved on in those pictures so don't come talk to me as though I'm a naive teenager" her brows

drew together clearly she was frustrated "Plus I don't owe you last dances either" she added with frustration. She didn't understand where the sudden frustration came from "You were also very happy with not talking to me for nearly a year" she looked at him.

Dali: "I was respecting a request that you made, Kayise"

Ntombikayise's breathing quickened "One last dance?" he pleaded softly.

Ntombi: "I don't want to run into Liyema whenever I have to

attend your family gatherings.
You guys are now family as
disturbing as it sounds"

Dali: "Fair enough. I knew you'd
throw an excuse at me because
it's how you cope with the
feelings you gave for me"

Ntombi: "Please leave me alone,
Daluxolo Mbuzo"

Dali: "Okay if you feel like dancing
tomorrow night you'll find me at
Carlo's studio. Enjoy your evening,
Kayise" he wanted to get close for
a hug but she backed away. Dali
got back into his car defeated and
she watched him drive off.

Boys: "You okay?" they asked simultaneously as they saw her facial expression had changed.

Ntombi: "Yeah" she looked at them. They all looked at each other not convinced by her answer. They saw who she was with and they wondered what he said that suddenly changed her mood. Ntombikayise went to sit on a towel and they sat next to her taking in the sun going down.

Dali's request was the last thing she needed that day and she had no intention of going dancing with him tomorrow night or any other

night. She realized today that there'd be situations where Dali and Liyema attended the same family gatherings and she was not up for that. She imagined it to be too complicated and her life has been so smooth that she didn't want to risk shaking the boat. ❤️

S2-INSERT 42

Mashudu and Nandi sat in a restaurant having breakfast while planning some details of their wedding. Mashudu wants a

traditional wedding while Nandi wants her dream church wedding wearing a white fishtail dress.

The two of them have been trying to work out the details as both decided that having two ceremonies would be a waste of money.

Mashudu: "Baby, the xhosa traditional cloth comes in white too. So have your father make it in the design that you want.

Then later once we are married your can change into the Venda attire as you'll officially be wed into a Venda family" he suggested.

Nandi gave it thought and Mashudu smiled when she smiled. Nandi: "I actually saw an idea of the dress that you are talking about. So we marry the western and traditional ceremonies by making it one?" Mashudu nodded "You're smart, baby. I love the idea. Planning a wedding is so stressful. We still haven't decided where we'll actually have it" she took a deep breath.

Mashudu: "We'll have it in Pretoria since it's the place we live at. Surely our families won't mind to travel from their

respective places to celebrate with us. There is a beautiful venue that I know. Everything is done there. The church ceremony, perfect scenery for taking pictures and they have a reception venue. This thing of going from a church to a park and then to the community hall is exhausting. Some guests won't have private transport and you know some don't offer rides even when they are alone in their car" he shook his head.

Nandi: "Yeah but will we be able to afford it?" he was the one who

was good with handling finances so Nandi always made sure to check with him first before spending because she was a spender while he was a saver. It caused a lot of fights during their first months of living together but they finally found common ground. Mashudu had to learn to occasionally give Nandi freedom to go spend on things he didn't feel they needed and Nandi had to accept that sometimes buying certain things was a waste.

Mashudu: "That's why we have been saving" he reminded her "We

aren't in a rush to buy a house yet because our flat will do for the first few years so we are good. I'm glad that we decided to live together. Imagine if we were faced with the financial issues we used to fight about in our first year of marriage" he held her hand.

Nandi: "we'd have thought marriage sucks" they both laughed "I can't wait to be your wife, baby" she leaned forward to kiss him. "So traditional wedding with a dash of modern it is?"

Mashudu nodded with excitement

"People have been asking me when they can expect their invitations. So we still agree that no children are allowed right?"

Mashudu: "I love the little buggers but they can sometimes disrupt so yes I'm sure. Make sure it's stated boldly on the invitations baby. Also tell them it's important they RSVP for themselves and their plus ones those who will be allowed to bring one that is"

Nandi: "This is going to be a big wedding" she sounded nervous"

Mashudu: "Yes because it'll also be

a chance to bring two families from different cultures together. I want it to be huge. In fact I'm now doubting that the venue will be big enough. Maybe we can have it proper village style. I want my entire village to see my beautiful Xhosa queen" Nandi blushed.

Nandi: "I don't mind it being in your home town but I always wanted to walk out of my father's house in a white dress, baby" she looked down.

Mashudu: "Then we have no choice but to have two weddings.

The white dress one can be here in Cape Town where only close family and friends are invited. Do you mind if it's intimate?"

Nandi: "That's what I always wanted. People who are closest to us to be the ones in attendance. I don't mind. My grandmother was looking forward to seeing me walk out of home in my white dress so much but now..." she shook her head.

Mashudu: "We'll go show her pictures and take her some of the wedding cake" he tried to lift her mood.

Nandi: "One of the reasons why I love you. You always seem to have a solution. I love you" she kissed him again.

Mashudu: "I love you too. So small intimate white wedding here and massive traditional wedding in Venda?"

Nandi: "Lucky for us we don't have to worry much about our attires because my father had us sorted. But this will mean that we have to push the date back a bit though. Are you sure we'll afford two ceremonies?" Mashudu nodded.

Mashudu: "Fortunately we both have parents and family who don't mind helping us. We'll be fine. I also don't want us to have wedding debt after the wedding day that's why we saved right?" Nandi nodded. The two of them sat and planned more and Nandi was confident that they could pull it off without a wedding planner. She was happy to be able to help him carry the financial costs of the celebrations even though she earned way less than him. She was ready to be his wife after they built a foundation already.

Rose was as excited about seeing her daughter get married as Mahlubandile was and Nandi intended on including both women in the process because she loves them both. Her heart was still broken about her grandmother but as someone who studied law she knew that justice had to be served even if the accused was someone she loves dearly. She thought Mashudu's family would have problems with her after the news of what her grandmother did became national news but they were still good to her. They alone

were a large family so she understood why Mashudu wanted the celebration they'd hopefully have in Venda to be huge. For the intimate church wedding they would both invite immediate family only.

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Daluxolo has been busy all day preparing for a night he was not even sure Ntombikayise would attend. The dance studio was empty on Sundays because there were no classes and he saw that as an opportunity to be alone with Ntombikayise in a setting

that brought them closer as friends. He planned to go all out with a romantic candle lit dinner for two and prayed Ntombikayise wouldn't be overwhelmed.

Yanda: "I have a bad feeling about this" he looked at Daluxolo as they drove home from church.

Hlubi: "Mbuzo, please let Daluxolo do what he feels is right"

Dali: "Thank you, sis Lisa" he looked at his brother.

Yanda: "Ntombikayise might not even pitch. All that money spent for nothing"

Hlubi: "I thought you liked

Ntombikayise, Yanda" she raised a brow.

Yanda: "I do...a lot but the fact that she's Liyema's ex wife doesn't sit well with me. It means that our brothers will always have bad vibes between them because Liyema will never really let go of Ntombi. I want our brothers to get along and if one of them has the woman the other regrets having divorced, it'll never happen. It might even affect our marriage because each will speak up for their brother" he looked back at Hlubi who was

fixing Mivuyo's shoe.

Hlubi: "You know I don't feel sorry for Liyema as far as Ntombikayise is concerned. He's lying in the bed he made. It's unfair of us to tell Daluxolo to not date Ntombikayise because his brother in law will have a problem with it. How many times will they even see each other?"

Yanda: "At every family event involving us and our children" he reminded her "I respect both Daluxolo and Liyema but when they are together I feel torn because they don't want to talk

to each other while I want to talk to both. These are both my brothers, Lisakhanya"

Hlubi: "I know that, baby but I believe that someday all will be well. Liyema will be married and wouldn't give a care about who Ntombikayise is with"

Yanda: "You can't be sure of that"

Daluxolo: "Guys I'm actually still in the car. Tonight is just to put to bed what's between Kayise and I"

Yanda: "And you needed dinner with candles and roses for that?"

Yeah right" he said sarcastically "I liked the lady you were with.

You didn't have to run after her. Ntombi always makes you beg to be with her"

Daluxolo: "She's afraid to move on. It's really not easy"

Yanda: "Well her fear is standing in the way of you moving on. She should just tell you to finally take a hike"

Hlubi: "She did and it was Dali who went to speak to her" she defended her friend. Daluxolo didn't deny it because it was true. Ntombikayise did her best to avoid him yesterday but he was the one who we + looking until he

found her. They had lunch as a family before Dali borrowed Yanda's car again to go run a few errands. Clearly Yanda and Mahlubandile were also torn in this matter so they decided to not touch on the topic as it might lead to them arguing. They spend the rest of the afternoon playing with Mivuyo until Nandi arrived home to tell them the plans she and her future husband made. They'd be driving back to Pretoria that afternoon so Nandi asked that Hlubi and Rose partner up to help her plan her church

wedding in Cape Town and Mashudu asked the same of his parents for the traditional wedding. Both sets of parents were more than happy to do it. After hours went by Daluxolo was at the studio setting up properly. He made sure their favourite music was playing softly in the background too. He dialed Ntombikayise's number but she didn't pick up. "Please join me at 7pm" read the text he sent. He went to the entrance to check if the scenery was beautiful at first glance and he was happy with his

work. His phone rang and it was Indiphile, the woman he'd been seeing for a few months but broke things off with three weeks ago. At first he didn't answer because it was not a first that she called to ask him to try again. She was a great woman and Dali liked her but he was still hung up on Ntombikayise. He was honest about it to Indi and she hoped that it was just a crush but when he broke things off she realized it was far deeper.

Daluxolo: "Hi, Indi. I'm kinda busy now so can you call when I can

talk" he said quickly.

Indi: "No, we have to talk tonight or I'll go crazy, Dali. I know that you said I should not call you and I respect that but something has come up" Dali sat down.

Dali: "What's going on?"

Indi: "Remember that time we had sex and the condom broke?"

Dali closed his eyes not ready to hear the rest of what she has to say.

Dali: "Of course I do. What about it?" he asked calmly.

Indi: "Well the morning after pill that you got me didn't work. I'm

pregnant, Daluxolo" Dali shut his eyes and rubbed his face vigorously "I didn't want this hence we always used condoms and I took that pill that morning though I don't usually take contraceptives due to the risks associated with them" she waited for him to say something "Please say something" she pleaded after a while.

Dali: "And you are 100% sure that you are pregnant, Indiphile?" .

Indi: "I even had a blood test done to be sure so yes. I should be

about four weeks now. I'm sorry to tell you this over the phone but it's been days of me debating with myself about whether or not to tell you"

Dali: "Thank you for telling me. I'll be back there tomorrow so I'll come by to see you"

Indi: "I'm sorry, Dali"

Dali: "Things happen. We'll talk properly when I'm back in the city. Thank you for telling me".

The two said goodbye and ended the call that left Dali's shoulders feeling heavy all of the sudden. He dialed Yanda's number and told

him. He had to tell someone before he could go crazy.

Yanda: "That's great news. You're going to finally be a father. I know it's not easy with Ntombi being in your mind all the time but clearly you two were not made to be together"

Dali: "Try not to sound too happy"

Yanda: "I'm not happy that two people I care about will be left crying tonight because that's what'll happen to you and Ntombikayise I'm sure. Don't think I don't notice that you have feelings for her... I do. But

feelings come and go Daluxolo. You now have a woman pregnant with your first born. A woman who loves you. Please make the right choices"

Dali: "You don't get it" he wiped a tear off "I'm now going to be a part of the people who have hurt her" he sniffed.

Yanda: "She turned you down and you did as she said. You moved on with someone else and that someone is pregnant. You didn't cheat, Daluxolo"

Dali: "I've got to go" he hung up before Yanda could say more. When

Ntombikayise opened the door to the studio she didn't expect complete darkness with just candles lighting the room. The setting was beautiful so she smiled when she saw it. Dali stood looking defeated. After that call he hoped she'd stand him up but she was there and smiling and looking as beautiful as ever.

Ntombi: "You and Carlo have been busy" she looked around "It looks beautiful" she added "I thought I'd come check if you still knew how to move" she laughed softly. The light in the room was not

enough for her to see that he had been crying at first but when he got closer she noticed "what's wrong?" she asked.

Dali: "I'm sorry, Kayise but I don't think that I'll be able to have that dance"

Ntombi: "Is everything okay? Is your father okay?" she got closer to him.

Dali: "They are all perfect"

Ntombi: "It's the way I spoke to you yesterday right? I'm sorry that I was so short tempered. I don't know what came over me"

Dali: "I've got to tell you

something" he looked at her

"Firstly I'd like to say I'm sorry"

his eyes shined more. He blinked

the tears away and told her why

he couldn't have that dance.

Ntombikayise felt her chest burn.

She nodded many times while

blinking the tears away.

Ntombi: "I'm the one who told you

to go find a woman and have kids

so I can't be angry at you for

moving on" she wiped her tears

quickly "Congratulations, Xolo" she

faked a smile. "I really hope that

your lady has a happy pregnancy

and a safe delivery" she added and

meant every word.

Dali: "Please do not think that I created this setting only to come tell you this. She called after I planned this"

Ntombi: "I know you wouldn't do that. Good thing she called before anything happened. I think telling you that we can try and possibly ending up making love only to hear tomorrow that it was short lived would have hurt. Uhm...let me get going" she looked at the door

"Yeah let me..." she pointed to the door. Dali gave her the last forehead kiss and she had to wipe

her tears off once again before running out of the studio. Dali sunk to the floor and hit it hard before crying. He knew the news of a baby coming should have made him happy but it suddenly didn't. Ntombi had to first let out the first flood of tears before hitting the road. She drove straight home because to go elsewhere might end up in regretful actions. The boys have not yet returned from seeing their friends and Ntombikayise did not have the energy to remind them that it was a school night.

Tamkhulu: "You haven't seen us all weekend yet you go straight up without greeting" he looked at her as she was about to go up the stairs.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry. Hello, Makhulu and Tamkhulu" she said still with her back turned to them.

Makhulu: "You might be an adult, Ntombikayise but that does not give you right to be disrespectful to your elders. Come greet properly" they watched her come down the remaining stairs looking at the floor. She tried her best to greet respectfully without

looking at them "Thank you. Now explain the tears" Ntombikayise looked at her grandmother. She took a deep breath before telling them the story.

Tamkhulu: "Life is going to keep sending you the same scenario until you learn a lesson from it"

Ntombi: "I don't want to hear it, Tamkhulu please"

Makhulu: "Hayi, Tata my child is heart broken so please not tonight"

Tamkhulu: "Ntombikayise keeps allowing these men with emotional issues to get close to her then

she's the one left crying because they go love other women with the healing she inspired" he cut his apple in half and gave the other half to Ntombi. Makhulu didn't eat apples but she was sure to give her husband a cold stare to tell him to keep quiet. Ntombikayise took the apple and mumbled a thank you.

Makhulu: "Go take a long bath and come down to have dinner. I cooked us a nice meal" she brushed Ntombi's back.

Tamkhulu: "Just because you are an emphatic person it doesn't

mean take on the pain of others. You have a healing energy so it is bound to attract the "damaged". I'm like that and I don't even know if I can say I passed down a gift to you or a curse. It is a curse when you allow yourself to be sucked into the issues of others but a blessing when you can help without getting attached. There's no difference between Bonga, Liyema and Daluxolo. All were men who needed someone to help them carry their load as they drowned when they had no one to help. Dali was a

better case of the three because he realized that he needed work and took action but fact remains that when you met he was a broken man and your healing energy as always made you feel the need for you to step in and help. You are like a light attracting annoying moths" he said sounding nearly disgusted. Makhulu: "Tata" she pleaded for him to stop. Tamkhulu just shrugged.

Tamkhulu: "You know I'm not one to burn my chest with words I'd rather have spoken out loud, my

dear" he looked at his wife "why do you think the boys managed to bounce back up after the divorce? It's because their mother is a healer so they fed off that gift but with them it was beautiful because they healed her back. Until you learn your lesson life is going to give you another Bonga, Liyema and Daluxolo. Same case different faces. You might find that you're not even attracted to Dali but you were attracted to his need of you. It's dangerous because you met this man right after your divorce. During a time

you wanted to feel needed. So take time to think if you really had a connection with this man or if you were attached to him.

Honestly I think it was attachment hence it was so easy to tell him to keep his distance.

Connection my girl is magic and it's in charge so you best believe it wouldn't have allowed you to distance yourself from the other person. In the western world they call people like us lightwaker but as African we say we were chosen by the ancestors to bring healing and make this world a bit

better. I used to attract the most nonsense type of friends who would stab me in the back once they felt they were now too good to be my friends. Ask your grandmother. But I was able to put healthy boundaries to protect myself and my gift. I no longer carry people's emotions because it's not my load to carry. I help where I can and move on. Learn to say no. Let's say you meet a man next who has a alcohol addiction problem and he tells you about it and even throws how he loves you in there. Give him the

number of an addiction center and say thank but no thank to a love that comes from such a low vibrating person. Tell him if he's serious, he must call that number and go seek help for himself and only when he's energy vibrates higher can he come speak of that love. Tell him you know your worth and it's not to be loved by a man who is vibrating too low.

Boundaries, Nto-Nto or you'll die young, my child. If it requires negative energy to be passed on to you say no, no, no. Let no be your favourite word from now on.

Embrace the word no. Don't explain yourself because no is a sentence on its own. Learn to love the sound of your feet walking away from what is not meant for you. You served your part in Daluxolo's life by linking him with his family but that was Daluxolo Xhego now he's Daluxolo Mbuzo and you best believe those are two different men. Let Tamkhulu hear you say no. They say practice makes perfect" Ntombikayise just looked at him.

Ntombi: "No, I don't want to do that Tata. Honestly all I need is

that bath Makhulu spoke about.
So I'm not doing this because I
don't have the strength to"

Tamkhulu: "See? It was not so
hard"

Ntombi: "I wasn't practicing to
say no...you know Tata I'll be
back. Sometimes you can be
something else. I just needed a
shoulder to cry on but no, not my
grandfather. He had to tell me
I'm a moth attractor" she stood
and left. Tamkhulu laughed softly.
Makhulu: "But sthandwa sam"
she shook her head and Tamkhulu
laughed.

Tamkhulu: "I didn't say she's a moth attractor. She just walked away from a situation that she'd rather not be in. If she does this whenever a man with low vibrating energy approaches her we'll never hear her crying over such again. This Daluxolo man is good but I would have preferred him to have met her as Daluxolo Mbuzo the man who found her when he was whole already not Daluxolo Xhego who was emotionally damaged. You all might think I'm crazy but I know what I'm talking about. I'll

know the right man for her when she meets him and brings him home for us to meet too. The other three were just mirrors of issues she has to deal with within herself and in her case she has to stop having this savior complex. Life sends you the same lessons until you learn. I'm hoping our child has learned her lesson. That she now has to be her own saviour. That she should stop taking her garden tools to make other gardens pretty when her garden is filled with dead flowers because she waters everyone else

but herself. That healing she gives out so freely should be taken within and if that doesn't happen another energy vampire will attach itself to her because she is an open field. She must learn to put a fence around herself"

Makhulu: "Where do you get all that you say, myenam? I swear you live in your own planet"

Tamkhulu: "I'm a healer too. Like I said she gets that from me but Ntombikayise is going about it the wrong way. The day I stopped having friends was the

day that life stopped serving me toxic friendships because I learnt my lesson. With me it was friends and with her it's romantic partners. The day she walks away from men who can't heal themselves and need her to heal will be the day that she has learnt her lesson. After that life will serve her a man who vibrates at the same frequency as her or maybe one who has a higher frequency which will be even greater"

Makhulu: "But we all have issues, Tata. It seems you want her to

go hunt for the perfect man"
Tamkhulu: "I said nothing about perfect. Of course we all have issues, mkam. It's how we deal with those issues that differentiate us. People like you, me and Ntombi can deal with our issues by ourselves but people like the men she attracts need people like us or else they sink with their issues into the dark sea making those around them work overtime trying to pull them out. Ntombikayise puts herself in situations where she always has to pull them out of deep water.

Doesn't she get tired of being a lifesaver? I just want to see her with a man who is secure in himself and can carry whatever load himself from the first day she meets him. One who won't lean on her completely to find healing. One who will heal her as much as she'll heal him. Also if she goes within and does the work she won't have to go hunt for him. God and the ancestors will gift him to her wrapped in a red ribbon like the perfectly imperfect gift that he'll be. It's all up to her. I had my say in this matter

so I'm not going to touch on it because I don't want to carry her negative emotions that she adopted from this Dali situation with her and end up telling her nonsense like she can still be with Daluxolo because he's not married yet. That she can be in a relationship with him as long as she encourages him to take care of his child. The nonsense some parents tell children. She is clearly being tested. She failed three times already and the exact same paper will be put on her desk by the school of life. Let's see if

she'll pass and finally get her gold star or not" he stood and Makhulu laughed softly. He'd always been like this. Whenever she listens to Bukhosi speak she got reminded of her husband as a young man. Ntombikayise stood at the top of the stairs and heard what her grandparents spoke about. She suddenly wasn't sure if she felt a connection to Dali or if she was attached as Tamkhulu pointed out. She wondered if he was sure. Perhaps he too was attached and was afraid to let go of what inspired his healing. Ntombikayise

looked as Tamkhulu opened the sliding door to go stand outside. She shook her head and thought about an African saying which said something like when an elder dies, a library has gone. Her grandfather was one unique person and she couldn't help but wonder how life would have turned out had she been raised by him. Perhaps her would have learned that lesson he spoke about and avoided unhealed men all together. She was still not sure how to go about passing this life test that he spoke about but

that night she didn't want to think about it. She just wanted to cry it all out whether she and Daluxolo were attached to each other or if they had a real connection they were both going to cry it out that night. She was happy that he'd be a father and get to fuss over his pregnant lover as he always dreamed of. Surrogacy was good but for a man like Daluxolo it would have stripped him off some of the important matters during the process. Matters like rubbing his lady's belly after feeling the first

kick. Things such as whipping up her gross cravings at midnight. Rubbing her swollen ankles while making jokes about how they looked like those of an elephant. Dali was a man who valued the little things that many considered unimportant and Ntombikayise was certain that he'd have felt robbed had another woman carried their child for them. Her eyes were still on Tamkhulu as her mind was filled with both good perceptives and sad thoughts but when Tamkhulu looked up to find her staring at

him he took his hat off to bow his head slightly while smiling and Ntombikayise smiled too while shaking her head. She lifted the now brown spoke to toast with him from a distance before taking a bite. She called her boys to tell them to come home at once and they were home within 30 minutes. She told them that they would be on a tight study schedule from tomorrow as they'd be preparing for their final exam and they nodded clearly ready to have no social life for the last months of the year. Ntombikayise

first had dinner with her family before going up to her room with a glass of wine. She ran that bath and indeed soaked herself for about an hour while drinking her wine. What surprised her was the fact that she didn't cry and filled the bath with her tears as she thought she would. Perhaps it was just attachment and all she needed was for someone to wake up from her sleep and Tamkhulu was never short of words so he was always ready to take on that duty. 

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Part of having a group of supportive friends was the fact that they could lean on each other. Mahlubandile has been helping Nandi plan her intimate dream church wedding eventhough they lived in different provinces. A lot of communication had to be done on a daily basis but Hlubi was enjoying herself. As stressful as planning the wedding was, it was also fun as she and her friends could always find an

excuse to meet up. Yandi having a natural flair for event planning was the one helping most.

Hlubi: "Ladies, Nandipha told me to thank all of you for contributing in helping me plan this. I think we have everything sorted" she looked at her friends with a smile.

Othu: "This is what friends are for. I honestly loved the planning that we've been doing these past weeks. Once Chulumanco starts planning hers I'll also know who to turn to" she took a bite of her bran muffin.

Ntombi: "Do you guys remember that youth TV show called the soul buddies?" the ladies nodded before laughing.

Zuko: "I know exactly what you mean. I've also laughed thinking about it. We have our own little soul buddies club just the adult version" they laughed.

Poppy: "I can't wait for the wedding. I feel like I don't get invited to weddings enough. I'm going to go leave the kids with my mother in law and have some crazy fun with my man"

Hlubi: "Will you ladies be able to

make it to Venda? Mashudu said he and his family will cover accommodation for those who can't afford their own"

Lucia: "I love traditional weddings. There is just life in them and of course gorgeous African clothes. I won't miss it for anything"

Ntombi: "Me neither actually. Nandipha is my niece so I'm going to celebrate this new phase of her life"

Mandla: "Friend, what if Dali goes with his pregnant lady?" she had to prepare Ntombikayise for that

possibility.

Ntombi: "I might be a bit affected by it but I've accepted it. I do not know how I will really feel but I've prepared myself mentally for it. It's been a couple of weeks now so it doesn't sting as much as it did. I'm now actually mean it when I say I wish him all the best. Thank you for being concerned, friend" she held Mandela's hand. "And please don't be asking your men to stay at home for the weddings because you fear I'll feel like the odd one out" she laughed.

Yandi: "We just want you to be comfortable. Honestly neither of us liked the fact that you didn't stay for Mivuyo's party. Now with Nandi's wedding both these men will once again be there and both might come with their women. I know Othu doesn't like us bringing the topic up but I feel as friends we shouldn't have limitations as to what we lay on the table out of concern"

Ntombi: "I'm not going to bail on the wedding celebrations because of Liyema and Daluxolo, ladies.

Part of the reason why I actually

didn't give Daluxolo a chance is because he's now family with Liyema. Too much drama that I didn't have energy for. Plus I'll have four dates, don't forget that" she said with a smile.

Yandi: "I want my boys to grow up to be like yours" she sulked and Ntombi laughed.

Hlubi: "She and Othu clearly did a lot right in raising responsible young men. So girl, have you thought about how you'll pass this life lesson Tamkhulu spoke about?" she looked at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Stay away from men"

they all laughed "Just think about it. I won't attract anything if I avoid everything" more laughter.

Poppy: "Get yourself a no strings attached" she suggested.

Othu: "Stop it, Poppy" she raised a brow "Don't corrupt Ntombi please" they all laughed.

Zuko: "Someone always falls in those situations"

Poppy: "Ntombi just has to make sure that person is not her. You'll have the fun but you won't be emotionally involved. If he gets attached, you bail"

Ntombi: "I don't think that's what my grandfather envision I'd do when he gave me that talk" she laughed. Mahlubandile's phone rang and when she checked the screen it was Lungile. When Hlubi let out a scream in excitement her friends all looked at her with curiosity.

Hlubi: "Alu's in labour" she said with a smile after hanging up "My little niece is on her way" she did a happy dance.

Ntombi: "Oh my goodness I'll have to go after work. Some of us have bosses remember" Hlubi

raised a brow.

Hlubi: "I'm going to pretend you didn't just say that. You can do whatever tomorrow"

Ntombi: "You're not my only boss, Mahlubandile. Mr Dudumashe wants to see results so please tell her I'll see her and baby soon.

Let's first say a prayer for the two of them. We all know that giving birth is not easy". They all held hands and Nomandla said a powerful prayer. Yandi, Poppy and Mahlubandile were the only ones who could immediately go to the hospital and wait for baby

Elephant to arrive. The rest had to go back to work and earn their bacon.

After the boys wrote their final paper they found some of the other learners waiting so they'd put their pens down together.

Bukhosi went to give Iviwe a long hug and a kiss when she made her way out of the hall.

Bukhosi: "How was the paper?"

Ivi bit her bottom lip.

Ivi: "I did my best, babe. All I can do now is hope for the best" she said nervously "How was it to

you?" she asked.

Bukhosi: "I think I aced it"

Bandile: "Free at last" he put his hands in the air before doing their personal greetings with his brothers.

Banele: "Man, I didn't think I'd actually pass grade 11 after the divorce. I'm glad that I pushed and I hope what I did during these exams was enough"

Bubele: "We put in our all in this, man" Pinky jumped on his back when she came from the hall and he kissed her passionately. The two of them would be having a

long distance relationship but the other boys knew that it was what Bubele hoped for. Once everyone who was writing was done the learners started to sing a song of victory to celebrate their "freedom". To put pen in the a big tin bin was the tradition of the school's matriculants so each learner threw their pen away. Some knew they'd have to pick a pen up again once in university or college but in that moment they wanted nothing to do with a book and pen. The quads went out with their

girls and Bandile tagged along though Bathandiwe was not there. They'd both be in Port Elizabeth next year and neither could wait for what they saw as freedom to date without worrying about their parents seeing them and sleeping over at each other's places. Bukhosi nervously took out a silver little box from his grey school pants and held Iviwe's hand. When he opened it there was a little silver band inside with a little fake blue diamond. His brothers looked at him with disapproving looks.

Ivi: "Bubu, what's up?" she smiled.

Bukhosi: "I love you, Viwe. This is a promise ring and it's to show you just how serious I am about us" Iviwe blushed as she watched him slip the ring into her right hand.

Ivi: "It's so pretty. I love you too. I promise I'm as committed" they hugged. The other girls looked at their boyfriends and Bandile was glad Bathandiwe didn't witness any of what just happened.

Pinky: "That's so cute, chomee"

she looked at the ring and then at Bubele who was avoiding eye contact.

Banele: "Some of us can't afford such and honestly, babe I won't even promise you such so don't hold your breath"

Hlumelo: "I didn't ask you to" she folded her arms. The girls as usual went to the toilet as a group.

Bubele: "You couldn't do that nonsense when you two were alone?" he threw a straw and Bukhosi and he laughed.

Banele: "Bra, do you really think

you'll want to have sex with her only for the rest of your life when you're so young?"

Bukhosi: "Maybe not but I'll always gravitate towards her. You children won't understand" he laughed.

Bandile: "You bet your old man ass we won't. Man, you guys won't hear the end of this" he looked at his brother and each hit Bukhosi but she just laughed.

Bukhosi: "I'm just showing love to my girl. I'm a romantic at heart"

Others: "Mxm" they all clicked their tongues and Bukhosi

laughed. He was not sure if he'll be with Iviwe forever but that's not what the ring was for. It was to promise her that he'd be committed to her for as long as their relationship would last.

When the quads arrived home they were greeted by Ntombi running around the house with party whistle in her mouth and she blew as hard as she could.

They watched her even get on the table and dancing. Tamkhulu and Makhulu just laughed at the craziness.

Ntombi: "You guys are done with

high school life. Why don't you look happy?" she jumped down from the table.

Banele: "Yeahhhhhh!!" he shouted before running around the house and Ntombikayise got charged up again. The five of them got their crazy on but when Bukhosi got up the table Ntombi told him to get down.

Bukhosi: "But you just..." he pointed to the table laughing.

Ntombi: "Barefooted not with hard school shoes that'll leave my table scratched and with polish marks" she inspected her table.

Makhulu: "Children do as you do,
not as you say"

Bukhosi: "Thank you, gran"

Ntombi: "Don't do that monkey
see, monkey do business here. So
what will you guys be doing this
festive?" she asked with a smile.

Bandile: "Our friends will only go
to initiation schools in December
so we'll most definitely be
attending imigidi. We've got two
weddings coming up. So I doubt
we'll lack things to keep busy"

Ntombi: "So you guys won't be
going with your dad to the
Eastern Cape this year?"

Bubele: "It's just not the same without you anymore. Plus we spend the June holidays there"

Ntombi nodded though they weren't really on holiday in June but rather freezing in the bush.

Ntombi: "I'm really proud of you guys" she went to hug them all "Also you will wear your farewell suits to Nandi's wedding. We aren't spending money on what you have already. Maybe we can buy different shirts. Even for the traditional wedding, you guys have attire for that too. Makhulu will make new beads for you since you

guys left yours in the Eastern Cape"

Bandile: "I've got no problem with that. I actually can't believe Nandi is getting married. Wow time flies" he thought back at the times they were younger.

Ntombi: "My exact thought when I look at you. Sis Alu is in labour. Do you guys want to accompany me to the hospital?"

Banele: "No, we'll see the baby when she's home"

Ntombi: "I thought you'd say that. Okay I'm going to go there. You guys know that I can't resist

babies" she said with excitement.
Makhulu: "You children allow everyone to see these newborns way too soon. I will see that child after two weeks as I always do with babies who don't come home to my house after birth"

Bubele: "Mama, Bukhosi proposed to Iviwe" Ntombi nearly choked on her own saliva. Bukhosi explained what happened "People still give promise rings?" she asked.

Bubele: "Our thoughts exactly. He heard dad advised he not skip a phase" he shook his head.

Tamkhulu: "I think it is good for a man to make his intentions clear. I don't know this promise ring thing but if it's a symbol of commitment then leave Bukhosi alone"

Bukhosi: "Thank you, Tamkhulu" he looked at everyone.

Banele: "Tonight I'm going to watch every movie there is because I'm not waking up early tomorrow morning nor do I have to study. It's a peaceful life" he threw himself on the couch.

Ntombi: "Rest because university is starting soon" she headed to

the door.

Bandile: "Let me drive you" he shouted behind his mother. They were licenced drivers so Ntombi couldn't object.

Banele: "Then I'm going to drive you back" he stood and ran out to the car. Ntombi sat in the passenger seat in front enjoying having personal chauffeurs.

Ntombi: "You guys might wait a long while because the baby has not come yet"

Bandile: "We don't mind. Don't tell the family we're outside because I don't want to see the baby.

They are pale and wrinkly after birth." he said with disgust and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "You guys were worse because you were smaller than the average baby. Don't drive around please" they both promised. Ntombi arrived and she found the Elephants waiting for their new addition. Alu had been in labour for hours so everyone was relieved to hear that Alu gave birth to a healthy baby girl. No had seen Mrs E for a while and when she made her way to the waiting room everyone could see

that she had glow.

Liyema: "We thought you've abandoned us. You travel so much we hardly see you" he went to greet his mother with excitement.

Mrs E: "Well Mahlubandile told me to go enjoy life and that's what I did. It feels good to use my money on experiences and not things" she said with a smile.

Hlubi: "I'm glad you finally saw the light" she hugged her mother.

Mrs E: "I just flew in and when I saw Lungile's text about Alu

being in labour I thought I'd
come here from the airport.

How's it going?"

Hlubi: "Health Elephant princess"

Mrs E smiled.

Mrs E: "I'm so glad it's another
girl" she looked at Ntombikayise.

She walked over to Ntombikayise.

"Allow me to take this chance to
say sorry for all I did that added
to your pain, Ntombikayise. I

know now how overprotective I
can be of my children was not

healthy. I'm sorry" she held
Ntombi's hands.

Ntombi: "I forgive you, Mrs E.

You're looking good so keep doing what you've been doing" Mrs E smiled.

Mrs E: "Well I've been meeting new people and I actually came with someone I'd like to introduce to you children" she looked nervous. She left and returned with a man "Ummm... everyone this is Scott Taylor my special friend" they smiled at each other "Scott these are my kids, Liyema and Mahlubandile. Lungile's the one who's with his wife now.

That over there is my daughter in law... I mean former daughter

in law Ntombikayise" she said with a nervous smile.

Scott: "Pleased to finally meet you. Your mother speaks a lot about you children" said the blue eyed old man as he shook each hand.

Hlubi: "Mmm, mommy I can see you've been busy living indeed" she smiled "Pleased to meet you too, Scott" she looked at him. She guessed him to be Zola's age and she never imagined her mother would get into an interracial relationship but as long as Zola was happy she was too. Hlubi felt

it was about time her mother moved on after years of being alone.

Liyema: "I can't say I've heard a lot about you because she never mentioned you. We'll talk properly after I meet my niece but for now it's good to meet the man who has been keeping my mother away"

Scott: "Well I look forward to that proper talk, Liyema" he smiled. Suddenly Ntombi wondered how her boys would react the day she brings a man home when Liyema who was a grown man

didn't seem to like his mother dating. Scott excused himself but told Zola he'd return to pick her up when she's ready to leave.

Mrs E: "I know that you guys are shocked but after he introduced me to his daughter and son, I felt it's right I do the same. His kids made me feel welcome so please just try to be open minded. And yes, he's aware of my HIV status" she spoke quickly.

Hlubi: "I don't have a problem. As long as he treats you right, I'm okay really. I've always wanted you to meet someone again"

Liyema: "Where did you meet him?"

Mrs E: "In KwaZulu Natal. I attended this art exhibition and I got charmed" she blushed. Ntombi kept quiet. The ladies also arrived and Ntombikayise was glad to have others around. Finally they were allowed to see the baby but only briefly. She was perfect in her pink and white blanket.

Ntombikayise took a few pictures to show her family but soon they had to leave mommy and baby to rest. When Liyema asked to go speak to the boys Ntombi said it

was okay. She left them alone and went about her business.

Liyema: "You guys barely come to my place anymore and I think I know why"

Bandile: "Actually dad it's not what you think. We are grown now so we no longer feel obligated to go from your place to here all the time. We spend time with you though" Liyema nodded.

Liyema: "I wanted to ask how you all would feel if Abongile and her mother moved in with me?"

Bukhosi: "I'd honestly feel nothing. I won't be angry about

it nor happy. We love our little sister so to see her often would be good"

Banele: "Plus it's your place so do what you want. Part of accepting the divorce was accepting that someday both of you will meet other people. If you feel it's best for you then I don't mind"

Liyema: "Thank you. I am glad I came to talk to you all. So do you guys want to go out to celebrate the end of your school career after 12 years of hard work"

Bubele: "Maybe tomorrow because we already made plans with mom

and Amahle. She's gone to get dressed. We're going gaming and then catch a movie" Liyema nodded.

Ntombi: "You can actually join us. I don't mind. I mean we're both excited for them so why not celebrate with them. Just tell Portia so she doesn't jump to conclusions"

Liyema: "She knows you'll always be a part of my life because of our kids"

Ntombi: "Tell her non the less" she looked at him "Guys you're sitting here as though you're

ready yet all of you are wearing slippers" she pointed to their feet.

Bandile: "Yho" he put his hands on his head. All of them went to their rooms. The doorbell rang and Ntombi was certain it was Vusi dropping off Amahle for a weekend sleep over. Ntombikayise told Amahle to go put her bags in Ntombi's room because she no longer had her own room since Bandile and Bubele took it.

Amahle was excited about going out with both Liyema and Ntombikayise and for a moment it

felt like the good old days.

Amahle: "Sis Ntombi, will you be coming to my party next month? My father said I should invite you all personally"

Ntombikayise: "We'll be there. Is everything sorted?" Amahle nodded.

Amahle: "Mama said everything is sorted. They've been saving for the year"

Bandile: "Are things at the school better?"

Amahle: "They still tease me for my accent but yes I actually enjoy it. It's nothing like Pretty said it

would be. I've got more friends than at my previous school too" she smiled "Has the matric pictures arrived yet?" she looked at the boys and they nodded.

Banele: "You'll see them later or tomorrow" Amahle nodded. They arrived at the arcade games and played all of the games.

Ntombikayise was having a great time and she could see Liyema was too. After months she felt she could finally say they have both found peace.

Liyema: "Thank you for this" he looked at her.

Ntombi: "A while ago I thought I'd never forgive you but today I can actually sit down and have a conversation with you" she smiled.

Liyema: "I'm sorry about Daluxolo. I know you really liked him and that's why I hated the guy"

Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Well you better let go of that jealousy because someday I'm going to meet a man who will be meant for me and you'll have to swallow that pill as hard as it will be"

Liyema: "So you don't mind seeing me with other women? he looked

at her "I tend to mind a bit when I see you with other men" he added.

Ntombi: "I don't mind at all. You mind because you are filled with either guilt or regret. I feel neither because I'm now truly secure in myself. I really do wish you all the best in your life, Liyema. I'm the love that I needed all along. I have been out trying to find my worth in others when I never lost it to begin with. I discovered love within myself and I can't have room for the good while I allow the bad to

still take up space" she said with a smile. Liyema believed her. How could he not when she meant every single word. He still saw her as the one that got away. His gift from god that he took for granted and now lost for good. Liyema: "I always thought it would take us both longer to get over each other but you seem to have let go""

Ntombi: "Of what use is holding onto the past, Liyema? Growing up I always dreamed of being married to the father father of my children. I couldn't picture my

kids not having both parents under the same roof. Perhaps that's why I felt a strong urge to be with you after you allowed me access to them because I subconsciously still held on to that dream. We are attached to so many things that aren't supposed to be in our lives. I loved you though but that's over with. I know many have been making you feel guilty for moving on first but don't think I'm holding it against you. Not all of us survive being single and you are one of those. Come let's give our kids the fun

we promised them in celebration of them finishing high school" she said with excitement before standing to run to her kids.

Liyema knew that the best he might get was friendship but even that would come with boundaries because he sensed Ntombikayise wasn't allowing just anyone access to her anymore.

Neither of the kids hoped for a spark to start between their parents again. They'd just enjoy those occasional moments when the two could go and have fun with them together. Amahle no

longer felt desperate for them to get together anymore either because she had parents at home who gave her the stability of two loving parents under the same roof she wanted. She no longer missed her old home much either because she's settled in well. They went to watch their movie. Both Liyema and Ntombi hoped that the hard work their boys put into studying would reap fruitful rewards. They were both confident that they'd see their boys appear in the newspaper on the day of the results but if not

they'd be sure to tell them it's not how many times you fall but rather how many times you get back up that mattered. ❤️

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When Portia's mother heard that her daughter would be moving in with Liyema she felt like helping Portia pack in that instant. To her it was the first step to marriage for her daughter and the fact that it was to a well off man was a bonus. When Portia and Abongile finally arrived to what

would be their new home she felt both happy and scared. The Elephants were still hung up on Lakhawe and they made no secret of it. When Liyema went to introduce Abo to his extended family in the Eastern Cape all they kept asking was whether he and Ntombikayise would ever find a way to each other again. Portia respected Ntombi but to live under Ntombi's shadow was going to be a challenge. Abo ran to her father as the two of them have formed quite a bond. Those were the moments that made Portia

feel the move was a good decision. Liyema walked towards her while holding Abo in his arms and kissed her. It was innocent enough for the child's innocent eyes yet passionate enough to be shared by lovers.

Liyema: "Did you guys have a comfortable trip?" he looked at Abo with a smile.

Portia: "We did thanks. So we're doing this?" she said with nervous enthusiasm.

Liyema: "I guess so" he laughed softly "I've made room for you in my wardrobe so that you'll feel

that this is your home too. So welcome"

Portia: "Thank you" the two of them pushed their bags to the bedrooms. Abongile had her own bedroom but because she was used to sleeping next to her mother it was difficult to make her sleep on her own bed. It was something that rather frustrated Liyema because he felt they could only do so much in the bedroom as lovers while there's a sleeping toddler with them.

Liyema: "Tata has asked someone

to paint your room and decorate it. You will sleep in your princess bed tonight" he showed her the pink painted bedroom.

Abo: "I sleep with Mama" she made it clear to him once again.

Liyema: "Abongile, you can't sleep between us all your life, Nana.

Miss Teddy wants her friend to come keep her company" he took one of the stuffed toys that he bought her but Abongile shook her head.

Portia: "Don't force her. It'll happen when she's ready" she leaned against the door frame.

Liyema: "None of my children shared a room with Ntombi and I except for those nights when they'd be scared or just feel like being cry babies"

Portia: "Well this is not your child with Ntombi but with me. I don't mind Abongile sharing a room with us"

Liyema: "You know that it can be a mood killer right?" he raised a brow.

Portia: "We'll talk about this some other time. We're tired so I'm going to go take a nap with her. Will you join us?" Liyema shook his

head.

Liyema: "I'm going to Lungile's place. I bought my niece a few things that I'd like to go drop off"

Portia: "Okay we can go with you. Abo hasn't met her new cousin so I'm sure she'll like it"

Liyema: "My mother will be there too and you two don't really see eye to eye"

Portia: "Well no use avoiding her. Let me quickly go freshen up and I'll join you shortly. Don't leave without me Liyema" she quickly went to their room. Liyema sat on

the bed and placed Abongile on it too so she'd get a feel of how comfy it was. The toddler got on and jumped on the bed instead so Liyema decided he'd train her to use her own bed gradually to make her think that it was what she wanted. One of the major struggles of living with someone new is learning their habits and having to accept the ones that he didn't like. It was like that with Elaine and with Portia but he hoped that soon they'd be able to accept each other as is. The three of them drove to Lungile's

place and found baby Zoë sleeping. Mrs E had a big debate about the child's name with her parents as she wanted her granddaughter to have a Xhosa name but Zoë was the name Lungile and Alu loved for their child so she had to accept. Liyema could see Mrs E's smile face when she caught sight of Portia.

Mrs E: "Will the boys even continue visiting when they have to see her there every single time they do?" she looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "I spoke to them and they are fine with it. They'll come

over to see their sister"

Mrs E: "I don't think she's a good match for you, Liyema"

Liyema: "Will anyone after Ntombikayise ever meet your standards, Ma?"

Mrs E: "Most probably not but that's not why I'm saying it. Her vibe is just so off" Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "Cutting the umbilical cord remember?" he smiled at her.

Mrs E: "It doesn't mean I'll stop looking out for you kids. It just means I won't be as involved as before. You rushed living with

her"

Liyema: "I don't like living alone and you know it. Portia and I will make this work"

Mrs E: "Neither of you even seem madly in love with the other"

Liyema: "So you're a relationship expert now that you're in one?"

Mrs E: "I know what love feels like and I know what it should look like"

Liyema: "Well couples aren't the same. How do you expect her to behave like my lover in your presence when you are constantly putting her down? I'm moving on

with my life, Mama. Yes, there will always be a part of me that regrets the divorce but no use crying over spilt milk. Ntombi and I are now able to laugh together again and it actually feels good. It makes my current relationship easier knowing that she doesn't feel hurt by it. Please we came here for lunch and to see Zoë not to analyze my love life"

Mrs E: "Okay then. Speaking about love life, Scott is on his way too and yes I asked Lungi and Alu they said it's fine"

Liyema: "I guess we both don't

like the idea of each other's relationships but we gotta live with it" he said sarcastically.

There was a knock on the door and Mrs E walked to the door excited. Her man gave her a tight hug as soon as she opened the door and no one could miss the teen giggle that she let out.

Lungile was more open minded about Scott than Liyema but he felt uncomfortable Scott kissing his mother and her blushing like a young girl.

Alu: "Welcome to our home, Scott" she smiled "what would you like to

drink?" she asked.

Scott: "Same as this beautiful lady" he said after looking at Mrs E's juice.

Lungile: "I'll go get it" he went to the little table where they placed the drinks.

Liyema: "So what do you do, Scott? You seem to have a lot of free time on your hands" they all sat.

Scott: "Retired principal hence the free time" he said with a smile.

Liyema asked a lot of other questions. He found that Scot's wife died ten years ago after a

short illness. Lunch was served and they all enjoyed the offerings on the table while having conversation.

Mrs E: "I have something that I should tell you all. I'm selling the house because Scott and I will be buying an apartment in Pietermaritzburg" she looked at her kids.

Liyema: "You don't even know the man that well. Why would you sell the house our father left you?"

Mrs E: "Because it is way too big for an older women like me who is living alone. I made the memories

there but it's time to move on.
Mahlubandile gave me her
blessings"

Liyema: "Mahlubandile was not
raised in that house that's why."

Lungile: "I always thought you'd
downscale soon after Tata's
death so I don't have a problem
with it. That house really is too
big for you and I can imagine
empty too since you're all alone
with the help. You've dedicated
your life to Tata and then to us.
So go and live your life, Ma. You
can't argue about the fact that
she looks happy, Liyema. I'm

concerned about her going with a man we don't know well too but you forget that Mama is not to be messed with. Let her go, bra" he looked at Liyema.

Scott: "My children had the same fears as you do. That I'd be moving to another town with a woman I've just met but they can see your mother and I care deeply about each other. I promise to take very good care of her" he looked at the brothers.

Liyema: "You better do that or there will be serious trouble. I can't stop her from going so you

have my blessing too" Mrs E smiled.

Mrs E: "Would any of you like first buying choice before I officially put it on the market?"

Lungile: "We love our cosy home and we don't plan to have another child after Zoë so we're good, Ma. I've lived in that mansion and once was enough" he looked at Alu and she nodded with a smile.

Alu: "Thank you for offering though, Ma"

Liyema: "I'm not going to ever need a house again because I don't plan to get married and

have more children. The apartment is good for the three of us" he said with certainty and clearly meant every word. Portia was a bit taken aback by his words but chose to say nothing. They all got a chance to hold baby Zoë and she looked as beautiful as her grandmother. All the Elephant granddaughters looked a lot like Mrs E. The news of his mother moving was not good news to Liyema but Lungile had a point. She's dedicated most of her life to her husband and to them so it was time she followed her heart.

Mrs E loved Abongile just as she did her other grandkids and she felt bad for supporting Liyema in denying paternity. The lunch was amazing but each had to go on with their lives afterwards.

Liyema went to put Abongile who had dozed off in the car in her bed for a nap.

Portia: "You are so inconsiderate by the way. You didn't even feel the need to introduce me to Scott"

Liyema: "It slipped my mind I'm sorry. It's not like he's family anyway".

Portia: "You said something earlier. Does it mean that you and I will cohabit for the rest of our lives?"

Liyema: "I thought that you knew I don't want to ever get married again. Twice was enough. Marriage is overrated. We are here now and raising our adorable daughter together. That's no different from marriage the only difference is the marriage certificate we don't have. I really am not up for married life again, Portia. If that is a deal breaker I'd understand"

Portia: "No...it's not. I just didn't expect it but I don't have a problem with it" she said in a whisper "Plus Abongile is happy and that's all that matters. Let me go take a shower before taking that nap. I really am exhausted" Liyema just nodded "Won't you join me?" she offered. The physical attraction between them was extremely strong because each loved to feast their eyes on the other's body. Liyema realized that Ntombikayise was right. He had a certain preference when it came to physical beauty.

He thought Ntombi was one of the most beautiful women he'd ever met but he had weakness for women that didn't have similar physical features as her. Liyema: "I thought you'd never ask" he said with excitement before taking his shirt off to run after her to the bathroom.

Portia has never been married and she dreamt of it but she had to accept that being with Liyema meant it won't happen. Her relationships never lasted long so for Liyema to show such commitment by having her move

in with him was a first for her. It was not marriage but it was the next best thing to marriage or so she tried to convince herself.

When Ntombikayise heard something burst she knew that it was her tire. The car pulled over by the side of the road and she went out to inspect. She was fully capable of changing her own tire. She took in her surrounding and it was just field on either side of the road but at least it was not a quiet place. She opened her boot to take out her spare tire and

tools she'd need. Changing a tire was not something she enjoyed doing but it had to be done so she got to work right away. "Need help, ma sista?" a young man asked from behind Ntombi. She didn't know where the two of them came from. She wondered if they were sitting in the bush all along or what. She stood up to get a good look at them. They wore their caps over their eyes and Ntombi's heart started to beat faster when the other inspected the inside of her car. Ntombi: "I'm fine. I don't need

help" her fingers clench the steel tool in her hand tightly to protect herself just in case. The one who looked inside her car went to open a door. "Sthandwa Sam, there you are" said another deep voice before Ntombikayise felt a peck on the cheek. She tried to check for a car to stop so she'd get help but a taxi had just passed her and no other car showed up. Just a few seconds ago it was a busy road but when she thought she needed help suddenly there was none "I came as quickly as possible" said the handsome man dressed in

a jean and t-shirt. His composure and attire was completely different from the other two but she was certain that they were together. She surrendered to her being on the brink of being a hijack victim. Her pepper spray was in her bag inside the car and she knew she stood no fighting chance against three men.

Ntombikayise pushed the man who clearly had no respect for personal space away but he held her waist with intent. Her tears were not far as her vision became blurry "It's okay, I'm here you're

safe" he whispered "Is there a problem, gents?" he looked at the one by the door first.

Young man: "No, groot man" he closed the door "Let's go, bra" he said to his friend suddenly sounding scared. This scene took Ntombi back to when she had just met Mahlubandile. The time she had a stalker so it made her numb with fear. The two young men crossed the road and ran across the field until they were no longer in sight. The other man let go of her waist soon after.

Ntombikayise finally got courage

to fight when there was one of them so she dug her heel in his foot. She hit him on the arm with the steel in her hands.

Him: "Could you please stop?" he said with gritted teeth before taking her weapon from her hand. She ran to her bag to get her pepper spray and used it and heard him let out a groan of pure agony.

Man: "Shit" his eyes felt like they were on fire "Do you always attack people who try to help you? Geez you couldn't put up a fight when the real thugs were

here but you suddenly can now that they've left" he said in a low but clearly angry tone

"Congratulations you've just made me blind" he rubbed his eyes and Ntombi started to feel bad. She went to take a bottle of water from her car.

Ntombi: "Take your hands off" she said to him. He was in too much pain to open his eyes "Stop being such a baby and let me try to ease the pain" he couldn't believe her nerve. Ntombikayise finally managed to get his hands off his eyes. She suddenly realized

she had no idea what she was doing so she took out her phone to google. It read that she should use hand wash and water to wash the affected area so she went to her shopping bags to check if she bought any and she got a bar soap and used water to foam up her hands. She tried to clean the area around his eyes as best as possible but he was in pain and she felt like crap for being responsible. She took wipes and wiped the area around the eyes afterwards "Google says you must blink a few times to tear up

your eyes as that also helps" she looked at him. He did as instructed and the pain was excruciating "So it's only one eye?" she looked into his beautiful light brown eye.

Person: "Does it matter? he raised his voice "I'm going need an eye patch now that I'm blind in one eye" Ntombikayise couldn't help but laugh. She had a tendency to laugh at the most inappropriate times and that was not it. He could be a serial killer for all she knew but she couldn't exactly run to the same bush

those other two came from. She couldn't drive away either as her car was one tire short so laughter was one of her coping mechanisms "I'm glad one of us find it funny" he looked at her with his "good" eye.

Ntombi: "Google said it'll wear off in 30 minutes to an hour" she hoped that it would comfort him and calm his anger down.

Person: "Can you take me to the emergency room because I don't trust you at the moment"

Ntombi: "The feeling is mutual. What did you come here with?"

Get to hospital the same way you just miraculously got here" she looked around.

Person: "I was in a taxi well on my way to a very promising business meeting until I saw a woman alone by the side of the road with dodgy boys" Ntombikayise went on to continue changing her tire but she was vigilant. Her plan was to get it done and drive off as quickly as possible. The fact that her phone died after googling didn't help but she sent Mahlubandile an SOS text in time before it shut off completely. She kept scanning

her surroundings and the man who was still aiding his clearly painful eye with the wipes she gave him.

Ntombi: "So you want me to believe that you got off the taxi to help me? Yeah right" she said sarcastically "You'd better not come near me because I will do more damage. I will twist your balls so hard they'll burst" she warned. He held the front of his pants picturing what she had just threatened to do. "You should have asked your taxi to wait for you" she added.

Person: "Believe what you want and be damn sure I don't want to be near you either" he back up more "I did ask the driver to wait but he was sure to point out to me that I was not in an Uber. As for twisting my balls until they burst damn you're cruel" he shook his head. Ntombi was not about to apologize because she meant each word.

Ntombi: "Let's say you did decide to play superman. Why would you do it?"

Person: "Because if good men don't do anything what other hope

would women and children have in this fucked up country?" he said in a calmer tone that made Ntombi look at him. She knew that he was still strong enough to do whatever he wanted with her had that been his intentions so she calmed down a bit but was still on high alert. She was struggling a bit so he knelt next to her to assist "Don't you dare spray my other eye" he said and Ntombi felt had no intention of laughing but she couldn't help it. How could she not when he made a wipe an eye patch?.

Ntombi: "I won't" she promised
"You look ridiculous with that
thing. It's like you have a panty
liner over your eye"

Him: "I don't know what that is
and I don't care if it makes me
look ridiculous because it brings
some little relief after you blinded
me when my only intention was to
help. There we are done" he looked
at her "Now can you drive me to
the ER because I'm even having
a headache on the side of my
head you sprayed on".

Ntombikayise nodded. She got in
her car but instead of letting him

in she locked all her doors before driving off. She looked at him and as bad as she felt she thought it was best to be safe than sorry. She was grateful for his help in scaring those boys off but she feared he might be a bigger threat. Not everyone is helping you because they want to, some do it to push an agenda. Those were the words Ntombi thought to ease her guilt. She finally got home and took Tamkhulu's phone to call Mahlubandile as hers was charging.

Hlubi: "Tata, please tell me that

she's home please" she said quickly and in a shaky tone.

Ntombi: "Best, it's me. I'm okay now"

Hlubi: "Dammit, Ntombikayise"

Ntombikayise could hear her sniff

"What happened? Why is your phone's location off?" she asked in

a stern tone. Ntombi explained to

her what happened "I'm so glad you're safe. You did good by driving

off so don't feel bad about it.

Gosh the thought of you

becoming a statistic" she

breathed.

Ntombi: "I'm fine, friend. A bit

spooked but I'm fine. I promise you that" she said with a smile. She was still shaking but she would be fine.

Banele: "We are going to drive you from now on, Ma" he said when she hung up the phone and the other boys nodded.

Ntombi: "You guys wake up way to late and I wanted to hit the shops early"

Tamkhulu: "Are you telling me that there is no other wholesalers, Ntombikayise? You must find one closer and I agree with Banele. We will all go with

you from now on"

Ntombi: "Tata, I can be robbed or hijacked even on my way to work. There's nothing you can do about it. I was actually glad that none of my kids were there. It might have turned out completely different had you guys been there and tried to fight those boys. One actually had a knife now that I think about it"

Bukhosi: "We aren't kids anymore, Mama. We are men. I'll Google another wholesaler that's inside the city" he said with frustration. The thought of what could have

happened to their mother was frightening. Ntombikayise never had issues with going to that wholesalers to get the groceries she and the ladies gave out. She volunteered to go alone when the others couldn't make it but she agreed to finding another close by. Makhulu: "Let us be grateful that she's home safe. Absolutely nothing else matters" she hugged her daughter and Ntombi shed a tear or two.

Bubele: "It's okay, mom. There won't be a next time because we won't allow it" he comforted his

mom. Ntombi just wanted to sit down with her family after that scary moment because she was once again reminded of how short life is.

When Craig got a call from Lefa Gwala, the man that he and his brother in laws were meant to have a meeting with he was shocked to hear Lefa tell him that he was stranded. Craig got into his car and indeed found him on the side of the road with wipes scattered around him. Craig laughed all the way to the

emergency room when Lefa narrated the story. Fortunately there seemed to be no permanent damage to the eye and indeed within an hour he could use that eye again.

Craig: "Do you want to postpone?" he looked at Lefa whose one eye was red.

Lefa: "No, let's get this over with. That's if your partners have time. My plan was to go change into more professional clothes before the meeting but today's just not my day"

Craig: "They are at the office

waiting after I told them you said it's okay to meet. Screw suits, man you're alright. We called you for your expertise not for clothes. Told them that you had an emergency situation to take care of"

Lefa: "Thanks, man". The two of them drove to Craig's office where Babini and Mzu were waiting. Craig introduced the finance "guru" to his partners. Once the men got a good laugh at Lefa's situation they could finally sit down to discuss business. His eye was still burning but it was

bearable.

Lefa: "You just mentioned that the owner had an audit done already so what exactly do you want me to do?" he looked at the men.

Mzu: "He made use of his own financial firm so we want you to check if everything is indeed in order. The last thing that we want is to purchase and be faced with nasty surprises. This man has been blowing hot and cold for over a year now" Lefa nodded.

Babini: "I can do pretty much everything but I admit that

financial services are not my thing. I did make sure that I got everything you'll need to conduct the audit though" he patted some files.

Lefa: "Is this to be done in secret?" he looked at Craig.

Craig: "Is it possible?"

Lefa: "I don't offer such services anymore because I'd rather have complete transparency but since Craig is an old friend, I'll do it"

Craig gave a grateful smile.

Mzu: "We're not crooks" as a man with Christian values he felt the need to point that out. "We just

don't want him to know and cover up his financial dirty dealings should there be any. He was in a hurry to sell but suddenly changed his mind after months. He placed the business on the market once again but once Babini looked into it he found that no one's interested. He checked everything out and everything seems above board but like he said he has limited skills in financial services that's why we called you. We just want to know what we are letting ourselves into. All seems above board but we haven't really

checked on the financial front" he said nervously.

Lefa: "No need to explain yourself to me. I understand" he took the files "I'll get on it as soon as possible"

Craig: "Should the audit be clean, we'll definitely buy. So we might need you to help us with some financial planning too should we buy the place" Lefa raised both brows.

Lefa: "At the moment I'm only conducting auditing services. If you keep the old staff on then surely they have a financial

manager"

Craig: "The owner is one of those who wanted to do everything himself. He's the CEO, HR, Finance manager" he said with frustration. "So we'll definitely have to outsource until we find someone permanent"

Lefa: "I'm unfortunately swamped with other auditing contracts for other businesses so I doubt I'll be able to take that on.

Babini: "No sweat, man. My wife's friend has those expertise" he looked at the others. They all

knew that he was referring to Ntombi.

Mzu: "She's employed full-time. If she offers the same services privately that she offers her employer it'll be conflict of interest. She might get into trouble even lose her job"

Lefa: "Don't stress. I'll connect you to someone who'll be able to help. For now my business is only focused on auditing but I might grow soon"

Babini: "Could you please make us one of your main priorities?"

Lefa: "It shouldn't be a problem"

he scanned the contents in one of the files. Babini and Mzu had other business to take care of so they rushed to get to that.

Lefa: "Are you selling your current business?" he looked at Craig.

Craig: "Got bored so I need a new challenge but I'll keep my current hustle"

Lefa: "Honestly, man had you not been a part of this I wouldn't have taken on this contract. I'm swamped but couldn't say no to an old acquaintance"

Craig: "Appreciated, man" they shook hands once again "How's

Hlomphe?"

Lefa: "Growing" he said with a smile as he thought about his son.

Craig: "Nine this year?"

Lefa: "Ten" he said proudly.

Craig: "Get outta here" he couldn't believe it.

Lefa: "I'm telling you. My boy is about to be a man. The parents are also good and so is Kgethang" he spoke about his parents and big brother. Lefa and Craig met years back. Lefa was one of three boys who got a scholarship to go study in the states to qualify as

a chartered accountant. He worked there for a few years and that's when he met Craig. He was the one who helped Craig move some of his funds into the South African banking system. They weren't friends per say as they didn't hang out together but they trusted each other. When Craig realized they'd need an auditor they could trust Lefa was the first person to cross his mind. Lefa had returned to SA full time right after Craig so he'd been home for years. After years of working for someone else, he

decided it was time to use his expertise to make himself money instead. Being born to a Sotho mother and Xhosa father also made him good at African languages which was beneficial when it came to getting clients as he could relate to many people with his language skills.

Craig: "Stop hiding so much. We should have a beer and watch a game sometime" Lefa nodded to accept the invite "Any missus around?" both men laughed.

Lefa: "No missus around. I'm hardly touching base so no time to

hunt for such. The lady who nearly made me blind is quite a catch though"

Craig: "You were complaining about how she nearly made you blind all the way to the ER. Now you fucking tell me about what a catch she is" they both laughed again.

Lefa: "I was angry back then but now I understand why she drove off. Have you ever seen a woman change a tire in heels?" he asked sounding impressed. Craig shook his head.

Craig: "You were never one to like

damselfs in distress. So I'm not surprised at all of the fact that what she did impressed you"

Lefa: "I want my woman to not be afraid to handle her shit. I'll help of course but I love knowing that she'll be alright in my absence. Had those two chancers not been with her I'd have never told the taxi to stop because she was handling her shit well" Craig raised a brow like one who was not believing what he said "Okay I'd have told the damn taxi to stop even if she was alone because damn" he looked down

while shaking his head thinking about the mystery woman.

Craig: "Next time she will shoot you" he joked and laughed.

Lefa: "If I die, I die" they both laughed.

Craig: "Crazy piece of shit" he shook his head laughing "So what would you have done had they called your bluff on the toy gun you so subtly showed them?" Lefa stood.

Lefa: "I'd have fucked them up" his facial expression became serious.

Craig: "Yet you were left fucked

up" Lefa blinked a few times. "Did you get her name?" he asked as the two of them made their way out of the office.

Lefa: "No but I'll call her Pepper for now seeing as she's so good at using pepper spray" Craig laughed.

Craig: "May you meet Pepper again then because she owes you a thank you and an I'm sorry"

Lefa: "Women are scared of us, man. How can they not with the rape and killings going on? So I owe her an I'm sorry for invading her personal space like that. I

should have chosen a different approach not the act like her man thing. I'm sure she thought I'd rape her or something"

Craig: "But that's exactly what you might have saved her from. How you did it shouldn't matter as long as you accomplished it"

Lefa nodded. He didn't know why he did what he did but his instincts just told him to first scare off those boys. If they didn't back off he'd have certainly put up a fight and as someone who did martial arts he knew he probably would have broken some

of those boys bones.

Lefa: "Well I thought I was giving Mpho a headstart on his dream of being a policeman someday but my mother told me no grandchild of hers will play with a gun...toy or not. I'm glad she said that before he saw it because I now realize it's not a wise purchase"

Craig: "We learn on the job, man. Mine are grown but I'm still learning" he patted Lefa's shoulder "So need a lift to your place since your car is in for service?" Lefa shook his head.

Lefa: "I'll take a little walk before I get back to work. It was good seeing you again, Knight" they shook hands. Craig watched Lefa throw the toy gun away in a bin on the premises. He knew that he made the right thing by recommending Lefa to handle the audit. He was looking forward to finally starting this new business venture. The owner has been giving them the run around for more than a year and had the three of them not thought it was good business they'd have given up long ago but

it was a great business so they were willing to beg and go the extra mile even if it was out of all three of their characters to do so. Should Lefa pick up on anything off they'd finally abandon the shared goal but they hoped he would give them good news. 🍷

S2-INSERT 45 (NOT EDITED)

It was the day of Nandipha and Mashudu's intimate church wedding. Everything was minimalistic yet so elegant just as

Nandipha dreamed it would be. The dress that her father made for her fit her like a glove and suddenly she dreamed of passing in on to her own daughter someday. Because it was made by her father it felt like a legacy being passed on. Mahlubandile and Rose were both proud mother's of the young bride.

Hlubi: "Oh man where can one put a stop to time?" she blinked away her tears. After the lobola was done and dusted everything felt real. Her little girl would soon have a family of her own.

Rose: "I feel so blessed to be a part of this. You look so beautiful. Your father did an amazing job with the dress" she looked at Nandi from head to toe.

Nandi: "I feel like a princess" she smiled.

Hlubi: "You are daddy's little princess and I'm sure he is in a corner right now crying" the three ladies laughed.

Amahle: "Thank you so much for making me a bridesmaid, sis Nandi" she went to hug Nandipha.

Nandi: "No way I would have excluded one of my favourite

cousins. Thank you for agreeing to it, mintase. You look so adorable"

Hlubi: "Your friends aren't happy with you not including them to be a part of your bridal party"

Nandi: "Mashudu's sisters aren't either but this is my wedding and it's one on a tight budget. I can't expect Tata to make dresses for so many people and they weren't willing to meet me half way"

Rose: "Your day, your rules"

Nandipha smiled and nodded.

Nandi: "I'm getting married" she said with excitement. There was a knock on the door and Yanda

appeared when the ladies said they were decent. He put his hands over his mouth as he looked at his daughter in administration. He'd seen her in the dress before during all the fitting but to see the complete look left him in awe. He went to give her a tight hug. Yandi: "You are looking beautiful" he complimented her for the tenth time.

Nandi: "Thank you, Tata" she looked at her dress.

Yanda: "Are you sure about this? If not then you can still change your mind"

Nandi: "I prayed about this, Tata and it feels right. After living with this man I know that I can do so for the rest of my life" she said with joyful certainty. Yanda smiled and nodded "So can the most important man in my life please take me to go marry the man of my dreams?" she asked with a smile.

Yanda: "Let's go" he bent his elbow and Nandi put her arm around his. When Nandipha made her way out of her father's house in her dream dress she couldn't help but feel a bit emotional. Mrs

Mbuzo might have been a terrible person to others but to her she was a grandmother in every aspect. She wiped her tears as she imagined how much her grandmother would have sang and rejoiced on that day. Her family was sure to accompany her out of the yard in song. She was grateful to see all the people who were closest to her celebrating with her. She had no doubts about Mashudu even if some doubted they'd last. If it didn't at least she'd have tried instead of allowing the fears of others to

stand in the way of her happiness. They got into the cars and made their way to the church. The family made their way inside to take their seats but Nandi could still hear a lot of singing clearly both families were happy to celebrate their children's unity. Lungile was the MC so he made sure the guests held off on the songs so Amahle and Nandi could make their entrances.

Mashudu's best man was also his younger brother. Walking his daughter down the aisle was both a joy and sad moment for Yanda.

He'd gotten to know Mashudu over the months he'd been engaged to Nandi and he could see that he respected Nandi. He was her support throughout the issue with Mrs Mbuzo. When the Reverend asked who was giving Nandi away Yanda took a deep breath before saying that he was. Nandi held her husband to his hand and both were smiling non stop.

Mashudu: "You look beautiful" he whispered leaving her blushing. The ceremony began and the Reverend was sure to make a few

jokes to ease the nerves of the young couple.

Reverend: "It is an honor and privilege to now pronounce you Mr and Mrs Mambane" he said with a smile "You may now kiss your bride" he looked at Mashudu.

Mashudu lifted Nandi's veil over her head and she was looking down clearly blushing. When his lips met hers she forgot anyone else even existed. They didn't make the kiss a long one out of respect for their elders and because there'd be plenty of chances to kiss properly.

Mashudu: "I love you" he kissed her forehead.

Nandi: "I love you too". Someone started a song and the young couple turned to look at their guests. Both lifted their hands up to show their wedding rings and the guests cheered even louder. Some of the church seats were empty but one could swear it was a full house. The young couple walked to the table where they both sat down to legally make their union official. They made their way outside where the families waited to shower them

with rose petals for well wishes. Nandi couldn't thank her mother enough for all the planning. The traditional wedding would be in a few weeks in Mashudu's home town and they were both looking forward to that celebration too. They found a picture venue and took a lot of pictures before going to the reception area. Because there was no time to practice the entrance dance the couple had to improvise. Lungile was a great MC and had many in stitches too. The speeches were made and because it was a small celebration

not many asked to speak.

Nandipha and Mashudu gave their parents the two layers of their three layered cake. They gave Rose the other layer and the gesture left Rose in tears. She felt Nandi including her in the planning was enough but to be given the same gift the parents got melted her heart.

Nandi: "Uhm wow..." she smiled as she looked at their guests "I'd firstly like to thank my parents vfor everything that they've done for me. I have two mothers. One who gave me life and the

other who made sure I stayed alive so when I say thank you to my parents I include both my mothers. It feels good to have a third" she looked at Mrs Mambane who blew her kiss

"Thank you both so much Ma and Tat'Mambane for raising a good man. To my family thank you for the support. Babe, thank you so much for making me the happiest girl alive. I love being married to you already" everyone laughed.

Mashudu: "I'd also like to thank my parents and family first. To the Mbuzo family, you raised a

gem and I promise to look after her and love her for the rest of my life. Thank you for entrusting me with her. May both families forever be united through us and hopefully the future children we'll be blessed with"

Mrs Mambane: "Amen!" she stood to support the children part and everyone laughed. They loved Nandi. At first they too had concerns about the fact that the couple came from different backgrounds and cultures but when they met Nandi they loved her.

Mashudu: "Nandipha Mambane"
he smiled while looking at her and
the guests ulululated. Nandi
blushed "I'm not perfect but you
make me want to be a better
version of myself. Thank you for
choosing me, MamCirha" he kissed
her cheek "As my wife said, thank
you to everyone who came to
celebrate with us. I'm hoping
that all of you will once again join
us for our traditional wedding.
Thank you" he gave the
microphone to Lungile.

Lungile: "Can we please sing a
song for the couple again".

Yandiswa took liberty to lead one and the couple went from table to table to thank the people in attendance. They partied and danced with their families more but then it was time for them to go enjoy the rest of the day alone. They'd be going back to Pretoria soon but they'd be having a mini honeymoon in Cape Town even if they both knew the city well. The ladies took their shoes off after the couple had left to get down because it seemed the young girls had no interest in taking advantage of the dance floor. All

of them enjoyed not having their children around for a few hours. Mrs E was also introducing Scott to anyone who didn't know him. Dali was smiling to himself as he watched Ntombikayise dance with her friends. He and Indiphile were a couple again and not for the sake of the baby but because they had a connection. Ntombi went to sit down after someone stepped on her foot so Dali saw it as opportunity to go say hello. Dali: "Don't you know that you should wear work boots to such?" he joked and they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Next time I'll do exactly that. You good?" Dali nodded.

Dali: "As good as I'll ever be, I guess" he smiled "You?" he looked at her.

Ntombi: "I'm awesome thanks" she smiled "How's future fatherhood treating you?"

Dali: "I heard the heartbeat for the first time a few days ago and it was magical. I can't believe that I made that" Ntombikayise smiled while looking at him. He looked so content.

Ntombi: "Wait until he or she is put in your arms. Nothing as

magical as that"

Dali: "I'm sorry once again, Kayise. I honestly didn't want things to turn out the way that they did. Mentally I had this life planned but then yeah...things happened"

Ntombi: "Things work out as they should, Xolo. I literally saw your eyes sparkle when you spoke about your baby. If I could turn back time while knowing what I know now I'd change nothing. I know how much this baby means to you. I also know that you love the mother. It's possible to love two people at the same time"

Dali: "It feels like cheating though"

Ntombi: "It's cheating when you get involved with both people at same time" she looked at him "So you wanna have that last dance of closure to you promised me?" she laughed softly.

Dali: "It's like you read my mind. Let's go shut down the dance floor". Ntombi quickly put her shoes back on. They both went to the DJ to request a song they could do the jive with. When they started to dance a dance they learned when they were still

dance partners everyone on the dance floor stood around them to watch the professionals do it.

They moved so effortlessly and the dance beat was fun and perfect for two people closing a chapter. The dance allowed them to do what they had in common while they were having fun.

Liyema stood with his hands in his pocket looking at Ntombikayise glide across the dance floor.

Swaying her hips and looking like the young girl in her twenties that she met. The boys were cheering for their mother until

they took a bow.

Ntombi: "Thanks for that. It was amazing" she said with a wife smile.

Dali: "It was an absolute pleasure. We don't have to be complete strangers to each other right?"

Ntombi: "Not at all" she smiled. They hugged before going to their friendship groups.

Othu: "Babe, you are gifted. Don't stop dancing" she hugged Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "I'll never stop and to do it with my first dance partner

again was great"

Hlubi: "Pity life is so cruel"

Ntombi: "It hasn't been cruel to Daluxolo. His baby will make him finally realise why we couldn't be together"

Yandi: "I actually think she is right" she looked at Dali while nodding .

Zuko: "Please don't tell me that the party is over"

Hlubi: "Hell no. We'll be the last to leave this place" she stood to dance "But I'd like to thank you all again for helping me with this wedding. My daughter is happy

and so am I" she hugged them all.

Mrs Mambane: "Ma Mbuzo, thank you for raising a good daughter. I look forward to sharing grandchildren with you someday" the two of them laughed.

Mrs Mbuzo: "I pray they first enjoy being alone before having kids though" Mashudu's mother nodded in agreement "My husband and I would like to have a family lunch tomorrow before we go back home. Please do join us"

Hlubi: "Nandi's father and I will be there and so will Rose" Mrs

Mambane smiled before hugging Mahlubandile.

Mandla: "Well at least it seems Nandipha didn't get herself a monster in law" she said after Mrs Mambane left and the ladies laughed.

Lucia: "I think mine is planning my murder as we speak" more laughter.

Poppy: "I don't give mine chance to walk all over me. I won't be oppressed by her just because I married her son"

Yandi: "Mine I'd an absolute sweetheart" she bragged.

Othu: "Mine was too from what I can remember. But Craig's aunt kept suggesting he take a second wife so I told her just what I thought about that"

Zuko: "Yes, girls" she snapped the her finger with attitude.

Mahlubandile went to get her husband so they could dance to the slow music playing.

Hlubi: "You did good by letting go a bit. I'm proud of you" she kissed him.

Yanda: "Her not living at home prepared me so it's alright. At least Mivuyo still have a couple of

years before leaving the nest"

Hlubi nodded with a smile "I love you" he kissed her neck.

Hlubi: "I love you too, Mbuzo" she closed the gap between them as they danced.

Tamkhulu: "May God bless this young couple who got married today with an eternity together. May they see each other grow grey hair" he looked at Makhulu's hair before kissing her cheek.

Makhulu: "Amen, Tata...amen" she smiled before putting her head on his shoulder. Bandile and Bukhosi dropped the elderly off when they

were too tired to stay on before going back to the wedding again. They danced with their mother until their feet were sore.

Ntombi: "I can't wait for you guys to grow more and get married" she looked at them all.

Bubele: "Don't hold your breath, mommy dearest" Ntombi laughed.

Banele: "You'll be walking like this when I decide to take a wife" he bent over forward and walked like an elderly with back problems and Ntombikayise's mouth was wide open as she laughed.

Bandile: "I actually don't think I

wanna get married anymore.

Marriage doesn't last"

Ntombikayise's laugh stopped.

Ntombi: "Marriage is beautiful so please don't ever let go of a great girl because you witnessed me and your dad divorce, Andile" she kissed his forehead and hugged him "All of you" they joined her in a hug.

Bukhosi: "Once I've got a stable income and have a stable relationship I will get married"

Banele: "Shut your mouth,

Bukhosi" Ntombikayise laughed.

She didn't need a date because

she had four handsome ones.

They've been driving her since the incident and she didn't mind at all.

Amahle came to join in on the group hug. The party finally came to an end long after the couple left.

Babini: "So everything is good?"

he looked at Lefa. Because the wedding was small the ladies didn't get to bring plus ones but the men didn't mind at all.

Lefa: "Yes... everything is above board" he said with certainty.

Mzu: "Finally we can do this" he

looked at his brother in laws.

Craig: "Let me call the lawyer so he can contact Xavier's people" he stood to make the call.

Lefa: "The fact that no one's interested in this business doesn't put you guys off?"

Babini: "We might have convinced the other bidders that they are better off not getting involved"

Mzu looked at Babini shocked.

Lefa: "Ahh" he nodded "Now it makes sense" he sat back.

Mzu: "So we won't get this fair and square?"

Babini: "He wouldn't have handled

this with transparency so we got it fair and square. Nothing illegal, Mzu" he promised and he watched Mzu breath.

Mzu: "Then let's celebrate" he stood to shake the other men's hands with excitement.

Lefa: "Enjoy your celebration, gentlemen. My job here is done. I gave Craig the number of someone who is going to help you with the financial planning after purchasing the business. All the best" Babini and Mzu thanked him again. Craig walked Lefa to the door and Othu appeared just

as her husband opened the door. Craig introduced the two and Lefa was glad to meet Craig's wife.

Othu: "When Craig brings business home I know that he has a personal connection to the person so I hope to learn where you two know each other from when you join us for dinner soon" she said with a smile.

Lefa: "Tell me when and I'll be here. It was great meeting you" Othu smiled before going inside to greet the other men.

Craig: "So no sign of Pepper?" he

laughed and Lefa shook his head. Lefa: "I finally have some free time so I'm going to spend it with my boy" Craig nodded. He walked Lefa out and thanked him for the great service once again before watching him drive off. Othu was so excited to hear that the men would finally own a business together as it seemed important to them. She was tired from the wedding but she first had to listen to the many voicenotes left in her friendship group. Her friends were crazy and

she loved being a part of the
crazy a lot. ❤️

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Lefa leaned against the door
frame with a cup of coffee in
hand looking over at the sleeping
Hlomphe. He never took for
granted the days he could spend
time with his son because
Hlomphe lived with his maternal
grandmother. His mother was
married to someone else and like
Lefa she too only saw Hlomphe
occasionally. He walked closer to fix
Hlomphe's neck as he was sleeping

uncomfortably. The young boy stopped snoring after his father got him comfortable. Lefa went to his laptop to get some work done while waiting for his boy to wake up. He was a busy man but for the week Hlompho would be with him he put most things on hold. He was also more aware of his surroundings when out in public because he was hoping to spot "Pepper" but so far he has not been lucky at all. He thought that he'd forget about her after a day or two but he found himself mentally playing the scenario of

the pepper spray over and over again laughing at it too. Hlompho finally appeared rubbing his eyes and yawning. Lefa shook his head while looking at the "sleepy head". Lefa: "Hi, dad" his hands moved because he was signing. Hlompho was born deaf and while many pointed out to Lefa how difficult raising a deaf child would be he took on the challenge of enrolling himself and family in sign language classes while Hlompho was still a baby. As Hlompho grew older things became more challenging because he became

aware of the fact that he was different. Lefa can't count the amount of anger outburst they had to deal with but Hlompho finally accepted his condition and was one of the happiest boys alive.

Lefa: "Good morning" he communicated back. When out they get a lot of stares but it no longer bothered either of them "What will you have for breakfast?" he asked.

Hlompho: "The usual" he said referring to his favourite cereal "It's not like you have anything

else to offer me for breakfast. You can't cook remember?" Lefa burst out laughing.

Lefa: "This boy" he said out loud while shaking his head "We could always go out if you feel like something else" he added and watched Lefa shake his head "Then please go and brush your teeth because I can't stand your breath" Hlomphe laughed.

Hlomphe: "Haha...very funny, dad" he laughed "I'm the one person who doesn't kill people with morning breath because I have this magic of speaking with my

hands" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Just go brush your teeth because you know very well that you don't laugh with your hands. You open your mouth so wide when laughing you end up looking like a hippo when it yawns" Hlompfo laughed.

Hlompfo: "I'll get you for that" he walked away laughing at the hippo joke. He loved being with his father because the man was his hero. He didn't understand why he couldn't stay with Lefa full time. He went to do what his father said. He craved pancakes with

fruit and honey for breakfast but he was not in the mood to go out and to ask his father to try to make them could result in the both of them burning down with the flat. He sat down and ate the cereal his father prepared for him while watching cartoons with his old man.

Lefa: "We aren't going to watch cartoons all day long, buddy. We should go out and do something fun" he said after tapping Hlompho's shoulder to get his attention.

Hlompho: "I feel like playing on

those motorbike games. When I'm old enough you should get me a real one"

Lefa: "I don't have a death wish"
he shook his head "You know your grandmother would never allow it. She and grandpa asked to have lunch with you"

Hlomphe: "I don't mind that because I miss them. Dad, when will you come take me to live with you?"

Lefa: "Did something happen at your grandmother's?" Hlomphe shook his head.

Hlomphe: "I know that I can't

live with Mimi" he referred to his mother "After all these years she still can't sign well and her husband isn't even trying. I constantly feel like I'm outside looking in when I'm with them" he opened up to his father and Lefa was left heart broken.

Lefa: "I'm sorry that you feel like that when with them. Some people are slow learners so Mimi might be one of those hence she still can't communicate with you well" Hlompho nodded. Lefa didn't want to be the one to tell Hlompho that maybe his mother

didn't want to try hard enough. When the doctor told them that Hlompho was deaf Mimi wore a look that Lefa would never forget. She looked at him as though he was broken. The two of them kept in contact for Hlompho's sake but after she got married the communication became less because the husband is the jealous type "Look, I've been talking to Mimi and soon my family elders and hers will sit down and discuss this. We want to prevent it from going to court hence it's taking so long. But Dad

will do anything to have you here permanently. I love you, boy" he brushed Hlompfo's head.

Hlompfo: "I love you too" he smiled "So gaming today?" Lefa nodded "Are you getting yourself a wife soon?" Lefa laughed out.

Lefa: "When did you get so big that you ask such questions?" he said out loud.

Hlompfo: "You do know that I can read lips right?" he raised a brow shaking his head "I'm no longer a baby" Lefa nodded "So?" he asked.

Lefa: "You and I can live here alone. We are cool"

Hlomphe: "What will you feed me? Cereal and bread until I move out?" Lefa loved his son's sarcasm because he saw it as a sign of intelligence but in that moment he wished Hlomphe was still a toddler.

Lefa: "I'll learn how to cook. I moved out of home at age 18 and have never been back yet I survived without grandma's cooking" Hlomphe shook his head in disapproval.

Hlomphe: "Are you a monk?" Lefa laughed until tears formed in his eyes "Because you've never

introduced a lady to me. Since monks don't do love things it'll makes sense that you're one" he added.

Lefa: "I'm not a monk" he wiped his tears off "I just don't want you to get attached to someone and have to see them leave should we break up" he said honestly.

Hlompfo: "Choose the right one who will not walk away from us"

Lefa: "Easier said than done"

Hlompfo nodded as he understood.

Hlompfo: "I won't have a problem with you finding someone. I don't

have a problem with Mimi having someone so don't worry about me. I just want to see you happy like my friends fathers who have wives"

Lefa: "Thank you and I appreciate your support but I am happy. I've got you don't I"

Hlomphe: "Dad, you don't get it, I'm trying to get myself proper meals when I come here.

Especially when I finally come to live with you." he joked and they both laughed.

Lefa: "But you do know that women aren't made to cook and

clean after men right? I don't want you thinking that they are here to be our slaves"

Hlomphe: "I was joking, dad and I'm sorry. I know that because you told me before. We could always learn" he suggested.

Lefa: "I don't like cooking so I'm not making any promises. Let's talk about something else. Is Mimi's husband treating you well when you're there? You know you can tell dad anything right?"

Hlomphe: "Apart from the communication barrier he's okay. I would have told you had he done

something bad" Lefa believed him. They had an open communication relationship. Lefa was glad that Mimi's husband didn't want Hlompho with them full time because he didn't want another man installing principles in his son that he didn't know. Hlompho stood to go shower. Lefa laughed at the conversation they just had again.

Lefa: "Growing way too fast" he said to himself while laughing.

Lefa went to get ready too after Hlompho got out of the bathroom. The two of them wore

matching clothes right down to the sneakers. Since it was school holidays the game place was packed with children of all ages. Lefa and Hlompho went to the area where the motorbikes were and all were occupied except for one. They hurried to it but when they got there they knew why everyone avoided it to begin with. It had a huge out of service sign on it.

Lefa: "We can go try something else until someone leaves" he looked at the disappointed Hlompho. Once again a few eyes

were on them.

Hlompfo: "Can't we ask them to fix it?" he asked before pressing the screen to check if it really was broken.

Banele: "Is something wrong?" he looked at Hlompfo. He couldn't understand what Hlompfo and Lefa were talking about since he didn't know sign language but judging from the look on Hlompfo's face he could see it was not good. Lefa explained to him what was going on "Oh he can come and use this one" he got off the bike.

Lefa: "No its okay, he can wait his turn. Enjoy your game, ntwana nam" he looked at Banele.

Banele: "I've been on this thing for about an hour. All the little kids have even been giving me cold looks. I think they are already planning my downfall... literally" both Lefa and Banele laughed.

Banele spoke too quickly so Hlomphe couldn't read his lips well. When he asked his father what Banele was saying Lefa translated.

Hlomphe: "Thank you" he smiled.

Lefa: "Are you sure?" he looked at

Banele.

Banele: "100%, bhuti" he nodded.

Hlomphe: "Wow his score is so high" he looked at the screen before saying to his dad. Lefa told Banele what he was saying and Banele gave a proud laugh.

Banele: "Let me go find my mother. I drove her to the shops because she said she needed to buy milk and it's been an hour now" he shook his head.

Lefa: "Mothers" he teased before they both laughed "Thanks again" he shook Banele's hand.

Banele: "How do I sign goodbye

and he should enjoy the game?"

Lefa appreciated the fact that he asked because usually someone just does whatever comes to mind which ends up being offensive to Lefa and Hlompho. Lefa showed Banele and the teen tried his best and it was good enough for a beginner. Hlompho held his thumb up to give Banele a final goodbye. Lefa enjoyed the game with his son and even got on it himself. When Mr and Mrs Gwala told Lefa they were around Lefa decided to give them and Hlompho some time to bond. If he stayed

he'd argue with his parents because they didn't know when to put limits on spoiling Hlompho. He'd be picking Hlompho up later on as Hlompho said he'd rather have dinner at his grandmother's than eat bread.

Ntombikayise was busy putting her new microwave in the boot of her car. She looked at it with admiration once again. Banele couldn't be patient with her any longer so he took a taxi home when Ntombikayise told him it was okay.

Lefa: "At least all of your tires

are intact" he said with excitement when he saw Ntombi. It felt as though he got water after walking through the dessert for days. When Ntombi turned to look at him she backed away a bit and started to search inside her bag. "Are you really going to spray me again?" he put on his sunglasses and stood at a distance from her.

Ntombi: "Are you stalking me?" she took out her pepper spray indeed but it was still in its wrapper as she had just bought a new one but she was struggling

to open the package. Lefa stood closer and took it out of her hands to help her with it.

Lefa: "There you go" he gave her back the black bottle.

Ntombikayise knew that no thug would give her her weapon back so she calmed down a bit "I'm not stalking you" he assured her with a smile.

Ntombi: "Thank you" she put the spray in her bag "So did you go blind?" she laughed at her own question and he did too. He took his sunglasses off and his eyes looked even more beautiful in

direct sunlight.

Lefa: "Fortunately not but if you spray again I definitely will go blind"

Ntombi: "Guns down" she raised her hands in the air.

Lefa: "How is it possible that you can change a tire but can't open a wrapper?" he laughed.

Ntombi: "I will pick up guns again" she warned and watched him hold his arms up in surrender.

Lefa: "Hi" he said in a charming voice.

Ntombi: "Hello" she said politely.

Lefa: "How have you been since

the last time I saw you?

Remember that day when you injured me and left me on the side of the road to die?" he joked and they both laughed. Ntombi felt so bad.

Ntombi: "Clearly you're a strong man who is able to survive difficult situations because you are standing in front of me right now"

Lefa: "Drive off again next time should it happen. Rather be safe than sorry but not with me because I'm no threat. I'm glad to see that you are looking at

beautiful as ever" Ntombikayise looked at the concrete floor in the parking lot and smiled "I've been hoping to run into you again" he added.

Ntombi: "You don't even know my name so how can you hope to run into me again?"

Lefa: "I've been calling you Pepper" he explained the reason and Ntombi laughed "Hopefully today I'll get the real name" he smiled.

Ntombi: "I don't think that I want to give you my real name. I love this Pepper nickname" Lefa

laughed.

Lefa: "Okay, Pepper. I'm Lefa Gwala" he was not going to push but he had no intention of letting her leave without getting her real name either.

Ntombi: "Nice to meet you, Lefa." she shook his hand "I'm sorry for the other day. I panicked" she said sincerely.

Lefa: "I'm sorry for how I handled it. My goal was just to let those boys know you were protected"

Ntombi: "Did you really get off in the middle of nowhere to help

me?" Lefa nodded "Thank you" he smiled "I don't usually cry by the way. One of those boys had smelly armpits and the smell affected my eyes" Lefa laughed out and Ntombikayise laughed at herself too.

Lefa: "I knew there was a logical explanation for the tears" they both laughed "So can we please go for a drink just to make proper peace?" Ntombikayise looked at the box in her boot.

Ntombi: "Uhm..." she wanted to go home and test her new microwave.

Lefa: "Please, Pepper"

Ntombikayise laughed softly. She closed the back of her car and locked it before walking back to him.

Ntombi: "Okay let's bury the hatchet once and for all" Lefa smiled. The two of them went where they could get good coffee as they both liked it. They spoke about general stuff.

Lefa: "So what do you do?" he wanted to know as much about her as possible even though she hadn't given him her name.

Ntombi told him that she was in

finance and he smiled when they had their first thing in common. They spoke more about their industry and both were passionate about it.

Lefa: "You've got a beautiful smile" Ntombikayise didn't like how she blushed after that.

Ntombi: "Thank you and you've got beautiful eyes" Lefa closed his eyes for a second while smiling. Suddenly he was blushing but he looked at her once again. Both cups got empty after a good conversation mostly about their careers. There was definitely

flirting between the two and a chemistry that even left the waiter blushing on their behalf as she watched them.

Ntombi: "I've got to go" she held her handbag close.

Lefa: "Let me walk you to your car" he paid the bill quickly because he saw her take her wallet out. He was glad that she didn't stop him but instead thanked him.

Ntombi: "You don't have to walk me to my car"

Lefa: "Oh no...it's not to protect you but to save some potential

victim from the danger in that bag" Ntombi stood and laughed. Ntombi: "Am I ever going to hear the end of that? I said sorry" she looked back as he walked behind her. As much as he tried to not take in her curves he failed. To him she was a complete package with a bit of extra. He walked next to her when they got out of the cafe to avoid his body reacting to the view of her. The personal issues conversation didn't flow as of yet but it was not awkward either. They got to Ntombi's car and she opened her

door but stood to look at him.

Lefa: "So you're not going to give me that name?"

Ntombi: "Why is it so important?"

Lefa: "I want to give the universe my heart's desires and since I would love to see you again, I prefer to say your name in the prayer" Ntombikayise looked away blushing. She lost count of the amount of times that happened.

Ntombi: "Once it involves prayer it's too serious too soon, Mr Gwala" she smiled.

Lefa: "Fair enough. Since it seems

like you want to be sure about me before giving me your beautiful name. I'll just write my number down and when you are ready you tell me...call me" Ntombi took out her phone to unlock it before telling him to say his number.

Ntombi: "I might just call, Lefa" she saved the number.

Lefa: "Please do, Pepper" Ntombi laughed "I'll call you that until you get tired of it and give me your real name" he added. He loved the mystery but he wanted to call her by the name her parents gave her.

Ntombi: "I like it. It sounds spicy" Lefa laughed as he watched her get into her car. Ntombi drove out of the parking space slowly and he watched her car until it disappeared. Lefa went to his car but instead of getting in he first put his hands on it while bending forward thinking about that moment. Car guard: "Are you okay, sir?". Lefa straightened and only realised then how stupid he must have looked.

Lefa: "Fine thanks" he got inside of his car "Thank you" he gave

the guard a reward for looking after his car. Ntombi was no better than him as she he left a great impression on her too. When she got home she asked the boys to connect the new microwave.

Makhulu: "It looks perfect. It blends well with the kitchen unlike the white one that was the odd appliance in the kitchen"

Ntombi: "Exactly what I thought, Ma. I will ask Rose if she needs a microwave"

Tamkhulu: "This was all just a waste of money"

Banele: "Where is the milk?"

Ntombi put her hands above her head. "What were you doing that entire hour I waited for you, Ma?" he asked with frustration.

Ntombi: "The sales person at the furniture place just ambushed me and then I fell in love with the microwave and it was all downhill from there" the gentlemen all shook their heads.

Tamkhulu: "Women and spending money unnecessarily" he shook his head before walking away. Hours went by and Ntombi went to have a cool shower. It was one of Cape Town's most hottest days so she

needed to wash off the days sweat. She looked at Lefa's number and suddenly felt her body tingle. She thought about Poppy's word about getting herself a no strings attached. There was clearly enough chemistry between her and Lefa that she couldn't deny anymore. She found herself dialing the number and it rang a few times.

Lefa: "Lefa speaking, hello" he said when he answered the private call. Ntombikayise suddenly regretted calling "Hello?" he added. Many potential clients

called him with private numbers so he had to answer it.

Ntombi: "I'm ready to give you that name" she pressed a pillow against her face because she didn't know what to do with herself. Lefa smiled.

Lefa: "I'm listening" he said in a low charming tone.

Ntombi: "I want to tell you face to face" she didn't even realize that she was lying on the floor.

Lefa: "Tell me where and I'll be there". He was willing to postpone the dinner at his mother's because he goes almost every

week. He'd go get Hlompho after meeting Ntombi. She gave him the time and place but Lefa would believe her only when he sees her. Ntombi got herself dressed and pretty to go out on a "date".

Ntombi: "Othunyiweyo has a problem and she asked me to help her solve it. I'm quickly going there" she said quickly when she found her family sitting in the lounge.

Makhulu: "So late, Ntombi? Can't you do it tomorrow?"

Ntombikayise shook her head quickly.

Ntombi: "It's urgent and extremely private, Ma so no" Bandile was about to speak "I don't need a driver" she said and watched him close his mouth again. She pretended to be answering her phone "I'll be back. Othu's panicking" she said while running to the door.

Tamkhulu: "We must pray for Othunyiweyo these young people go through so much" Makhulu nodded in agreement. If only they knew that there was absolutely nothing to do with Othu. Lefa stood quickly when Ntombikayise

arrived. He really was not expecting her to show up. She looked beautiful and he prayed she never grows her hair because her cut suited her. He sat down after pulling a chair out for her.

Ntombikayise: "Ntombikayise" she looked at him "My name is Ntombikayise" Lefa smiled.

Lefa: "Pleased to finally meet you, Ntombikayise" he smiled "I actually thought you wouldn't come" he added.

Ntombi: "I nearly got cold feet but then I remembered that I'm a woman of my word. Let's order

because I am hungry. I feel like something that has hot chips in it" she looked at the menus. He was glad that she was comfortable enough to eat whatever she would had she been by herself. The dinner was good and they stayed well after finishing their food for drinks but decided it was time to call it a night.

Ntombi: "Why does your car give you so much troubles?" she said when she heard him say he'd call a taxi.

Lefa: "My dad borrowed it later

today" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I could drop you off at your place" Lefa looked at her.

Lefa: "I don't think I'm comfortable with the idea of a lady dropping me off and driving to her place alone"

Ntombi: "I'll be fine. Going once, going twice and....,"

Lefa: "I'll take it" he said before she could finish. Any excuse to spend more time with her. She indeed drove him home and their lips collided soon after he said thank you. His kiss left Ntombi melting. It hit her that he

might have a woman in his life so she asked him after breaking the kiss. His eyes were narrow as he was lost in the kiss. He shook his head quickly after she asked and she asked again and he gave her reassurance. Ntombi did not know how she got to the front of his door but there she was kissing him like there was no tomorrow as he struggled to put the key into the hole because he didn't want to break the kiss. The door finally flung open and Lefa closed it with his foot because his hands were full as he carried Ntombi in

them. Neither Ntombi's heart nor mind urged her to stop and her body had handed itself over to the moment long ago. It had been over a year since she felt a man touch her as Lefa did and kiss her the way he did. She was moaning already as he took her clothes off and when she felt his lips kiss between her breasts she was sure to rip his clothes off too. He had a tattoo on his chest and what a perfect chest it was. She went to buy her own protection on the way because she let what Poppy suggested

get to her mind but she was glad she came prepared. Lefa was taken aback by her having her own condoms but it aroused him even more. The moment was too heated for it to be a foreplay and slow love making moment. They were both hungry for each other and when Lefa lifted Ntombi against the wall she knew there was no turning back. She liked that they didn't make it to his bedroom because it was to be a no strings attached affair. As they moved together in a passionate rhythm both knew that they

wouldn't be able to last long as the pleasure got intense after each second. His thrusts were slow and then they quickened and Ntombi wanted to beg him to not stop. The room got filled with moans, groans and deep grunts from places of pure bliss. Ntombi knew that she might regret the moment just as she did with Daluxolo but she didn't want him to stop. She was in that moment. She knew who she was with and she enjoyed every single moment and like a perfect choreographed dance both of them reached the

edge seconds apart. Their knees weak they both glided down to take a breath. Her legs still wrapped around him as he was on his knees. Lefa looked at her shiny face and smiled proudly because he was responsible for the "glow".

Ntombi: "I've got to go" she said once she was returned to reality. She kissed him and he stood with her and walked to the couch where he laid her down.

Ntombikayise couldn't believe that her body craved his again soon after it got fed well. Things got heated once again and one

thing led to another.

Ntombikayise was busy getting dressed in the dimmed lounge and Lefa was doing the same after Ntombi gathered willpower to peel herself from him. He wanted to beg her to spend the night because he was not ready to see her leave but he had to accept it. Lefa: "Please tell me that we'll see each other again. You still have to give me your surname" they both laughed. "You called me with a private call earlier on so I still don't have your number" he held her close. They were

intoxicated with each other "So will you reveal parts of yourself on each date?" he breathed deeply and smiled.

Ntombi: "we'll see" she didn't want to get too close. She didn't understand how the no strings thing worked but she was certain it didn't include cuddling afterwards and she didn't mind. A lot get revealed during pillow talk and she didn't want that. She took her bag and was out of the door before he could say anything else. As she drove back she felt no regrets what so ever. It was

the first time she'd done such. She didn't count Daluxolo's encounter because she was not herself back then but with Lefa she was sober minded. She made a conscious decision to be with him and she had no regrets. Her body felt like it had just gotten a full body massage treatment. His scent clung to her and she could still feel his body as though he was still touching her. Every part of her felt relaxed and she was satisfied. Lefa was leaning over the rail of his apartment block still looking out at the gate. He

wanted more than what just happened. He also had no regrets but he felt a woman like Ntombi was worth getting to know more. A passion filled night was the last thing he expected but he was not complaining. He was still in the moment that he didn't even see his car pull in. A tap brought him back to reality and he looked to see who it was.

Hlomphe: "The mosquitoes are going to bite you" he laughed. Only then did Lefa remember he was without a shirt.

Mr Gwala: "You need to stop

working so much, Lefa" he said because he thought Lefa was working and that's why he didn't make it to dinner.

Lefa: "I'll try, Tata. You can take the car to drive back home. I'll come get it tomorrow"

Mr Gwala: "Hide his laptop" he told his grandson and Hlompho laughed while nodding "I'll see you both soon" he said out loud and signed. Hlompho hugged his grandfather and went inside the house. Mr Gwala left and Lefa went inside to inspect if there was no evidence left of him

having had a guest over. He went to scoop up ice cream for him and Hlompho when the young boy asked for it. Clearly the dinner at his paternal grandparents was good and he took out a container with food from his backpack to give to his dad. Lefa was full in every single way a man could be so he put the food in the fridge but still had appetite for Ntombi.

Ntombi found her entire family still up when she arrived.

Makhulu: "Othu's problems are no more. I prayed hard for her"

Ntombikayise felt so guilty.

Ntombi: "Thank you, Ma. I'm tired so I'm going to go to bed"

Makhulu: "Oh my poor child. You must be tired indeed. Go sleep"

Ntombi: "I am tired, Ma" she tried not to smile "But it's good tired" she added "Goodnight. I love you all" she yawned.

Family: "Goodnight. We love you too" they sat in an imperfect song. Ntombikayise ran to her room and threw herself on the bed face down. She buried her face in a pillow and let out a soft scream of excitement.

Ntombi: "I just had sex" she

started to sing but stopped as she felt it was not something to brag about but she still felt no guilt nor regret "It was a once off, Ntombikayise Poti. No matter how great it felt you're not going back there, girl" she pointed at her own reflection in the mirror before falling backwards to her bed with a smile "Why are you being like this?" she asked herself when she felt like a blushing teen. She took her dress off and wore her oversized shirt before getting into bed "Just sleep before you drive yourself crazy,

Ntombi" her head hit the pillow. She couldn't sleep because she was too excited to so she got on to WhatsApp. "I just got myself laid and yes, by a man not toy" she sent to the friendship group.

Notifications were flooding in but Ntombi just sent the emoji with the zipped mouth. It was obviously not the first time she'd been with a man but she never felt the butterflies that she was in that moment. She ended up falling asleep and she went to bed one happy woman and Lefa was no

different. Would there be a next time? Only Ntombikayise knew. 

S2-INSERT 47 (NOT EDITED)

It was a Saturday morning and Ntombi couldn't understand why there was an annoying knock on the other side of her bedroom door when she planned to sleep in that day. She put her gown on and went to open the door. Bubele could see she was not happy to be disturbed from her slumber.

Bubele: "Please don't kill me. Your friends are downstairs" Ntombi

looked behind him.

Ntombi: "What?" she was shocked
"What time is it?" he scratched
her head and yawned.

Bubele: "9am"

Ntombi: "Since when do you guys
wake up so early?"

Bubele: "Since Tamkhulu said we
had work to do outside" Ntombi
yawned and nodded "Your friends"
he reminded.

Ntombi: "Oh yeah...tell them I'll
be down in a second. Please offer
them something to drink, my boy.
I'll come make breakfast for us
all now now" Bubele nodded before

running downstairs to relay his mother's message. He found each woman with a glass of juice already. Ntombikayise went to the bathroom to brush her teeth still feeling good. When she made her way out of her bedroom she found all the ladies except for Mandla, Lucia and Alu waiting for her.

Poppy: "Sit down and talk about that revelation you made last night" she said in a stern voice and Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "It was the excitement speaking, friends. Honestly there's

nothing to tell" she looked at them and neither of them looked happy.

Hlubi: "Don't dare test us, Ntombikayise" she pointed at Ntombi "We didn't leave our warm beds to come here to hear you tell us that. Sit down and talk" Ntombikayise laughed out.

Poppy: "She even has that fresh after sex glow" she shook her head and Ntombi looked at herself in the mirror.

Othu: "I'm trying so hard to not go over there and shake the story out of her" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Okay calm down now. Don't raise those blood pressures" she sat down "So do you guys remember that man I said helped me when I was almost robbed?" all the ladies nodded at the same time "Well it turns out that he had no hidden agenda. He was really just helping a lady who needed assistance. So yesterday we met randomly and later we did so again"

Yandi: "You had sex with a stranger? Did you use protection?" she sounded concerned.

Ntombi: "Girl, nothing about last night made him feel like a stranger" she said in a flirty tone "And I had my own protection" she assured Yandi. Poppy came to high five Ntombi.

Zuko: "Oh god you're so taken by this man it's not even funny" she laughed.

Ntombi: "You told me that a dildo is good but I'd need some skin to skin warmth too so I thought why not marry the two and my friend last night did just that" she closed her eyes.

Othu: "So you are a trying the no

strings attached thing?"

Ntombi: "Don't judge me. I needed last night a lot. I don't know if I'll contact him again though"

Poppy: "What?" she stood "Girl, if it feels good why put an end to it?" she went to sit next to Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Yho and he knows his business. I think he bewitched me because my body just surrendered to him"

Hlubi: "Oh my word" she laughed softly. It felt good to see Ntombi blushing again.

Ntombi: "Yho, bestie I nearly

asked to sleep over just so he'd keep doing what he was doing. He commanded my body like..." she took a pillow and humped it and the ladies screamed in amusement. The door flung open and Tamkhulu stood ready to attack. Ntombi stopped what she was doing and sat down quickly. Yandi: "We are alright, Tata" she assured the elder and Tamkhulu nodded before closing the door behind him.

Othu: "Show us again"

Ntombikayise put one foot on the bed and humped the pillow again

and they all screamed once again before bursting out laughing.

Hlubi: "I'm so glad I came because I wouldn't have believed the others had they told me what just happened" they all laughed.

Poppy: "Ntombikayise, go and get your freak on, friend. Life is too short to hold off what you clearly love"

Ntombi: "No, Poppy this no strings is not my thing. I'm done. He doesn't have my number, not my surname so he won't be bothering me"

Yandi: "But let's say that he asks for a date, a proper one. Would you agree?"

Ntombi: "He seems like a well put together man, friend. But I don't know"

Hlubi: "You can't hide that heart forever" the other ladies nodded.

Poppy: "Why are we suddenly talking about hearts now? Let her have fun and if it leads to more let it be authentic. All this seriousness can come later.

Ntombikayise, take in as much of this glow as possible before you get heavy"

Ntombi: "It felt good that one time, friend but I doubt I will do it again." she laughed softly.

Zuko: "So what's his name?"

Ntombikayise zipped her mouth.

Ntombi: "I don't want to tell yet. If I do call him again I want to enjoy him before I tell you ladies all the details"

Yandi: "As much as I don't agree with the no strings thing. I can't deny the glow that Poppy mentioned. Girl, your body clearly loves the man already" they all laughed.

Othu: "Okay Makhulu said we

must stay for breakfast and I'm hungry after all of that. Ntombi go and wash please. Next time you use me as a scapegoat please warn me because when I came your grandparents held my hand and prayed for me" Ntombikayise laughed out and apologized.

Hlubi: "It's so refreshing to see you so upbeat. I missed it so much. Thank you mystery man" she said out loud and they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Okay let me go take a quick shower then we can go eat"

Poppy: "Don't you dare think

about last night and end up
horny"

Ntombi: "I'm not making any
promises" she quickly ran back to
the bathroom. Poppy asked too
much of her when she said
Ntombikayise shouldn't think
about last night. As she felt the
water glide over her body she was
thinking about it and it indeed
aroused her but she finished up
quickly to join her friends. They
waited for her to finish getting
ready and helped her choose an
outfit. They all went to have the
delicious breakfast prepared by

Makhulu. She didn't know whether she'd call Lefa again.

Craig and Lefa finally got a chance to grab that beer and talk about anything else but work.

The purchase of the business was going well so the two men toasted to that.

Lefa: "Did you call the woman about the financial planning services?" he asked Craig while his eyes were glued to the soccer game on the bar's counter.

Craig: "It seems she's as swamped as you but since the

place isn't officially ours she said she might be free by the time that it is" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "I actually met another person with the expertise that you guys need but like your wife's friend she's employed full-time" he said with a subtle smile as he spoke about Ntombi.

Craig: "What the fuck was that?" he raised a brow "That smile you just wore when you spoke about this person? Something going on between you two?" Lefa sipped his beer.

Lefa: "It's Pepper" he confessed

with a blushing smile. Craig could see that he was clearly taken by the Pepper woman. Lefa gave the innocent details of what went on yesterday.

Craig: "You Lefa Gwala the alpha of all males gave a woman complete control?" Lefa shook his head laughing.

Lefa: "I met an alpha woman. I didn't think they even exist. I think that I met my match, man" Craig was shocked by the words. Lefa complained to Craig that no woman challenged him and he doubted that any could yet

there he say blushing like a teen boy thinking about Ntombi.

Craig: "I gotta meet this woman" he laughed "You're fucked" he said to Lefa.

Lefa: "I'm fucked, man" he admitted "I can't get her out of my mind and I don't even know how to get hold of her because she's so secretive"

Craig: "What did she say her name was?" he looked at the TV.

Lefa: "Ntombikayise" he also turned his focus on the screen. "She didn't give me a surname though" he added.

Craig: "I happen to know a Ntombikayise who is in fiance...well my wife does" he said casually.

Lefa: "It might be her. Can I see her picture?" he sounded hopeful.

Craig: "I don't have any but let me check Othu's Facebook page. I know they tag each other a lot"

Lefa was tapping his fingers on the counter waiting for Craig to finish. Craig checked Othu's timeline for a good picture of Ntombikayise and he finally found one good enough "That's my wife's Ntombikayise" he showed Lefa the phone. Lefa's smile told

Craig that it was the same person.

Lefa: "That's her" he enlarged the picture to look at her smile.

Craig: "That's Ntombikayise Poti" he pointed to the phone screen.

Lefa: "Tell a brother more" he looked at Craig.

Craig: "Uhm... I don't know much but I know she is a financial manager for a law firm. Her husband divorced her over a year ago"

Lefa: "Children?"

Craig: "Four teenage boys" he held up four fingers. He thought Lefa

would flinch but he didn't.

Instead he just nodded "They're quadruples. She had five because she adopted a girl but the girl decided she wanted to go live with her biological father. Last year was not an easy year on her, man"

Lefa: "But she made it through and that is the type of woman that I admire. I saw her birth scar last night so I knew she might be a mother" he looked at the picture again.

Craig: "Wait I thought you just went out for dinner. How did you

see her....you sneaky bastard" he threw peanuts at Lefa when he realised Lefa cut the story.

Lefa: "A man doesn't give details about his intimate time with such a woman. I respect her too much. Only once she's next to me will I brag because she's amazing"

Craig: "She's a good woman and clearly strong. Don't be evoking her love when you know you don't have any long term intentions, Gwala"

Lefa: "Trust me, I'm not just passing through here. I want to take my bags off and settle, man"

he looked at Craig and Craig nodded "Thanks for the information but all else I'll hear from her. So since she's your wife's friend. Could you by any chance arrange that she comes for dinner at the same time as me someday?" Craig laughed.

Craig: "I've got you" they shook hands "Plus why wait? Hlompho must see that his father really isn't a monk" they both laughed.

Lefa: "The things that he speak" he shook his head.

Craig: "Let me call, Othu to ask if we can have dinner"

Lefa: "Don't make it obvious, Knight" he pleaded.

Craig: "I got you" he said while pressing his phone. Othu answered after two rings "O, could you please ask Ntombikayise if she could come over for dinner. I'd really like to ask her advice on financial matters" he said to his wife.

Othu: "When, baby?"

Craig: "Uhm... tonight" he coughed "Wanna do it as soon as possible, baby" he added.

Othu: "Let me ask her now while we're still together" there was a

long pause and Craig could hear Ntombi and Othu speak "Babe, she says she can do tonight"

Craig looked at Lefa.

Craig: "Tonight?" he whispered and Lefa nodded quickly "Tonight will be perfect. Thank you so much, babe" he added. He ended the call and told Lefa the good news.

Lefa: "Oh shit what should I get her?"

Craig: "Dude, you'll "coincidentally" join us tonight. Bring a file to make it seem as though you're there to talk business. I know

Othu she'll definitely invite you to stay"

Lefa: "I wonder if Mpho will mind going to the grandparents again?

Let me go spend the entire day with him so he'll get tired of me.

Knight, you're the man" he patted

Craig "You're the man!" he

shouted again as he made his way to the door and Craig laughed.

Craig: "You're fucked" it was his way of saying Lefa had it bad.

Lefa: "If I die, I die" Craig

laughed out. Craig enjoyed the

rest of the game. He didn't know

what Lefa was like as a boyfriend

but he was a good man so Craig felt good about playing cupid because Ntombi was a good woman. Lefa indeed spend the day with Hlomphe and Hlomphe could see his father looked different and in a good way.

Hlomphe: "You look excited" he smiled.

Lefa: "I'm spending time with my boy, it's a beautiful day, business is good so I have reason to be"

Hlomphe: "You've spend time with me before. You've experienced many beautiful days and you have never complained about business

being bad. So it can't be that"

Lefa: "Just be kid, Hlomphe and stop analyzing me" Hlomphe laughed "I have just gotten good news that's all" he added with a smile.

Hlomphe: "I'm glad, dad" they did their special handshake "If there's something sweet where you are going bring me a doggy bag. Yesterday I brought you food" he reminded his father.

Lefa: "I got you, boy" they fist bumped. Hours went by and Lefa went to drop Hlomphe off. He was not ready for Ntombi to meet his

son yet because he wanted to know her first. Her four teenage children didn't put him off and he hopes that she was over Liyema. When he saw Ntombi's car parked out the driveway of the Knight family he felt his palms sweat and heart beat faster. He had a random file that had absolutely nothing to do with Craig in with him. He rang the bell and Craig came to open the door. Craig laughed at how nervous Lefa was and he reminded his friend to breathe. Ntombi's eyes shot open when they met those of Lefa's.

The room was suddenly spinning.
Lefa greeted the ladies and they
greeted back.

Craig: "Thanks so much for
bringing me this, Lefa" he looked
at the file.

Lefa: "I'm sorry to come so late.
I know it's important so I
thought I'd make a turn here
and drop it off"

Craig: "You're a lifesaver" they
kept up the act.

Lefa: "Let me get going. Enjoy
the rest of your evening"

Othu: "No you're here already and
there's more than enough food.

Come join us" Craig gave Lefa that "I told you so" look. "Let me introduce you to my lovely friend" she held Ntombi's sweaty hand "Ntombikayise Poti this is Lefa Gwala. Ntombikayise is one of my best friends but today she's here to give Craig financial advice" she smiled.

Ntombi: "Nice to meet you" she gave Lefa a nervous smile. She didn't want Othu and Craig knowing they knew each other and Craig was not about to rat on them either. He would tell Othu privately.

Lefa: "Likewise"

Othu: "Baby, you are going to get the best advice tonight. Let me go get the food so you guys can start talking. Please come and help me" she looked at Craig. He followed behind her.

Ntombi: "You're friends with Craig?"

Lefa: "You could say so. Small world" he smiled and she nodded "At least now I know that you are Ntombikayise Poti" he stood closer. Ntombikayise took a deep breath.

Ntombi: "Do you think we should

tell them that we know each other?"

Lefa: "Craig knows because I spoke about you to him" he confessed and Ntombikayise appreciated the honesty "I had to see you again" Ntombikayise smiled.

Ntombi: "I'm glad that you took the opportunity to see me" she said in a shy whisper. What shocked her was him kissing her but she didn't stop him. She instead sealed the gap between them to take it all in.

Lefa: "Please may I have your

number?" he asked after breaking the kiss.

Ntombi: "I enjoy the fun that we had. Next thing we'll be getting too serious". It's as if she read his mind. The physical intimacy was great but he wanted to go deeper.

Lefa: "Night cap at my place then?" Ntombikayise first took a good look at those eyes before nodding. The Knights appeared and Craig told Othu what was going on and Othu felt herself ease up a bit when she learned that Ntombikayise's mystery man

is Lefa. She was going to keep the secret until Ntombikayise was comfortable with telling the others. Dinner was served and the chemistry between the two could be cut with scissors. When it came to financial issues the two of them seemed to just melt into one person in a way. Ntombi helped Othu put the dishes away. Othu: "I think this has potential to be more than just a fling, friend. Please should he be interested be open to more" Ntombikayise expected Craig to tell her.

Ntombi: "I'm so scared, friend" she confessed.

Othu: "Remember what happened when you allowed fear to stand in your way?" Ntombikayise knew she spoke about Daluxolo "I feel like you'll kick yourself even harder for doing the same with this and have him walk away. Those walls you built are now suffocating you" she added.

Ntombi: "He hasn't asked me on a date. Just for my number"

Othu: "Give it to him. No reason why you can't keep having the fun you had last night while getting

to know each other" she smiled. Ntombi: "Yeah?" Othu nodded with a smile. The two guests both left the Knight house at the same time. Ntombikayise decided to take Othu's advice. She got to give Lefa's house a proper look and saw Hlompho's pictures on the wall. Lefa told her who Hlompho was. He made coffee for them and Ntombikayise went to sit on the couch awkwardly. He came in holding two huge cups because he learned that she was a coffee addict like himself. He got comfortable next to the

beauty in his house.

Ntombi: "He looks so much like you" she smiled. Ntombikayise told him about her children and that they'd be going to university soon. It was the first time that they spoke a bit about their personal lives.

Ntombi: "Do you still want my number?" she asked softly.

Lefa: "Yes, please" Ntombikayise took her phone out and dialed his number. His phone rang and when her number showed he smiled.

Ntombikayise pressed the end call button and Lefa dialed the

number.

Ntombi: "Really?" she laughed when his name showed on the flashing screen.

Lefa: "You're such a mystery I had to make sure it was yours" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Let me go before Hlompho comes home" she looked at him.

Lefa: "We've got time" he moved closer. Ntombikayise didn't know why she couldn't say no to him but it hit her that she didn't want to. They kissed and the kiss became heated. One thing led to

another and Lefa's new couch got "baptized" by the two once again. Their moments together were always heated, passionate and short yet so satisfying for them both. That night Ntombikayise didn't want to go home either but she forced herself to. She hadn't seen his bedroom and for some reason she was perfectly fine with it. She was trying so hard to hold on to her walls but then she remembered Othu's words. The connection between her and Lefa was ten times stronger than that she had with Dali. He

walked out with her to her car as he'll be fetching Hlompho. When Ntombi felt him hold her from behind and kiss her neck she closed her eyes for a second.

Lefa: "What are you doing to me?" he whispered in her ear. He wanted to be with her even if it was just to talk.

Ntombi: "What are you doing to me?" she tilted her head back after whispering back.

Lefa: "We'll know the answer soon" he spun her around slowly. He opened the car door for her and watched her get in "I'll drive

behind you until you reach your neighborhood then I'll head to my parents to get junior"

Ntombikayise smiled "Can I call you later?" Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "I'd like that and thanks for making sure I reach my neighborhood safely" he gave her a kiss before he went to his car.

Ntombikayise drove off first and he was behind her all the way.

When Ntombikayise drove into the neighborhood that she told him was home he hooted to say goodbye and she hooted back. She sat in her car for a long while

over thinking the situation but she was smiling. The kids were not home as they went to a party and the elders were asleep.

Ntombi sat down on the stairs feeling like she'd won the lottery or something. She knew that it might be nothing but it felt good in that moment. She deprived herself of things that felt good for so long so she decided to put an end to it. Being with Lefa felt good and even if it didn't last she didn't want to be left with what ifs. She went to shower and went to bed. She didn't fall asleep

immediately because he said he'd call and after a while he did. They spoke for over an hour and when he asked her to go on a date with him she said yes. She decided that it was a the time to say yes to what felt good. ❤️

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Amahle and Nandi were still in contact and last night she and Nandi for the first time spoke about their biological mothers not having been in their lives. When Amahle learned that Rose had a

mental illness and that's why she left Nandi she couldn't help but wonder if that was the reason why her mother did what she did. She still enjoyed living with her new family but suddenly her mind was full with questions once again.

Vusi: "Your mother and I have something to tell you?" the excitement in his voice and his bright smile told Amahle it was good news. The special meal prepared by Asakhe told her something was up. She smiled at her father waiting for him to

have his say "I got a promotion" he said with excitement. Amahle jumped from her chair to go give him a hug.

Asakhe: "It doesn't end there" she smiled "I also got a job.

Nothing major but it's something" Amahle's smile widened.

Amahle: "Oh wow" she went to hug Asakhe "I'm so happy" she held on tighter.

Vusi: "That also means that we'll now be able to afford you a better school. Not private but it's in town" he and Asakhe both looked at Amahle waiting to see

her reaction.

Amahle: "Thank you, Tata but I don't want to change schools again. I'm happy where I am. More than I was at my previous school actually" she said honestly.

Asakhe: "Are you sure?" she put a bowl of salad on the table before sitting.

Amahle: "I'm 100% sure. I love my netball team here because they are really good. Don't worry about it. I won't say no to a family trip once a year though" she looked at them both with puppy eyes and they laughed.

Vusi: "I'm sure we can try that but your mother and I must first discuss it" Amahle nodded. Asakhe has had arguments with Amahle but not so bad that she'd want Amahle go back to Ntombi's. The food was delicious and Amahle hoped more of it would be prepared now that they were going to be a two salary household.

Amahle: "Uhm...Tata, can I ask you sometimes?" she said nervously and Vusi nodded "What is my mother's full maiden name?" she whispered.

Vusi: "Qaqamba Vakalisa" he looked at his wife.

Amahle: "I mean the woman who gave birth to me" Vusi and Asakhe's smile faded.

Vusi: "She's not important" he continued eating.

Amahle: "But...,"

Vusi: "Amahle Gala, I said she is not important" he snapped "Don't ruin a perfect night talking about such" he pleaded.

Asakhe: "Did I do something that might be making you unhappy, Mahle?" Amahle shook her head quickly.

Amahle: "I was just curious".
Suddenly Asakhe got concerned.
They had dinner and Amahle
washed the dishes.

Asakhe: "I think I know how
Ntombikayise must have felt
when she first heard that
Amahle wanted to know us" she
looked at her husband.

Vusi: "We are good people"

Asakhe: "What if she wants to go
find her mother?"

Vusi: "I'm sure that she's
somewhere on the street smoking
drugs so she won't find her"

Asakhe: "I hope she's still happy

here" she looked at Amahle who was listening to music on her phone. Because she had earphones on she didn't hear her parents talk.

Vusi: "If she was not she'd have told the Elephants and they'd have come to get her" Asakhe nodded.

Asakhe: "True" she felt her husband kiss her hands.

Vusi: "Thank you for loving my daughter like she's your own, Sakhe. This extra money in the house will take off some load and I think it'll bring good change to

our home. It's normal for her to wonder about her biological mother but it doesn't mean she'll want to go look for her" Asakhe nodded.

Asakhe: "Do you think we'll be able to have enough money to someday go see a fertility specialist?"

Vusi: "This promotion comes with medical aid benefits. Since Amahle is on Liyema's, you can be on mine" they kissed.

Amahle: "Gross" she looked at them and they laughed.

Asakhe: "Close your eyes" she joked "Are you done?" Amahle

nodded.

Amahle: "You said I should leave the pots right?" Asakhe nodded.

Asakhe: "They need some TLC because they don't look shiny enough"

Amahle: "I don't see a difference but hey...if you say so"

Asakhe: "You'll know what I mean when you have your own house"

Amahle: "I'm going to bed now. Goodnight parents" she went to hug them both.

Vusi: "We love you, Amahle"

Amahle: "I love you too...peace" she held up two fingers and

walked to her bedroom.

Asakhe: "Night night" she shouted and watched Amahle's door shut. The couple sat down and had a conversation about what they'd do with the extra money they'd receive next month. They were excited about it because they wanted to paint their house. Amahle sat on her bed busy searching the internet for her story. She knew major stories such as a baby being dumped made headlines so she was certain she was written about. She never cared to search

for such but as she grew she wanted to know what happened and why. She was shocked to find that many babies were like her. She finally got articles that were about her story as the details matched but no where in them was her mother's name. Her mother was always referred to as "the accused". Just as she was about to give up she finally found a name but the article said it was that of the accused's aunt.

Amahle typed the name in the Facebook search bar and many people had the exact name and

surname so she didn't know which was the right one. She switched her data off and put her phone under the pillow hoping that her father would open up more about the matter. She prayed that her mother had a similar reason like that of Rose for abandoning her. In fact for throwing her away because she was found lying amongst filth. It would break her heart to learn that her mother threw her away on purpose. If Vusimuzi was only 16 when she was born Amahle imagined that her mother was no older than her

when she had her. Finding her father and living with him came with happiness and contentment so perhaps finding her mother would have the same impact. She loved Asakhe but she wanted to at least see the woman from whom she was from. She felt she needed complete closure because she didn't want to grow up as a young woman with issues.

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The quads were busy cleaning the backroom on their yard. After begging Ntombikayise, Bukhosi finally convinced her that it would

be best for him to sleep outside during his university days which would be soon. Ntombi walked in holding a tray of sandwiches and juice for them.

Ntombi: "It's coming along nicely" she looked around "I think it'll need some paint" Bukhosi ran his hand over the wall before nodding "And then?" she pointed at Banele who was looking at a piece of paper making hand signals.

Bandile: "He says he's teaching himself sign language" he sat down to eat.

Ntombi: "Bandile, take the food

outside and rather eat there, mntanam because it's too dusty in here" Bandile lifted the tray to do as she advised.

Bubele: "You owe us for helping you do this" he pointed to Bukhosi.

Bukhosi: "I'm going to wash dishes for the entire week" he promised before they followed behind Bandile. Ntombikayise poked Banele with a broomstick and he looked at her.

Ntombi: "Go eat" she smiled.

Banele: "You know, Mama I met a deaf boy a few days ago. It hit

me that we don't really care about learning sign language to understand people who sign. Like a person can speak a different language to mine but chances are we both know English so the communication barrier will be broken but when you meet someone who signs you realize just how little we care about this form of communication when there are people who only understand it and writing out there since they are deaf"

Ntombikayise looked at him wondering where it all came from.

Lefa has not told her that Hlompho was deaf as it was not something Lefa felt he should say at random moments.

Ntombi: "Well I never a thought about it and you're right it's the one language many of us don't give attention to. Where did you meet this boy?" Banele told her about the encounter with Hlompho and she nodded "So can you sign a few things yet?" she asked curiously.

Banele: "The basics and my name. I've been practicing my name so much but finally got it". He

showed Ntombi what he learned already and she was impressed. Ntombi: "Mmm" she smiled "I'm proud of you. Let me check the basics such as hi and how are you" Banele gladly taught her those basics and Ntombikayise couldn't believe how difficult it was for her but she got it at the end. Banele: "I'm starving. We'll try again later" Ntombi nodded and watched him walk away. She went to sit under a tree with them as they made plans for important December dates. She and Lefa would be having their

first official date that evening. The boys would be visiting their father as they haven't done so in a long while.

Ntombi: "Guys, did you mean it when you said that you don't mind me moving on?" she looked at all four. They looked at each other before nodding.

Bandile: "As long as he treats you right and you're happy"

Bubele: "And we get to eventually meet him" Ntombikayise nodded with a smile.

Banele: "Have you met someone already?" he cleared his throat.

Ntombi: "Maybe but I'd first like to know him to check if he's worth introducing to you guys" they nodded.

Bukhosi: "Just be safe okay"

Ntombi nodded even though she felt it was her line to use on them not the other way around "we'll continue tomorrow with the cleaning. Dad has called already to ask what time he should come pick us up"

Ntombi: "Enjoy your weekend. How do you guys feel about Portia now?"

Bandile: "She's actually cool. Now

Makhulu dating is just gross"

Ntombikayise laughed out.

Bukhosi: "Tell me about it" he shook his head.

Ntombi: "Love has no age. Let me go finish up the laundry. With sis V away for the entire week I gotta do it. What color would you like for the room?" she looked at Bukhosi.

Bukhosi: "I'll think about it?"

Bubele: "You mean you'll consult Iviwe" he whispered to his

brother and Bukhosi pushed him away. Ntombi went about her laundry.

Banele: "I hope that you'll sometime borrow me the room when I need privacy with Hlumelo"

Bukhosi: "R100 a night. If you aren't willing to pay go book a B&B" the others laughed.

Bandile: "Bubele and I already have a deal" they fist bumped.

Bubele: "Do you guys think we'll cope with being apart?" he knew he'd miss his brothers terribly. .

Banele: "It was bound to happen, man. Were men now so we must live separate lives but keep the bond" the others nodded.

Bukhosi: "You guys take good care of yourself in PE" he looked at Bandile and Bubele.

Bubele: "Hence we split in pairs right? So we can keep each other in check. No matter what friendships we form out there may our friendship never break because we will never lead each other astray" the others nodded.

Bubele: "I actually thought I'd be excited about leaving but as the days get closer I'm feeling more sad. I'm going to miss you guys" they all looked at Ntombikayise as she hung the

fresh smelling clothes on the line. Ntombikayise kept looking back at her boys when she made her way inside the house holding a plastic basket. She wondered what they were speaking about that made them look at her so much.

Ntombi: "Mama, I'm going out later on with a male friend. He's going to come pick me up so I thought I'd prepare you" she looked at Makhulu who was watering the plants. Makhulu turned to look at Ntombikayise smiling.

Makhulu: "Okay, baby girl. I'll tell

your grandfather because I know that you won't want to as you fear he'll tell you it's too soon"

Ntombikayise took a deep breath

"Ntombikayise, if this male friend makes you happy then I'm happy that you are seeing someone again. I can not wait to meet him Did you tell the boys to go to their father after you've gone?"

Ntombi: "I don't want them to meet him yet, Ma. Actually if you guys had plans you wouldn't have met him yet either but he insists on picking me up at home and you'll be here so yeah" she smiled.

Makhulu: "Mmm sounds like a gentleman. Let me go tell Tata now while he is still in a good mood" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombikayise was not in the mood for Tamkhulu's lectures that day that's why she didn't tell him but rather had Makhulu do it on her behalf.

Bonolo and Vakele Gwala stood by their front door watching Lefa's car drive into the yard. Hlomphe had been seeing them almost every day since his visit but he ran into their open arms as

though he hadn't seen them in years. Lefa went to hug his mother before shaking his father's hand.

Bonolo: "Finally, you came to sit and eat with us" she said to Lefa.

Vakele: "He is overworking himself. I know that you dream of building an empire, Lefa but you can not do that when you are constantly exhausted" he closed the door behind him. Hlompho tapped his grandmother's arm and Bonolo looked at him.

Hlompho: "He has been excited about something, grandma" he

said before looking at his father.

Lefa: "I told you that I am excited because you are visiting and your visit got extended which has made me more excited"

Bonolo: "So he has not been overworking himself?" she asked Hlomphe.

Hlomphe: "Not so much" Mr Gwala nodded.

Vakele: "Come let grandpa show you something" he took Hlomphe's by hand and went with him to the lounge.

Lefa: "I hope that you didn't get him a gift, Mme" he looked at his

mother as the two of them made their way to the kitchen. Lefa opened the pots and took a piece of meat from one.

Bonolo: "That's why you still aren't married. You eat from the pot" Lefa laughed. He looked a lot like his father but had his mother's eyes "When will you bring me a makoti, Lefa?" she looked at him.

Lefa: "You wanted a grandchild and then Hlompho came so be content with that"

Bonolo: "Are you gay, Lefa?"

Lefa's eyes widened as he was not

expecting that question "If so then don't be afraid to tell us. It'll be a shock but we won't love you any less" she added.

Lefa: "I'm glad to know that if I was a gay man I'd be one openly because of your support but I'm not, Mme. I just don't have time to date right now" he lied. He knew he's mother would want to meet Ntombikayise that same day if he told her about her.

Bonolo: "You never brought a girl home after Mimi. In fact she was the only girl you brought to us and that because she was

pregnant with Hlompho. I know that Mimi hurt you and then there was that whole thing with Hlompho's paternity"

Lefa: "If you think I'm letting what Mimi did affect my present and future you clearly don't know me well enough. I would never give anyone such power over my happiness. I don't introduce anyone because my relationships have a short life span. I don't want you guys being hung up on an ex of mine and giving my future wife hassles. I also don't want Hlompho getting attached"

Bonolo: "I hear your reasons but you know that your father and I are free and open minded so we won't give your future wife hassles. I'm glad you even talk about a future wife" Lefa laughed "I just want what Kgethang has for you. A beautiful wife and children"

Lefa: "I already have a beautiful child. Kgethang got lucky and found a good woman. I haven't had that luck yet but it doesn't mean it won't happen. Now can we eat because I'm starving?"

Bonolo: "I'm going to dish out for

you and Hlompho for the duration of his stay so you can freeze it. The child will get constipated by all the bread, Lefa"

Lefa: "I buy readymade food too" he smiled.

Bonolo: "You don't even know if the person who prepared the food washes their hands after using the toilet" Lefa laughed out before going to the lounge.

Lefa: "Your wife is a neat freak" he said to his father.

Vakele: "It's worked in my favour so far so I'm not complaining.

How's business?". Mr Gwala used

to be a labourer while Mrs Gwala was a domestic worker. Lefa didn't have a fancy upbringing as they lived in someone's backroom for all his life. That's what motivated him and Kgethang to work hard at school and they didn't do too badly for themselves. Kgethang was an engineer and together they managed to buy their parents a house.

Lefa: "It's good. I'm just glad that you stopped lecturing me on how risky leaving my stable job was" he laughed.

Vakele: "I used to stand by the

side of the road with a sign
"painter, plumber and builder"
hoping that some rich person
needed someone with those skills.
I don't know what having a
stable job is like, Lefa and it used
to eat at me because I had you
all to provide for. So when you told
me that you are leaving your
permanent job to start a business
I feared you'd end up like me"

Lefa: "You do know that you're a
great man right? Ending up like
you would not have been bad.

Kgethang and I never went to
bed hungry so thank you. Plus we

enjoyed helping you make those signs" both men laughed.

Vakele: "You two are the only thing I did right...well choosing your mother also. I'm proud of you both. I'm proud of the fathers that you are today"

Lefa: "We pass on values and principles that you passed on to us, Tata. To witness you finally tear up that sign and Mama put down the feather duster at the Amber's made all the hard work worth it. You two think we do a lot for you but nothing we do can compare to what you did for us.

We love you, old man" Mr Gwala laughed at the old man part.

They both stood to share a hug.

Vakele: "I love you too". he patted Lefa's back proudly. They had a great lunch and Lefa welcomed his mother's offer to cook for him and Hlomphe.

Bonolo: "So where are you going that requires you to leave Hlomphe for the evening?"

Lefa: "A very important meeting" he smiled.

Vakele: "It must be one promising meeting if it leaves such a smile on your face. A man only smiles like

that when he's about to reap the rewards for his hard work"

Lefa: "I don't know about that, Tata but all I can say is that I have reason to wear this smile"

Bonolo raised a brow.

Bonolo: "Then let him sleep over, Lefa. This thing of getting the child so late at night is not good".

Lefa tapped Hlomphe's shoulder and Hlomphe looked at him.

Lefa: "You wanna sleep over?"

Hlomphe shook his head.

Hlomphe: "I like my own bed" Lefa nodded. He would rather Hlomphe make certain choices himself.

Bonolo: "By next year he should be living with you. This thing of his grandmother saying that you never married Mimi therefore Hlompho belongs with her as per culture is just nonsense. A child belongs where he feels home. His grandmother is too old to look after him alone and since Mimi is married I do not know why they don't give Mpho to you"

Lefa: "It'll all work out, Mme"

Vakele: "I agree with him. We've been talking to Mimi's elders and I think this time they'll give Lefa custody. I've been thinking

about starting a plumbing company" he looked at his son "Don't worry, Kgethang said he'd help with start up capital because we know that you are not stable in that department as of yet"

Lefa: "I would have preferred it if you men discussed it with me before making that conclusion, Tata"

Vakele: "Fair enough" he nodded "we'll discuss it when we are all together. Could you help with a business plan? They say it's important"

Lefa: "Gladly and I'm glad that you'll be making use of your skills in such a way, Tata". Bonolo was smiling as she listened to them talk. Usually boys were considered to be mommy's boys but hers were daddy's boys and she loved it. She loved the bond that the men in her life had and she hoped that Lefa would settle while she was still alive to witness it. Lefa spent the entire day with them before leaving to get ready for his date. He was excited and wished he could see Ntombi immediately. It had been a busy

week for them both so they decided to have the date during the weekend when they both had plenty of time. Ntombikayise gave him her address when he asked to pick her up and drop her off after the date. She told him that her grandparents would be home and they would want to know who she was going out with for safety reasons so Lefa was nervous about meeting them but he didn't mind. A part of him was glad that the quads were not home because he felt there would come a time when they'd introduce each

other to the children. The closer he got to Ntombi's house the more excited he became.

Ntombikayise's bedroom window faced the street so she smiled when she saw his car outside the gate. When Lefa made his way inside the yard he first took in the house and he saw her wave from the top.

Lefa: "Repunzel, let down your hair" Ntombikayise wondered what he knew about Disney princess movies but the line made her laugh so she opened the window "Oh thank god it was just

a dream...my baby still has her brush cut" he breathed a sign of relief and Ntombikayise laughed. Ntombi: "You're crazy" she looked down "Who are the flowers for?" she asked and he said it's for Makhulu "Ditch them because my grandpa doesn't like other men buying his wife gifts" she warned him and watched him toss the flowers on the grass "Oh my word, I'm going on a date with a crazy man" they both laughed. What she didn't expect was for him to take his jacket off and begin to climb up the tree that

lead to her bedroom window. It was like a scene from a movie and Ntombikayise wanted to shout cut because she feared he'd fall and break but he did not. In fact he got inside her bedroom through the window safely but his shirt was not so lucky "What on earth, Lefa Gwala?" she was shocked. When he walked closer to kiss her she realized just how impressed she was.

Lefa: "Hi" he smiled "Your bedroom looks beautiful" he added "I had to come check if there was no dragon holding the Princess

hostage in her tower and end up preventing her from going on a date with me" he joked and they both laughed. His niece always forced him to watch Disney with her so he knew the cartoons well.

Ntombi: "You're crazy" she laughed softly before kissing him "Who does that?" she inspected the torn area of his shirt "This will be the most unforgettable first date ever" she laughed.

Lefa: " You look beautiful"

Ntombi: "I'm not done getting ready and if you don't get your crazy self out we're never going

to get out of here" they kissed but stopped when they both felt themselves get carried away.

Lefa: "Let me go but we've got a problem. As a child I was champion tree climber but I could never get back down without help" Ntombi's eyes widened.

Ntombi: "Why did you come up knowing that?" they both laughed.

Lefa: "I couldn't help it. Your beauty just lured me up. I could try but I will definitely fall" he went to look out the window.

Ntombi: "Wow I'll never forget

this. Do you know how difficult sneaking someone out is?" she let out a laugh in disbelief. Tamkhulu and Makhulu usually sat outside in the garden during the hot days so Ntombi was glad they were outside indeed. Ntombikayise signalled for Lefa to follow her and she loved the excitement of being caught "There's the front door that you should have made use of to begin with" she pointed to the door laughing.

Tamkhulu: "I'm going to come now, mkam" Tamkhulu said from outside.

Ntombi: "Go" she said with a nervous yet excited smile and Lefa just had to get a last kiss before running to the front door

"Faster...faster" she whispered while laughing and watched him run out. She wiped the tears from laughing with her sleeve.

Tamkhulu: "Are you okay, Nto-Nto?" he sounded concerned. He came in a second after Lefa ran out.

Ntombi: "I've never been better, Tata" she ran up the stairs still laughing at the wide strides that he took when running out. She'd

never forget that date in her life. She heard a knock but she continued getting ready.

Tamkhulu opened the door and Lefa stood holding flowers in hand. He greeted the elder before being let into a house he just had to run out of due to his craziness. Lefa introduced himself to

Tamkhulu and Makhulu properly.

Tamkhulu: "Nice to meet you, young man. Ntombikayise should join us shortly but come sit down while you wait"

Lefa: "Thank you, Tamkhulu" he nervously went to sit down.

Makhulu: "Would you like anything to drink, Lefa? Ntombikayise takes her sweet time when she likes"

Lefa: "Water please, Makhulu" the running did a number on him. So water was exactly what he needed. Makhulu went to get him a bottle of water from the fridge and he downed it after thanking her. Makhulu asked the typical questions a father would ask a man taking out his daughter and Lefa answered honestly.

Ntombikayise finally made her way down and Lefa stood to look

at her forgetting that he sat with elders. Makhulu couldn't help but smile.

Lefa: "You look beautiful" he said with a smile.

Ntombi: "Thank you" she blushed.

Lefa: "These are for you" he gave Ntombikayise the flowers while blinking and she played along. She thanked him.

Tamkhulu: "I'm glad that they are for her, not my wife" Ntombi and Lefa looked at each other.

Lefa: "I don't get men who buy gifts for another man's woman, Tamkhulu" Ntombikayise burst

out laughing but composed herself once again. Tamkhulu nodded in agreement.

Ntombi: "I think we should go to avoid being late" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Tamkhulu and Makhulu, it was a pleasure meeting you. I promise to bring her back safely" he gave Tamkhulu a firm handshake and the elder looked into Lefa's eyes while nodding.

Tamkhulu: "That's all we want. Enjoy your evening, Nto-Nto" Ntombi smiled.

Makhulu: "You children have fun". The youngesters thanked the

elders before leaving the house.

Ntombi: "I saw what you did there with the flowers. Smart move, Mr Gwala" they both laughed.

Lefa: "These are for you because you once mentioned you'd rather get chocolate than flowers" he gave her a box of chocolates. She thanked him with a hug. He opened the car door for her and she wondered if he would do so after the first date. They went to a nice place that Ntombikayise never dined at. What she loved about it was the fact that one

could dance after having dinner because they had a live band and a dance floor. The two of them danced to the lively music. He was not so good at it but Ntombikayise enjoyed herself a lot. They weren't shy to kiss, to hold hands and flirt because they'd gotten much comfortable with each other. Ntombikayise was a bit disappointed by the fact that he drove her straight home and not to his place but she was sure Hlompho was home. The elders were awake so she didn't want to walk with Lefa passed

them to her bedroom either. Lefa accompanied her to her door and kissed her before giving her a very long hug that clearly indicated that he didn't want to part with her either. Ntombi went to her room straight away and placed her dress against her nose to get his scent on it. She loved his smell but she took the dress off and wore her night dress. Lefa went to pick Hlompho up from the parents. He called Ntombikayise when Hlompho was asleep and learned that she couldn't sleep either because she

was thinking about him. He asked her to come over and Ntombikayise first said no but after a while she got dressed and went to his place. The elders were asleep already when she left so she'd have to explain to them where she was from tomorrow morning should she spend the night. She found Lefa waiting at the parking lot for her already and they hugged.

Lefa: "Please spend the night" he pleaded when he closed the door behind them. Ntombikayise nodded and he led her to his bedroom. It

looked like that of a typical man. Neutral colours and no sense of décor either "Ntombi" he held her neck gently "I don't want the sex tonight. I mean I always do but I want something different tonight" Ntombikayise suddenly felt embarrassed because she had started to unbuttoned her shirt. Ntombi: "I'll go back home then" she buttoned her shirt up again. Lefa: "That's not what I meant" he kissed her "I want us to undress each other but tonight in other ways that don't require us to take our clothes off. I love

being physical with you but I want more. I wanna go deeper". Ntombikayise didn't know how to react. She knew he meant opening up to each other about things that were private. Lefa got on his bed before lying on his back. He could see that he took her by surprise because she just stood looking at him. He thought she'd take her bag and leave but instead he watched her sink to the bed. He opened his arms and breathed when she fell into them before holding him tightly. Ntombi had missed intimacy. Yes, the sex

was great but she missed the intimacy but only realised how much when she laid in his arms. They started the conversation with topics that had them both laughing softly.

Ntombi: "So I'm your sugarmama?" she laughed as she tilted her head to look at him. She was a year older than him.

Lefa: "Will you give me a boyfriend allowance?" he teased and she shook her head laughing. "Then you don't qualify to be a sugarmama" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "What were you like as a

child?" she laid on top of him to look at him while he spoke.

Lefa: "A complete nerd. I used to be the awkward smart kid no one wanted to be friends with. So after matric I decided to lift weights to stop being a skinny boy hoping the ladies would notice me" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "I'd have noticed you" she blushed.

Lefa: "I'd have noticed you too" he kissed her "we'd have been telling our high school sweetheart love story today had we met in high school" he said with

certainty. They spoke about a lot of things. He opened up to her about intimate things and she did the same. Her upbringing story hurt him but Bonga's story hit even harder. "I enjoyed this intimacy so much. Thank you for stripping yourself bare emotionally and mentally for me. I look forward to hearing more and learning more about you. Thank you for letting me see beneath your physical beauty" he kissed her forehead.

Ntombi: "I'm glad that we did this too" they kissed before

cuddling once again. Ntombikayise knew that she had just put herself in a relationship and it's what Lefa wanted because he was not up to being friends with benefits with her. Ntombikayise took her clothes off and he gave her one of his pajama tops to wear before the two of them got under the covers. They cuddled side by side and spoke almost the entire night until Ntombi fell asleep. She couldn't hold her sleep off any longer because she was too comfortable in his grip.

Ntombikayise opened her eyes and

got greeted by the sleeping Lefa. She took a moment to just look at him and she smiled. She took her phone and the time said 6am. She sent her grandmother a text saying that she would be home shortly and that they shouldn't worry about her. She knew they'd be going to church soon and she'd go too if she made it in time. She wanted to sneak out while Lefa was sleeping but she thought he wouldn't appreciate it because they definitely had something going after last night.

Lefa: "Mmm?" he said in a deep

groan when she shook him awake. He looked at her with a smile when he remembered that he was not alone. She felt his lips touch her face three times as he kissed any random spot leaving her smiling.

Ntombi: "I've got to go" she said quietly and watched him sulk before holding her closer. "I don't want to go either but Hlompho is going to wake up soon I'm sure. I know they wake up early for cartoons during holidays" she wrapped her arms around him too. They just enjoyed holding

each other for a little while before Ntombikayise sat up.

Lefa: "I can honestly get used to this" he admitted.

Ntombi: "We are going about things so differently from the normal way"

Lefa: "If there's a manual to love and dating then whoever has it must keep it because I love how we are doing things. It's working for us" he sat up too. Ntombi nodded in agreement "And you're right, that one will get up to watch cartoons soon and he'll definitely go at me for my lack of

cooking skills. He never gets tired of doing it"

Ntombi: "You can't cook?" Lefa shook his head "What do you feed the child?" she laughed.

Lefa: "Cereal, cereal and cereal" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "What does he like for breakfast?"

Lefa: "He has a sweet tooth so pancakes with honey sometimes"

Ntombi: "I could quickly make them before I go. You can even have the bragging rights" Lefa looked at her for a long while "I'm sorry" she got off the bed "I

shouldn't have offered. I know that we agreed to not involve our kids yet" she took his pajama top off and got dressed. He got off the bed to walk to her and held her close.

Lefa: "No woman has ever offered to cook for my son. In fact non have bothered to even ask how he was after I told them about him and that's why he has never met any woman I've dated. I kept quiet because this is foreign to me but I'd love for you to make him pankcakes. I'll have to go borrow some ingredients from

my elderly neighbors because I don't buy much" he let out a nervous laugh. Ntombi smiled. He got dressed and went to his neighbours who were always kind enough to give him something when he was short. Ntombikayise took some toothpaste and rinsed her mouth just so it would smell better before washing her hands to get started. Lefa said he'll go brush his teeth and he ran to the kitchen quickly when he heard a bang. The pan fell on the floor but she was not hurt.

Ntombi: "Is he a lite sleeper?"

she continued quickly. She didn't want Hlompho seeing her. She wanted Lefa to have a proper conversation with his child first. Lefa: "He didn't hear it don't worry. Hlompho is deaf" he told Ntombi for the first time. He waited for that pity talk all his previous girlfriends gave him after telling him.

Ntombi: "What?" she looked at him shocked but she remembered that it didn't mean he was any less human. "Check" she did what Banele taught her yesterday and Lefa just looked at her imperfect

signing skills with great admiration. She explained how she knew it. Lefa thought about his encounter with Banele and realized that the story Ntombikayise just told him matched with what happened the other day. "I know it's not much but I'll learn" she said optimistically.

Lefa: "Does this son of yours perhaps have a zigzag pattern made on the side of his head?"

Ntombikayise nodded while smiling as he described Banele's appearance "Then it's the same

boy who got off his game for Hlompho. Wow small world indeed" he smiled "Upstanding young man you've got there" Ntombikayise smiled.

Ntombi: "Thank you" they both smiled "So did I pass the sign language test?" she laughed softly.

Lefa: "You told me to voetsek" he stood to go to her.

Ntombi: "What?" her eyes widened and he kissed her. She laughed at herself.

Lefa: "I love that you tried though. Since I'm an expert I'll

teach you". He just took a moment to look at her without saying a word.

Ntombi: "What?" she blushed and he just shook his head. He couldn't believe that she was so amazing and that he got her to give him a chance "Let me finish so that I can go" she got back to what she was doing. He wore an apron but did absolutely nothing. She finally finished the pancakes "I really hope he enjoys them" she smiled.

Lefa: "Promise to stay and enjoy breakfast with us next time?"

Ntombi: "I promise"

Lefa: "Thank you" he kissed her forehead before hugging her "Can I really take credit for them?" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: You may but whether he believes you is a totally different story" they both laughed "Okay let me really get going"

Lefa: "Noooo" he hugged her.

Ntombi: "Stop being such a baby" she whispered while laughing. The two finally let go of each other and Lefa stood against the door after accompanying her to her car with a wide smile on his face. He'd been intimate with her a few

times but he enjoyed last night even more than other times because he was starting to know Ntombikayise better. He meant it when he said he could get used to waking up next to her every morning but he knew slow was better. When he heard a noise coming from Hlompho's room he quickly went to the kitchen to get some flour on his apron and even face to make the story believable. Hlompho thought he was dreaming when he got the scent of fresh pancakes but as he got closer to the kitchen he was

certain that it came from there. He raised a brow when he found his father plating the pancakes. Lefa put the honey on the table. Lefa: "Dude, I thought I'd treat you to something different for breakfast this morning" he smiled. Hlompho walked around the kitchen looking like someone who was in search of something. He even checked under the table. Hlompho: "Where is the person who really made these?" Lefa: "Really? You think I'm lying?" Hlompho: "No but it's unlike you

that's all" he shook his head
"They smell great" he smiled. The
two of them sat down to eat.
Hlompfo looked at the pancakes
as if they were tainted "Are you
sure they are safe?" he asked.
Lefa: "Why would a serve you
things that aren't safe?" he said
before taking a bite.
Hlompfo: "Just asking" he smelled
the pancakes and Lefa laughed.
Lefa: "You really don't trust my
cooking?" he laughed.
Hlompfo: "I don't live by that if
I die, I die moto of yours" Lefa
laughed out shaking his head "My

worry is we'll eat your pancakes and both drop dead. Whose going to find our bodies since you don't have a girlfriend who checks up on you?" Lefa had to stand to process what Hlompho just said. He held on to his chest laughing. Lefa: "The shade" he shook his head "well for your information those were actually prepared by my girlfriend?" he shot back. Hlompho: "Is she real or imaginary?" Lefa felt defeated "Maybe you bought these so I have to be sure" he added. Lefa: "Who do you take after with

the sarcasm?" Hlomphe pointed to Lefa "No I'm not like that. It must be from Mimi's side of the family. My girlfriend prepared them" he raised a brow and Hlomphe smiled.

Hlomphe: "Then I'll eat" he said before digging in "They are delicious" he licked his lips.

Lefa: "You trust a stranger but not your own father?" Hlomphe laughed "Plus stop licking your lips because I know that you didn't brush your teeth"

Hlomphe: "Don't change the topic. Tell me more about your girlfriend"

who makes delicious pancakes. I bet she is beautiful and lights you up because you aren't much to look at" they both laughed out. Lefa: "If I'm ugly then you're ugly too but she's beautiful" he smiled.

Hlompfo: "When will I meet her?"

Lefa: "When the time is right"

Hlompfo nodded.

Hlompfo: "Does she have kids?"

Lefa: "Four boys but they are much older than you"

Hlompfo: "I don't mind"

Lefa: "They were born on the same day" Hlompfo's eyes

widened.

Hlompfo: "Must be nice to have brothers all your life" he smiled "Tell her I said thank you for the pancakes or I could tell her myself" Lefa shook his head.

Lefa: "I didn't want to tell you because it's still new"

Hlompfo: "It explains why you looked so excited lately. I like her already"

Lefa: "Calm down, Hlompfo. If we feel ready then we'll introduce you to each other"

Hlompfo: "Four older brother, wow" Lefa wore a serious

expression. Hlomphe always got excited too quickly and it made Lefa regret telling him. Now he was thinking ahead of everyone else.

Lefa: "Patience. Don't start having expectations" Hlomphe calmed down. Lefa understood he was just a kid but even that meant he had to hold his horses sometimes "Let's put this conversation to rest for now and eat. Tomorrow you're going back home" Hlomphe wore a sad face "Soon you'll move in with me. I promise" he said with certainty

and Hlompho nodded.

Hlompho: "Let me stop using my hands when talking and eat" he joked and they both laughed. He trusted his father so he believed Lefa would do anything to make him stay with him. He loved his grandmother but he loved his father more and he felt his father was the one person who understood him most. He couldn't wait to meet Ntombikayise and got more excited after each bite he took of her pancakes. He knew that his father's excitement was from a new development in Lefa's

life and to hear it was a woman made Hlompho happy. His only hope was that Ntombikayise liked him too and her sons. Lefa sat looking at Hlompho eat with excitement and he knew his son was already playing out scenarios in his head about meeting Ntombikayise. Suddenly he regretted telling Hlompho so soon but he couldn't take it back. He was serious about Ntombi especially after last night and he feared she'd think they were moving too fast. He meant it when he said he'd do anything to

have Hlompho with him. When Ntombikayise arrived home Tamkhulu was in the bathroom showering and Makhulu said that he didn't notice her car was not in the garage and Ntombikayise felt relieved. Makhulu was glad to see Ntombi go out again because she felt Ntombikayise was far too young to be cooped up at home. She prayed over the Lefa situation on behalf of her daughter and had faith that if Lefa was meant to be in Ntombi's life long term God would make

that possible as she believed
that all was up to God. 

S2-INSERT 49

Days have gone by and it was
going to be Christmas soon.

Amahle had not been successful in
finding her mother and because
Vusimuzi refused to give her a
name it became difficult so she
put the mission on hold to enjoy
the school holidays. When the
Gwalas heard a knock on the door
they all stood to walk to the
entrance. Kgethang hugged his

mother tightly as soon as she flung the door open.

Bonolo: "Oh wow just look at you" she brushed his arm with a big smile on her face "Ahhhh" she screamed in excitement when her three grandchildren ran into her open arms "Ditloholo tsa ka tse ntle" (my beautiful grandchildren). She hugged them all tightly. It was ten year old Neo, eight year old Kutlwano and 6 year old Naledi. Their mother Noluthando walked to the family looking beautiful in the her modern makoti attire. She gave her mother in law a

tight hug before getting a quick peck on her lips.

Kgethang: "Debeza" he went to give his father a tight hug. Mr Gwala was so happy to have both of his sons home. "Jebe" he said to Lefa before shaking Lefa's hand and giving a tight hug too.

Lefa: "Nonyanya" he looked at his older brother who wore a big smile clearly happy to be home.

Vakele: "Nolu, my daughter" he hugged his daughter in law "Look how beautiful you all are" he held his grandchildren close. To have them all for the December

holidays was always a joy. Bonolo swore to make her daughter in laws feel at home so they won't be discouraged from visiting and she clearly did something right because Noluthando loved visiting them.

Neo: "Did Hlompho really go back home, Tamci?" he looked at Lefa who gave a single nod.

Vakele: "We are on our way to Vredenburg actually to go talk to Mimi and her family. We need to finally put this matter concerning Hlompho's custody to rest"

Lefa: "Are you too tired to tag

along?" he held his brother's shoulder.

Kgethang: "Never, ntwana. You and the children will be fine on your own until we're back right, baby" he looked at his wife.

Nolu: "Yes, we'll be fine. I'll get started on dinner so long" Bonolo laughed.

Bonolo: "I knew you'd take over my kitchen but I really don't mind. Just rest first please"

Nolu: "You know your son doesn't allow me to help him rest by driving, Ma so I got enough sleep trust me" she said with a smile.

Kgethang: "Boys come help me get the bags out of the car" he looked at his children and they walked out "I don't know why a father has to struggle so much for custody of his children even when he's the most stable parent" he said when it was just him and Lefa by the car.

Lefa: "Well Mimi's mother still believes that a child born out of wedlock belongs with the girl's family"

Kgethang: "Nonsense" he took out a bag "We are bringing the boy home today. It's not right that

he should spend the December holidays with his grandmother while his cousins are here visiting. Naledi is now fluent in sign language" he said with a proud smile.

Lefa: "Thanks for taking the kids to classes, bhuti. I know you're not obligated to but thank you"

Kgethang: "Of course I'm obligated to. I'm Hlompho's uncle and his favourite one at that"

Lefa laughed "Is business good?" they closed the boot and walked back to the house holding the big bags.

Lefa: "It's going that's what I can tell you. It's not easy though"

Kgethang: "The first two years of a business are said to be the most difficult. You've been doing this for less than a year so give it time. Ever thought of perhaps partnering up with someone with just as much experience as you?"
they closed the door.

Lefa: "As if anyone is going to stand my perfectionist ass" they both laughed "Nha I haven't thought about it" he admitted.

Kgethang: "Even if it's employing someone Lefa. You can't do

everything yourself especially since you said your client base is growing"

Vakele: "I told him the exact same thing. He has me worried too because he wants to play all rounder" he stood by the door of the guest bedroom with his hands in his pockets.

Lefa: "Next year will be different" he promised "So why on earth did you tell Tata not to bother me with start up capital for his business?" he looked at his brother.

Kgethang: "When you started your

business you were living on your savings, Lefa. Since you're still working alone, I doubt that you take on a lot of clients so I was just being considerate"

Lefa: "But I would have wanted to be asked first" he looked at both men.

Kgethang: "Lefa, would you be able to help Tata with start up capital for his business?" he did as Lefa asked. Lefa looked out to the backyard through the window.

Lefa: "No" he said in a whisper "I'm sorry, Tata but I won't be

able to help as of yet" he clenched his jaw. Vakele walked towards his son and put his arm around Lefa's shoulders.

Vakele: "I understand. I know that you would have helped if you could. I don't want any of you putting yourself in debt to help us because you know how much I hate debt. Kgethang nearly lost his family due to debt years ago" Kgethang looked down as he remembered that dark time in his finances and marriage "It's not going to be a big business, Lefa. Just this and that to keep busy.

So please stop looking like that" he signaled Kgethang closer and held both his sons close "I see your hardwork. I own a house for the first time in my life because of the two men that I raised. We didn't ask because we are being considerate and I'm glad you said you can't help instead of run to banks to make debt. Kgethang and I have this under control. I've also been saving a few rand from my pension so I'm sorted" he looked at Lefa and Lefa nodded The men shared a group hug. Mr Gwala had nothing when the boys

were young. They lived on a hand to mouth basis but he compensated for it by being a present father and as he held his boys in his arms he was glad that he chose to be present. The Gwalas got into their car after Bonolo told the men there'd be plenty of time to discuss business. Vakele drove them to Vredenburg in Lefa's car. Lefa allowed his old man to drive because Mr Gwala only got his license about a year ago. He's never had a car so Lefa allowed him to enjoy the driving experience as much as possible.

Lefa couldn't wait to see his son even though it had only been a few days since they saw each other. They arrived at Mimi's parental home and found Mimi sitting with her mother and two uncles. Lefa greeted his ex politely and since there was no love lost they could even engage in small talk. He had not told the family about Ntombikayise yet. Lefa went to Hlompho's room and found his son drawing. He was very good at it and he liked drawing his favourite cartoon character. Lefa laid on the bed and when Hlompho

saw it was him he jumped on top of his father in a hug.

Lefa: "Neo, Kutlwano and Naledi are at grandma's" Hlomphe became excited "They said I should come and get you" Hlomphe nodded quickly.

Hlomphe: "I'm bored here" he sulked "I want to be where my peers are. Please tell me that you're here to get me, dad please" he pleaded. Kgethang walked into the room and lifted Hlomphe up before Lefa could answer.

Hlomphe's gripped his uncle in a tight hug. He loved his father's

family more than that of his mother's. Kgethang had to put him down so he could communicate with him.

Kgethang: "Is that a beard?" he studied Hlompho's chin and Hlompho laughed.

Hlompho: "You should teach me how to shave" he said to his father.

Lefa: "If you are beardless like your grandfather I'd be happy because it'll save me that trouble" they all laughed.

Hlompho: "I missed you so much, uncle Kgethang" he hugged his

uncle again "I have so many drawings to show Kutlwano and Neo" he took his sketch book and showed it to Kgethang. Kgethang looked at the drawings impressed before putting the book under his arm.

Kgethang: "You are very gifted. Maybe you'll be a graphic designer" Hlompho nodded.

Lefa: "We must go to the lounge to talk to your mother. I'll come tell you what the outcomes of the meeting is" Hlompho nodded.

Hlompho: "Uncle, my dad has a girlfriend" he said with great

excitement.

Kgethang: "Shame on you for making me hear it from a child" he said out loud to Lefa.

Lefa: "It was supposed to be our secret but this one" he smiled while shaking his head looking at Hlompho. Hlompho tapped Kgethang's arm so he looked at the boys.

Hlompho: "She makes delicious pancakes too" he added and Lefa put Hlompho under his arm to stop him from saying more.

Kgethang: "It must be serious if you introduced her to him and

allowed her to cook for him" he said while laughing and freed Hlomphe from Lefa's grip to know more.

Mimi: "Guys, can you please join us so we can begin?" she looked at the men "Do you..." she paused a bit "want me to bring you anything?" she asked Hlomphe and he shook his head. He loved her but they didn't have a strong bond. He had a closer bond with Mimi's mother but not with her. Lefa and Kgethang left Hlomphe by himself and promised to return hopefully to tell him to pack and

not to say goodbye. The meeting begun.

Noah: "I know that according to tradition the girl's family raises the child if she is not married" he sat back "But after having a long discussion and arguing with each other about this we have all decided that it is best for Hlompho to go live with Lefa" Mimi's uncle's said. Lefa breathed out as one who had been holding his breath.

Mimi: "I actually never had a problem with Hlompho coming to live with you but my mother told

me it's not how things are done since you didn't pay lobola for me. When my husband offered to give cows to the family to adopt Hlompho I refused because I know that you were never an absent father. I just ask that he continues to visit me especially since my mother will be living with me until her broken foot heals":

Vakele: "Thank you so much for seeing reason. We promise that Lefa is going to take good care of Hlompho"

Mimi: "I know that you wanted to change his surname from mine to

yours too and I give you blessing to do so" Lefa stood to go hug her.

Lefa: "Thank you so much and I promise I'll never keep him from you" Mimi smiled and nodded.

Petunia: "As sad as I am to have my grandson leave home I understand why it must be done. He is a young vibrant person who needs a young person to raise him. Me slipping in mud and breaking my foot will make me even more slow for Hlompho. I'd have liked for him to go with me to Mimi's place" Bonolo raised a brow ready

to attack should Petunia say she changed her mind "But we all know that Hlompfo doesn't want to. I didn't want to admit this but our side of the family doesn't put much effort in learning to communicate with Hlompfo and it makes him end up frustrated when at our family gatherings. The Gwalas on the other hand he says all know sign language" she added.

Bonolo: "Not all of us but yes most of us who are close to him"

Petunia: "And that is one of the reasons why he feels more loved

with your family. All that I ask is for Lefa to make sure that the woman he someday marries treats Hlompho right. I told Mimi the same thing when she told me that she wants to get married. Include the child in your new families. Don't make him feel like he's a stranger in his own parents homes" she looked at her daughter and Mimi looked down.

Lefa: "I promise to continue taking good care of him"

Petunia: "Then that's that then" she said in a sad whisper.

Bonolo: "I promise that I'd never

allow a woman who my son is with to mistreat Hlompho" she looked at Lefa. The elders didn't notice Hlompho was standing by the passage looking at them. He couldn't read their lips well and their body languages were all neutral meaning he couldn't guess what they were saying. He went back to his room and opened his wardrobe looking at his already packed bags. He trusted each word that came from Lefa's mouth so when his father said he'd go live in Cape Town with him he made sure to be prepared

for when Lefa came for him. He missed his cousins so much and couldn't wait to see them again. The meeting went on as the two families went over the terms and conditions of Hlompho's new residency. Lefa had a friend who kept a spot for him at a school that would be perfect for Hlompho. That friend was just waiting for word from Lefa so they could finalize the process. When Hlompho felt arms wrap around his upper body he got a whiff of his mother's perfume so he was certain it was her. She

spun him around so he'd look at her.

Mimi: "We have finally decided what's best for you and we've decided that living with your father is best" when she communicated with him she was sure to speak out loud and sign so that he could read her lips too.

Hlomphe hugged her tightly before looking at her again "You'll still visit me at my place though" Hlomphe nodded.

Hlomphe: "I don't have a problem with that. Thank you, Mom" he hugged her again.

Mimi: "Hlompho, I want you to know that I didn't leave you home with grandma because I didn't see you in my new life but because I know it was the best thing to do. Even now I know living with dad will be best for you. I love you so much. I have something for you" she stood to go take out a small box from her bag. It was a phone, not a smart one because they still believed that he was far too young for that "You send me a message anytime that you want to talk to me about anything. I loaded

airtime and I will do so every month" she added. Hlompfo put the box between his legs.

Hlompfo: "But it does not play games" he sulked and she laughed. His father walked in.

Lefa: "You will get a smartphone when you reach a certain age. For now that one is perfect. For games you know that you can make use of the Xbox at my place" Hlompfo nodded.

Hlompfo: "Our place" he corrected his father and Lefa nodded with a smile. He thanked his mother for the cellphone.

Mimi: "Can you believe he's already packed his stuff?" she stood to look at Lefa and they both laughed.

Lefa: "He's forward this one. Once again thanks for this, Mimi"

Mimi: "I'm really sorry for cheating on you and making you have doubts about his paternity, Lefa. I was young and naive"

Lefa: "I've forgiven long ago, don't worry" they smiled at each other. The Gwalas stayed over for lunch as asked by Hlompho's maternal grandmother. She was sad to see her grandchild whom

she raised her head but it was time.
The Gwalas went home very
happy people.

Kgethang: "So none of you were
going to tell me that Lefa has a
girlfriend?" Lefa hit his brother's
arm "Oh..." his eyes widened "They
also didn't know?" Lefa shook his
head.

Bonolo: "So who is she? What does
she do? Where does she stay?
How did you two meet?" she
asked with such excitement. Lefa
looked at Kgethang with a raised
brow and Kgethang only raised his
shoulders before saying sorry.

Lefa: "If you don't mind, I'd like to keep it to myself for now, Mme please. It's new and I don't want to overwhelm her with meetings with parents and such" he looked out the window.

Vakele: "Let Lefa handle his business as he sees fit, Nosakhumzi please" Bonolo wanted to say something "Please, my darling" he pleaded and Bonolo closed her mouth.

Lefa: "Thank you for respecting my privacy" he regretted ever telling Hlompho. His family let go of the topic but Lefa could see his

mother was about to burst with curiosity. When they arrived home the house smelled of different blends of spices as Noluthando was busy preparing supper. The cousins all ran to greet Hlompho. Hlompho: "I'm going to stay with my father from now on" his hands were moving quickly clearly he was excited to share the news.

Kutlwano: "So does that mean that you are going to come and spend the rest of the holidays here with us? Grandpa promised that he would take us to the beach" Hlompho looked at his

father but Lefa didn't look at them as they communicated so he didn't know what they were talking about.

Hlomphe: "I'd love to. Let me spend a day or two with my father to softsoap him. Don't do anything without me" the others laughed and nodded.

Naledi: "Hlomphe!" she said out loud and let out a scream before running to hug him "How are you?" she asked him. She wanted to brag about her fluency in sign language.

Hlomphe: "Good and you?" he

smiled.

Naledi: "I'm good too. Are you going to sleep here tonight?"

Hlomphe told her his plan and Naledi nodded.

Kutlwano: "We saw a big python a few days ago" Hlomphe's eyes widened.

Hlomphe: "Did your dad take you to the zoo?"

Neo: "No, it was found in our neighbors backyard. He realized that his pet rabbits have been going missing and when he inspected he found a python"

Hlomphe: "Wow Mpumalanga is

awesome. I need to visit again. I drew awesome new Naruto stuff" he went to get his backpack and showed it to them "I made one for you too Naledi of princess Tiana" Naledi jumped up and down as he paged through his sketch book not able to contain her excitement. She let out a scream when she saw it. No one got alarmed by her screaming anymore because they knew it was one of her ways to express her happiness.

Naledi: "I love it thank you" he looked at her lips so he understood

what she was saying. "Tata, look what Hlompho made for me" she ran to the lounge where the men sat.

Kgethang: "Did you thank him?"
Naledi nodded "You must ask if you can have it for your room but ask nicely. Go show Mama what Hlompho made for you" he watched Naledi run to the kitchen.

Vakele: "He's a natural talent"

Lefa: "Those hands are gifted" he said proudly "Apart from his birth today is by far the happiest day of my life" he said with a smile.

Kgethang: "Nothing beats seeing your kids grow up right in front of you so I'm glad today went in our favour"

Vakele: "That's true and the experience becomes even sweeter when there are grandkids making noise somewhere in the house" he said with contentment. Bonolo came in holding Noluthando's hand.

Bonolo: "I swear Kgethang's wife doesn't listen to me when I tell her that she is not here to serve us but to enjoy family time time us. I found her checking what else she could do after switching

that stove off" the two women laughed.

Lefa: "You'll never find anything else to do, sis Nolu because your mother in law has a PhD in cleaning" they all laughed.

Kgethang: "She's like that even at home, Mme so don't think she's trying to impress you"

Nolu: "Now you're putting me on the spot" she said with a shy smile.

Kgethang: "Sorry, love" he smiled.

Vakele: "So are you children coping with the heat of Mpumalanga?"

Nolu: "Yho Tata at first my feet

would get swollen but now we are fine. I even got used to the fact that we find a scorpion in and around the house at least once a week"

Bonolo: "I'd die" her entire body shivered at the thought "Will you all stay until after new year?" she looked at Nolu and she nodded "That's lovely" she added with a smile "I suggest that Hlompho be here for the holidays too, Lefa seeing as his cousins are here. They can go for sleepovers at your place since you are the cool uncle who lets them eat icecream

until late at night" Lefa laughed.
Lefa: "That's because I usually
have nothing else to feed them"
they all laughed.

Vakele: "Your mother "babied" you
and Kgethang too much"

Bonolo: "You are as spoiled, my
darling. When was the last time
you stood in front of a stove since
we got married?" Vakele laughed
out "The braai stand doesn't
count" she added and watched her
husband laugh more. She loved
him so much. She remembered a
time when her family wanted her
to marry a teacher as he'd

provide for her best but the labourer who stood in a torn overall as she was on her way home from work took her heart. She remembered how heavy the bags she carried were and how the handsome Vakele helped her carry them to the bus. Because there were no cellphones when they met, she gave him her work landline. Vakele would spend his last coins on public phones to call her and she'd be left charmed after each call. At one point she considered going into the loveless marriage with the teacher to

have a better life for her and her future children but her heart refused. Life was difficult because her pay was little and Vakele only earned money on days someone needed his skill set. She remembered that two room backroom they rented. In fact it was a one room that was divided with a curtain. She and Vakele had no sense of privacy so the boys had to move from the "bedroom" to go sleep on the kitchen floor. Her family would remind her daily of how she wouldn't have been struggling had

she chose another man. How she'd be living in a subsidy house with a husband earning a monthly salary but she never regretted choosing Vakele. He could indeed cook because on days when Bonolo's bus delayed she'd find supper ready and the boys bathed. Lefa and Kgethang looked at their parents while smiling. They were in awe of their love. When Noluthando suggested they separate when their marriage was on the rocks Kgethang told her that wouldn't happen because he feared it might lead to divorce. He didn't

want to divorce and Nolu was glad that he didn't agree. Lefa on the other hand also dreamed of a similar marriage to that of his parents but unlike Kgethang he's never been lucky in love.

Vakele: "But should I have to stand in front of a stove again, I won't be as clueless as these two" he kissed Bonolo's hand and she looked at her boys nodding in agreement to what her husband said.

Kgethang: "We won't be as useless as Lefa. Noluthando was sure to teach me when she was

pregnant with Neo to ease her load"

Lefa: "Don't lie" he looked at his brother.

Kgethang: "Baby" he looked at his wife so she'd back his story.

Nolu: "He can cook rice, meat and make eggs" she laughed.

Lefa: "That's not cooking. I'm talking Sunday lunch seven colors, bru"

Kgethang: "Whatever. At least Hlompho compliments your new lady's cooking so you might just learn something" Lefa kicked Kgethang's leg and Kgethang

laughed.

Bonolo: "So he's met her?"

Lefa: "No, Mme he hasn't. He can give witness to that" he looked at his mother "So marriage turned you into a two color cook and a snitch?" Kgethang laughed.

Nolu: "I don't take credit for the snitching. I don't know where he learned that from" she laughed.

Kgethang: "I'm just happy for you, man. Just the mention of this girlfriend makes you smile. You try to smile subtly but your big bro knows you"

Vakele: "I didn't want to be the

one to point it out but I noticed it too" he laughed softly "Be happy, my boy" he nodded.

Bonolo: "And make introductions"

Lefa stood up "I've got to get going. There's no way I'll get that one to come with me now so I'll pick him up later" he looked at his family "Thank you for accompanying me to Vredenburg" he smiled.

Vakele: "We support each other" everyone nodded in agreement.

Kgethang: "Tomorrow it's bro day right?" he stood to give Lefa a bro hug and Lefa nodded. He said

goodbye to everyone else before going to the guest room where the kids were. He called Hlompfo aside after play wrestling with them all even Naledi has turned into a tomboy somewhat. He knelt down to be at the same level as Hlompfo.

Lefa: "I've got some business to take care of so I've got to. Will you be fine here?"

Hlompfo: "Will you pick me up later or should I sleep?"

Lefa: "What would you like?"

Hlompfo: "To beat you at that game we played last time. So I'll

come home tonight and sleep here for the duration of the holidays. Will you be okay with that?"

Lefa: "Yeah, I'll be seeing a lot of you from now on anyway" they fist bumped "Enjoy then. Send me a message from your phone when you are ready to go home but it shouldn't be too late because my age doesn't allow me to stay up late anymore" Hlomphe laughed while nodding.

Hlomphe: "I'm really happy that we'll live together" he said before hugging his father.

Lefa: "I'm happy too" he said

after breaking the hug.

Hlomphe: "Are you still with the lady who made the pancakes?"

Lefa nodded "Won't it be a good idea to meet her now since I'll be with you full-time? She will want to visit right and I'm not going to hide" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Do you really want to meet her?" Hlomphe nodded quickly "I'll ask her if she's ready for that"

Hlomphe nodded once again. .

Hlomphe: "I hope you told her only good things about me" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I told her that you have a

red underwear filled with holes that you refuse to throw away" Hlompfo's eyes widened.

Hlompfo: "Why would you give her such private details so soon?" he shook his head and Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I'm kidding. Let me get going"

Hlompfo: "Are you going to her?"

Lefa nodded "Tell her that I said hi" Lefa promised to do so. He didn't tell Hlompfo that Banele was the boy that they met that day and that he was Ntombi's son because it would only get Hlompfo more excited. Lefa went to say

goodbye to the kids again before leaving. It was a hot day so he picked Ntombikayise up and the two of them went to the beach. She was not her usual excited self all the way to the beach. They stepped out of the car but Lefa leaned against his car and held her arm gently to reel her into his embrace.

Lefa: "What's wrong?" Ntombi looked out to the blue water to avoid eye contact. She didn't think he'd notice.

Ntombi: "It's nothing. I'm just having an off day. A former

colleague of mine is in hospital after getting beaten by her husband so yeah... I'm just sad and I can't even bring myself to go visit" Lefa knew that it took her back to her own domestic abuse. He gave a tight hug and Ntombikayise held on for a long while because it was exactly what she needed "I'm sorry for ruining your day when you were so excited after seeing your brother again" she whispered. Lefa broke the hug because he wanted her to look at him when he spoke.

Lefa: "Seeing you makes me more

excited and I can't expect you to be happy and upbeat all the time because we're human. I'm sorry about your former colleague and I can't begin to imagine what you must be feeling. I can't take the pain away but I'm here" he kissed her and hugged her again. Ntombikayise told him that walking on the beach always lifted her mood somewhat so Lefa held her hand and the two went to the sand barefooted. He held her from behind as they strolled on the moist sand. Ntombikayise appreciated that he didn't didn't

fill the space with irrelevant chatter to try boost her mood. She felt herself feel better after each neck kiss that he would occasionally plant in her skin. They spoke about the colleague more and Ntombikayise decided she'd go see the woman. Perhaps when her former colleague hears her story she'd have the courage to leave her abusive husband before it was too late. Soon after that conversation with him she was giggling like a teen once again. Ntombi: "I'm so glad that they agreed to have Hlompho live with

you. I could see that it was important to you" she said with her arms wrapped around his neck while his held her waist firmly. The waves would hit their feet cooling them both nicely.

Lefa: "I swear, baby if they didn't agree this time I'd have gotten the law involved" he admitted "But I'm glad that it didn't get to that because I imagine it being traumatic for a child" Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "It is" they kissed. She'd been spending the nights at his place and arriving early the next

morning to avoid her kids noticing that she'd been out all night. It was exhausting to sneak around but they both agreed it was best. Sometimes she'd sneak him into her house and to her bedroom.

Lefa: "I've got something that I need to talk to you about" his facial expression changed to serious "The sneaking around is fun and exciting but since we aren't teenagers anymore it does get a bit exhausting" he said with his forehead against hers.

Ntombi: "I was thinking the

same thing last night but I didn't want to make you feel pressured into anything" she whispered.

Lefa: "I haven't felt any pressure since we've started seeing each other. Everything feels authentic. I would like to see where this leads to, Ntombi and that will happen only if we let our kids know about it"

Ntombikayise nodded "I know that you don't want us to get too serious too soon but with Hlompho being with me full-time it means that you'll eventually meet him

and I'd like for that to be when we want not while I sneak you out of my place. I also know it's more difficult on your side because your boys are grown" he held her chin and brought her lips to his.

Ntombi: "Introducing each other to each other's kids is a huge step, Lefa. It would mean that we acknowledge that this is a relationship because I don't want to introduce a fly by night to my kids"

Lefa: "Same applied to me. I won't be here today and gone the next day. I love you" he said for

the first time since they've been seeing each other and Ntombikayise wrapped her arms around him tighter. She liked how her heart started to beat faster after he said those words.

Ntombi: "I love you too" they both smiled "But you gotta be sure because when I love I do so wholeheartedly" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "I'm in" he kissed her "I'm so in, beautiful" he hugged her.

Ntombi: "Are you ready for me to meet Hlomphe?" Lefa nodded and she did too "I'll first have to sit down with my boys and talk to

them. Can it be on separate days please?"

Lefa: "No problem. In fact if they aren't ready I'll wait on them to be but mine is ready to hire a private investigator to find you and introduce himself"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Do you think he'll like me?"

Lefa: "He's the most easy going person I know so he'll love you" he said with a smile "Do you think your boys will like me?"

Ntombikayise raised her shoulders. She really had no idea.

Ntombi: "Like you've just mentioned, they are young adults so it can go either way but they are okay with their father dating so I'm hopeful they'll be accepting of you. One thing I'm certain of is that they won't be disrespectful"

Lefa: "Now I'm scared" he gave a nervous laugh.

Ntombi: "You met Banele already and he is actually one of the difficult ones to impress after Bukhosi"

Lefa: "I was a stranger back then, baby"

Ntombi: "Let's not think about it"

too much. Things will go as they should. I can sign my name now so I'm ready to meet Hlompho" she laughed softly.

Lefa: "Let me see" he looked at her smiling. Ntombikayise had been practicing her name and the basics of sign language since he told her Hlompho was deaf so she confidently showed him that she knew what she was doing. Lefa wore a wide smile as he looked at her. If he was so happy to have her try he couldn't imagine how Hlompho would feel.

Ntombi: "So?"

Lefa: "That was perfect" he kissed her "He reads lips too so look at him directly when you speak he'll understand most of the conversation. As long as you don't talk too fast"

Ntombi: "Got it" she nodded nervously.

Lefa: "Thank you. What can I do to impress your sons?"

Ntombi: "Just be yourself. That'll be more than enough. They are easy going too, just overprotective of me"

Lefa: "All boys are that way when it comes to their mother or at

least most"

Ntombi: "True" she nodded "If you would rather spend time with your family I'll understand. I don't mind..." he kissed her before she could finish. Ntombikayise didn't try to finish her sentence but instead enjoyed the kiss.

"Would tomorrow be too soon for you to meet Hlompho? I could order in some good food and make it a dinner" Ntombikayise took a deep breath.

Ntombi: "Let's do it" he nodded a few times looking nervous "I'm so scared" she showed him her

already shaky hands and held held them before giving them a kiss. They enjoyed their outing but Ntombikayise advised that he go spend time with his family because she would be there forever while they were visiting. He would run back to steal a kiss whenever he got to his car and Ntombikayise was laughing. He must have done that about five times before finally driving off. Ntombikayise went inside the house and found Tamkhulu sitting alone in the lounge. She went to sit next to him.

Tamkhulu: "You are looking very happy lately. I actually can't remember the last time you were such a breath of fresh air" he looked at her. Ntombikayise looked at him while smiling.

Ntombi: "I feel like a breath of fresh air, Tata" she put her head on his shoulder "So Lefa" she looked at him "what do you have to say about him? I'm ready to hear the long psychological evaluation that you have" she laughed softly.

Tamkhulu: "I actually don't have any" Ntombikayise quickly

straightened to look at him. She was shocked "Don't look at me like that" he added.

Ntombi: "You do know that he has a child and was fighting for custody of him right? Usually those are the kind issues you tend to focus on when it comes to my partners"

Tamkhulu: "Was?" he looked at her. Ntombikayise explained that Hlompho would be staying with Lefa "He handled that without bringing you into the mess. I never said find a perfect man, Nto-Nto. I said find one who

wouldn't drown in his own issues therefore spilling all of that negativity on you. I'm glad that he handled the issue without you. If you are in a relationship with him there'll be issues you'll have to support him on and visa versa but he didn't give you the sad story of his son the first day that he met you making you want to save him. Instead he made sure your relationship isn't even affected by it but he knew that you were rooting for him"

Ntombi: "So I've passed this life test that you mentioned?"

Tamkhulu laughed softly.

Tamkhulu: "You're not doing too badly. It's still early days but I love how you are since you met him. He enhances your happiness and no father can fault that. I really have no lecture" he laughed when Ntombikayise gave him a doubtful look. "I mean it but only time will tell" he added.

Ntombi: "How do you think the boys will react when they meet him?"

Tamkhulu: "Now that I really don't know, mntanam" he rarely said that which made Ntombi

even more nervous. The boys arrived from a traditional celebration of one of his friends. They looked too drunk from all the traditional beer and Ntombikayise did not want to know what else so she let them go to bed because they were trying to avoid talking to her at all cost as they didn't want her to know they were tipsy.

Ntombikayise's festive break had already started and she added her remaining leave days so she'd be home for a while to get much

needed rest. The quads came down the stairs looking like hell but she was not going to lecture them.

Ntombi: "I made you guys a hangover mix that I saw on YouTube" she said to them.

Bukhosi: "We aren't hung over, Ma. It must be a virus" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I'm glad that you guys are trying to cover up out of respect but I know you're hung over. I'm sure there was a lot of meat, traditional beer and other alcohol at the celebration. At

least you guys drink on special occasions so I'm not going to lecture you. Now drink that while I make a greasy breakfast". She watched them all sip the mix while looking disgusted.

Bandile: "I think you got the recipe of the wrong mix, Ma. This can't be medicine" he shook his head.

Bubele: "Slow poison for sure"

Banele: "All I know is that our mom won't kill us so this must be a cure. I'm going to drink it because hell I feel like crap" he held his nose and downed the drink

while his brothers looked at him not believing their eyes. The others just took small sips until they were done. Ntombikayise told them to go brush their teeth and wash their faces afterwards and they said they felt a tiny bit better when breakfast got served.

Tamkhulu: "Ja..." he pointed at all of them "Alcohol is not your peer. Know your limit. I know imigidi can tempt you to try all the drinks served but it's not worth it. I don't ever want to see you boys like this again. Know your limit" he

said in a stern voice and they all nodded. All they ate was the bacon and and eggs as they couldn't down anything else.

Ntombi: "Guys, you guys know that I've been putting myself out there again romantically. Well I've been dating this man for a few weeks now and we have decided it was time that I introduce you to him and he introduces me to his son" she looked at them all. They had that thing of looking at each other first as though they were reading each other's minds.

Bandile: "What's his name?"

Ntombi: "Lefa Gwala" she gave them general detail about Lefa and they just nodded.

Bubele: "So is he younger than you? I mean his kid is way younger than us"

Ntombi: "We are in the same age group" she watched Bubele breath. The thought of their mother dating a young man freaked them out. Ntombikayise didn't mention she was a year older than Lefa because it was irrelevant "Actually, Anele if you can still remember that deaf boy

that you met" she looked at her son "His father is the man I'm talking about" she added. The others asked Banele a lot of questions about that encounter and he answered all the questions. Banele: "I obviously can't say if he's cool or not because I don't know him but he didn't seem too bad" he concluded "You can bring him around, Ma" Ntombikayise exhaled in relief.

Bukhosi: "Yeah.. it's best we know where you are when you're not here so it's cool" he nodded. They all agreed to meeting Lefa.

Ntombi: "Thank you so much. When do you guys think you'll be ready to meet him?"

Bandile: "Definitely not today" he put his head in the table.

Bubele: "We'll talk and let you know, Ma" he nodded "I actually like that you'll have company when we're gone. I hope he's a cool dude" he added.

Ntombi: "He is a good man" she smiled "I'll wait to hear from you guys then. I'm meeting Hlompho tonight"

Banele: "Tell him I said hi. Doubt he'll remember me though" he

laughed.

Ntombi: "So can I please spend the afternoon with you four and then we can buy what you'll need for your university life?"

Bandile: "We'll check after the nap" he stood and went to his room.

Ntombi: "Can you guys please not tell your father about Lefa yet"

Bukhosi: "We don't discuss you at all when with him. Also I doubt he'll mind because he's happy with his other family. They are planning on going down to the Eastern Cape. He wanted us to go

but nha not this year" he also stood to go to his room. They all went to take a nap.

Makhulu: "That went better than we expected" Ntombikayise nodded.

Tamkhulu: "I think kids react better to situations when they are included. I'm glad they reacted as they did. Now let's see if they'll like Lefa"

Makhulu: "You like him" she looked at her husband.

Tamkhulu: "Something about him feels right" he stood to not show just how impressed he was by

Lefa. Ntombikayise went to wash the dishes before cleaning her house with Makhulu's help. When the boys woke up they were good enough to go have lunch with her. They all wore sunglasses and bought a lot of water but at least Ntombikayise got to catch up with them on their lives. They weren't up for shopping because the Christmas rush was crazy. Ntombi: "What are we doing for Christmas?"

Bubele: "I imagine the usual. Church and big lunch"

Ntombi: "This will actually be the

first Christmas the five of us spend together with me as a single mother. Remember you went to Eastern Cape for it last year?"

Bandile: "And that's why we didn't go this year. We can go to church with the elderly and have your amazing food afterwards"

Ntombikayise nodded.

Banele: "We should finalize plans now because Christmas is next week"

Ntombi: "We'll hear what the elders have to say. Are you guys ready for your results next

months?" she asked with excitement.

Bukhosi: "We're ready" they all nodded. Ntombikayise enjoyed the time with them even if they looked like zombies. As hours passed she became more and more nervous about meeting Hlompho. The boys gave her a date they were comfortable with meeting Lefa on and Ntombi had no problems with it. She bought two cakes, one for home and the other she'd take over to Lefa's since Hlompho had a sweet tooth. Lefa and Kgethang also dedicated the

day to their children and Lefa told Kgethang more about Ntombi.

Kgethang: "I've never seen you like this" he looked at Lefa "And if you two are bringing in the kids its getting serious" he sat back.

The kids were at the restaurants play area.

Lefa: "She got my attention while I was in a speeding taxi, Bru"

Kgethang laughed out "Our "how we met" story was like one from a movie and had it not been for those damn thungs it would have been a beautiful story"

Kgethang: "I'm just glad you

stopped. Had you passed while seeing a woman look like she needed help I'd have gotten angry at you for not trying to help"

Lefa: "Remember when Tata got stabbed in the arm helping another man who was being mugged?" Kgethang nodded "I remembered that and told the driver to stop"

Kgethang: "If you die, you die"

Lefa laughed out "Now I'm as excited as Hlompho. Surely she won't mind meeting us since you met her parents"

Lefa: "Grandparents and it was for safety reasons. They live with her so it makes sense that they'd want to meet the man she suddenly spend so much time with. Plus your mother is too much.

Next she'll be wanting me to invite Ntombikayise, her kids and grandparents over for Christmas lunch" Kgethang laughed.

Kgethang: "Okay point taken. We'll anxiously waiting on you"
Hlomphe ran to their table.

Hlomphe: "I think we should go now. Don't order the food from here, it didn't taste good" Lefa

raised a brow looking at him.

Kgethang: "You want to make a good first impression, I see"

Hlompfo: "I just want her to feel welcome that's all" Kgethang nodded.

Lefa: "Let's go find another place to get take aways from then"

Hlompfo nodded "She said she got us chocolate cake for dessert" he added.

Hlompfo: "See? She will bring us something nice so let's offer something nice to her as well"

Lefa: "Go tell the others we're going then" Hlompfo ran off.

Kgethang: "I guess we'll see you tomorrow" they shared a bro hug.

Lefa: "I'm going to go get my lady a toothbrush that will stay at my place"

Kgethang: "You've got it bad"

Lefa: "I love her" he looked at his brother "I think I got it bad from the first day but I couldn't freak her out with that when she was in panic that day"

Kgethang: "Be happy, Debeza" he patted Lefa's shoulder "I hope this woman commits because you are a commiter of note. You wear your heart on your sleeve"

Lefa: "I think that's why women screwed me over in the past but I have a good feeling about her. I feel she's as tired as me of the superficial love served today"

Kgethang nodded. Lefa said goodbye to his niece and nephews before he and Hlompho went to find food good enough for Ntombikayise. Hlompho made him walk to several stores before he was satisfied with the food. Lefa was so annoyed by it he was tempted to ask Ntombikayise if she would mind having bread and tea but they got the perfect

good at last. Ntombikayise smelled lovely and wore one of her sexy undies to show Lefa later on when Hlompho is asleep. She was nervous and Lefa could see just how much when she nearly let the cake in her hand slip.

Lefa: "Hey" he put the cake on her car to hold her "He's going to love you. The idea of you already has him so excited to meet you" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "What if the idea of me and the reality of me aren't the same?" she took a deep breath.

Lefa: "Baby, you raised four boys"

he reminded her "My one is no different than yours when they were his age. Everything good excites them. Just be you"

Ntombi: "Okay, sthandwa sam" she shook her nerves off and Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Now let's go" he took the cake and waited for her to lock her car before taking her hand that was still shaking. She told him that her boys agreed to meet him and Lefa would deal with his own nerves on the day. Hlompho looked at the table and smiled while nodding. He's been

wanting his father to meet someone as his mother did. He had no memory of them together because they broke up when he was still very young when Ntombikayise walked in with Lefa, Hlomphe walked towards them. He had no shy bone in his body. Lefa: "Hlomphe, this is sis Ntombikayise and Ntombikayise this is my boy Hlomphe" he said out loud and signed so they'd both understand.

Hlomphe: "You forgot the part where you say she's your girlfriend, dad" Lefa was

translating while Hlomphe spoke and Ntombi couldn't help but laugh. She looked at Lefa and waited.

Lefa: "Hlomphe, this is sis Ntombikayise my beautiful girlfriend and baby this is my very forward son Hlomphe" he made the introduction again "Are you happy now?" he looked at Hlomphe and the boy smiled and nodded.

Hlomphe: "I'm so happy to finally meet you, aunt Ntombikayise". His hands moved way to quickly so Ntombikayise was glad Lefa could translate.

Ntombi: "Pleased to..." she paused to think a bit "meet you too, Hlomphe" Hlomphe gave her a thumbs up before clapping his hands. Ntombikayise felt so good about herself.

Hlomphe: "I was right she does light you up because she's very beautiful" Ntombikayise's nerves all faded. He really was an easy going little boy. She thanked him for the compliment.

Lefa: "I will stop translating if you keep putting me on the spot like that" he said to Hlomphe in a playful way.

Ntombi: "He's just teasing" she looked at him and Hlompho nodded as he watched his father's hands. Lefa planned on translating everything even if it meant stopping his dinner to do so.

Lefa: "And you seem to enjoy it way to much" he said before tickling Ntombi. Hlompho stood smiling as he watched

Ntombikayise laugh out. Like his father he couldn't miss her beautiful smile. Lefa went to tickle Hlompho next before lifting his boy off the ground and sat him on a chair around the table.

Hlompfo: "My father only told me today that the guy who offered me his game is your son. Is it true that there are three more of him?" Ntombikayise smiled.

Ntombi: "Well they might have been born on the same day but they are all different. So there's only one of him" Hlompfo laughed.

Hlompfo: "Will I meet them all someday?" Ntombikayise looked at Lefa who waited on her answer so he'd translate to Hlompfo.

Ntombi: "I'm sure they'd like that very much" Hlompfo smiled and nodded.

Lefa: "Let's eat before the food gets cold, Hlompho. We'll continue this conversation afterwards"

Hlompho nodded. The three of them ate but Hlompho had too much to share with Ntombi to wait so Lefa had to put his spoon down every five minutes to translate. They finally finished the food on their plates and Ntombikayise cut everyone a slice of cake and Hlompho's one was extra thick as requested by him.

Ntombi: "He's really an amazing young boy" she said to Lefa while Hlompho was in the bathroom.

Lefa: "Thank you. See it was not as bad as you imagined it would be right?" Ntombi shook her head. Hlomphe washed his hands wearing a smile on his face. He was glad to have finally met Ntombikayise and he liked her very much. He loved that she was trying to sign even more "Did you wash your hands?" he asked Hlomphe and Hlomphe nodded. Hlomphe: "I really enjoyed your pancakes the other day, aunt Ntombikayise. When you have time again please make them for me?"

Ntombi: "I'm glad that you enjoyed them, boy. I would make them if your father remembered to buy groceries" Lefa laughed as he translated and Hlomphe shook his head.

Hlomphe: "Tell me about it"

Lefa: "I bought some things, baby. Like the general stuff, milk, sugar and such"

Hlomphe: "I had to tell him what I usually saw my grandmother buys because he was clueless"

Ntombikayise waited on Lefa but he just raised his brow.

Lefa: "I'm not translating that"

he protested and both Ntombikayise and Hlompho laughed. Hlompho typed on his phone and showed Ntombi the screen and she laughed out. "Well thank goodness you were there or you'd have starved to death in this house" she typed and showed her the screen. Hlompho laughed while nodding. Lefa didn't know what the two were typing and showing each other but he knew that he was the joke but he didn't mind being roasted. The laughter was contagious and he ended up laughing at something

he didn't even know. It was like Hlompho and Ntombikayise had an inside joke.

Lefa: "Okay, I'll translate again" he said when he felt left out and they all laughed. The night went well and there was no communication barrier at all because Hlompho would read Ntombi's lips in instances where Lefa had to go to the bathroom and he'd type his reply on his phone for her to read. Lefa stood at the door watching the two communicate and he could see that Hlompho liked his lady. He

prayed the quads would be as open to him as Hlompfo was to Ntombi but he knew it might not happen. When Hlompfo kept closing his eyes while sitting on the couch Lefa told him to go to bed. Ntombikayise didn't expect to get a warm goodnight hug from Hlompfo but she embraced the affection by hugging him back. She sat and waited for Lefa come back from Hlompfo's room.

Hlompfo: "She's better than I thought she'd be. I like her very much"

Lefa: "I'm glad that you do. So

you approve?" Hlompfo nodded quickly.

Hlompfo: "She made me feel included. Unlike Mimi's husband"

Lefa: "Be patient with him. Mimi said she'll talk to him because she didn't know you felt that way but now she's aware" Hlompfo nodded.

Hlompfo: "Do you think she liked me?"

Lefa: "A lot" he nodded "She said so herself" Hlompfo smiled

"Goodnight, champ" they fist bumped before hugging. Lefa found Ntombikayise comfortable on the couch and he laid on top of

her gently and kissed her. She opened her legs so he'd be more comfortable.

Lefa: "One down, four to go" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Even I'm nervous about that four so I can't imagine you"

Lefa: "As long as there's mutual respect it'll be fine. Will you sleep over?" Ntombi pretended to be thinking. She had every intention of sleeping over because it's been a while "I got you a toothbrush for when you sleep here so you've got to test it" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "You do know that you're opening the door for me to just "forget" more stuff here right? I've been disciplined so far, Gwala"

Lefa: "Mark me, Poti I'm your territory" he joked and they both laughed "You can even leave your bloomers" Ntombikayise laughed once again.

Ntombi: "I don't own bloomers" she looked at him.

Lefa: "Thank god" he pretended to breath a sigh of relief before they both laughed. Ntombikayise got him off of her "Are you

leav...?" he felt her top hit his face.

Ntombi: "You're slow, babe. I want to show you my sexy bloomers" she giggled and ran to his room when he stood. He chased her to what has become their love nest but she was not on the bed. Ntombikayise jumped on his back from behind the door and laughed out at her own silliness. He was a silly man so it was impossible to be too serious all the time around him. He brought out her inner child that got lost amongst all of life's

responsibilities. After marvelling at her sexy undies he made sure to unwrap the entire package to get a taste of it. Ntombikayise could still remember the first time he made love to her. He's a man who gave attention to every part of his woman's body. A man who encouraged her to tell him what made her feel good and because of that Ntombi always had an orgasm, in fact she sometimes had multiple of them in a single round which left her wanting him more. Lefa was attracted to Ntombi mind, body

and soul. He loved that she was a woman who brought more than sex to the table. He could pick her brain on everything. He's asked for some advice on some of his contracts seeing as they were working in the same sector. Her kindness showed what a beautiful soul she has and witnessing her with his son made him more in love with her. Her body on the other hand aroused him even when she was fully clothed and drove him crazy when it is bare. They connected on many levels which had been something both

prayed for in a partner. Their good morning greeting to each other the following morning was lazy love making in the spooning position.

Lefa: "I wish that we could lock ourselves in this room all day" he said after getting his breathing normal. His face buried in her neck and Ntombikayise tilted her head to look at him.

Ntombi: "That would have been amazing" she kissed him "I love being with you a lot, Lefa Gwala. I think you've bewitched me" they both laughed softly.

Lefa: "Funny how I wanted to say the same thing to you" he couldn't get any closer to her than he already was but he shifted closer to try. "Craig calls us top deck chocolate" he said while brushing her thigh. He was much lighter than her hence Craig's nickname for them. Ntombikayise laughed when she heard it.

Ntombi: "My girlfriends are dying to meet you by the way"

Lefa: "As my brother is dying to meet you"

Ntombi: "Felicia has a thing in a few days and all their partners

will also be there. If you like you can go with me"

Lefa: "I'd like that very much. I don't want us to be a secret anymore now that we're in a relationship. You are my girlfriend right?"

Ntombi: "Yes, yes and yes" she turned around to give him a proper kiss "I'm so excited to introduce my man to my ladies. I was the only single one there, baby. Can you believe it?"

Lefa: "Never again will you be the only single one amongst them. I promise" he crossed his heart.

Ntombi: "Do you think your brother and his wife will agree to joining us? I'm sure your sister in law craves for young company when she's here visiting"

Lefa: "Do you even have the green light to invite other people, baby?" they both laughed and Ntombikayise shook her head.

Ntombi: "I just heard Felicia say the more the merrier"

Lefa: "I'll ask Kgethang and I'll get back to you. I'm sure they'd like to come. I'm sure sis Nolu is tired of long skirts and doeks by now"

Ntombi: "And the scalf over her waist" they both laughed "Let me get going" she looked at his tattoo.

Lefa: "You no longer have to sneak out" he reminded her.

Ntombi: "Oh yeah" she smiled. She told her boys she'd go to Othu's after the dinner with Lefa and Hlompho to have a girls night sleepover. She was not sure if they believed her or not but she was not yet comfortable with telling them she was spending nights at Lefa's "Let me go test my toothbrush" she moved her

brows up and down. They both stood to brush their teeth "Yours just had to be blue and mine pink, babe" they both looked at the toothbrushes that were side by side in a toothbrush cup.

Lefa: "It's a cliché, I know but it's to symbolise that his and hers thing. I admit to watching too many movies" he explained himself. Ntombikayise nodded with a smile and they went to take a shower together. She was glad her kids were grown because had they been Hlompho's age she wouldn't have been comfortable

with spending nights at Lefa's place. When Hlomphe got the smell of a delicious breakfast he knew Ntombikayise made it and he was shocked to see her in the kitchen with his father. They were playful as they cooked and Hlomphe silently stood by the door watching them. At some point in his life he wished for such moments but stopped. Moments were he'd see his parents happy and showing affection to each other. Ntombikayise was not his mother but he knew that in a year or so she might become his

stepmother and he knew he wouldn't mind. He made them aware of his presence and Ntombikayise was much more relaxed. She promised Lefa that she'd join them next time she helped him prepare breakfast for them so she sat down to eat in honor of that promise. Deep down she wondered if they were moving too quickly after about two weeks of dating but she didn't let those fears become too strong. No one knew what the future holds but she knew that the present was amazing so she decided to focus on

it because it was all that mattered. 

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Amahle and her family would be spending the festive season in Durbanville where Asakhe's sister lives. She turned down the Elephant's Christmas lunches because she didn't know if she should accept Ntombi's or Liyema's invite so she decided it was best she declines both to not cause any conflict. She was hoping to spend the day at her paternal grandmother's and ask subtle

questions about her mother but Vusi said his mother would be leaving for the rural areas to spend Christmas there. Amahle even tried getting a name out of her adoptive parents but neither Liyema and Ntombikayise felt it was their place to say anything. They lost the rights to make decisions on what's important for her and dangerous when she went to live with the Gala's.

Ntombikayise advised her to let the issue go because she might not like what she found but Amahle was known to be stubborn so Ntombikayise knew the chances

of her letting the issue go were slim. Mrs E on the other hand has been happily in love so much so that Scot's children invited her to enjoy Christmas with her.

Mahlubandile and Yanda were still happy as was Mivuyo who had a new baby milestone each week leaving his parents proud.

Hlomphe hadn't settled at his father's yet because he was spending time at his grandparents to enjoy the limited time he had with his cousins.

Liyema and Portia found common ground and finally managed to convince Abongile that sleeping in

her bed was best. Ntombikayise and Lefa were still going strong and the day for Lefa to meet the quads had come. Usually the boys were out of the house by noon to go visit friends but they've been home waiting for the lunch meeting with their mother's new boyfriend.

Bukhosi: "I don't know why I'm suddenly nervous" he looked at his brothers before taking a deep breath.

Bubele: "Being a child of divorced parents is not easy. When we were 16 we thought our parents would live happily ever after yet

here we are waiting to meet our mother's boyfriend while our father moved on while married" he shook his head.

Bandile: "And people still expect us to take marriage seriously?" he asked sarcastically before shaking his head too.

Bukhosi: "I don't think anything is wrong with marriage. What's wrong is people who don't honor their marriage vows. People like dad"

Banele: "I'm sure that when dad married mom he didn't imagine he'd go against his vows. That's what scary about marriage. You

don't know if you two will be the same people in a few years"

Bukhosi: "Point taken but that's where making better choices come to play. Dad made poor choices and that's why we now have to do this. I blame everything on him"

Bandile: "You're still angry at him huh?" Bukhosi nodded.

Banele: "Me too but let's not do this now. We gotta be neutral so we can be objective when we meet this dude. Let's not dampen Mom's joy because we chose to discuss emotional things. If we can visit dad and look at the face of a woman he had an affair with

we can surely shake the hand of a man our mother met nearly two years after her divorce" the others agreed. They all watched Ntombikayise nervously prepare lunch. She'd occasionally drop something because she was nervous. Tamkhulu and Makhulu got invited by Othu's grandmother to her home so there was no one in her corner to help her call the boys to line. She finally finished what she was doing and quickly went to her room to change into something more flowy. When the doorbell rang she ran out of her room, down the

stairs and found Banele on his way to open the door already. She let him do it since he was ahead of her but she stood behind him. Lefa appeared wearing a big yet clearly nervous smile on his face. He also brought something sweet for dessert as Ntombikayise did the other day. Because he had met Banele before they greeted each other and Ntombikayise was so happy to hear Banele ask about Hlompho. It was small talk but at least it brought some relief to the nerves. When Lefa walked inside she stepped forward to greet him but didn't

know what greeting would be appropriate so the two of them just shared an awkward brief hug instead which was a first and they both vowed it would be the last they shared such an embrace.

Ntombi: "The others are in the lounge" she pointed behind her "Uhm...Banele please go get us all something to drink while I go introduce bhut Lefa to the others" she watched Banele nod before going to the kitchen.

Ntombi: "Hi, baby" she whispered before going on her tippy toes to kiss him.

Lefa: "Now I know how you felt

when you had to meet Hlompho. I don't know if I need the toilet or if I'm about to faint"

Ntombikayise laughed softly.

Ntombi: "Come, let's get it over with" she held his hand and led him to the lounge "Thank you for the dessert. You can put it on the table" she smiled and watched Lefa do as she said. The other three boys stood and none of the adults could read their body language. Lefa took a subtle deep breath looking at the young men. Had it been young kids he imagined it would have been easier to make acquaintance but

they were free thinking men already. He shook each hand firmly as Ntombikayise made individual introduction. There was a moment of awkward silence as neither knew what to say.

Ntombikayise felt she should break the eyes but her mind felt empty.

Lefa: "Did you guys watch the match last night?" he asked casually and the boys went crazy thinking about it. Ntombikayise had to tell them over and over again to lower their cheers while watching the game last night but they were too in the game to

listen.

Bandile: "If you're not Man United you might as well leave our home now" he joked.

Ntombi: "Bandile" she said in a stern voice not getting the joke.

Lefa: "What other team can I possibly be?" he said with a proud smile.

Bukhosi: "Then you get a pass. In this house we welcome anyone but when it comes to international soccer we choose our people" they all laughed. To see Bukhosi chilled made Ntombi breath.

Ntombi: "Let me go and get the food because I don't want to

hear anything about this soccer game. Witnessing these four yesterday was enough" she said to the men. Banele came with the drinks and when she heard laughter and casual chatting over last night's game she couldn't believe how easily Lefa broke the ice. She made last touches to the food and watched Lefa head towards her.

Lefa: "That referee was bribed and that still didn't help that losers team have their way" he shouted to the boys who were following behind him "what can I help you with, baby?" he looked at

Ntombikayise and she stood smiling.

Ntombikayise: "You can take the green salad bowl to the table.

Thank you" she said in a nearly blushing tone. He did as she said and the boys followed suit by taking the other dishes while they were still deep in their conversation about rigged games and sore losers. Ntombikayise went to the kitchen to get the food but instead went to the table empty handed because the guys took care of it.

Lefa: "Next time just marinate meat for us to braai, Ntombi. I'd

have brought buns and you wouldn't have gone through all this trouble"

Bubele: "Oh man, bhut Lefa its as if you were here when we told her the same thing. I told her that we are men we don't care about fancy lunches" he put his hands above his head and Ntombikayise laughed "I think she wanted to impress you" he whispered to Lefa.

Ntombi: "Hey" she hit him playfully with a dishcloth before laughing.

Lefa: "Thank you for going the extra mile" he smiled at his lady.

Bukhosi: "That's our mom. Always going the extra mile" he smiled too.

Ntombi: "Dishes are still yours, guys. Sthandwa sam, I know you were genuine in your thank you but the four of them are trying to get out of washing dishes and I'm not falling for the sudden praises at all" everyone laughed.

Bandile: "Had you just bought meat, marinate and disposable plates we'd have saved us all the trouble though. Admit it, mom"

Ntombi: "Cooking for you five was no trouble so don't include me in your supposed misery. I'm not

washing these"

Lefa: "Since I will also eat, I'll help"

Bubele: "Our kind of guest" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "No" she shook her head. The boys all mumbled something making Ntombikayise laugh. They dug in and all of them were glad that Ntombi cooked because that lunch beat any braai meat they ever tasted. Ntombi wanted a proper Neal because later they were going to a braai.

Lefa: "I'm ashamed to even ask this but Hlompho asked that you please dish out for him. Since I

see the bowls going empty I had to speak up" he put his hand over his face clearly embarrassed.

Banele: "I'm sure what's left will be enough for a little man. No sweat" he looked inside all the bowls nodding.

Ntombi: "Too late" she said to Lefa "He sent me a text last night asking me to do that and because I know my boys love my cooking I was sure to dish up for Hlompho before putting the food on the table" she said looking very impressed with herself.

Bukhosi: "See?" he looked at Lefa "Always goes the extra mile. I

hope you are not the type of man to take advantage of such a person, Bhut Lefa" he added.

Lefa: "Never" he looked at Ntombi "I promise you that" he looked at all the boys and they nodded.

Bubele: "Good, grootman because I think you know what our mom has been through. So take care of her and we won't have a problem" he warned in a respectful way.

Lefa: "Then we won't have any problems because I'm not going to hurt your mom intentionally. I really care about her. I know this can't be easy on you. I can't imagine my mother introducing

another man to my brother and I. I just want to thank you for welcoming me and giving yourselves chance to know me. I'm really glad that I met you because you four are a treasure to your mother. Thank you for the respect you've shown me since the second I walked through that door" they all looked at him and not once did he break eye contact with them.

Banele: "Thing is we know our mother wouldn't have introduced you to us had she not been sure that you're a good man. Like you've said we're a treasure to

her and I hope she allows her treasures to put the dishes in the dishwasher" he kissed his mother's cheek and everyone laughed. The moment was getting too serious so he decided to change gears a bit.

Ntombi: "Okay you may" they all did a high five.

Bandile: "Talking about Hlompho just now. So he really can't hear...like absolutely nothing?"

Lefa: "He was born completely deaf. He's never heard a sound in his life" the boys nodded looking at their plates "But he is the most talkative boy I know" he said to

not have the boys pity his son.

Ntombi: "Who he really does have a lot to say that one" they laughed "Can you believe the other day he said that's why God took his "talkbox" because God knew he'd talk us into a coma" everyone laughed.

Lefa: "Sounds like something he'd say" he nodded while laughing.

Banele: "You should bring him next time. I want to show him that I'm not as clueless when it comes to sign language as before"

Bandile: "You must teach us, bra. He sounds like a very funny little guy"

Lefa: "Mmm too smart for his own good. He's been asking if he'll meet you four. To him you guys are one person divided into four" the quads laughed.

Bubele: "More like one person divided in two. Bukhosi is my identical twin and Bandile and Banele are identical"

Lefa: "I've noticed but all four of you look the same too. I can not explain it" they all laughed "Proof of the power and beauty of a woman's body" he looked at Ntombikayise "So non of you want to study finance? What has our industry ever done to you?" he

joked to not creep the boys out about a woman's body. The boys all laughed and gave their reasons and Lefa nodded "Follow your dreams, guys. I'd have been one proud father had you all been my sons" he said honestly and the boys thanked him.

Bandile: "Let's wait on the results"

Ntombi: "I don't care if one or all of you failed I'd still be proud and encourage you to try again. Is everyone ready for dessert?" they all nodded. Banele went to get the dessert bowls and Bukhosi served dessert while Bandile and Bukhosi

helped Ntombikayise clear the table. Lefa gave the boys some good varsity living tips from a man's perspective and he said almost the same as Liyema the day that he gave them the same advice. The boys went to pack the dishes in the dishwasher.

Ntombi: "Guys when are you going to paint the room?" she asked when they asked to excuse themselves to go to friends.

Bukhosi: "After Christmas, Mama we promise"

Bandile: "But we really got to go, Ma. Very important gathering and our girls will be angry at us if

we don't attend it" Ntombi raised a brow while shaking her head

"Thank you, queen mother" they all kissed her cheek as they made their way to their rooms.

Bukhosi: "He's not so bad" he said when they were alone.

Bandile: "As long as he keeps his promise to be good to Ma I'll be good"

Banele: "Glad to see that he's the same chilled guy as when I first met"

Bubele: "Plus, Mom looks happy" his phone rang "Oh shoot let's go before they kill us" he answered Pinky's call. They put on their

sneakers and jacket before going back down.

Bandile: "Bhut Lefa, it was good meeting you. Thank you for helping to convince our mom to make use of the dishwasher after all these years of us being her dishwasher" he joked and everyone laughed.

Ntombi: "I will change my mind, you will be late and you all will be dumped" she pointed at them and they raised their hands to the air.

Bukhosi: "That was a very dangerous warning so we're sorry, mom. I love you and enjoy the

party with friends later. I'm sure by the time you arrive we'll be home" the others nodded.

Ntombi: "Tamkhulu and Makhulu took their key right?" the boys nodded "Okay have fun and responsibly so" she hugged them all "After new year it's my time to spend with you since you guys have been so social lately. I have to get enough hugs before I go drop you off on foreign land" she sulked.

Bubele: "And I'm out before the face kisses come" he put his jacket on "Bhut Lefa" he held out his fist and Lefa brought his

against his in a fist bump.

Bandile: "Later" he also fist bumped Lefa after hugging his mother.

Bukhosi: "Take care of her at the party please" he shook Lefa's hand firmly and Ntombikayise laughed softly.

Banele: "You kids have fun" he fist bumped Lefa too.

Ntombi: "Watch it" Banele laughed and they were all out of the house. Ntombikayise turned to look at Lefa with a smile "I did not anticipate that" he held her closer.

Lefa: "I had a lot of scenarios in

my mind leading to today but non were as good as the actual meeting. You raised good young men" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "Well I can't take all the credit. Liyema is a good dad" Lefa nodded "we did it!" she jumped up and Lefa laughed "Now we can date openly" they both nodded.

Lefa: "Do you think they like me?" Ntombikayise nodded with certainty.

Ntombi: "In this house we have something called "the chief chair" which only a selected few are allowed to sit on while eating. They allowed you to sit on it"

Lefa: "Oh" he looked at the chair
"Now I feel so honored" he kissed
her.

Ntombi: "There's also this thing
called "the Queen's bed". Wanna
have the honor of joining me on it
now while we are still alone?"

Lefa: "How could I say no when
I'm being summoned to the
Queen's actual palace?" he kissed
her passionately. Ntombi
unbuttoned her dress all the way
down and he bit his bottom lip
looking at her. He looked like a
predator who's eyes were on a
prey and Ntombi had absolutely no
complaints when he caught her

and "devoured" her. Lefa left after a long while and Ntombikayise made sure that he didn't forget Hlompho's food. He'd come over again later on to pick her up so they'd go to Felicia's party. Kgethang and Nolu agreed to join them so Ntombikayise was looking forward to meeting new people. Nomandla, Hlubi and Alu had already gone with their families to the in laws and Othu, Yandi and Poppy would do the same soon. Ntombikayise was glad that she didn't have any makoti obligations to worry about. When the doorbell rang Ntombi was

certain that Lefa was early but instead she was greeted by Liyema.

Ntombi: "I can unfortunately not let you in because I'm on my way out to my friends and no one else is home" she said after greetings.

Liyema: "I brought the gadgets that the boys forgot at my place. You know how lost they are without technology" he gave a box to Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "Thank you. I'll be sure to give it to them" she smiled.

Liyema: "So you're going to keep acting like you're not uncomfortable"?" Ntombikayise

looked at him confused "I mean with the fact that you're the odd one out whenever your friends have something at their places...you know with you being the only single one" he said softly "Lungile told me because he's been to one of the parties with Alu" he added quietly.

Ntombi: "It doesn't bother me at all actually and even if I acted you best believe that I wouldn't have had to act tonight" she said with a smile. She didn't want him to meet Lefa yet.

Liyema: "Next month it'll be Nandi's traditional wedding. You

know I don't mind acting as your plus one" he laughed softly "As friends" he added.

Ntombi: "And where would Portia be?"

Liyema: "On my other arm. The last thing I want is for you to end up on those rent a boyfriend sites" Ntombikayise laughed out.

Ntombi: "So you want your ex wife and your baby mama whom you cheated on the ex wife with to both be at your arm. I know that was a joke so I'll just laugh" she did just that "Thank you so much for trying to save me the "embarrassment" of arriving at

the wedding by myself but I won't be alone so you really don't have to" she said politely. When Lefa arrived to pick her up for the party Liyema felt like punching him when he kissed Ntombi. Ntombikayise introduced the two men though she felt it was too soon.

Ntombi: "Baby, you'll still be free to go to the wedding with me right?" she looked at Lefa.

Lefa: "As if I'd miss the opportunity to have a good time with you" he smiled. Ntombi turned to look at Liyema with a smirk on her face and he cleared

his throat feeling embarrassed.

Liyema: "I've got to go"

Lefa: "Good meeting you, man" he held his hand out but Liyema didn't shake it but instead walked away. Lefa looked at Ntombikayise before shrugging. When Liyema turned around to find the couple kissing his jaw clenched but there was nothing he could do. The last thing he expected was what he just witnessed so he needed to process it all. Ntombikayise ran inside to get her bag before locking the doors and going to the car with Lefa where Kgethang and

Noluthando waited. Lefa introduced his family to Ntombi with pleasure.

Kgethang: "Finally we get to put a face to the name. Such a pleasure meeting you, sis Ntombikayise" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Likewise, Bhuti".

Noluthando didn't say much just smiled.

Lefa: "She's very shy" he whispered to her before she got into the car and Ntombikayise nodded. Kgethang on the other hand spoke until they arrived at Felicia's house.

Craig: "Topdeck" he went to greet

Ntombikayise and Lefa because they arrived at the same time. Ntombikayise laughed at that and hugged Othu. Lefa introduced his family to the Knight's and they all went inside the yard. The men were already getting on like a house on fire but Nolu felt so odd. Ntombi: "Would you like anything to drink?" she asked Nolu with a smile.

Nolu: "I'd rather go with you to get the drinks because you're the only one that I know" she whispered shyly.

Ntombi: "No problem" the two of them went to get drinks and

Ntombikayise didn't mind Nolu clinging to her. The men were around the fire with beers laughing and chatting like they grew up together.

Poppy: "Nolu, I hope you gave our girl some tips on how to impress the Gwalas for when she becomes a makoti there too" she joked and the ladies laughed.

Ntombi: "No, we are not there yet and might never so you don't have to Noluthando" she smiled.

Nolu: "They are sweethearts. Just treat them with respect and love their son" she said with a smile.

Othu: "Respecting elders and treating her man good is like breathing to Ntombi so girl you're going to pass with flying colours" she high fived Ntombi and they all laughed.

Lucia: "Are you okay?" she asked Noluthando.

Nolu: "It's just not easy for me to meet new people"

Zuko: "We are like old friends you haven't seen in years so trust me you'll be fine after a while" she promised.

Yandi: "I'm exactly like you, Nolu but yeah we're like one big family. You'll someday meet all of us. Will

you stay for the new year?" Nolu nodded "Yes...then please join us with your husband and kids for a get together" she said with a smile.

Nolu: "As long as it's not at the beach"

Poppy: "I love people but even I don't want to be at the beach on New year's day so it won't be. It'll be at Yandi's place. It'll be a bring food and eat it together type of thing" Nolu nodded.

Nolu: "Will you be there?" she looked at Ntombi and Ntombikayise nodded "Then I accept" she smiled.

Lefa: "Baby, we are quickly stepping out to go get more drinks. I'll be right back" he said quietly.

Ntombi: "Okay, babe" he kissed her before leaving the ladies alone again and Ntombi's friends went crazy with excitement.

Othu: "Look at Craig already out the door without even telling me that" she shook her head in disbelief.

Zuko: "Girl, non of us got a report so calm down" she looked at her girlfriend leaving with the men and they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Guys, they knew that

Lefa telling me would automatically mean that you're told too haibo" she blushed and sipped her drink.

Poppy: "Honey, that man was telling you and only you. We just eavesdropped to understand why our partners were walking out" they all laughed.

Nolu: "But let's allow Ntombikayise to have her moment. We were once there at some point. Now they don't even open the door for us anymore" the ladies agreed.

Ntombikayise: "Thank you for understanding" she smiled.

Lucia: "I told Greg the drinks weren't enough. I swear I'll lose it if they are going to some bar to watch a game"

Ntombi: "My man..." she looked at them all "Yes my man said they are going to buy drinks so that's what he's going to do. If he doesn't return I'll know yours corrupted him" she joked and they all laughed.

Poppy: "Never, mine is the gooddest one" laughter once again.

Yandi: "No comment" they laughed even louder.

Othu: "I'm looking at Ntombi and I keep thinking "Ja waze wadla

umalambane" Ntombikayise spit her drink out from laughing.

Ntombi: "Wow, Othunyiweyo. I wouldn't have been shocked had Poppy or Felicia said that but you...no" she laughed again "Look now you let my lady act short lived by making me spit out my drink" they all laughed.

Zuko: "It's just good to see you extra happy" she smiled.

Nolu: "I bet you ladies my mother in law is going to ask me what kind of person Ntombikayise is. She's dying to meet you"

Poppy: "Yho, yho yadhala inkathazo madoda" the all

laughed.

Ntombi: "Tell her maybe soo she'll meet me"

Nolu: "Just be yourself and compliment her on how clean her house looks. I swear you'll never go wrong with that combo"

Lucia: "I like this sister sister think already" they all toasted "You ladies better take small sips because the drinks aren't on their way yet. Why else would they all go to buy them? These men though" she shook her head.

Ntombi: "Oh my word and I saw the cricket was on"

Othu: "So no one to braai our

meat and no drinks" she sighed
"Did we really just get ditched?"
she looked at the ladies.

Poppy: "We don't need them
anyway. We are a party on our
own" the ladies all cheered in
agreement.

Nolu: "I wasn't going to say
anything but we got two extra
bottles of wine because I didn't
know what to bring. Kgethang
said the snacks are enough
because he didn't want you guys
thinking we're drunks"

Ntombi: "That would be good
news if they didn't take Lefa's
car since we came in it"

Yandi: "Our car is bigger since we've got a large family so let me check" she went to go check through the window "It makes sense for them to take ours" she looked at the ladies with a smile and they all went to check where the keys were and found Lefa's.

Ntombi: "We have to drink responsibly though" all gave her a look and she laughed. The men did return and were shocked to find the ladies around the fire busy roasting the meat.

Craig: "Was the fire right before you ladies put the meat on?"

Othu: "If all of you hadn't left us,

we would not be standing here right now and yes the fire was right" she looked at her husband. They were all good at cooking but not outside cooking but they wanted to prove to the men they could do it.

Mzu: "We all had to go because each had to pick what his lady likes. Every man knows his woman so I couldn't go buy things for Yandi because I don't know what Yandi likes" the ladies laughed at the good excuse.

Poppy: "We'll accept that excuse but sit back and watch us teach you how to braai" the other ladies

felt like kicking her because they didn't have the confidence that she had. The men took their camp chairs and sat back enjoying watching the ladies braai.

Kgethang: "I'm glad I'm not driving because I don't want those non alcoholic beers you guys bought" the others laughed.

Babini: "They've got no idea what their doing" they all laughed while looking at the ladies.

Lefa: "They look like how I look when someone tells me to cook a meal" laughter again.

Kgethang: "This could actually work in our favour, men. If they

mess this up, we get to go to the shisanyama where the game is on. They get to buy us meat to say sorry and they will stay to watch the game with us to prove how bad the feel" they all fist bumped before sitting back. They finally finished and when the first piece was cut to check if was bloody inside as the men thought it would be they found perfectly made meat. The ladies did a high five and a happy dance. Once the food got served and the feast was had the music got played and Poppy challenged the rest by opening a the dance floor. Lefa

and Ntombi stood at the same time to join her and soon everyone even shy Nolu was up and dancing like no one was watching.

Ntombikayise finally loved those couples parties because she was a part of a couple too. Initially Noluthando didn't want to go with but as she danced with her husband by her side she was glad she came. She stood outside the bathroom waiting for Ntombikayise to finish up.

Nolu: "Don't worry, I'm not standing here because I'm not comfortable with the others" she said when Ntombi opened the door

and both ladies laughed.

Ntombi: "You are having a good time though right?" Noluthando nodded.

Nolu: "I think we get so lost in this wife title that we forget to remain girlfriends to our husbands so they won't be bored. Today I was a girlfriend again and I know Kgethang loved every second of it. Thank you for inviting me" she said with a smile.

Ntombi: "You've got a point there. When married we stop dating. So try to pick a day during the week that's just for you two.

Sometimes you'll find it's what

many divorced people needed"

Nolu: "I'm sorry that your marriage ended but my brother in law is a good man. Please take care of him because I know he will take care of you. I'm sure you know how unfaithful his son's mom was" Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "I really love him, Nolu. I know many think it's too soon to say such but I can't help how I feel"

Nolu: "To hell with others. Go at a pace that's perfect for you two" she smiled "Let me go in" she quickly ran inside the bathroom. Ntombikayise and Lefa

were flirting all through the night even when standing at a distance from each other. The party had to come to an end but they promised to get together again soon. Lefa first dropped his brother and sister in law off before taking Ntombikayise home. Lefa: "I've never seen sis Nolu dance. She didn't even dance at their wedding, baby" they both laughed. They were sitting in the car.

Ntombi: "Today was a good day. Both of us met awesome people" she held his hand.

Lefa: "I don't think your ex will

agree"

Ntombi: "He'll get over it. I don't want to talk about Liyema, Lefa because I don't owe him an explanation" Lefa nodded in agreement because he felt the same way about Mimi.

Lefa: "So I'll only see you after Christmas now?" he said with disappointment.

Ntombi: "They say absence makes the heart grow fonder" she leaned closer and he met her halfway in a kiss.

Lefa: "I'm glad that your tire burst that day" Ntombi laughed "Minus the potential threat. I

wouldn't change anything. I bought my mother pepper spray by the way" they both laughed.
Ntombi: "Did you get everything sorted for Hlompho regarding his new school?"

Lefa: "Yeah... I just hope he settles well there. Him being at my mother's actually gives me time to get a lot of work done at night"

Ntombi: "You'll have to get help soon, Lefa. Now that he's living with you you've got to be a present father"

Lefa: "I know, Ngqangqa. I guess that means I'll have to rent

office space too because I've been working from home. The last thing I want is for Hlompho to accidentally spill juice on work"

Ntombi: "There is a vacant office where I used to work. You only need one for now. Your assistant can share it with you until such a time you'll need a bigger one" Lefa nodded. They spoke more about the issue and Ntombi made a few good suggestions which Lefa appreciated.

Lefa: "Maybe someday we can partner together" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "I'm a dragon at work because I want everything to be

perfect" Lefa laughed out.

Lefa: "I doubt that very much".

They sat in the car for about an hour before finally parting. When

Nolu arrived home she found

Bonolo having tea pretending to not be able to sleep but Nolu knew

that her mother in law wanted

news on Ntombi. Kgethang had a

lot to drink so he went straight

to bed. Noluthando had nothing

bad to say about Ntombikayise.

Bonolo: "Since it sounds like you

two are friends now. Why not

invite her here for dinner? You'll

be hosting of course" Nolu

laughed.

Nolu: "I don't think that their relationship is at that stage of introducing parents, Mama.

Remember Kgethang kept me from meeting you guys for a year because it's what we agreed on. Don't pressure them. They had to introduce the kids for obvious reasons but meeting the parents I'd a big deal and it's scary"

Bonolo: "You're right but I just feel so left out. I know it's still early but I'm so excited that he's so excited not to mention

Hlomphe. I'm going to burst with anticipation" Nolu laughed.

Nolu: "For now just go to bed"

Bonolo: "I'm glad you had fun. This might be Lefa's future wife so I'm glad you two got along" she said with a smile "He told his father that her kids were welcoming too which is good. Okay I'll wait for him to bring her but he better not wait a year" Nolu laughed.

Nolu: "Let me go to bed. Thank you for looking after the kids"

Bonolo smiled and nodded

"Goodnight, Ma" she stood. Bonolo said goodnight and watched Noluthando go to the room.

Portia found herself getting more

frustrated as Liyema tossed and turned beside her. He had been grumpy since his errand to take his children's stuff home so she was certain that he either had a fight with Ntombikayise or his kids or all of them. He turned to face the other way again.

Portia: "Liyema" she switched her light on and sat up "What is it?" she asked "Did you change your mind about me going with you to the Eastern Cape?" she watched him sit up.

Liyema: "I spoke to Bandile. Can you believe that Ntombikayise introduced her boyfriend to them

today? She introduced another man to my kids without telling me" Portia rolled her eyes before falling backwards to lie on her back again.

Portia: "What am I to you?"

Liyema: "My girlfriend"

Portia: "Did you not introduce your kids to me?"

Liyema: "It's not the same. I went to talk to her before doing it" he laid back down too.

Portia: "We aren't talking about minors here. Had they been I'd understand why you are not happy but we are talking about young men who are culturally and

legally considered men who can make their own decisions. I'm sure that she spoke to them and they agreed to it" she hoped she could be the voice of reason.

Liyema: "They are still my children"

Portia: "Children whom you can't go to court and fight custody for because they can decide what they want since they are 18.

You're just angry that she moved on because you thought you were her last"

Liyema: "I'm talking about my kids and you're talking about something else. I'm going to go

make myself coffee. I can't sleep anyway" he stood to go to the kitchen. Portia wanted to let out a silent scream. Things were going so well for them. She took her phone and dialed her mother's number making small talk to pass time.

Ma Maduna: "What is really bothering you, Portia?" she asked when she got tired of the small talk. Portia told her what happened "Mmmm, that man will never see your worth when he's still hung up on another woman" she said.

Portia: "I'm competing with a

woman who is not even trying to win him back, Mama. I'd have understood if she was trying to come between us but she's living her life"

Maduna: "I could come over to help you and teach you how a man is kept. Your father and I were parted by death even though he was a skirt chaser he'd always return home to me"

Portia: "Clearly I didn't inherit your man keeping talents, Mama. No never mind. He'll get over her when he sees she's really moved on"

Maduna: "You're clueless when it

comes to men. A man chases after women he knows he can't have the most. I don't know if they find thrill in that but it's how it is. You will soon bore him and since he doesn't want to marry you, he'll take his child and kick you out"

Portia: "He loves me. I know that"

Maduna: "Love isn't always enough. Since you don't need my help let me leave you to it then. You know where to find me when you're ready for my wisdom. Try to get pregnant again and pray for a boy. She gave him four so it

might be her magic"

Portia: "Babies are no traps whether they are male or female. I'll do it my way. He doesn't love her anymore. He is just shocked that another man wants her"

Maduna: "If you say so, my dear. Goodnight. Give Abo a big kiss from me" she hung up before Portia could say goodbye. When Liyema felt Portia's arms around him from the back he smiled. He didn't know what his problem was because he had a beautiful girlfriend whom he loved a little more each day. They were happy but something about seeing

Ntombikayise with Lefa didn't sit well with him. He knew that bringing it up again would upset Portia so he instead lifted her up the kitchen counter and kissed her. Their bond was stronger and he could finally tell her that he loved her and mean it. They were interrupted by a loud knock and Liyema walked to the door swearing at the person but softly. When he found his mother standing at the door looking like she'd seen a ghost he let her inside quickly.

Mrs E: "Someone stole half of my money and that's only because I

keep my money in two separate accounts. I don't want to imagine the damage had I not done that" she spoke in a quick panic.

Liyema: "What?" he was shocked
"How?" he added.

Mrs E: "I don't know" she said in a shaky voice "Maybe it's ciber crime. All I know is that my money is gone, Liyema. The money I had just gotten for my house is gone" she went to sit down.

Liyema: "Why is this suddenly happening now that you've got a man"

Mrs E: "Oh no...this is no time to use any excuse to express your

dislike of Scott. He has his own money that he got from he's wife's insurance" she defended her boyfriend "I also don't share private information with him so it can't be him" she added.

Liyema: "Let's go to the police" he looked at his mother "Transfer all your money to me if you must, Mama. We do not know how much access this person has to your banking information. Block everything for now. Dammit these ciber criminals are most busy at these times because they know most have received their Christmas bonuses. You might

have used an ATM that was tampered with. We're going to go to the cops let me go get dressed. Babe, get her a strong drink so long" Portia nodded. She did as Liyema asked and watched Mrs E down the strong drink like it was water. She was clearly stressed. "Do you remember Zingisa Elephant? Did you really think you'll go to the grave without paying for what you did? I'm coming for everything" read a text from an unknown number. When Mrs E dialed the number it was unavailable. Her hands started to shake and she asked

for another drink.

Mrs E: "The police are useless. I'll deal with it myself" she stood and was out the door before Portia could answer. Portia explained to Liyema why his mother left and Liyema couldn't get hold of her. He couldn't go to the house either because the house no longer belonged to Mrs E. Liyema called Mahlubandile and Hlubi said she'd try to get hold of their mother and did Lungile promised to also try though they weren't in Cape Town. Liyema knew that he couldn't go to the Eastern Cape anymore because his mother

needed him. As Mrs E drove around with a mind filled with questions she wondered who the person threatening her might be. She called her private investigator and he agreed to meet her right away. Zingisa was not a good person according to Mrs E and she felt no regret over the years but she finally realized what people meant when they say karma never forgets an address💔

S2-INSERT 51

It was days after Christmas and

while everyone laughed and ate the previous days Mrs E waited on the person who blackmailed her to communicate with her once again. She lied to Liyema saying that all her money got recovered as it was the bank who was at fault saying that he can go with his family to the rural areas as they had planned to do. The last thing she wanted was to open a can of worms and confess to being the one who killed Zingisa. She hadn't told Mahlubandile about the blackmail either.

Mrs E: "Why do I pay you if all

you'll tell me is that you can't find anything, Bongani?" she looked at the private investigator "It's been days yet you keep saying that this person covered their tracks well. That's not bloody good enough, man!" she shouted. Bongani: "What are the chances of your husband faking his own death?"

Mrs E: "What?" she walked towards him quickly.

Bongani: "He supposedly died in a foreign country after you framed him for a murder that he didn't commit" Mrs E held her waist

giving his theory more thought.

Mrs E: "But we saw the body"

Bongani: "There are drugs that can make a person seem dead because they slow their pulse."

Mrs E: "And framing him was such a risk because I knew that he was a smart man" she walked up and down in the small room she was renting. With half her money gone, she had to downscale on her lifestyle "Zingisa's parents aren't the type to figure such out, steal my money and blackmail me either. This does sound like something that my dear husband would do.

Maybe he's sitting on some iceland laughing at me" she sat but stood once again "Look into it. Make sure that he's indeed being eaten by maggots" Bongani nodded before making his way to the door "Bongani" she called behind him and watched him turn to face her "If by the end of the day you still have nothing, don't. bother coming back here" Bongani's jaw clenched but he nodded and left. Scott appeared when Bongani opened the door. The two men exchanged a nod before walking past each other.

Scott wanted to hug Mrs E but she extended her arm between them to keep the gap between them wide.

Scott: "This is not how a relationship works, Zola" he looked at her "Look at you. When was the last time you ate something decent? Are you even taking your treatment?" he asked the last question in a whisper.

Mrs E: "Just leave me the hell alone" she suddenly remembered that she had been taking her treatment poorly "Don't you have somewhere to be?" she shot him

a cold look. Scott got closer to her and though she pushed him away he managed to hold her firmly in his grip. Mrs E didn't have the strength to fight so she let him hug her. She was too stressed to be a girlfriend so she was not going to apologize for her behaviour nor would she be surprised if Scott left for good. Scott: "When one is used to being treated badly they usually don't know what to do when a right love comes. I'm not going to allow you to push me away" he whispered to her and she closed

her eyes listening to him.

Mrs E: "If you knew the type of person I really am you'd run voluntarily. You saw me so now you can go"

Scott: "I'd rather go and run you a nice bath so you can relax. I'll order in and we can enjoy a nice brunch" he kissed her cheek. She watched him go to the bathroom and heard the water run. She was not dirty but she needed a relaxing bath so she hoped that it would make her feel a bit better. She calmed down a bit and managed to smile when she gave

Scott's gesture some thought.

Mrs E: "I'm sorry for not attending Christmas lunch with you and your family" she watched him peek out the bathroom door.

Scott: "They were really looking forward to spending the day with the woman who has been making me such a happy man but I told them you have your own family issues to take care of. Don't worry about it, darling" he said with a smile "For now let's do this" he unbuttoned Mrs E's dress then pulled the zip down and watched it land on the floor. Many

thought they were too old to be intimate but they didn't think so and after years of not feeling a man's touch Mrs E melted in the moments they'd be intimate. Once Scott rid her of her clothing he lifted her up gently, walked with her to the bathroom before easing her into the warm water. They'd bathed together a few times so he knew her preferred water temperature. Mrs E closed her eyes feeling grateful to him for giving her what she didn't think she needed but as she sat in the tub she realized it was

exactly what she needed.

Mrs E: "Thank you" she sat up to kiss him before relaxing back again "Won't you join me?" she smiled. He was sitting on the toilet seat facing her.

Scott: "Let me rather do this" he took a soft scrubbing sponge, dipped it into the water and started to wash her.

Mrs E: "What did I do to deserve this?" she smiled with her eyes closed as she felt the sponge glide up and down her back.

Scott: "You've been an amazing partner and today I'm going to

spoil you and hopefully you'll forget about your troubles"

Mrs E: "They are too great to forget but for now I'll just try because there's nothing I can do about it"

Scott: "Talking always helps. I remember when Anne had just died, I found some healing after opening up to my family"

Mrs E: "If I tell you I'd have to kill you" she mumbled.

Scott: "What?"

Mrs E: "Oh nothing, my love. I was just thinking out loud" she took a deep breath. She heard a

knock on the door and Scott stood saying it might be their food.

There were some voices at the door before she heard it shut.

Scott: "The food is here and it smells absolutely divine" he shouted.

Mrs E: "Let me take in more of this moment and I'll join you soon" she shouted back. Scott returned and took his seat on the toilet.

Mrs E's phone rang and she asked him to quickly go and take it in the room. It was a private call and she felt her heart beat faster.

Mrs E: "Hello" she said quietly.

Caller: "You sound nervous, old friend" said an unfamiliar yet familiar voice on the other side of the phone. She couldn't explain why the voice sounded familiar yet she could remember whose it was.

Mrs E: "What do you want, you bastard?" she knew that it was the blackmailer. Scott was asking her what's going on but she held her hand up to tell him to keep quiet. The caller let out a laugh that had Mrs E so mad she put her fist down forgetting that

she was in water. The soapy water hit her face making her more upset

Caller: "I know what you did and I have proof"

Mrs E: "I don't know what you're talking about" she snapped.

Scott: "What's wrong?" he whispered looking concerned..

Caller: "Oh is that the lover I've been seeing you with?. You might as well dump him now because he won't want to be with you after knowing what you did"

Mrs E: "Stop hiding, you coward.

If you're man enough you'll show

yourself" she heard laughter on the other side.

Caller: "Invite accepted". Mrs E heard a beeping sound after those words so she knew that he hung up. She stood and nearly slipped when she made her way onto the bathroom tiles but she held on just in time. Scott was following behind her not knowing what was going on.

Mrs E: "Please leave" she wrapped a towel around her body.

Scott: "What...,"

Mrs E: "I asked you to leave, Scott please. You are suffocating

me. I'm pushing you away because I want you to go" she lied. She loved how he loved her but she didn't feel she deserved it "Don't bother coming back either" she added while walking towards the door. She opened the door but he stood looking at her.

Scott: "Are you sure you want that?" Mrs E nodded and watched him take a deep breath

"Okay...here I thought that I found someone to grow old with but I guess it was never meant to be" he took his jacket and walked towards her. They made

prolonged eye contact and Mrs E felt him kiss her on the cheek.

"Take care of yourself" he whispered before leaving. Mrs E closed the door and let out a groan of anger. She was eager to see where her relationship with Scott led.

Mrs E: "Damn you, Zingisa" she said with gritted teeth. She went to her handbag to check if her gun was still inside. She was not planning on taking any chances with her safety. The invite to her blackmailer was made out of anger and as she sat with a gun

in hand she prayed that she had not said he should show himself. She ate the food that was ordered by Scott hours after the call "Coward" she said to herself when she thought about the stalker. She nearly fell backwards on her chair when she heard a knock on the door. Her weapon was in her hand and pointing to the door waiting to shoot whoever appeared. The door was locked so she'd know by forced entry that it was an intruder. In normal circumstances she'd have called the cops but the person

knew way too much and she didn't want to risk it. The doorknob turned making her focus on the door more. Suddenly whoever fiddled with the door stopped but Mrs E did not lower her weapon. "Dammit, Zola it's not like you to hide like this" she said to herself while walking to the door. She was no Wonderwoman but she didn't see herself as a weakling either. She pulled the door towards her but no one stood on the other side of it. She breathed a sigh of relief but as she turned to make her way outside she felt

strong arms hold her from behind. One hand was over her mouth while the other grabbed the gun from her hand. She watched her only hope be tossed across the room as the man carried her inside. She was kicking about trying to fight back but it was all in vein. She heard the key turn in the door and her mind anticipated the worst. The person let go of her and when she turned around she couldn't believe her eyes. It was bra Jester, a man who used to be one of Mr Elephant's employees.

Jes: "Miss me?" he asked with a smirk on his face "Because you best believe that I missed you" he leaned forward to kiss her but she slapped him hard across the face. He adjusted his jaw while rubbing it but instead of looking angry, he looked amused.

Mrs E: "What are you doing here?" she back away from him.

Jes: "Merry Christmas, Zola. Or is it belated?" he said with a smile before giving her a little red box "Don't even try to reach for the gun because it's empty" he showed her the bullets and she

looked back at it feeling
defenceless.

Mrs E: "So it was you? Did you
take my money?"

Jes: "I needed it. Getting back on
my feet after the prison life you
and your husband put me in was
not easy" he poured himself a
drink.

Mrs E: "How did you do it?"

Jes: "You've got poor cyber
security so anyone could have done
it. Aren't you going to offer me a
seat? I don't remember you to be
such a poor host. Remember
those fancy parties at your

house?" he sat down "And if memory serves me right you used to host me at parties no one else got invited to"

Mrs E: "Answer my question" she took the glass from his grip.

Jes: "Yes, I was the one calling you". For some reason Mrs E took a deep breath before laughing.

Mrs E: "You better bring my money back, Luyolo" she looked at him.

Jes: "Or else what, Zola?" he shifted forward to look at her. He kissed her passionately and Mrs E's body betrayed her because she

didn't push him back immediately. She first allowed him to kiss her and was shocked to learn that he was still the only man who could make her lose her senses.

Mrs E: "Sies, who the hell knows what you got up to in prison" her senses returned and he laughed when she wiped her lips wearing a disgusted look on her face.

Jes: "Don't believe all the prison stories you see on TV. Not all of us screw with young men in prison" he laughed before sitting back. He looked at her with a smile. She was as beautiful as he

remembered her to be and the fact that she dyed her hair made her look younger than her peers. The two of them had a passion filled affair at one point until Mr Elephant found out. That was the end of not only their affair but also Jester's life as a free man. Mr Elephant had all the resources to frame an innocent man for a crime he didn't commit and Jester had to pay for sleeping with his wife. He'd been in prison all those years serving time for a crime that he never committed.

Mrs E: "How did you get out, Luyolo? You were given two life sentences" she was the only one who called him by his real name and he was happy to see that it had not changed.

Jes: "I appealed so many times and finally won. You do remember that I am a lawyer right?"

Mrs E: "So why did you blackmail me? You're not getting more money out of me". She shifted backwards on the table she sat on when he moved forward. She was not afraid of him but afraid of the heat she felt when he was

near. A heat she had forgotten about after his arrest. Mr Elephant warned her to not visit Jester in jail or he'd punish her for the affair too so she chose to obey. She wondered about him years after his arrest and she was glad to see that he never changed. The once black hair and beard now had white strands in them but he was as handsome as she remembered him to be. Bra Jester's phone beeped and she watched him look at the screen. "She had nothing to do with your arrest" read a text on his phone.

He took a deep breath and looked at her for a long while. His plan was to make her pay for everything he thought she was a part of but when that sms came he felt his anger and urge for revenge he planned on her just fade away.

Jes: "Your husband stole my life from me. The money that you have was his so I'm entitled to it". Revenge was all that kept him going in prison but now that he had no one to serve it to, he didn't know what to do. "I'm not going to apologize for taking

what I deserve. I'm sorry that I had to take it from you forcefully but you wouldn't have given it to me had I asked"

Mrs E: "You should learn to ask. I used to give you everything that you needed back then" she reminded him.

Jes: "I needed you to choose me and fight him with me, Zola. You didn't do that but instead distanced yourself and never came to see me". Mrs E blinked away her tears.

Mrs E: "He would have crushed me. You know that he had a little

obsession with me. Hence he would cheat but never agree to divorce me. You saw the power he had" her vision became blurry and Jester calmed down. He always had a soft spot for her. Even in jail he had a little picture of her to make the days feel shorter even though he was angry at her. Jes: "I don't care about the Zingisa bitch. I was glad to learn that you served him the same revenge that he served me" Mrs E: "I guess I learned from the best" she said referring to her late husband "His affair with

her was the last straw, Luyolo. They not only hurt me but my son too and I lost it. I don't regret killing her and I don't regret framing him for it. I hope they are in hell together"

Jes: "And I'm not going to turn you in because the bastard deserved it" he said. The sms from a reliable source changed his mind. He couldn't punish her for something she didn't do.

Mrs E: "But you said you were coming for everything. What did you mean by that?"

Jes: "I thought you helped him

frame me because you were closest to me meaning you could plant false evidence"

Mrs E: "I loved you way too much to give him leverage over you. I don't know how he got to plant the evidence"

Jes: "Death would have been a better punishment than prison. The things that I had to do in those first years to make my mark so no one would mess with me were satanic. You know that I was never a violent man but prison brought out a monster in me that I didn't know lived inside

me and my only crime was to love you" Mrs E let her tears fall. He indeed was the most gentle of men she ever had the pleasure of knowing so she could only imagine how difficult life in prison was for him. "Don't cry, I'm a survivor" he wiped her tears. The man in front of her was her love. She got involved with him the wrong way but her heart was ripped out when he was arrested. It explained why his voice sounded unfamiliar yet familiar. She had to force him out of her mind and heart for her own sanity but

clearly her subconscious never forgot him. She thought he was guilty of the murders at first but as years went by she found that he was innocent but there was nothing that she could do about it.

Mrs E: "I guess I chose to make him pay the same way he made you pay because I never forgave him for taking you away from me. I wanted him to rot in jail too but like the lucky bastard he was, he got away with it by choosing death. He's always been a coward who hid behind the power of

money. I'm sorry that I thought you're guilty"

Jes: "My own mother thought that I was guilty. When I heard I'd be out I was so excited to go see my family even though they never cared to visit only to learn that none of them are still alive" he laughed while crying "Each year I spent in jail claimed a life in my family" he wiped his tears.

Mrs E: "I'm sorry that I allowed us to happen knowing who I was married to. I was the married one so I should have been the one to walk away. You just...you just

gave me a love and respect that he didn't. Keep the money because I really don't care about it. What you took could never hurt me as much as what he took from me. It was never the money that I was crying for but the thought of going to jail for what I did when they both deserved it"

Jes: "I'm never going to send you to jail" he promised "I knew you were married too but didn't stop seeing you so don't blame yourself. You were my love, Zola" Mrs E laughed softly.

Mrs E: "How is it possible that it

feels like we haven't been apart for years? I should be mad at you for blackmailing me yet here I am understanding why you did it.

Jes: "I had to check if you still had that feisty side. You inviting the person who blackmailed you over proved its still there" they both laughed.

Mrs E: "But it was never there when I was around my husband. I was as meek as a lamb"

Jes: "Because fear numbs us"

Mrs E: "How did you find everything out?"

Jes: "I have my ways..."

friendships in prison. Same way I managed to free myself. It feels so good to be outside. I literally sat outside the prison gate for an hour not knowing what to do with myself after years on the inside"

Mrs E: "You could have called me"

Jes: "I didn't know how much of the old Zola still remained in you.

There was a time I resented you thinking you helped him frame me, but I was wrong"

Mrs E: "I thought it was him.

That perhaps he faked his own death. I never imagined that it would be you. I finally found my

daughter" Jester smiled.

Jes: "Lulama?" Mrs E nodded with a smile. She gave a summary of Mahlubandile's story "Remember when we'd go to your grandmother's house hoping whoever took her returned her?" Mrs E nodded.

Mrs E: "He was angry at me for having lied about aborting instead of being happy to have his daughter" she shook her head and laughed in disbelief.

Jes: "He never deserved you. I'm glad you found your daughter because you used to cry a lot when

thinking about her"

Mrs E: "And you'd always comfort me" she smiled thinking back. She knew that he might have an agenda but when he kissed her she melted into his arms again.

The excitement built up and one thing led to another. Thankfully she had protection. Her body had changed as expected due to age but Jester was as excited to be with her as he used to when they were young.

Mrs E: "We can't start over again, Luyolo. What just happened was great but too much has

happened. I do not even know if I can trust you. For all I know you want to take out the anger that you have towards him on my children and I would never allow that"

Jes: "I just realized that the money means nothing. Yes, I need it to live but it doesn't stitch the wounds. But being with you right now makes the pain less. I still love you"

Mrs E: "No you don't. I have someone in my life" she got up and wore her gown "Too much has changed. Plus...he...he gave me

HIV" she stuttered.

Jes: "I know that too" Mrs E's eyes widened "That I learned a few days ago and I wish I could wake him from the grave and kill him myself"

Mrs E: "You've got to go" she watched him get up from the bed. He started to get dressed. She didn't like how defenceless he made her feel but in a good way. With him she never felt like she had to be anything other than herself. "No, Luyolo" she turned her head sideways when he wanted to kiss her again. He made her

feel young again like they were still in that forbidden love bubble they used to hide in and she saw that as dangerous because it had dire consequences back then so she feared it would be no better now.

Jes: "I'm sorry for blackmailing you. I really still love you, Zola"

Mrs E: "Go meet a younger woman and just live. Make up for lost time"

Jes: "I'm making up for time lost between us. Time stolen from us. Young women who will suck my bank account dry can go to hell"

Mrs E: "You mean same way you sucked my bank account dry?" .

Jes: 'I explained that but if returning it will prove just how much I want to come back to you I'll do it"

Mrs E: "Keep it. Maybe it'll take away the guilt I've been carrying for not doing anything to help you get out when I found you're innocent. Just don't think that you'll blackmail me into your bed with the Zingisa thing. You blackmailed me already so I really can't trust that you weren't serious"

Jes: 'To blackmail you into my bed would be rape. I want to be back in your bed the right way.

Judging from what just happened, there's still some magic between us".

Mrs E: "Please go" she whispered. She was not ready to admit to the magic "We're too old for magic. I'm a grandmother"
Jester laughed.

Jes: "A very sexy one. You age like fine wine. Sex has no age either"
he reminded her "I hope it was the last time you saw that white man because if you'll call me, I

don't want to share you. I did so once and I hated it"

Mrs E: "Maybe you need to stay away from other men's women"

Jes: "Maybe other men should stay away from my woman" Mrs E didn't like the subtle blush she felt after he claimed her as his woman.

Mrs E: "Just go" she said softly. He put down a piece of paper on the table.

Jes: "My number should you want to make up for more lost time. I know I do. You're still as beautiful as ever, MaZoli. Like I've said

I've been through a lot so no HIV is going to scare me" he smiled before walking to the door "Do you know that in the wild some animal species kill the young of another male's bloodline?" he stood by the slightly open door.

Mrs E: "What?"

Jes: "I want to get to know my son, Zola. The only reason I didn't rub his paternity in that bastard's face was because I didn't want my son to be killed by that monster. Now he's gone so I want to get to know my son" he looked at her.

Mrs E: "I don't know what you are talking about, Jester" her chest started to rise and fall quickly as her breathing quickened.

Jes: "I won't force myself into your life but I won't let go of my son again so don't try to make me. Don't try anything foolish either because that secret will be public knowledge. Too much has been taken from me and the thought of that pig raising my son made my blood boil but it was for the best. I'll give you some time to tell him" he said before closing the

door behind him. Just when she was happy to feel alive he dropped that bomb on her. She really didn't care about the money that he managed to steal from her but he wanted her to reveal an even bigger secret. She'd rather go sit in a jail cell for killing Zingisa than allow him to reveal her other secret. She looked at the piece of paper on the table and suddenly wished that Jester was still in prison. She decided she'd try to bribe him with more money in exchange for his silence. The connection between them

scared her as much as him revealing the secret didn't

Portia ran to Liyema's car that she borrowed to run a few errands not believing her ears. She was in the area Mrs E lived in and decided to go check in on her boyfriend's mother to score some brownie points. The visit to the rural area with Liyema proved to her that she'll need to have someone's support in the family. They were planning on spending the new year there too but she couldn't stand it anymore so she

asked to leave early. Liyema didn't like how isolated his family made her feel so they all came back after Christmas day. Portia stood by the door ready to knock when she heard Jester say that he wanted to know his son. Portia knew that it was either Liyema or Lungile because Mrs E had no other sons. She dialled her mother's number because she felt the news was too big for her to carry by herself.

Maduna: "Until that man marries you, he's family is never going to take you seriously. I'm so tired of

telling you the same thing" those were her first words. No hello or how are you. Portia rolled her eyes before telling her mother what she heard "Who she was judging you for opening your legs for her married son when she knew very well she's no better" she clapped once.

Portia: "Should I tell Liyema, Mama?"

Maduna: "Whose stupid daughter are you because I can't believe the things you think of something? That man's surname is part of the reason why his

business is doing so well. The Elephant name carries great weight even here in the Eastern Cape"

Portia: "But it might be Lungile"

Maduna: "You have to be smart about this, Portia. Let Zola know that you heard the conversation and tell her that you'll keep her secret. She'll think she has an ally in you and encourage her son to hold on to you"

Portia: "She hates me too much"

Maduna: "She'd rather have you close and keep your mouth shut than have her son find out and

hate her. Whether he's the bastard child or the other one Liyema will hate her and she would surely die. Play your card right and watch Zola get you married"

Portia: "You clearly don't know this woman, Mama"

Maduna: "I don't but I do know she's desperate to keep this secret. She's got influence on him so if she advises that you are a woman worthy enough to be his wife he'll give it thought. If you go tell him he might end up hating you too so do not do that"

Portia: "I've got to think about it more. Bye, Ma"

Maduna: "If you allowed me to visit, you'd have been wearing your makoti attire right now with a new name but hey..."

Portia: "Bye, Mama" she hung up. She decided against confronting Mrs E while emotions were still high so she went home instead. A gentleman was on his way out when she walked inside their apartment. Abongile was out with her big brothers.

Portia: "Who was that?" she asked Liyema.

Liyema: "No one" he kissed her "So how's my mother?" he asked.

Portia: "Got a headache so decided to come straight home"

Liyema nodded "Who is Jester, Liyema?" she looked at him.

Liyema looked at her confused.

Liyema: "The only one that I knew was a man who used to work for my father but I was still very young back then" he suddenly remembered "Where did you get that name?" Portia didn't have an explanation.

Portia: "Heard Mr Dudumashe mention him once when with your

mother so I thought he was family" she said quickly hoping Liyema wouldn't ask his mother about that conversation.

Liyema: "Nha he wasn't but he was like a uncle to me though. Used to spoil me rotten. I wonder where he went to. He just disappeared"

Portia: "Was Lungile born the time he left?" Liyema thought back.

Liyema: "Nha...it was still just me. Why?" he looked at her.

Portia: "He sounds like he was important so I wondered if Lungi also knew him"

Liyema: "Nope" he said with certainty. Portia suddenly felt worried. "What will we do for the new year? I was thinking family braai because Lungile and Alu will also return soon" he looked at her. Portia: "Anything you want" she smiled. She missed her sisters but her mother told her to not leave Liyema's side.

Liyema: "Ntombikayise had my boys for Christmas so I will ask them to spend the new year with us"

Portia: "Did they agree?" Liyema shook his head "You can't stop

them from meeting Ntombi's boyfriend, Liyema" she reminded him for the hundredth time.

Liyema: "About that" he kissed her "I thought I'd allow life to deal with it" he added.

Portia: "What does that mean?"

Liyema: "If they are meant to be together they'll last but not they'll break up. I just hope she didn't introduce a fly by night to my children. So I've decided to focus on my relationship" he smiled and she did too.

Portia: "I'm glad but what if they get married? How will you

react?" Liyema looked down.

Liyema: "This is her first boyfriend after the divorce so I'm sure she won't be too serious too quickly because she's cautious after what I did to her. Life throws all kinds of challenges to a relationship that prove to us who people who are meant to stay in our lives are"

Portia: "You heard from Mahlubandile how happy she is right? I'm sure their relationship will withstand anything. I hope so because she deserves happiness like we are" Liyema

nodded

Liyema: "And I'm happy for her"
he faked a smile "Because I've
got a beautiful woman in my life"
he kissed her. "I know that you
never married and I guarantee
you that there's nothing special
about marriage. We are like a
married couple already. I'm
committed to you" Portia smiled.

Portia: "You better be. I don't
want to put love potion in your
food" she joked and they both
laughed.

Liyema: "Hmmm no need for that.
I'm over Ntombi and I don't

want any other woman but you.
You should look for work next year
Abongile will start crèche"

Portia: "I'll update my CV" he
nodded. The two of them enjoyed
the free time without a busy
toddler. Portia's mind was at Mrs
E's secret. She knew that should
Liyema be Jester's child, it would
mess him up so she decided to
keep the secret to herself. They
were in a good place and Liyema
was known for not handling things
well so she feared he'd go off the
rails again. She decided against
confronting Mrs E for her own

peace of mind.

Kgethang kept looking at Lefa as he was talking to someone over the phone. He kept biting his bottom lip and Kgethang knew that it was a stressful call because it's what Lefa did when he was stressed. He watched his brother hold the back of his head after ending the call.

Kgethang: "What's up?" he stood to walk towards, Lefa.

Lefa: "Nothing" he walked away before his brother could reach him.

Kgethang: "I know you better than that, Lefa" Kgethang followed behind. The family was all out to the beach as Vakele was honouring a promise that he made to his grandchildren.

Lefa: "Two clients told me that they won't be needing my services anymore" he looked at his big brother "Another one that I pitched to for a long term contract turned me down" he added.

Kgethang: "Rather strange for them to do so when most offices are closed. Did they say why??" he

started to feel concerned.

Lefa: "They found better services at a cheaper price"

Kgethang: "Over the holidays?"

Lefa: "I don't know, Kgethang. All I know is that if I lose one more the business is going to be in trouble" he got himself some water.

Kgethang: "What kind of people do business over the phone? Surely they are going to pay for cancelling contracts without any real reason"

Lefa: "Well they said they don't mind. What am I not doing

right?" he asked with frustration
"So far I've conducted thorough audits so why would they just cancel?" he asked.

Kgethang: "Can't you lower your fees?"

Lefa: "I'm already offering my services at a reasonable fee,

Kgethang. If I go any longer I might as well offer my services free of charge" he shouted "I'm sorry" he added when he realised he was taking his anger out on the wrong person.

Kgethang: "It's all good" he patted his brother's shoulder.

Lefa: "I was planning on buying Tata a bakkie for his plumbing equipment. I saw the perfect second hand one but how will I do it when I'm losing money?"

Kgethang: "Lefa, stop trying to force matters. You can't help Tata in this business and neither of us expect you to. Your business is a baby so don't expect it to walk when it's still in its crawling stages. Contracts come and go. You are good at what you do so you'll double your client base once the holiday season is over"

Lefa: "I know but I don't like

losing things I've worked my ass off to get. How the hell did Tata cope with not knowing where his next paycheck will come from?"

Kgethang: "He's a superhero"

they both laughed and Lefa nodded in agreement "So for now just go see your woman. Maybe she'll calm you down" he advised.

Lefa: "I can't bring her into this mess, man. Some women bail when they hear their man is losing cash"

Kgethang: "I'll pretend you didn't just assume your independent girlfriend has gold digging

qualities"

Lefa: "I'd never degrade her like that but I can't deny that her ex-husband comes from a millionaire family and he might be one too so she's used to the best by now. Imagine if I can't even take her out for an ice cream?"

Kgethang: "Okay point taken but I didn't say tell her what's happening. Just go clear your head by spending time with her"

Lefa: "Usually you chased me away like this when you wanted the house to yourself to bring a girl over" Kgethang laughed out loud.

Kgethang: "I don't have to sneak my woman into my parental home because I can bring her and sleep with her in one bed with the parents knowing" he pointed to his wedding finger.

Lefa: "Well lucky you" he laughed "But you're right, I do miss my woman so much. This Christmas thing and having her spend time with her family and I with mine is just too much"

Kgethang: "Unite the two families" he joked and they both laughed.

Lefa: "Give me lobola money" he

held his hand out.

Kgethang: "Each man to his own in that department, brother" they both laughed.

Lefa: "I'm out" he took his keys "I don't know what you'll use to get around though since Tata has your rental car" he said on his way out.

Kgethang: "I'm not planning on going anywhere. I want to take in as much of the alone time as possible before the chaos returns" he laughed and heard Lefa laugh too before the door shut.

Kgethang went to get snacks

before putting on the sports channel "Enjoy the few hours of bachelor life, Kgethang. God knows you don't get enough of it" he said to himself with a smile before putting his feet on the table.

Lefa loved Ntombi's garden so much and loved holding her hand while sitting in it even more. He never owned a house but it was a dream of his someday. He hoped that the day he purchased a house would be with a wife by his side.

Ntombi: "Would you mind matching

for the wedding, babe?" she looked at him but he was not there mentally "Lefa" she shook him and he snapped out of his thoughts to look at her "What's wrong?" she asked.

Lefa: "Just some underdevelopment in my business, baby. I'm sorry that I'm bringing all that here"

Ntombi: "Talk to me. Maybe I can advise you on something" he leaned closer to kiss her.

Lefa: "You're amazing" he looked at her "I just lost a contract or two" he said softly. He couldn't

keep it from her as he planned to because he wanted them to have an open communication relationship.

Ntombi: "Major ones?" Lefa nodded "But why? What were their reasons?" he told her "They just called out of the blue on the same day to cancel you?" she sat closer.

Lefa: "Lost the first one before Christmas actually"

Ntombi: "I'm sorry to hear that but I'm confident that greater and bigger ones will come" she went sit on his lap.

Lefa: "I just had this growth plan in mind and I was not doing too badly but now. I don't know"

Ntombi: "Your business will grow. You have put too much into it for it not to. Take that job to help Craig and the gang with their financial planning" she advised.

Lefa: "That's not a strong point of mine but I'll give it more thought"

Ntombi: "There were a few small companies who weren't happy with the service my previous company gave them. I can give you the names and you can call and

ask for a meeting" Tamkhulu words came to mind of how she should hand people means to help themselves and not take on the load by doing the work for them. She still found herself wanting to carry others load for them but in her relationship she was not going to repeat the same mistakes. She was going to allow Lefa to be King of his life by trying to solve his own problems. "They said should I ever open my own firm they'll follow me so it's worth a try" she added.

Lefa: "You're not a part of my

business, baby so they won't want to be associated with it"

Ntombi: "But once they learn that I recommended you they might"

Lefa: "No, those are your contacts for when you someday decide to go independent. I'll hook more contracts after the holidays. At least I'm not declaring bankruptcy"

Ntombi: "Absolutely nothing wrong with starting from scratch but because you have a child I'm glad that you still have savings. I love you" she kissed him.

Lefa: "I love you so much more"
he squeezed her thigh and kissed
her again "Damn it's hot" he
looked at the clear skies and
Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "Let me go get us some
ice cold water" she stood but
instead of going to get water
bottles from the fridge she went
to the tap where the pipe was
connected. When Lefa felt a cool
splash on his body he jumped up
quickly and realized that he was
being watered down. He held his
arms out to block the water while
laughing. He chased Ntombikayise

around the backyard and she clearly liked seeing him wet because she laughed until she couldn't run from him anymore. He took the pipe from her hands and directed it to her. She screamed while running from the water. She ran to the tap and turned it until the water stopped attacking her. They were both soaked and Lefa went to her and kissed her.

Lefa: "That was exactly what I needed. A good laugh to take the depressing feeling away and cool water for the scorching heat"

Ntombi: "I'm good for you" she whispered confidently before kissing him again.

Lefa: "I couldn't agree more"

Ntombi: "But I'm wetter than you, baby because you had the pipe longer" she laughed while looking at herself.

Lefa: "Then you shouldn't mind if I make you wet twice" he held her behind firmly before kissing her and she was left blushing. He indeed made her wet twice and both times were refreshing after days of not spending time with him due to their individual family

commitments. She was not worried about his business facing downs because she'd seen him work and his work ethics were amazing and any company would be lucky to have him handle their finances. ❤️

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New Year came and went but Mrs E's problems remained. Jester refused to take her money and took so much offence that she had not been able to get hold of him since the day she tried to buy

his silence. A few months ago she thought that she'd be living in a cosy apartment with Scott and planning on spending the rest of their lives together but she was as miserable as she was while married to Mr Elephant and after he died. She sat waiting for Jester to join her after begging him to give her another chance to talk. She remembered that he was never one to make a lady wait and when he walked into the restaurant she smiled before standing. "Some things never change" she thought. He still

didn't seem to like keeping a lady waiting and he was still the neat gentleman she remembered. Both of them sat down and he ordered water with a slice of lemon.

Mrs E: "You don't drink anymore?" she took a sip of her wine.

Jes: "Limited stock in prison" he joked but she laughed at the joke alone "Should you be drinking?" he looked at her hands.

Mrs E: "Don't do that. Just because I am HIV positive it doesn't mean I should stop living. It's been years now so I'm sure wine won't kill me now" she

snapped.

Jes: "Apologies, mam. I'm just repeating what I read but it's your body. I hope you didn't call me here to throw insults at me again, Zola" he thanked the waiter for the water before ordering a big slice of cake. "What are you laughing at?" he looked at her.

Mrs E: "It's just that you're still the same. You're literally the only man that I knew who could down such sweet things" he couldn't help but let out a soft laugh "Also I'm not here to offer you more

money." she added honestly "I'm here to make you see reason, Luyolo. He's done well without you all these years and you've done well without him" she added.

Jes: "Not that I was given much of a choice" he sat back and focused his attention on her "This is not up for debate. I've given you a lot of time. The last thing that you want is for me to go knock on his door and tell him myself" he watched her take a deep breath.

Mrs E: "He's got children, Luyolo. Stop making this about yourself

and think about the implications such a secret will have on him.

It's not worth it"

Jes: "Did you not hear me say that I'm all alone in this world, Zola? I want my son and his sons to know that they are not Elephants but Rasmeni's. If I don't do this, my father's bloodline will parish. It's important to me as a man and to my lineage"

Mrs E: "They already have a lineage. Please don't do this to my boy" she pleaded with shiny eyes.

Jes: "I love you but I love him more"

Mrs E: "You are a jailbird" she blurted out "Do you realize how negatively that is going to impact him?" she added in a whisper.

Jes: "Then you and I are going to tell him why I was a jailbird.

That the man whom he regarded as a father put his real father behind bars because he couldn't stand that his wife wanted to choose another man. I'm done being a prisoner. I'm not going to be a prisoner to this secret either. This is important to me as a man" he said with gritted teeth "That's my seed and the

pain of not seeing him grow was unbearable. I never even got the chance to hold him because by the time he was born I was already serving five months of a two life sentences" he said with anger.

Mrs E: "Why now? Lungile is a grown man so why didn't you write him a letter telling him since you seem to have contacts helping you get information on us?"

Jes: "Because there was a time I thought I'd rot in jail so what use would it have been to tell him. Now I'm out and I have proof of

my innocence which you'll also give witness to. Once he learns that I never meant to be absent, he'll understand"

Mrs E: "Or it might drive him to alcoholism"

Jes: "Rasmeni men do foolish things when they are young but once they grow up they mature into fine and mature men" Mrs E thought about Lungile and it described his behaviour over the years perfectly. During his youth he lived in the present but as he grew he became more prepared for the future.

Mrs E: "Please, Luyolo" she wiped her tears with a tissue.

Jes: "Your tears are not going to help. I want my boy to know who he is and his children. They are all that I've got.

Mrs E: "This is going to hurt me so much. Had you not gone to jail I'd have left him for you and we would have raised our son together. Why do you think I told you that I was pregnant and it's yours? If I didn't want you in his life I'd have kept quiet about it but I told you. I had to pretend that it was Mlu's after you got

arrested. I didn't ask for this and neither did Lungile so please don't do this to us"

Jes: "I'm sorry but I can't walk away again. I didn't say anything to Mlu because I knew he would have forced you to have an abortion like the first time that he did. To ensure my son's safety I had to keep quiet but I won't do that"

Mrs E: "Do you think that we'll play happy family afterwards?"

Jes: "Like I've said, I love you but won't force my way into your life but you best believe I will

make my son aware of the truth. I asked someone to download pictures of him and his family for me on the facepage thing. Those are Rasmeni's through and through. He looks like you but his boy looks so much like me" Mrs E didn't say anything because whenever she looked at Cwenga she'd think that exact same thing. The Elephants always wondered who Cwenga looked like and Mrs E would say he looked like the men in her family but truth was he looked like his grandfather, his real

grandfather.

Mrs E: "Please give me some more time to tell him" she said in a whisper.

Jes: "Don't even think about killing me"

Mrs E: "I'm no murderer" Jester raised a brow "It was only that one time" she said quickly "Okay and maybe when my daughter needed help too" she said quietly "Okay, Luyolo I'm no saint" she snapped and he laughed.

Jes: "And that's why I need protection. I know you'd do anything to protect your children

and since you feel telling Lungile will cause trouble you'll do anything to stop me. If I die Zingisa's case will be reopened and you best believe they'll have evidence, the real evidence"

Mrs E: "I'd actually have been disappointed if you took me on blindly"

Jes: "In prison you learn to trust no one. So I'll apply those same survival methods on the outside because Mlu taught me that danger is everywhere. I should have been a top dog in the legal profession, yet I landed on the

other side of it. If anything, it taught me just how flawed the system is. Elephant Attorneys is founded on lies, murders, bribes and who knows what other evils. Does the current generation in it know just how much blood is on Dudumashe and Elephant's hand?" Mrs E: "Don't take my children's legacy away from them, Luyolo please. Yes, perhaps the company was founded with dirty agendas, but my daughter is keeping the house clean. What Dudumashe does is up to him but Mahlubandile is good at what she

does"

Jes: "Materialistic things don't matter anymore so don't worry. All I want is my son. I'll give you a day or two"

Mrs E: "No" she looked at him

"Cwenga has been in and out of hospital and no one knows why so I'm not burdening Lungile with that on top of everything else. Their new year didn't start off well so please. If you're the caring father you say you are, you'll know a parent puts his needs second"

Jes: "When were you going to tell

me my grandson is sick? Are you making this up?"

Mrs E: "I would never speak ill of my grandson. He's been under the weather but he's fine again but not completely healed so give Lungile time to get over the shock please"

Jes: "Okay" he nodded "So is there any hope for us?" Mrs E raised a brow.

Mrs E: "No, you messed up the first decent relationship that I had"

Jes: "I was the first decent relationship that you've had"

because I was the first man to
serve you love instead of obsession
masked as love"

Mrs E: "Where do you even stay?"

Jes: "Do you want to come and
steal moments like you did years
ago?" he laughed.

Mrs E: "We're too old for that"

Jes: "I'm making up for lost time.
I got myself a young escort too
because I wanted to be reminded
of how holding young breasts feel
like" he said with a smirk and Mrs
E didn't look too happy "Are you
uncomfortable." he asked.

Mrs E: "I hope you made sure

she's over eighteen. After this issue with Mahlubandile, I learned that some escorts are young trafficked girls. So yes, I'm uncomfortable because my daughter was once one forcefully and had she not gotten out you might have slept with her. It's disgusting" she felt herself get angry.

Jes: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring up old wounds. You've just made me see a totally different side to prostitution that I never thought of. Okay... I guess I'll try internet dating"

Mrs E: "Be sure to be honest about your criminal record" Jester laughed.

Jes: "I get a feeling you don't want me to move on"

Mrs E: "Don't be crazy" she looked away.

Jes: "Then I'll find myself a beautiful 40 something year old" he said with a smile.

Mrs E: "Mxm" she clicked her tongue and he laughed.

Jes: "Nothing's changed. I remember you reacting the same way when I told you Nosipho had a crush on me"

Mrs E: "You were in a relationship already"

Jes: "With a woman who had a husband" he reminded her "You wanted me to be faithful to you when you had a husband and it was unfair. Now you want me to be faithful to the memories of us when you refuse to make new ones with me. Let me get going" he said while pressing his phone. Her phone beeped and when she checked the message it was his address.

Mrs E: "Get yourself a smartphone. Who uses a phone

with buttons these days?" she asked sarcastically.

Jes: "A man who uses a phone for calling and SMSs only" he said while standing.

Mrs E: "I'm not going to use this address"

Jes: "It's for my son after you tell him the truth he'll surely want to come see me" he downed the rest of his water and left.

Mrs E looked at the half-eaten cake and took it to finish it. She didn't know what she'd do. If she tries to silence him in any way, she risked his evidence coming out

which could result in her going to jail and Lungile might still hear the truth even afterwards. If she told him he'd hate her or he might understand. There was no winning choice because either way he'll learn the truth eventually and it was best he heard it from her.

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Liyema: "There is absolutely no way I'm going to handle your company's advertising. I don't care how much this account is worth". Liyema said to David, a man whom he used to go to school

with. All he remembered from his encounter with David was the bullying. And seeing David still triggered some trauma and anger.

David: "Oh come on, I apologized for everything that I ever did to you. We are talking about millions here, Liam". Liyema's jaw and fist clenched because that name took him to the days David and his friends would flush his face in the toilet.

Liyema: "Get the hell out of my office and never step foot here again" he stood.

David: "I was just teasing. You can't tell me that you're still hung up on what happened. We were kids and I was clearly a dumb kid. Please, man I need you to handle my marketing. You're one of the best". Liyema opened the door and the security already stood waiting to escort David out "Is this really necessary?" he looked at Liyema. Liyema: "You made my teenage years hell" he shouted "Now I can choose if I want you in my business or not. Hell would freeze over before I allow you to bully me again" he added. .

David: "I wanna do business with you. Not beat the crap out of you" he pleaded but the security grabbed him and led him to the door "You'll regret humiliating me like this" he said.

Liyema: "I regret allowing you to humiliate me. The next time you set foot here I'm reporting you for trespassing" he shut the door and walked to his desk but the door opened again "What?" he shouted before turning around. His siblings were standing by the door with widened eyes.

Hlubi: "Isn't Portia giving you all

at home?" she laughed.

Liyema: "Not today" he sat down
"Why are you here? I'm busy" he
watched them sit down.

Lungi: "What happened?". Liyema
told him.

Liyema: "He had the nerve to tell
me that he won't beat the crap
outta me" Lungile burst out
laughing.

Hlubi: "Tell me why you're
laughing?" she asked while
laughing already.

Liyema: "Don't tell her, Lungile" he
warned.

Lungile: "It's just funny he said

that because David has beaten the crap out of Liyema twice... literally". Mahlubandile laughed until she laid on the floor.

Liyema: "Voetsek to both of you for laughing" he looked at his work "Do you realize that bullying and is a serious thing? Last year a kid killed himself because of it" he was not going to laugh "It leaves a certain amount of trauma to the victim and some of us never really get over it. Shame on you for laughing when you have kids who are yet to go to school". Hlubi composed herself and so did

Lungile.

Hlubi: "I'm sorry. I just thought you were always the no nonsense taking person since forever. I'm shook by the fact that they literally beat the crap outa you" she tried not to laugh while saying it "why didn't you protect our brother?" she hit Lungi's arm "Or did you at least give him toilet paper to wipe the crap" they both burst out laughing again.

Liyema: "Please get security to my office" he said over the phone.

The siblings apologized and when

security walked in Liyema told them not to mind.

Hlubi: "We brought you lunch actually" she opened the food containers.

Liyema: "My girlfriend packs me good lunch everyday" he was still angry about being teased.

Lungi: "Wait so you turned down a huge account because it's associated with your former bully? He can't bully you here, Liyema"

Liyema: "Even if I'm on the brink of poverty and David offers me money I'd rather die of starvation. I hate that demon."

If we both go to hell, it won't be big enough for us and that's why I'm trying to live righteously to not meet that man in hell"

Hlubi: "He cut you deep. Let it go, brother. Let it go, saint Liyema"

Lungi: "Saint Liam" he laughed and when he explained that was what David called Liyema

Mahlubandile laughed once again.

"Okay we're sorry" he zipped his mouth.

Liyema: "How's Cwenga, Lungile? Can we finally have an adult conversation?"

Lungile: "He's a fighter. He's good

actually"

Hlubi: "I was so happy to see him so lively again. He gave us a fright" they all nodded "So are you really too busy? I don't want to intrude" she looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "I really am. So much so that I couldn't join the boys to do their university shopping.

Ntombikayise and I will drive them to Port Elizabeth soon"

Lungile: "Together?" Liyema nodded.

Hlubi: "I'm glad you finally accepted their relationship. They are such a beautiful couple and oh

my goodness Lefa's son is adorable" she said with a smile. .
Liyema: "I might have accepted that she's moved on but I don't want to know the details of the man she's with. I just hope that he's going to be good to her not just emotionally but financially and otherwise too"

Lungile: "Perhaps he's not monied like you but he's hustle is strong" he started to eat.

Hlubi: "I'm glad that you wish he treats her well. She's glowing so best believe that he is and her grandparents love him too"

Liyema gave Hlubi a cold look
"Okay no more Ntombi and Lefa"
she dug in on the food too. The
three of them caught up since
they spent the festive season
apart. They were all back to work
and working hard. They planned to
go visit their mother because
she'd been distancing herself from
them.

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It was Kgethang and his family's
last day in Cape Town because
the holidays were over it was
back to reality. Hlomphe was sad
to see his cousins leave but also

excited to be going home with his father where he planned to stay until he moves out of the house.

Hlomphe: "Next time we should go to visit, uncle Kgethang" he said while standing in front of everyone and Kgethang nodded in agreement.

Naledi: "I like it here because there is a beach. Mpumalanga is full of creep crawlers and it's too hot"

Kutlwano: "I actually agree with Naledi and trust me I don't often agree with her" they all laughed.

Kgethang: "I'd love to

accommodate you all at my house. I'm sure we can find fun things to do in Mpumalanga also"

Hlomphe: "I'm so sad that you are leaving" he sulked.

Lefa: "That's what growing up mean. Siblings scatter around and raise their children in different places but we'll forever be united"

Neo: "Tata, please buy us ice because it's hot"

Lefa: "Let me spoil you guys since I'll be seeing you after a long while now" he held all the kids close as they made their way inside a shop. As kids typically did

they didn't just take the ice they wanted but other sweet treats too. Lefa allowed them to because he wanted to spoil them. He drew his card out to pay.

Cashier: "It says declined, sir" she said in a whisper. Those were the words any shopper dreaded. Lefa took his card and checked it out.

Kgethang: "Use mine" he took his wallet from his back pocket.

Lefa: "Nha, I've got enough cash on me" he took money from his wallet and paid. The kids thanked him for the treats and he nodded while looking at his card confused.

Kgethang: "You cool?... Financially that is?" he whispered when the kids were at a distance. Lefa didn't mention that he lost yet another contract. The year started off on a terrible note for him but he had gone through worse so he was certain he'd be okay. He just wished that it didn't happen when Hlompho was with him.

Lefa: "My savings were on this card and I've clearly been spending way too much over the festive" Kgethang nodded "But I've got money on my other card

so don't worry" he smiled.

Kgethang: "I hope it's not a business account, Lefa"

Lefa: "Nha, its profit I've made so far. Business has just not been doing well so I need to spend this money wisely"

Kgethang: "Hlompho's fees?"

Lefa: "Taken care of for three months. Thought I'd pay upfront when I had the money so don't stress"

Kgethang: "You do know that you can ask me anything right?"

Noluthando and I both earn decent salaries and this festive

we only spent my bonus so we can help"

Lefa: "You still have fees and other school related things to pay. Don't worry, I've got Hlompho sorted"

Kgethang: "Will Mimi help you financially? She should"

Lefa: "I don't expect her to but if she does I'll use the money on Hlompho. Now stop talking as if I'm penniless" he laughed. Lefa wondered where Hlompho was running off too and when he followed behind he realised that his son had spotted Ntombi.

Hlompfo ran into Ntombi's arms and she was as happy to see him. The quads and Hlompfo had met once and aside from the occasional communication barrier they got on well.

Hlompfo: "These are my big brothers" he said to his cousins who ran after him too. So far only Banele got part of what Hlompfo was saying. Lefa shook the boys hands before hugging Ntombikayise.

Neo: "Are you really his older brothers?" he looked at the quads. Hlompfo knew what Neo

asked. Hlompho bragged about the boys to his cousins and they were glad to see that he was not lying about them being quadruples.

Bubele: "Yeah this is our boy" he drew Hlompho closer to not embarrass Hlompho. The others gave Hlompho a head brush using their hands to give witness to what Bubele said.

Lefa: "Did you guys get everything that you needed?" the boys all spoke at once while showing Lefa what they managed to get. Ntombikayise greeted

Kgethang and Kgethang introduced his children to her.

Bukhosi: "I don't need much since I'll still be staying at home. I just came for the food mom likes to buy after a long day of shopping" everyone laughed.

Banele: "Did you get your stationary?" he signed and spoke loudly and watched Hlompho nod.

Hlompho: "I'm ready to go to school. We must go play a game before school open. My dad said you all will go to big school that won't allow you to do such all the time" Lefa spoke as he signed.

Bandile: "We'll visit" he promised.

Lefa: "Let us leave you guys to it because Kgethang and his family are leaving later on. My mother cooked a big meal and no one can miss it"

Kgethang: "Hopefully next year this time you all will be joining us for a bite" he looked at Ntombikayise and Lefa with a smile. The couple laughed softly. . The boys said goodbye to Hlompho and his cousins but Hlompho insisted on going with them to the car to help them put their shopping in the boot. Kgethang

and his children also went to their car after saying goodbye to Ntombikayise.

Lefa: "I'll call you later on" he promised before giving her a brief kiss.

Ntombi: "At least things will be calmer now, then we can spend more time together" she smiled.

Lefa: "I'm glad that they get along. I'm sorry that Hlompho said it's his brothers to the others. It must have put you and them on the spot"

Ntombi: "Not at all, baby. I imagine he's sad to see his cousins

go" Lefa nodded "It's that only child thing. Trust me I know from experience that it's not easy" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Well if I play my cards right, I'll score him four brothers" Ntombi laughed "I'll talk to you later" he hugged her. He wanted to go before she could notice something about him was off. He walked Ntombikayise to her car and said goodbye to the quads before he and Hlompho went to join Kgethang and his children in the car. Nolu made herself friends through

Ntombikayise and they had lunch together at Ntombi's house to say goodbye to their new friend the day before. Lefa and Ntombikayise have discussed him introducing her to his mother and father and they both agreed it was time but after the festive hype had settled which would be soon.

Amahle went to her local tuck shop to buy herself some data. When she arrived at the store she found Chumani, her crush buying a loaf of bread. She felt

the butterflies in her stomach flutter as they did whenever she was in his presence. He was 15 so he was a year older than her and she thought that it was time she had a boyfriend like all her other friends but Chumani hardly noticed her.

Chumani: "You've got WhatsApp?"
Amahle looked around to make sure that he was talking to her. She gave him a nervous smile when she realized he was.

Amahle: "Yeah...yeah" she cleared her throat before smiling.

Chumani: "I've been searching for

you on Facebook but nothing. You are Amahle Gala right?" she looked at him awkwardly for the longest time. She couldn't believe that he knew her name and surname but she managed to give him a zoned out nod.

Amahle: "But on Facebook I'm Hleza Elephant-Gala" she said when her empty mind got filled again.

Chumani: "That explains why I couldn't find you" he licked his lips and she smiled at how cute he looked. He smelled soapy too "Give me ya WhatsApp tens so we can

chat" he took his phone out.

Amahle quickly said out her number.

Shop owner: "This one kiss-kiss many mantombazane" he said while pointing at Chumani.

Chumani: "Don't lie, Rajar" he said quickly "Let me walk you home, Amahle" he took his loaf of bread and led her out of the store.

Amahle: "So you kiss a lot of girls?"

Chumani: "That one is crazy" he pointed to his head "My brother and I look very alike and he likes them girls so I'm sure he sees my

brother and thinks it's me"

Amahle gave a blushing nod. "So what do you do for fun?" he asked while pressing his phone.

Amahle: "I play netball"

Chumani: "Besides things that involve school"

Amahle: "Uhm... I watch TV"

Chumani: "That sounds boring. Do you want to go to that hip hop show with my friends and I next weekend?"

Amahle: "What time?"

Chumani: "Starts at 8pm"

Amahle shook her head "why?" he asked.

Amahle: "I'm not allowed to be out that late. It's dangerous and I might get raped" Chumani laughed.

Chumani: "By who? Certainly not by me and since you're going to be with me I won't allow anything to happen to you. I can go ask for permission from your parents so they know who you are going with" Amahle shook her head quickly.

Amahle: "My father doesn't want me around boys"

Chumani: "You live like a prisoner but okay I respect that. If

you're not going to the hip hop thing then I'm not either"

Amahle: "Why?" she looked at him shocked.

Chumani: "I want to spent time with you" he finally put his phone in his pocket to give her his attention "I've been checking you out at school and I really love how different you are from other girls"

Amahle: "So you notice me?" she asked with excitement "I mean, why are you checking me out?" she calmed.

Chumani: "I want to know you

better. Maybe we can be friends or more" Amahle felt her heart skip a beat.

Amahle: "I'm not going to come easy" she wondered if what she said even made sense. She wondered if playing hard to get was wise but she felt it was because if he would be her first boyfriend, she wanted him to work hard in charming her.

Chumani: "The worthy ones never do" he smiled and she blushed.

Amahle stood by her gate "So you live here?" he pointed and she nodded "Can I come get you when

schools open to walk with you to school?" Amahle looked at the tar road blushing a subtly.

Amahle: "It depends if I like talking to you on WhatsApp" she smiled and felt her cheek warm up when he smiled too.

Chumani: "No problem. Let me go before my mother shouts at me for taking too long to buy bread. I hope those bundles are for WhatsApp because I wanna talk to you all night today to learn as much about you as possible"

Amahle: "What will your girlfriend say if she finds out?" she tried to

find out if he had one without making it obvious.

Chumani: "I'm single and available" they both smiled.

Amahle: "Let me go before my mom sees us" she looked at her home.

Chumani: "Can I get a hug?" he opened his arms. Amahle looked at the house before giving him a brief hug. She ran inside the yard quickly after that embrace blushing like no other. She dialed her best friend's number and let out nothing but a scream of excitement for the first seconds

before telling Thulisa what just happened.

Thuli: "Oh my word, chommee. I don't believe you. I'll believe only when I see screenshots of your conversation" she said in excitement.

Amahle: "I'll send you proof. If Chumani becomes my boyfriend I can have him introduce you to Thulani. Thulisa and Thulani, get it?" both teens screamed in excitement.

Thuli: "Oh gosh, we'll be with two of the most popular boys at school by the time the school

opens"

Amahle: "We must stop wearing those long granny skirts if we date them because Sindy and her friends wear short stuff"

Thuli: "No, our mothers would kill us. He noticed you with that granny skirts"

Amahle: "Chommee, let me keep some airtime to buy data. I'll send you all the screenshots later"

Thuli: "Don't forget to get Thulani's number" they both hung up after saying goodbye. Amahle went to the kitchen and did get chores while on cloud nine. She

wanted to give Chumani her undivided attention and the only way was to take care of her chores so the parents do not bother her.

Asakhe: "Amahle, please sit down"
Amahle sat while smiling "I saw you with that boy" Mahle's smile faded.

Amahle: "we didn't do anything"
she said quickly.

Asakhe: "I know but I also know that you are at a curious age.

This is not an easy conversation for me but I realized that you and Sis Ntombi had an open

relationship. I'm strict so things like these I shut down before they even begin but I don't want you going to cry to sis Ntombikayise so I'll put my strictness aside. You are now aware of boys"

Amahle: "No, Ma" she said quickly once again. Asakhe held her hands.

Asakhe: "It's happening we both know that. Your father had you when he was sixteen and you are two years shy of that age. So as difficult as this conversation is to me, I would rather have it and

prevent lifelong consequences than have regrets. If you want to be sexually active with a boy come tell me. So you and I can go to the clinic where they will teach you how to use a condom and contraceptives"

Amahle: "I'm not comfortable with this, Ma. Sis Ntombikayise and I never spoke about such" she stood.

Asakhe: "Because you weren't aware of boys when you lived with her. If you are more comfortable I'd rather you go speak to her then. You don't want a baby yet,

Amahle. Please be young"

Amahle: "I don't want to have sex. Please don't tell Tata that I stood with a boy. If you think I'm having sex he'll think so too" she walked away.

Asakhe: "I didn't say you are having sex. Amahle meet me halfway. My armpits are wet because this conversation made me so nervous. Please..." Amahle closed her room's door before she could hear more. Asakhe sunk to the chair feeling like she had just run a marathon. Open communication with a child was

not her style of parenting as it was with Ntombi but since Amahle had such a foundation Asakhe did what she thought Ntombi would have done but she didn't imagine it backfiring.

Amahle felt embarrassed by the conversation though she had never had sex. The last thing on her mind when with Chumani was sex and she was angry that Asakhe thought that it was. A text from an unsaved number saying "Hi, shorty...it's me Chumza" made her jump up from her bed. She first saved his

number and checked his profile picture to make sure that it was him and he looked as handsome as ever. She greeted him and soon started to have conversation. She still couldn't believe that he contacted her and she imagined how going to school with him on the first day would have tongues wagging and she could not wait. Asakhe sat biting her nails wondering if giving Amahle about contraceptives and condoms was her encouraging Amahle to start having sex. She knew Vusi would lose it should he hear that she

didn't forbid Amahle from seeing Chumani.

"You took your new boyfriend to go shopping for our children's stuff, Ntombikayise?" was the first thing that Liyema said when Ntombi opened the door.

Ntombi: "What?" she looked at him confused.

Liyema: "Look" he showed her picture of the quads with Hlomphe on Facebook "Is that not you and your boyfriend hugging in the background, Ntombi?" he zoomed in on the

picture and Ntombi laughed

"Ja...you didn't think that I'd find out but I did" he added.

Ntombi: "Hayi, the devil must be testing me right now" she clapped once before letting out a laugh of disbelief "Hey, they go shopping with you and your girlfriend all the time yet you don't see me bitching about it" she said to his face.

Liyema: "So that's language he teaches you? Yet you let that near our kids?"

Ntombi: "What the hell is wrong with you? Oh my word when they

said exes are a pain I thought that I was lucky. I had to watch you introduce two women to our boys since the divorce. Have you ever seen me do what you are doing?" she just watched him look at her "Oh maybe that's what eating at you. The fact that I didn't chase after you. Well stop chasing after my fat, that's what you called it right? Just because another man noticed it and loved it. If you dare come here again, I'll call the police" Liyema: "To chase me out of a house that I bought? What does

he have to show since being in your life?"

Ntombi: "Uhm... respect, love, consideration, kindness, protection and so much more" she looked at him "Not forgetting orgasm, intense orgasm and mind-blowing orgasm" she wore a smirk.

Liyema: "Yet you didn't mention financial stability"

Ntombi: "Oh I am financially stable because I have a great career and thanks to your zip that couldn't stay closed you added to that remember?" she asked sarcastically "Why are you

even here? Why is this bothering you so much?"

Liyema: "I don't have a good feeling about him"

Ntombi: "You didn't have a bad feeling about Elaine when you needed it and look where that landed you. We can't go by your instincts clearly so give facts"

Liyema: "That was low"

Ntombi: "Lower than you knocking on your ex-wife's door showing her a zoomed in image of her hugging her new man and throwing a fit about it? I do not think so. Call your children and ask what really

happened because I don't have time for this" she closed the door. Liyema heard the story of his father cheating on his mother but not wanting to divorce her and he wondered if he was like that. More of Mlu came out in him and he couldn't control it. Seeing her with another man angered him for no apparent reason.

Ntombi: "I once told Elaine to keep her dog on a leash and I think it's time I go give Portia the same advice"

Makhulu: "Calm down"

Ntombi: "No, Ma. How dare he?"

How dare he have a problem with my relationships? People talk about how "crazy" baby mommies are but never talk about the crazy baby daddies. Imagine, Ma. He sat looking at a picture and made it bigger to check for some leverage. I swear if I didn't know any better I'd say this man has become obsessed. Almost two years after our divorce"

Makhulu: "Regret comes after, Ntombi"

Ntombi: "There" she pointed at a distance "Far away from me is where he should go with his

regret" she stirred the pot aggressively "I can't be happy with him and I can't be happy without him either... nonsense" she put in more power in stirring. Makhulu: "Leave it, let me" she wanted to stir before Ntombikayise stirred a hole in the pot.

Ntombi: "I'm not going to let Liyema get to me, Ma" she closed her eyes and took a deep breath "Damn four eyes" she got worked up again "Can't see large font on a paper right in front of him but can see blurry small imagery on a

picture" she added.

Tamkhulu: "What's going on?" he walked in from a church meeting.

Ntombi: "I want the Elephants to have their cows back, Tata. Whatever they paid that still makes Liyema feel he's entitled to my life, I want it to be paid back." she said before running up the stairs with heavy steps.

Tamkhulu asked what happened and Makhulu explained.

Tamkhulu: "This Elephant boy doesn't know where his tail and head are. What exactly does he want?" he shook his head. I'm

going to go talk to him. If it's indeed the lobola then I'll take all that money from the cows we sold and give it to them. Lobola is not the purchase of a woman so I'd hate to treat it as such but if this Elephant boy thinks it is, he can have his damn cows back. My child is not stock on the stock market that he regrets letting go off after seeing that their value increased. Not with my child. Not when she's so happy" he went to sit down. Makhulu also wanted to know what Liyema's problem is but no one could figure

it out because he was acting like a spoiled toddler who threw away a toy but suddenly when a needy toddler got it he wanted it back. Lefa was not needy but Liyema was definitely spoiled and at some point he'd have to learn that no one cared about his tantrums. ❤️

S2-INSERT 53 (NOT EDITED)

"I've handled your auditing for years when I was still employed in my old company. You at some point wanted no other auditor but me to handle your books and even

jumped ship and followed me after you heard I was finally being independent" Lefa said to Andrew. A man whom he regarded as a close acquaintance "What has changed?" he felt defeated after hearing that Andrew was also taking his business elsewhere. Andrew was Lefa's biggest contract because unlike the other small companies, he had a big corporation.

Andrew: "Things have just changed" he shrugged.

Lefa: "We've come a long way so you gotta give me more than

that. You owe me a valid reason as to why you'd break such a beautiful business relationship". Lefa watched Andrew look away before looking at him again.

Andrew: "It's out, Lefa" he said quietly.

Lefa: "What's out exactly?"

Andrew: "You know what I'm talking about"

Lefa: "Care to share because I don't think we both received this memo you seem to have gotten your hands on"

Andrew: "We found out how you are making extra cash. I'm all for

having multiple streams of income but to sell confidential information of your clients to their competitors is low". Lefa stood to walk around with his bottom lip clenched between his teeth. If he bit any harder he'd surely bite his lip off.

Lefa: "Sell?...what?" he asked to make sure he heard right. Andrew repeated what he said and Lefa freed his lip to laugh instead "why the hell would I do that? You know my work ethics. The same ethics that made you stop using a huge auditing firm to come with

me to a start-up. I've handled your audit last year and you were happy with my work. Why would I ruin that, Andrew?" he sat back down.

Andrew: "Starting a business is not easy, Lefa. I remember times money didn't come in and I'd be desperate to find money somehow"

Lefa: "I'm not desperate for money dammit!" he lost it "I'm an accountant who helps others use their money wisely so you think I'll fail to give myself that same advice? My finances were doing

well until I lost four contracts" he shouted.

Andrew: "I'm sorry, Lefa but I've got to be safe than sorry. The source is reliable. They say you did that injustice to them so I can't risk my information going out especially financial information. When you were employed you had legal binding forbidding you from giving out confidential information"

Lefa: "I'm a professional. You might want to check our agreement again and you'll notice that we have a confidentiality

agreement. Don't think that I was disciplined because I feared being called to book by my previous boss. I'm more disciplined now than I was before because this is a legacy that I want to leave for my son someday. You are taking a legacy from my son and as a man who values family wealth you know how much I'm hurting right now" Andrew looked down. He felt bad for doing what he was doing but the board gave him no choice.

Andrew: "I'm sorry" it was all he could say.

Lefa: "You better not fight me on paying for the contract cancellation because the only way you'll win is if you have proof of what you're accusing me of and I know for a fact that you have none"

Andrew: "We'll sort that out"

Lefa: "My name will be cleared and when that happens don't ever come to beg me to take you on as a client again. I'll be waiting for that payment. Good day, Andrew"
he took his laptop and left the office. His heart was shattered because his business might as well

be non-existent. His remaining clients were small business owners who did not have much to pay him his normal fees but he had a passion for helping upcoming businesses that's why he took them on. When he got inside his car he put his hands on the steering wheel before his head rested on them. He let out a soft sob because he had financial troubles. He had no big debt but if things continued like that for a few more weeks he could end up on the streets. He tried to remember who he might have

angered or offended that made that person accuse him of such but no one came to mind. "I just caught myself smiling and I realized that I was thinking about you. So I wanted to be the reason you look at your phone and smile. I love you" read a text from Ntombi that just came in. He reread the message again because he just scanned through it the first time not giving it much appreciation. When he read it again he indeed smiled and wiped his tears sitting back. He dialled her number after

composing himself.

Lefa: "Are the books even balancing since you say you're thinking about me?". His question made her laugh. He couldn't understand why things couldn't just all go well for him at once.

When one part of his life was doing well, another would fall apart. He finally met the woman he was certain is his soulmate but his business going down and him possibly facing bankruptcy might affect his relationship.

Ntombi: "They are balancing, don't worry" she laughed again "So did

you go to the building we spoke about to ask if they have an office for you to rent?" Lefa rubbed his red eyes.

Lefa: "I see now that it's best I hold off on renting an office, baby. Working from home is just best and I'm not as busy as I used to be so I won't be needing an assistant either" he said hoping that she wouldn't insist that he does those things.

Ntombi: "You know your business better, sthandwa sam" Lefa breathed.

Lefa: "You're amazing,

Ntombikayise Poti" Ntombi blushed "I was having a terrible day but then your message came through at the perfect time and I indeed smiled" he smiled.

Ntombi: "I'm glad that I could make your day better. Do you want to come see me at work? That way I can give you a hug too" Lefa laughed softly.

Lefa: "I've got a new potential client I've got to meet, baby. I'll see you later when I pick you up for dinner with my parents". He could hear her breath and he knew she was nervous "You'll be

fine. Hlompho and I will be with you all the way" he said hoping to ease her nerves.

Ntombi: "I just hope they like me. Speaking of Hlompho, I finally got in at the sign language class" she smiled.

Lefa: "Won't that inconvenience you?"

Ntombi: "Three of my boys are moving out and one will be as good as out too so I don't think I'll feel the need to rush home as I usually did. It won't be every night. Just Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for an hour tops"

Lefa: " I'll go with you. What did I do to deserve you?"

Ntombi: "You treat me right, baby. Continue doing that and I'll also give you a love that you deserve. The boys said they'd give it a go too once they settled at university but they said they will use YouTube for now. We want Hlompho to know that we are trying"

Lefa: "He knows and we both appreciate it so much" he said honestly "So are the boys ready for their matric results tomorrow?"

Ntombi: "They actually seem very calm. I think I'm nervous for them" they both laughed. Mr Dudumashe entered her office "I've got to get back to work. I'll see you later and I can't wait" she whispered and he knew she wasn't alone.

Lefa: "I love you"

Ntombi: "Love you too" she whispered before putting the phone down. Had it been Mahlubandile she'd have blown kisses too but Mr Dudumashe was not her friend so she had to act accordingly. Lefa drove out of

the parking lot of a business he'd never do business with even when his business is back up again. He went to Craig's office because he needed to let out some steam.

Craig: "So someone's sabotaging your business? It could be a rival. Maybe your previous employer. Most employers hate employees turned competitors"

Lefa: "It's possible, man. All that I know is that it's costing me a lot. If I don't secure new business now, I'm not going to be able to afford rent. My overspending during the festive

season didn't help"

Craig: "You didn't want Kgethang to carry all the costs and we both know how costly the holiday season gets" Lefa nodded "what'll you do now?" he asked.

Lefa: "Hustle, man. I've never had things given to me on a silver platter so I'm going to do what I do most which is hustling"

Craig: "we do need an accountant" he said hesitantly.

Lefa: "I don't want to be a part of the employee system again.

Waking up daily to make another man rich" he shook his head.

Craig: "Babini would agree with you on that. That's his motto and he rubbed it off on his wife and now Mzu too. I agree with it but sometimes we gotta take what we're given until we get what we want"

Lefa: "I know... beggars can't be choosers thing but I'm not a man to just give in. I'll never forgive myself for taking the first exit point. I knew business is not easy and this is my first test and I intend on passing. Thanks for the offer though" he looked at Craig
"Do you guys still need someone to

help you with financial planning? I can do that" he took Ntombi's advice.

Craig: "We already signed a contract with that contact of yours" he felt bad for giving Lefa the bad news.

Lefa: "All good. You offered and I declined. Fredline is good at what she does"

Craig: "I could help financially" he looked at Lefa "As a loan of course because I know you won't accept it any other way" he added.

Lefa: "I'm good"

Craig: "Pride is not going to help

you, Lefa. We men are a proud gender but we are shooting ourselves in the foot with it most times"

Lefa: "Debt is a devil. Kgethang nearly lost his beautiful family because of debt. Whether it's from a friend or bank, debt is debt. Let me go grind. I'm introducing Ntombi to the parents" Craig saw a hint of excitement in his eyes for the first time that day"

Craig: "Your mother is not acting like deputy wife in Kgethang's marriage so I'll assume she won't

in your relationship. They'll love her, man. The Topdeck" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I have a good feeling about this one. I know it's still early days but being with her feels right" he said with a smile.

Craig: "Just get married. Damn you're so old yet you're still a bachelor" both men laughed.

Lefa: "If I didn't know better I'd have said you and my father are teaming up because he said the exact same thing. Let me get going" they shook hands.

Craig: "See you, brother" he said

after walking Lefa out.

When Alu called Lungile saying that he should meet her at the hospital right away Lungile knew that it was Cwenga. They'd been in and out of hospital with him recently but came home with no answers. The doctors couldn't give him medicine either because they could not diagnose him Alu sat with Zoë fastened on her chest with a baby carrier worried sick about her son. No parent wanted to see their child sick so when Lungile arrived she was glad to

feel his hand in hers. He looked at Zoë who was fast asleep not having a care in the world.

Lungile: "Let me call Mama so she can come take Zoë and go home with her"

Alu: "Thank you, baby. This really is no place for a baby" she said before listening to him talk to his mother over the phone. Her family was in a different province "So?" she asked when he ended the call.

Lungile: "She says she wants to be with us at hospital"

Alu: "The entire family being here

is not going to help in any way.

Mahlubandile is also at work.

Can't we try Portia?" Lungile raised a brow looking at her.

Lungile: "She might be Liyema's girlfriend but we don't know her that well. There is someone but I don't think it's appropriate to ask her for help"

Alu: "Who?"

Lungile: "Sis Ntombi's grandmother. Other than Mama and Mahlubandile I'd trust no one else with my children but they are no longer family"

Alu: "Let's try because Zoë will

become restless and we might spend the entire day here. At least she's not on breastmilk" Please Lungile" she pleaded "we are stressed and she'll feel it and cry nonstop when she wakes up". Lungile pressed his phone and dialed Tamkhulu's number.

Makhulu had no phone or at least they shared a phone. Tamkhulu gave Makhulu the phone after Lungile asked to talk to her. He put forward his case.

Makhulu: "Oh it would be an absolute pleasure to look after her while you are attending to

Cwenga" Lungile could hear that she was smiling and he couldn't help but smile too.

Lungile: "Thank you so much, Makhulu. Can I bring her now?" he wondered if the short notice was plain pushing it.

Makhulu: "Yes just make sure you pack enough essentials for her since you aren't sure when you'll come back for her"

Lungile: "Thank you so much, Makhulu" he smiled while looking at Alu.

Alu: "Thank you, Makhulu" she said in the background before

Lungile ended the call. He helped Alu unwrap Zoë who still had no idea what was going on around her. Once Alu reassured him over and over again that she'll be fine alone until he returns he went to her car because the car seats were in it. He first drove to his house to pack enough for Zoë before heading to Ntombikayise's house.

Tamkhulu: "Oh madoda, Matlubi is sleeping" he took Zoë from Lungile's arms "Other girls are already coming from the river from fetching water and you're

still sleeping" he teased before kissing the baby's cheek and Lungile laughed.

Lungile: "Thank you so much once again, bazali" he put Zoë's bags on the table.

Makhulu: "I'm sure we won't need two bags full of baby stuff for a few hours, Lungile" they all laughed.

Lungile: "I brought all that seemed important, Makhulu. You know men aren't good at these things" Tamkhulu nodded in agreement "I was not sure if asking you was inappropriate and

I apologize if I overstepped the mark" he looked at them both.

Tamkhulu: "Helping has nothing to do with culture. If one needs culture and religion to tell them how to be a decent human being, they aren't good people naturally"

Makhulu: "Plus we still remain family. We are her cousins great grandparents"

Lungi: "Speaking about those four, where are they?"

Tamkhulu: "Somewhere no one is going to ask them about exam results" the adults laughed.

Lungile: "Let me get going. Once

again thank you. Zoë is an easy child. You'll hardly hear her cry unless she..."

Makhulu: "Lungile, I've raised many children. Now go be with your wife please because this little one is in experienced hands. Little Cwenga is in our prayers"

Lungile: "Thank you" he kissed Zoë before going.

Makhulu: "Give her here, Tata"

Tamkhulu: "I'm still enjoying holding her, my dear"

Makhulu: "But I'm the one who was asked to look after her" she laughed.

Tamkhulu: "Oh she's so adorable"
Sis V: "Sis Ntombi might still give you another great grandchild and it might be a girl" the elderly looked at each other. Vuyi didn't know that Ntombi was unable to have more children so they just faked a laugh. Tamkhulu gave Zoë to Makhulu the second his nose got a whiff of baby poo and Makhulu laughed. When Lungile got back to the hospital he found his mother with Jester. Unlike Liyema he didn't know Jester at all.

Mrs E: "This is my driver" she

explained to her son before he could even ask. Jester just stared at Lungile in awe but managed to shake his son's hand.

Lungile: "I thought you were downscaling?"

Mrs E: "I find it difficult to let go of certain luxuries and having a driver is one of those" she said quickly before letting out an awkward laugh. She was with Jester when she got the call and he insisted on going with her but promised to not say anything.

Lungile: "Since my mother is only going to introduce you as her

driver I guess I'll have to make acquaintance myself. I'm Lungile Elephant, last born of your boss" he said with a smile and shook Jester's hand again.

Jes: "Luyolo Rasmeni but many know me as Jester"

Lungile: "Great meeting you, Tata Rasmeni. You've met my wife?"

Mrs E: "Of course I introduced them. What do you take me for?"

Lungile laughed "Thank you, Luyolo. I'll call you when you have to come pick me up again" she looked at him.

Luyolo: "My knee is suddenly acting

up so I'll just sit and wait for the pain to pass if you don't mind, mam" he gave a fake smile.

Mrs E: "Then go in and ask to see a doctor"

Lungile: "Maybe he just needs a rest. Sit down its really no inconvenience to us" Jester nodded before giving Mrs E a smirky smile.

Jes: "Thank you" he sunk to the silver chair.

Mrs E: "I'm sorry that I couldn't look after Zoë but here is where I'm needed"

Lungile: "You just don't want to be

alone with a baby for hours
because you never really were"

Alu: "Haibo, Lungile" she raised a
brow.

Mrs E: "It's okay, Alunamda. He's
not lying. So has any doctor said
something?"

Alu: "They said they are running
tests"

Mrs E: "Oh for goodness sake" she
sat down "Same story every time
we're here"

Alu: "I hope it's not leukaemia or
any other type of cancer. Kids get
cancer too much lately" Lungile
went to hold her. Liyema and

Mahlubandile got called because they'd be angry if they were kept in the dark. Alu sent her friends messages asking they pray for her son as he was in hospital again. The ladies called and promised to visit later on.

Jes: "MaGcina, ooGadluma, Thyopho, NoKwindla, Xhamela" he whispered while his hand rested on Cwenga's forehead "Here is your great grandson, please be with him and provide him healing so he will walk out of this place" he added.

Mrs E: "Are you crazy?" she

shouted between gritted teeth. Lungile and Alu had gone to talk to the doctor so Jes saw a gap to go meet his grandson "Go" she pointed to the door.

Jes: "I'm not going to harm him" he looked at Cwenga.

Mrs E: "This is not the time nor place for this, Luyolo so please just go" she raised her voice. He walked pass her to the door before disappearing from her sight. Mrs E went to stand next to Cwenga's bed "The last thing that I want is for you two to be seen together. No one can miss

such a strong resemblance. Had your parents not been so stressed when they met Jester, they'd surely have seen how much he looks like you" she sat down.

Cwenga: "Khulu" he opened his eyes.

Mrs E: "Makhulu is here, boy boy" she kissed his forehead. His parents returned "So?" she looked at them both.

Lungi: "They ran all the general tests but still nothing so they asked us for a family health history to determine if any rare genetic deceases ran in both our

families. We told them no" Mrs E suddenly got concerned. She wondered if any were in Jester's family.

Cwenga: "Mama, I'm thirsty" he said softly and Alu went to get him water and watched him sip from a straw.

Alu: "This is so stressful" she brushed her son's head "why is this happening to our child?" she looked at Lungile.

Lungile: 'If not to our child then to whose child should it happen?'"

Alu: "No one's. To know he's sick but not with what is stressful.

You go home, I'll spend the night here". Lungile didn't want to leave them so he'd decide later on what he'd do but he was certain that Zoë was in great hands and prayed Cwenga was too.

Mr Dudumashe nearly had a heart attack when he saw an old friend sitting in his chair. A friend he thought he'd never in his life see again.

Jes: "You aged terribly" he gave a sarcastic laugh before standing to walk around the large oak desk.

"Typical capitalist potbelly" he looked at Dudumashe from head

to toe.

Dudumashe: "Well I see prison kept you fit. I'm sure you needed the stamina to be someone's bitch in there" he shot back before closing the door. Jester laughed out.

Jester: "You'd know a thing or two about that since you have those meetings with your side thing who happens to be a man" Dudumashe choked on his own saliva.

Dudumashe: "I don't know what you are talking about" he went around to his desk.

Jester: "I can't relate to being someone's bitch in prison but I relate to being toughened up by it" he leaned forward over the desk "How are you, old friend? Paid Elephant a visit too" he smiled.

Dudumashe: "Get out of my office" he raised his voice "One call and your parole officer is here" he warned.

Jester: "Visiting an old friend is not illegal. Why are you shaking? Afraid I'll tell your wife about your indiscretions? Acting all holier than though when you know you

are a dirty pig. Or maybe I could tell her how you had her father killed" Dudumashe stood quickly breathing heavily.

Dudumashe: "You know that I can destroy you again?"

Jes: "Perhaps but this time I hold all the winning cards. I've got no intention of telling your wife anything and if you dare take me on in any way or kill me, you best believe that your secrets will come out"

Dudumashe: "What do you want dammit?"

Jes: "For now only half of your

estates and don't try to fool me because I know your net worth. I'm giving you until end of the week and if you don't deliver, you'll find yourself without a wife, but you will at least be someone's wife in prison seeing as you know so much about that. It was great seeing you, Dudumashe. I wish Elephant was here to witness me in the flesh, but life is a fucker. One moment you're framing an innocent man for murders he didn't commit and the next thing you know life gives you a taste of your own medicine. Consider my

request for money as compensation for what you did to me. Framing me for the murder of your father in law and his friend when you and Elephant sacrificed those two men to have all of this" he looked around the office "You two sold out your own people to be rich puppets of the white supremacy system" he added with anger.

Dudumashe: "That should tell you the power behind me then" he stood.

Jes: "By the time you flex that power your name will be tarnished

already. You know the last thing your puppet masters want is attention. Don't try to be smart with me. You're taking on a man who has nothing to lose"

Dudumashe: "If I pay you will you leave me alone for good? Pretend we don't even know each other?"

Jes: "You think that I want to look into your ugly face all the time? I just want what's due to me"

Dudumashe: "I can even do the transfer today to get you the hell away from me. There's plenty more where it came from"

anyways"

Jes: "I'm sure kissing ass has its perks indeed" he joked and laughed before walking out. Dudumashe banged his fist on the desk hard before letting out a groan of anger. He could not believe that Mlu left him to deal with what was Mlu's mess alone. Once again, he was left picking up after his best friend as he'd done many times. When his wife gave him the ultimatum to stop cheating he did for a while but the urge returned. He was way more discreet than before but he was

sure Liyema would laugh in disbelief if he heard that pep talk he gave Liyema was from a hypocrite of a man. He and Elephant got money by stealing and betraying but they always justified it by saying they had no choice as there was no resources for a black man in their days.

Jester returning opened up memories of just how dirty they played the game to get to the top and he hoped that paying Jester would be enough to keep him from talking. Jester walked inside the office again and found

Dudumashe sweating. He couldn't help but let out a laugh.

Dudumashe: "What the hell do you want?!" he shouted.

Jester: "I just couldn't resist.

Don't worry you dirty bastard. I want absolutely nothing from you.

The actual reason for my visit is to tell you that I won't be coming after you. Another lesson I've learned is that each moment is precious and my life is about to have meaning again"

Dudumashe: "What are you playing at?" he sat down holding his chest. He took out a small tablet

from its container and out it under his tongue.

Jes: "Every dog has its day and I'm not going to waste my freedom serving that day to you, you dog. Warning though, you come after my loved ones. Even if it's just looking at their direction, I will make you suffer public humiliation before I physically torture you to death".

Dudumashe knew that it was not a threat but a promise.

Dudumashe: "Loved ones you get where?" he asked sarcastically to mask his fear.

Jes: "Just remember my promise. Stay away from what's mine and I'll stay away from what's yours. Your dirty dealings will come out but it won't be from me. You think I'll allow you pigs to steal more of my fucking time. I'd love nothing more than to kill you but you are not worth it. These hands have never killed and they won't start with a dirty pig like you either. Fucking sad prick" he left the office. Dudumashe sat not knowing if he should believe the first revenge conversation or the second one. He was afraid of all

that Jester had on him coming out so he knew it was not wise taking on a man who had nothing to lose. He decided he'd have the money ready just in case Jester collects.

Ntombikayise went to the hospital during her lunch break because she wouldn't be able to do it later due to her appointment with the Gwalas. When she found Zoë home unexpectedly, she dropped everything to go and hug the baby. Zoë wore a cute outfit and Ntombi imagined dressing a

baby girl to be lots of fun. She didn't want to let go of baby Zoë but she had to because she had to go get ready for her date with her boyfriend's parents. She finished after a while and when she walked down she found Lefa waiting for her already holding Zoë. The doorbell rung and Lungile stood with a wide smile on his face when Ntombi opened. Like always he lifted her up in a hug that made Lefa stand from his seat to look at them but calmed when he saw it was Lungile. Lefa and Lungi had met before because

the women in their lives moved in the same circles but they weren't friends.

Lefa: "I'm sure that you are here for this little cute thing" he walked closer to Lungi with Zoë in his arms.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry" she looked at Lungile "I'm sure you don't want Lefa near your baby since Liyema has been making a fuss about our relationship" she added in a whisper.

Lungile: "Thanks, bra" he took Zoë and Lefa nodded "Daddy's missed you so much" he kissed Zoë "And

about that, sis Ntombikayise don't worry. I'm not going to be recruited into Liyema's issues.

I've got no problem with this. In fact it's good to see you happy" Ntombi smiled.

Lefa: "You look beautiful" he kissed her cheek and she thanked him "You need to try and calm your nephews down" he looked at Lungi. The three of them walked to the lounge and found the boys busy with their phones.

Bubele: "Isn't the whole point of making use of this programme to get our results before everyone

else?" he asked everyone.

Lungile: "Just calm down and wait for your results tomorrow"

Bandile: "I'm sure that we failed, man and that's why they haven't sent us that sms with the results" he bit his nails which was not something he usually did.

Ntombi: "Will you four be okay? I'm really getting worried now"

Bukhosi: "We'll be fine but the national results are about to be broadcasted. I wonder how the western Cape did and I wonder if we are a part of those who passed" he spoke quickly.

Banele: "Go have dinner because watching with you will actually feel like added pressure. Dad said he's on his way to watch it with us and promised to keep quiet"

Makhulu: "I suggest that you two go before you are late. Don't worry about the boys, they'll be fine" she said not wanting Liyema to find Ntombi and Lefa there because he was going to dampen Ntombi's mood "Lefa, tell your mother to treat my daughter well please" Lefa laughed softly.

Lefa: "I promise to do that, Makhulu. Bra, adorable baby you

got there. Take care and I hope your son recovers" he shook Lungi's hand.

Lungile: "Thanks, bra. Let me walk out with you guys. Boys, please take it easy. Tamci has full confidence in you four. I love you" he looked at the quads "Come hug me" he laughed when they all mumbled something before standing to give him brief hugs. Lefa and Ntombikayise walked out with Lungile and went to the Gwala household. Hlompho had been there the entire day because schools had not opened yet.

Hlomphe greeted Ntombikayise with a big hug as always. Lefa introduced Ntombikayise to his parents.

Vakele: "It's such a pleasure to meet you, MamTshawe. We've heard a lot of great things about you" he said with a warm tone that made Ntombi feel like she was talking to Tamkhulu.

Ntombi: "I've only heard great things about you too, Tat' Gwala and you Mam'Gwala" she said with a smile "You've got a beautiful home too and it's clear that it gets a lady's touch

because it's so clean" Bonolo looked around smiling at the compliment. Bonolo: "Oh only another lady can notice that so I'm sure your house is as beautiful. I love your dress so much" she returned a compliment.

Ntombi: "Lefa actually picked this one out for me" Bonolo gave Lefa an impressed smile.

Vakele: "When I bought you a piece of clothing it was when I was certain you would be my wife" he glanced over at Lefa who looked down shyly "Gwala men give hints, my girl" he teased and

Ntombi laughed softly.

Lefa: "I feel like I'm being put on the spot here. Can we please go and sit down and eat" he looked at his parents.

Bonolo: "Yes, yes please come through. I want to hear everything about Ntombi. I've been hearing filtered things, so I prefer to hear it all from the horse's mouth. Is it true that you are also an accountant?" she held Ntombi's hand and led her to the table while the men followed behind. When no one translated Hlompho learned that it was

adult conversation, so he kept himself busy with his grandmother's phone. Ntombi told the family she's finance manager at Elephant Attorneys "I'm so glad that you went to school and chose a good course too. My husband and I dreamed that our boys would get an education, create financial stability for themselves and meet women who can match their drive" she looked at Vakele with a smile. Vakele faked a smile but his attention was on Lefa. When financial stability was mentioned his

shoulders suddenly dropped.

Vakele: "Yes but we also wanted people who were going to be kind to them. I can see you children are kind to each other. We're sorry for talking ahead Ntombikayise but we're excited to have Lefa bring a young lady home" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "I understand, Tata"

Bonolo: "I also hope that your divorce didn't discourage you from marriage. We'd like to see this one married and since he brought you home the chances of it being with you are big"

Lefa: "Mme" he warned "Please we're still enjoying each other's company so don't overwhelm Ntombikayise" he added.

Ntombi: "It's okay. Like Lefa said we're still enjoying getting to know each other, Ma but don't worry my divorce didn't make me lose faith in love" both she and Lefa smiled at each other. Lefa tapped Hlompho's shoulder.

Lefa: "Put the phone down please. What is so important that you have to press it when sitting at the dinner table?". Hlompho put the phone down.

Hlomphe: "Because you're not talking to me, so I assume it's not meant for my young ears".

Lefa nodded.

Vakele: "He's been busy with it for hours now" he signed and spoke.

Hlomphe: "I'll tell you what I was busy with when we get home"

Lefa nodded. Dinner got served and the food was amazing.

Ntombi: "How come Lefa can't cook when your food is so good, Ma Gwala?" Bonolo laughed softly

Bonolo: "Because I raised children during a time when boys were told to go work outside and girls

inside" Vakele laughed.

Vakele: "That's how she likes to put it but actually she was just treating them like eggs" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "I told my boys that there's no chore meant for girls and others for boys. They wash dishes and cook"

Bonolo: "That's great because I still worry about what this one eats and more so now with Hlomphe living with him. At least Kgethang found Nolu". The conversation was flowing from work, family, beliefs and many

other things which made the dinner a good one. Lefa knew his parents would be warm to Ntombikayise so he was not nervous about introducing her. After spending hours at the Gwalas the three of them finally made their way to Lefa's place. Hlomphe asked to talk to his father and he didn't mind Ntombikayise staying for the conversation.

Hlomphe: "There is something that has come to my attention" Lefa spoke as he signed. Ntombi knew that it was something

serious "Why didn't you tell me that hearing aid can finally make me hear?" he asked Lefa.

Lefa: "Because they can't. You'll have to be partially deaf to have those, not completely"

Hlomphe: "So you don't know about cochlear implants?" Lefa sat back and Ntombi knew that he was aware of them.

Lefa: "Where is all of this coming from?" Hlomphe looked down.

Hlomphe: "I just found out about it randomly"

Lefa: "Don't lie to me, Hlomphe" the stern tone Lefa spoke in

would have scared Hlompfo had he heard it but Lefa's eyes alone were serious enough to let Hlompfo know his father was not happy.

Ntombi: "Lefa, please let him have his say. Don't attack the child when all he wants is answers"

Lefa: "Answers to questions that he got where, baby?" he looked at her. Ntombi didn't have the answer to that "where's this coming from?" he asked Hlompfo.

Hlompfo: "Mimi's husband" he said before looking down. Lefa stood to

go kneel in front of Hlompfo and he looked at his father "what exactly did he say?" he asked.

Hlompfo: "That having implants will make me hear sound. That it'll be easier for them to communicate with me"

Lefa: "If he doesn't want to make effort to learn sign language it's none of your business. Is that what you have been reading on grandma's phone?" Hlompfo nodded "Did you see that such can have complications?" Hlompfo nodded again "They put metal into your

ear, Hlompho. In fact not all deaf people even qualify for it and it's costly" he added.

Hlompho: "I'm sorry I've upset you. It's just the more I read the more excited I became. It would be nice to know what your voice sounds like" Ntombi felt her heart break as Lefa translated.

Lefa took a breath to calm down.

Lefa: "I'm upset because an adult who should be a parent to you made you feel like you had to change to make things easier on them instead of accepting you as you are and learning to

understand you" Hlomphe nodded
"Plus, dad doesn't have such a nice
voice just ask aunt Ntombi"

Hlomphe laughed.

Hlomphe: "I'd still like to know
what it sounds like. I didn't care
about this but when I read it's
possible for me to hear the first
thing I got excited about was
being able to hear your voice"

Lefa shut his eyes for a few
seconds.

Lefa: "Okay, let's do this. Let dad
do more research on this"

Hlomphe: "I'm not scared of the
operation"

Lefa: "Because you're my brave boy but I'm scared of it so I need time to think about it. A lot of time, Hlomphe" Hlomphe nodded "I'm not going to lie to you, I don't have enough money for such yet" Hlomphe nodded.

Hlomphe: "Will you let me know when you do?"

Lefa: "Yes but it might be years" Hlomphe looked down disappointed but Lefa held his head up again "Hlomphe, you're the best thing that's happened to me and that means I'd do anything for your well-being but it also means that

I'll sometimes have to say no or maybe to things you really want. Such come with a lot. Specialists who have to work on you and it might take years for you to get used to hearing again. Sound might even traumatize you. As your father I have to think about such on your behalf. I don't have money but when I do and you still want this, we'll discuss it again"

Hlomphe: "I understand"

Lefa: "I love you"

Hlomphe: "I love you too. I'm sleepy now"

Lefa: "Since you told me you're too old to be tucked in then I guess it's Goodnight" Hlomphe laughed.

Hlomphe: " Bhut Bandile, Banele, Bukhosi and Bubele don't get tucked in" Lefa and Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Because they are way older than you but I used to do it until they were about 12"

Hlomphe's eyes widened.

Hlomphe: "They said ten"

Ntombikayise shook her head and Hlomphe laughed "well I'll go tell them that I was a big boy before them" he stood up

"Goodnight, aunt Ntombi" he went to hug her.

Ntombi: "Goodnight, boy" she kissed his cheek. Hlompho said goodnight to his father.

Lefa: "Don't forget to brush your teeth" Hlompho nodded and left them alone. His heart was broken by his father not being too happy about the implants but he understood that it was expensive so he planned on giving his father the time he needed. He went to brush his teeth before going to his room. Ntombi had to watch Lefa give Mimi a piece of his mind

over the phone but Mimi hung up.

Lefa: "Co-parenting is hell" he threw himself next to Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Trust me, I know" she got closer to him.

Lefa: "Can you fix him?" he looked at Ntombi "That's the first question that Mimi asked when we learned he's deaf. Making it sound like he was broken" he shook his head.

Ntombi: "I don't think that's why she asked that, baby. When we're pregnant we pray that nothing is wrong with baby. One of the boys would just stop breathing at

random moments when he was a baby and I remember asking what I've done wrong. I also asked the doctors if they could fix him, not because he was broken but because we fear life will be difficult for them" she heard Lefa take a deep breath.

Lefa: "You've just made me see Mimi's reaction differently for the very first time" he said after a while "That's why it's important to communicate. Had she put it like you just had I'd have understood but instead she made me think she regrets having him"

he added.

Ntombi: "I'm sure she loves him"
she kissed him.

Lefa: "But I'm not being unreasonable by being angry at them for telling Hlompho about the implants without discussing it with me first. Right, baby?" he looked at her. Ntombi got comfortable on the couch and he laid on his back between her legs.

Ntombi: "No you're not unreasonable, baby. I would have been as upset had I been you but you handled the situation well"

Lefa: "He might be crying himself

to sleep because I said no" he titled his head.

Ntombi: "You can go check up on him" Lefa shook his head.

Lefa: "Hlompho knows I'm here should he want to talk. I'll let him process the disappointment. I really didn't need this right now. Mimi's man couldn't have picked a worse time to bring this up"

Ntombi: "Talk to me" she whispered.

Lefa: "I don't want to stress you with my issues. I'll handle it"

Ntombi: "I'll stress anyway so

just tell me" he looked at her for a long while before telling her about his day "Why would anyone want to tarnish your name like that?" she asked sounding frustrated.

Lefa: "My previous boss was really not happy with some of his clients leaving with me so I'm sure it's him but I can't confront him without evidence because this source didn't tell Andrew names. I can't believe Andrew just believed lies, baby. I swear to you I'd never leak client info for financial gain"

Ntombi: "I believe you, sthandwa sam. We'll deal with this together. They are making way for bigger clients so you'll be fine. Yandi said that Babini has a private investigation hobby. Since you're friends you could ask him to find this source"

Lefa: "Had it been Craig I'd have called in a favour but I'm hardly friends with Babini and I don't have the money to pay him"

Ntombi: "I could help"

Lefa: "No, sthandwa sam I'll be fine but thank you for offering. Craig made me an offer" he told

her about it "I do not want to go back to being an employee, Nana"

Ntombi: "I understand but since you're a man who likes providing for himself and his family it might come to that should more companies listen to this liar. Even if it's just for a year"

Lefa: "I'll think about it" he promised.

Ntombi: "Please do" they kissed.

Lefa: "I really like this" he smiled "Having someone to talk to like this...in an intimate space with comfort kisses in between" they both laughed "It's addictive" he

turned around and gave her a passionate kiss "I'm also lucky to have found a woman with brains" Ntombi laughed and wrapped her legs around his mid-section and he kissed her face many times making her laugh out.

Ntombi: "Can we pray for this situation?" Lefa smiled and nodded. The two of them got on their knees and Ntombi said a short prayer "No jealous source formed against Debeza Financial Services will prosper" she said with certainty.

Lefa: "Amen" he helped her up

"My woman brings so much to the table" he kissed her "I hope I do too, baby" he hugged her.

Ntombi: "You do, sthandwa sam...you so do" she whispered.

"Please tell me you're still going to the wedding" she looked at him.

Lefa: "We'll have to forget about matching outfits because I'm too broke to have outfits made but Hlomphe and I do have Sotho and Xhosa attires though, matching too"

Ntombi: "Show me and I'll have mine be made to match yours"

Lefa just stood smiling "What?"

she laughed.

Lefa: "I just remembered something my aunt used to tell Kgethang and I"

Ntombi: "Which is?"

Lefa: "Lefa and Kgethang, all women have vaginas but not all of them are smart so don't chase after the next new woman but find yourselves one woman who is going to be great advisors. Heee you boys underestimate the power a woman has over a man. So choose one who'll partner with you, not one who'll control you" he said in a woman's voice trying to

sound like his aunt and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "She said all of that?"

Lefa: "I'm telling you, Nana. She used to tell us since we were young hence I remember all the words" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Even the vagina part?" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Let's call Kgethang and listen to him telling you the same So I'm glad that my woman is the full package"

Ntombi: "Oh?" she blushed and he nodded before kissing her.

Lefa: "I also won't be able to

take you out on dates for a while"

Ntombi: "I don't care about all of that. Us happy is all that I need. Money is not important to me, Lefa. Our upbringing was the same and I know that people who grew up not having much fear going back there especially since we have kids but it's okay to start over just remember that"

Lefa: "As scary as that sounds I'll remember it. I do hope it doesn't get to that though"

Ntombi: "We'll deal with it together should it come to that"

Lefa: "You'll have to be patient

with me though because I'm not used to having a partner support me. Usually they jump ship at the first sign of trouble. Ntombikayise nodded. The two of them made coffee and enjoyed a movie and they chose comedy to laugh the seriousness of the day away.

Tamkhulu asked for Liyema's banking details and Liyema gave it to him confused.

Tamkhulu: "You listen here and you listen to me good, Liyema" he said when he was left with Liyema "I was not there when my granddaughter was being abused

by Bonga but I guarantee you that I'd have been in jail right now serving time for killing Bonga had I been in Ntombi's life back then. I'm in her life right now and I will be damned if I let you mess with my child"

Liyema: "Where's this coming from, Tamkhulu?"

Tamkhulu: "Hey, hey" he pointed at Liyema "I'm a nonviolent man but dare not push me because I will show you a side many regret forcing me to bring out. Let this thing of you thinking you have some ownership of my child's body

and life come to an end. You think this is like the time you had right to her body when she carried your children? You made your bed and just because it's filled with spikes it doesn't mean that you aren't expected to lie on it. I'm going to transfer your lobola back to you because Ntombikayise feels it's what makes you think you have a say in what happens in her life. You forget that Ntombikayise has a father and I will go to great lengths to protect my child physically, emotionally, spiritually and otherwise. Be warned because

I'm not going to repeat myself"
Liyema: "With all due respect,
Tamkhulu but as a father myself
I would do anything to protect
my children. Children that
Ntombikayise wouldn't even have
had in her life had it not been for
me" Tamkhulu couldn't help but
laugh "If I feel something's off
about someone, I will try to
distance my children from them.
Like you are doing now. I respect
you greatly but don't tell me how
to be a father to my boys. I
wouldn't have had to do what
I'm doing had she not begged me

to be on their lives to begin with"
Tamkhulu: "They are the young
men that they are because of
her"

Liyema: "Let me get going before
we both say things we'll regret"
he stood "Her sleeping out when
her children are nervous about
their results just proves she'll
choose this man over them" he
added.

Tamkhulu: "Rich coming from you
when you slept out on moments
they were sick. You chose other
women while married to their
mother. You scarred your children

so you best thank God that she is in their lives because at that age they are twice the men you'll ever dream of being because of her".

Tamkhulu watched Liyema walk out of the house. Ntombikayise walked in minutes after him and found him sitting on the couch.

The boys couldn't sleep so they came down and took snacks to sit with Tamkhulu and their mother. They wanted to know about her dinner and she told them it went well. They were all waiting for midnight when the boys would get those messages with their matric

results. Ntombi told them once again how proud she was of them and that she was proud no matter what those results say. ❤️

S2-INSERT 54

When Lefa called Vakele to ask when Bonolo would be going to her women prayer Vakele knew that Lefa wanted to talk to him in private. Lefa arrived at his parents' house a few minutes after Bonolo left. Schools had reopened so Hlompho was at his

new school and seem to be settling in well. He stopped asking about the cochlear implant and Mimi and her husband apologized for telling Hlompho about it without discussing it with Lefa first. Vakele poured homemade ginger for him and Lefa before joining his son in the lounge. They first spoke about general stuff before Lefa opened up about his struggling business.

Vakele: "How bad is it?" Vakele asked. He watched Lefa take a deep breath before he bowed his head. A tear fell on the mat and

Vakele wondered how long Lefa had been dealing with his problems alone. The old man went to sit next to his son and wrapped his arms around Lefa's shoulders in comfort "Let it all out, ndoda" Lefa felt the lump in his throat grow bigger with each tear he shed but he wiped his tears off after a while. His head was still down as he looked at his fingers. Lefa: "It's bad, Tata" he fiddled with his thumbs before looking at Vakele.

Vakele: "How can I help?" he wanted Lefa to be the one to tell

him what to do because he had no idea. He still had savings for his business and he'd give it to Lefa wholeheartedly.

Lefa: "I'm even ashamed to ask this, Debeza" he said quietly.

Vakele: "Lefa, I'm your father. The one person you should never feel ashamed to open up to. So tell me how I can help? I still have my savings so....,"

Lefa: "No, no, Tata that's for your business"

Vakele: "You're my business too, Debeza...more important than the plumbing thing"

Lefa: "I don't need money, Tata"
he looked at Vakele once again
"I've got some money but that
means I'll have to cut down on
costs. So...so I'm here to ask you
if Hlompho and I can please move
in here with you guys until I'm
back on my feet again" Vakele had
to bring his ear closer to Lefa to
be able to hear his request that's
how quietly Lefa spoke.

Vakele: "You shouldn't even have
asked for permission. You should
have packed your bags and
brought them"

Lefa: "This is not easy on me,

Tata. I left home when I was 18 and I never imagined I'd be back"

Vakele: "I understand that it's difficult but that's what parents are for. When the world shows you cruelty your parents are ready to welcome you and comfort you. Have you spoken to Hlompho about it?" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Well not the truth. I told him that we needed to vacate the flat because of safety reasons and other places are occupied. He's disappointed about the implant thing so I don't want

to add to that"

Vakele: "That's good. There are certain burdens a parent shouldn't share with children. I know that your mother will be happy to have you two here with us. You'll have your own room for privacy too. Did you tell Ntombikayise this?" Lefa shook his head.

Lefa: "She knows business has not been going well but I didn't tell her it's gotten so bad that I have to move in with you guys. What woman is going to stay with a man who moved back in

with his parents, Tata?"

Vakele: "One who loves you and judging from the three times we've spent time with her, Bonolo and I are certain that she loves you"

Lefa: "How on earth did you manage to get by with having no money sometimes?" Vakele breathed deeply.

Vakele: "By taking it one day at a time, praying and having the support of your mother"

Lefa: "I'm sure you're thinking "I told you so". Had I still been someone's employee I'd still have

an income"

Vakele: "You were brave enough to do what many fear. I came from a generation where starting business as a black man was not wise so we had to go look for work in mines. So I warned you about starting a business because I knew no better. Go to school and find work was all that I knew until you made me see differently. Had it not been for this devil sabotaging you, you'd still be good. I suggest that you stop trying to find business for now" Lefa shot Vakele a look "Listen to me.

It won't matter if you find another client only for the person responsible for tarnishing your name to reach that client too. Rather put your energy in finding out who it is and confront the devil before you go out to find other clients again" Lefa nodded. Lefa: "Makes sense and Ntombi advices where I can try to get help to catch the culprit" Vakele: "You do that even if it costs you some money. You'll lose much more if this goes on. No one will want to do business with you ever again if this person keeps

spreading lies about you". Lefa's phone rang and he apologized to Vakele before excusing himself to take the call. It was Craig and he asked if Lefa was free to meet with him in an hour and Lefa said yes.

Lefa: "I think he wants to convince me to take the job. As much as I don't want to, I'll have no choice. At least I won't have to move back in with my parents when I have a salary"
Vakele laughed.

Vakele: "You make it sound like the worst thing ever" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "To me it's not ideal after so many years of independence."

Vakele nodded "Let me get going so I won't be late for the meeting with Craig"

Vakele: "I'll wait to hear from you then. If it's about a job, I won't even mention this conversation to your mother but if you're sure you're moving in let me know"

Lefa: "I will, Tata" he gave his father a brief hug "Don't tell Kgethang about this either. I already feel bad that he is helping you all by himself"

Vakele: "We'll talk after that"

meeting". Lefa nodded before walking out the door. He decided on the way to Craig that he'll accept the job if it was still on the table. He found Mzu, Babini and Craig sitting with Craig when he arrived. He gave each man a firm handshake before sitting down. They spoke about general stuff at first before getting to the business they gathered for. Babini: "Knight tells us that you are having trouble in your business because someone is spreading false rumours about you"

Lefa: "And it's messing with my life and finances so much that I am forced to move in with my parents" all three men laughed and Lefa couldn't help but join them.

Craig: "Shall we save the man?" he asked while laughing.

Mzu: "Our offer is still on the table, Lefa and because we know your work and you personally we won't be brainwashed by some jealous person"

Lefa: "Thank you so much, men. Knight, I know that I declined the offer at first but if it's really

still available then I accept. My mother has no regard for personal space and I really don't want my lady to be uncomfortable with sleeping over knowing my parents are in the next room" they all laughed again.

Babini: "I'd die and because we don't want a pal to die we welcome you to our establishment"

Lefa: "Thanks, bras"

Babini: "And because we all know that you hate being under the employment of others we fear you'll do half assed work" he joked but Lefa promised that he won't

"And for that reason and because I am a firm believer in having more entrepreneurs we decided that we are going to work with you as an independent contractor"

Mzu: "You'll still be working under Debeza Financial Services providing Steel Brothers financial services" Lefa couldn't believe his ears.

Craig: "You'll also have to make use of office space on the premises so that we can reach you with ease. This business's finances are a mess and because we are planning on broadening our

export we'll definitely need someone with good quality accounting knowledge and experience and we believe that it's you because you have not only worked in Africa but internationally too meaning you'll help us understand the international markets"

Babini: "This might sound like too good of a deal to be true because it is. There is a condition that we are not willing to negotiate on"

Lefa: "Let me hear it"

Babini: "We want you to give your undivided attention to Steel

Brothers for six months.. That would mean taking on other clients would be a breach of contract which might result in the end of our partnership Like Knight mentioned and as you yourself saw when conducting the audit, we found this business with finance records that are a mess so it'll need someone to nurse it and that can only happen when that person is not distracted by other "babies". That is our condition and it's non-negotiable"

Lefa: "And after the six months?"

Mzu: "You are free to operate as

you usually would while still maintaining our books. We imagine by that time you'll have little work to do here so you'll have time to take on more to grow your business"

Craig: "We realize that it sounds a lot like employee/employment relationship but we assure you that you won't be working for us but instead partnering with us and us only for a certain period of time. That is what we have got to offer so we'd like to know your thoughts on it"

Lefa: "Firstly let me thank you

gentlemen for taking your time to meet with me to discuss this. Yes, I saw myself how poorly the previous owner handled the business's finances so I understand why you'd want someone to only focus on it for a couple of months, especially since you'll also be tapping into the international market once again. I'd also like to thank you for offering me a partnership instead of employment. I've got absolutely nothing against your conditions so with that said, I accept your offer" all four of them

smiled.

Babini: "This is the contract agreement that we complied. It's pretty straightforward but we advise you have your lawyer check it out before you sign" he gave Lefa a big brown envelope.

Mzu: "The fee we offer might perhaps not be the one you'd usually charge but we are still trying to stabilize the boat. Once that's happened, we'll definitely sit down and discuss your standard fee for your services". They all watched Lefa page through the contract. He was

scan reading and finally got to their proposed fee which he found to be enough until the business got back on its feet again.

Because he handled their books before, he knew they weren't lying about the finances being poor.

The previous boss would take from the business account to pay for personal stuff. The quality of product lowered which came with a loss of international exports meaning the company suffered financially. He thought the brothers wouldn't want to buy it after hearing that but they said

they'd restore it to their former glory and Lefa was glad to be a part of something he imagined would someday be big.

Lefa: "I'm more than happy with the money offered because I know you are all being transparent with me regarding everything."

Craig: "My man" they fist bumped
"Please have your lawyer go through that with you as soon as possible because we'd like for you to start as soon as possible"

Lefa: "If everything is above board I can have this back to you

by tomorrow...signed. You men don't know what this means to me. Thank you once again. Debeza Financial Services will provide Steel brothers the best service ever. Once we've re-entered into that international market I promise we'll be making the big bucks and my firm will handle those with the utmost care, transparency and accuracy" he promised.

Babini: "Why do you think we trust no one else with our company finances?"

Lefa: "Can you gentlemen please

show me where my office is because I've got a feeling I'll definitely be starting on Monday"

Mzu: "The type of people I like doing business with" they all stood "Please follow me, Mr Gwala" they all walked behind Mzu. Their premises were huge. It had factory warehouses and office spaces. "Lefa Gwala_Debeza Financial Services" read an A4 page with black bold font and Lefa laughed.

Craig: "We just wanted you to have an idea of what the actual tag will look like but we'll only

have it made should you return that contract to us signed" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I love it, man" he read the it again and could already picture how the real tag would look like.

"I've never had an office before well not since I started my own business" he looked around the decently sized office with a smiling.

Babini: "I'm glad that you like it. Since I'm CEO, it's a pleasure to welcome you to Steel Brothers, Mr Gwala" he shook Lefa's hand.

Craig: "That should be done after

he signed, man"

Babini: "Shut up, Knight" they all laughed "The man said he was on board but he has to go be sure we're not crooks which is good because I wouldn't trust us either" laughter once again. "Mzu over here is our Operations Director because he was once an employee here actually, so he knows the ins and outs of the daily operations and the employees trust him. Knight, is our Export Director because he already knows all the legal compliances to exporting good

across the borders and overseas since his security software company exports regularly. They put me as CEO because I don't take any nonsense and I know pretty much everything since I consider myself an all-rounder. You are our Finance Director because of your chartered accounting qualifications are impressive and not to mention your experience. We are men with different talents, skills and knowledge and I truly believe that together Steel brothers and Debeza Financial Services will reach heights we

can't begin to imagine. The fact that I like you three helps too" they all laughed.

Lefa: "To partnership"

Craig: "To brotherhood" they all nodded.

Babini: "And because we'll be associated with Debeza Financials we gotta make sure that you shake the virus off you" he looked at Lefa "I took it upon myself to go speak to this Andrew after Knight told me about your problem. I acted like I wanted to do business with him and in passing mentioned that I'll be

approaching you too and he told me not to because a certain Liyema Elephant told them that you sold his confidential information to a rival company for thousands"

Mzu: "That's Ntombi's ex not so?"
Lefa nodded.

Babini: "I took care of the fucker who thought he could take his regrets for leaving Yandi out on me. So take care of the fucker"
Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Thanks for letting me know"

Babini: "Digging is what I do best

but I'll settle well into the CEO thing too" he laughed. The men went to give Lefa a proper tour of their business. They offered steel to the construction and mining sector and looked forward to growing. They all got a cold bottle of beer to toast to the new friendship and partnership. Lefa called his father first and Mr Gwala couldn't help but dance around when he heard the news.

Lungile: "You're turning into Tata on a daily, Liyema. To sabotage another man's livelihood just

because you are a bitter ex?"

Liyema: "This is not about Ntombi but my children"

Lungile: "Go tell some dumb fool that crap. You thought she'd be single for years mourning your failed marriage. Her being happy with another man gets under your skin. You've got a girlfriend damnit. She's not coming after you like this"

Liyema: "Maybe that's why I'm so fucking pissed, Lungile. A woman who claims to love a man doesn't just give up on him. I'm now left wondering if she really

ever loved me or if she pretended to, so she'd be in the boys' lives. She once said she'll fight me when I told her she must stay away after their birth. Maybe her war was not custody battles but fake love to make me soft. I just made it easier for her to get out by cheating when the boys were almost at legal age meaning I wouldn't be able to fight for custody. I think she played me"

Lungile: "All I hear is what Mlungisi Elephant would have said"

Liyema: "Then you best brace

yourself since his blood flows through your veins too. Women are manipulative and Ntombi's actions after the divorce make me think that she married me to have access to my boys. I made the deal sweeter when I gave her entitlement to half of my estate"

Lungile" "What the...,?"

Liyema: "It all makes sense actually and her so easily accepting my status back then was the first red flag. She and this guy seem way too cosy to be new love. I'm sure she cheated on

me too"

Lungile: "Liyema, why did you stop therapy, bro?"

Liyema: "Because I'm now thinking clearly for the very first time in my life. Tata was right, women are manipulative. We think that he treated Mama badly but you'll find she was the one who drove him to it"

Lungile: "The fact that you look like Tata makes this moment remind me of him even more. You are aging bad if you are morphing into him, Liyema. I literally see nothing but him right now. Please

let Ntombikayise go and be happy. Sabotaging Lefa won't help you in any way it'll only make you lose Portia and Abongile"

Liyema: "I just realized that I was being played for access to my children and my money and that's all you can say?"

Lungile: "Let me rather not get involved. I picked Portia and Abongile up as you asked so we can go to Ntombi's to say goodbye to the boys since they'll be leaving for PE tomorrow"

Liyema: "Let's go. At least I know that her man won't be

there since he's probably begging for a slice of bread"

Lungile: "Mlungisi Elephant, please get out of Liyema Elephant before he loses himself completely"

Liyema: "Mxm" he clicked his tongue. They went to the car and made their way to Ntombi's house. The boys got their results days ago and all passed. Bandile's four distinctions results shocked everyone since he had always been the one to struggle academically. Bukhosi also got a bachelor pass with two distinctions. Bubele got

a diploma pass. Banele was not happy with the higher certificate pass that he got but everyone encouraged him to upgrade if he wanted to. Tomorrow Ntombikayise would be driving down with all four of them to PE to drop Bandile and Bubele off at NMU. Ntombi was not ready to let go but she knew she had to. There was great tension between Tamkhulu and Ntombikayise against Liyema but since the entire family was there, they had to be polite. The Elephants were shocked to hear their cows had

been returned but Tamkhulu told them the reasons. Liyema was called to order by his elders which left him angry at Ntombikayise even more. The family spent some time with the boys since they won't see them for a while but left a few hours later.

Liyema: "I'll be flying out late tomorrow and meet you there. I'm not in the mood for driving"

Bandile: "Cool"

Ntombi: "You guys will be driving yourselves because I'm not going to take you since I don't want to go" she joked while sulking and

the boys laughed.

Bubele: "We're sorry, Mommy" he gave her a pity hug and

Ntombikayise pretended to cry. .

Liyema: "I wonder how many of those crocodile tears have you shed over the years?" he mumbled to himself but Portia heard him.

Portia: "Abo and I will come visit" she said to lessen the tension.

Liyema: "You four are not going to drive long distance because you're not experienced yet"

Bukhosi: "Bhut Lefa let us drive to Vredenburg when we went to drop Hlompho off at his mother's

so we got that this. We'll take turns to help Mama drive" he said confidently and the others agreed. Liyema gave Ntombikayise a death stare and she gave him one right back. There was annoying hooting outside and Liyema jumped first to go check it out. He called everyone outside and they found a brand new car parked outside.

Bubele: "Is this for Bandile and I to use in PE?"

Bukhosi: "That would be unfair"

Liyema: "No, your turns are coming. This one is for the love of

my life.. mother of my daughter"
he went to Portia and kissed her
forehead.

Portia: "Really?" she said before
letting out a scream of
excitement and running to the car.
Liyema glanced over at
Ntombikayise.

Banele: "Did you have to have it
delivered here?" he asked his
father while looking at his
mother.

Liyema: "The dealership clearly
still thinks that I live here
because I never told them that
I moved"

Portia: "Thank you so much, babe"
she jumped on him.

Liyema: "You deserve only the
best while others deserved second
hand cars". Ntombikayise and
Tamkhulu looked at each other
and laughed.

Liyema: "That's why I had
Lungile drive us here. You'll be
driving us back" Portia nodded
quickly. Lefa and Hlompho arrived.
Hlompho asked to accompany
them to Port Elizabeth and Lefa
gave permission but he'd been so
stressed out about his money
issues he said he couldn't go with.

Hlomphe went crazy when he saw the red GTI parked in the yard. Bubele: "Looked at that one just staring at the car without coming to say hi" he ran towards Hlomphe and when Hlomphe turned to look his direction the young boy ran away making Bubele chase him. Bandile caught Hlomphe as he made his way through the other side and picked him up to take him to the people. Hlomphe absolutely loved the rough play his "older brothers" did with him. He felt like a part of the squad.

Banele: "Are you ready for the trip tomorrow?" his signing improved on a daily basis. Hlompho nodded.

Hlompho: "I can't wait"

Liyema: "You guys sign now?"

Bukhosi: "Yeah to better understand our little man" he roughly brushed Hlompho's head. "Bhut Lefa, you can come with" he offered.

Lefa: "You know what? I'd actually love to" Ntombikayise did a little dance of excitement and the boys laughed "I came to ask for a picture of my beautiful lady

for my desk actually but since you guys offered I'd like to go with you but Sunday Hlompho and I should be back because I've got a lot of work to start on Monday and it's school for him"

Ntombi: "You accepted Craig's offer?" she smiled.

Lefa: "Even better" he told them what happened and Ntombikayise gave him a long hug. Lefa wanted to rub his victory in Liyema's face and the look of disgust in Liyema's face proved he hit a nerve.

Bubele: "Other men be buying their girlfriends cars out there.

You best deliver" he joked and they all laughed.

Lefa: "Some of us have women who afford their own cars" he looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "Is that your way of telling us you can't afford it?"

Lefa: "It means that my woman's love language differs from yours. She values quality time over receiving gifts and you best believe that I give her plenty my time" Ntombi wrapped her arms around him and nodded "But since my business is picking up again I'll offer her other gifts

but not forgetting that my attention is the most important" he kissed Ntombi's forehead.

Liyema: "Portia and I will be driving down to PE too so two of you can go in her new car. I know that you like machines" the boys all scratched their heads avoiding eye contact.

Bukhosi: "Uhm, mom's car is bigger and it carries us all. Since it'll be our last weekend with these two in Cape Town we wanna spend enough time together. Yeah...you know...yeah" he stuttered.

Tamkhulu: "You did good, Lefa. A man must know how to solve his own problems and you are that man. I know that your business is going to grow"

Makhulu: "The devil is a liar"

Lefa: "Indeed he is, Makhulu" he looked at Liyema. The boys went inside to play games with Hlompho because they could sense the tension between their parents. "And my current partners are not men who listen to the rumours spread by a faceless coward, so we'll work very well together". Liyema and Portia

left and Liyema didn't get the reaction he thought he would from Ntombi after seeing the new car and he was not so happy about Lefa's new business either. Ntombikayise gave Lefa a long passionate kiss when they were left alone.

Ntombi: "I'm so turned on by you right now I could rip your clothes off" Lefa laughed and cleared his throat.

Lefa: "What did I do so I can do it more often?"

Ntombi: "You are so observant and you just such a manly man" she

kissed him again.

Lefa: "Let's climb the tree to your room then" Ntombikayise laughed out.

Ntombi: "I happen to still have both keys to Bukhosi's future room. It has no furniture but with the way I'm feeling right now I don't care" she led the way and he started to chase her

"Shhh" she put her finger over her lips when they tip toed pass the sliding door making their way to the backroom. Once the door was locked their lips locked and with each second the kiss became

intense. There was no furniture indeed but Lefa could easily lift her up against the wall which he did after lifting up her dress. He realized that she was not lying when she said she was turned on by him because her body was do ready for his without much foreplay which drove him crazy. They'd gone to do a sexual health examination and both got a clear but it was the first time they had been intimate with protection and neither could hold on as the pleasure was more intense.

Ntombi: "Physical touch is another

language of mine" she said while still trying to catch her breath.

Lefa: "That would make both of us then" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "Let's get back before they come look for us" he stood with her in his grip and she let go of him to fix her clothes.

Ntombikayise went upstairs to freshen up while Lefa took out Hlompho's bag for the weekend before going to home to pack a few things for him.

When Lefa got home he was shocked to find Liyema at his

parking lot. He thought that Liyema knew someone in the apartment block so he just walked pass Liyema but Liyema clearly had other plans because he held Lefa's arm roughly pulling him back.

Liyema: "You stay the hell away from my children, you hear me? he pointed "If you know what's good for you, you'll cancel going with them this weekend" he warned.

Lefa: "Or else what?"

Liyema: "You don't want to find out, boy boy" he hit Lefa's shoulder to belittle Lefa and it

made Lefa angry.

Lefa: "Get your hands off me" he warned but Liyema didn't listen instead he attempted to punch Lefa which resulted in Lefa delivering an unexpected throat punch directly to Liyema's "adam's apple" knocking Liyema to the concrete ground. He couldn't breathe at all as he started to become sweaty "I'm a master in martial arts. Had I put in any force in that punch I'd have broken your windpipe or even killed you but because this is a warning, I did the minimum. You stop

spreading lies about me and you stop disrespecting Ntombikayise. Don't poke a sleeping bear because I hold fighting skills that can literally kill someone. I'm a disciplined fighter because I know my power so let that be the last time you put your filthy hands on me. I'm going with my girlfriend and our children to PE tomorrow. You might want to go to the ER if you want to do the same thing" he watched Liyema coughing and his eyes had started to turn a shade of red. Lefa hated helping but he dialled an

ambulance for Liyema and also the cops because he didn't want any serious damage to occur. The ambulance arrived first and took Liyema. When the police came Lefa explained to them that Liyema started a fight and because he knew advanced self-defence he made use of it. Lefa knew that Liyema would twist the story had he not told his side first. Portia was called because she was Liyema's emergency contact and when she heard that he was in hospital she called one of the boys to alert them. Lefa

told Ntombi after talking to the police and Ntombi told her boys what their father had done.

When the quads walked into the hospital room, they looked at Liyema with great disappointment.

Bukhosi: "Why would you go wait for Bhut Lefa to attack him, dad?" he looked at Liyema.

Liyema's eyes were red and the pain that he felt in his throat was indescribable.

Liyema: "I'm sorry" he wrote because his throat was too swollen to speak.

Portia: "The doctor say that it'll be days before he can actually talk and weeks before he can recover fully. Apparently had Lefa's punch been more hard, it could have killed your father"

Liyema: "See what I mean when I say he's dangerous?" he wrote quickly and showed his sons.

Banele: "You went to the man's house to attack him. Had he not been a martial arts master you'd have hurt him but instead you got a nasty surprise which nearly made your neck split in two. He's a master in martial art for

goodness sake" he couldn't help but shout.

Bubele: "And Bhut Lefa was so understanding that he didn't lay a charge of assault against you. No man, you're an adult act accordingly. Have you ever seen Mama pulling her claws out to scratch sis Portia?"

Portia: "He's not going to be able to go with you children to Port Elizabeth. He can't even swallow, talk nor turn is head. There's a big blue bruise under that neck dressing"

Bandile: "He took on a damn

martial arts master for goodness sake. What did he expect?"

Liyema: "I'm still your father. Watch your tone" he wrote so quickly the boys had difficulty making out his writing.

Bukhosi: "Start acting accordingly" he said before leaving the room.

Banele: "We were making such great progress. You're an embarrassment" he left too.

Bandile: "I'll see you, dad. Maybe you not going is for the best"

Bubele: "You took on martial arts master who is skilled in Krav

Maga...Krav Maga, dad. He could literally have crushed your throat. Martial artists are extremely disciplined so I believe Bhut Lefa when he says you started it do don't you dare try to swing us to pity you and hate him"

Bandile: "Who takes on a Krav Maga blackbelt holder? Really?" he shook his head "Goodnight and I'll see you during the Easter holidays or whenever you are in PE. I'm so upset because I imagined you both drop us off at school but instead you went to attack Bhut Lefa whose only

crime is loving Mama and getting along with us" he left too.

Bubele: "Goodbye, dad. See you" he left too.

Liyema: "Tell them that I'm sorry. I'm not going to bother Ntombikayise again" he wrote.

Portia: "Mxm" she clicked her tongue and stood "You didn't even apologise to me for going to fight for your ex and yet you want me to be your mouthpiece? I'm so angry at you I could strangle you so I'll leave before I regret what I might do. I hope you learned a lesson because if you haven't you

will get killed" she left too. Liyema couldn't even shout for her to come back because his throat was so swollen he had to wear an oxygen mask to assist him with breathing.

Doc: "You are lucky that there seem to be no internal injuries, Mr Elephant. You can't go rub people off the wrong way and expect to get away with it. There were witnesses and they say you were the one who started it. Blows to the throat can cause potentially life-threatening complications. The blow didn't break through

your skin so you're not likely to have complications. With a history of heart disease I advise you choose your battles next time. You got off lightly" he said to Liyema. Liyema: "Just give me something for the pain and shut the hell up" he wrote.

Doc: "If we up the dose you will surely die. You'll have to bare with the pain for now"

Liyema: "Then give me something that'll make me sleep" he write quickly.

Doc: "The meds will take effect and you'll sleep don't worry but

you will have to stop writing so big in that book because you're going to need space as you'll be using it for a while". Liyema was not in the mood for the unprofessionalism of the doctor but he promised to deal with him once he's healed. The pain treatment took effect indeed and Liyema felt himself going to sleep. He regretted going to Lefa's place so much. He wanted to scare Lefa into not going with the boys tomorrow but instead he nearly lost his life. He was certain that he was going to die and he'd never

forget the pain. He decided it would be best he stayed away from Lefa in future. His aim was to stop another man from going with his son's to one of their very important milestones but instead he was the one who wouldn't witness it and Mrs E seemed too occupied to even care or fuss as she usually did. He wondered how he'd make it up to his children. ❤️

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Ntombi and Lefa departed from Cape Town with their boys early

in the morning. Lefa was the one doing most of the driving but he gave Bandile and Bubele a chance to drive and promised Bukhosi and Banele they'd get a chance on their way back. They finally arrived in Port Elizabeth in the afternoon and Ntombi smiled as they made their way inside the city she called home for a little while. Liyema didn't manage to get the boys to share a room at the on-campus residence as they wanted so Ntombi suggested they made use of off campus residence like she had when she

was a student. They found one close to campus and headed to it right away to have it checked out. The boys were sad to not have their father with them because they really wanted Liyema to be there but because he was in hospital they understood it was impossible. They'd never replace Liyema with Lefa because they loved their father too much but they hoped that Liyema will finally go back to being the man that they knew. Lefa: "I think this is it" they all looked out the window to check.

Bandile: "It looks smaller than I imagined. I hope the rooms are decently sized"

Ntombi: "Welcome to student life. Where you'll learn that many things aren't as you imagined they'd be" she unbuckled her seatbelt "Hlomphe has been asleep for a long while now" she said when she looked back.

Lefa: "Why do you think I don't do road trips with him?" everyone laughed. Banele shook Hlomphe and watched the young boy stretch his arms out looking around while wearing a confused

look.

Banele: "We are here" he looked at Hlomphe.

Hlomphe: "Finally" Banele laughed. They all made their way out of the car but took time to stretch before heading to the gate.

Bukhosi pressed the buzzer at the gate and they watched the gate slide to the side. Hlomphe climbed on and enjoyed the joyride on the gate leaving Lefa not pleased at all. He apologized to his father and they made their way inside.

Frank: "Good day" he said with a

smile while shaking each hand. Ntombikayise introduced herself and her family and Frank remembered speaking to her so he invited them inside "All boys team" he looked back with a smile "I've got girls only so maybe you can give me a son and I'll give you a daughter" everyone laughed. Lefa: "Not a chance, Frank. Ours are not up for exchange" he said while laughing.

Frank: "As you can see we pride ourselves in the safety of our students" he showed them the secure burglar gate before

showing them the alarm. The boys looked around too to check if they liked it. It was not home but it was decent enough to call home while they studied. Frank led them to the bedroom that they'll share and it was more spacious than they thought.

Lefa: "Is the wiring in this place up to standard?" he switched the lights on and off.

Frank: "Yes, sir" he promised.

Ntombi: "So do you guys like it?" she looked at Bandile and Bubele who suddenly seemed down "We can go check another, guys" she

added.

Bubele: "It's not that. It's just that I thought I'd feel excited but instead I'm just feeling sad" he sat on the bare mattress.

"Like we won't see you guys on a daily basis" he added.

Bukhosi: "I told you guys let's all try the universities in Cape Town but nooo you two wanted to be far away from the parents to get a feel of true freedom". It was his way of saying that he wished they chose to be close because he'll miss them just as much. The longest they'd been

apart is two days tops not more.
Lefa: "It's normal. When I got onto a plane for the first time leaving my home country to go where I'd never been without my parents was hell. I remember covering my entire body with a blanket, not because I was cold but I was sobbing like a little boy for my parents" Hlomphe was looking at their lips and Lefa's hands so he knew why everyone suddenly looked sad.

Hlomphe: "I would cry too if I left my family. So cry bhut Bandile, we will comfort you"

Bubele laughed.

Bubele: "Wouldn't you just like that so you'll never let us forget it" Hlomphe laughed.

Hlomphe: "I'll miss you too though. You four have really become big brothers I've never had. No matter what happens please promise you'll never forget me" the quads got more emotional. They knew that their mother's relationship with Lefa might not be forever but they promised Hlomphe that they'd be in his life for good. They enjoyed having a little brother to playfully

spite and send to the parents because Ntombikayise already had difficulty saying no to Hlompho.

Bubele: "This really is not easy" he put his face in his hands and Ntombi went to give him a hug.

Ntombi: "The journey to manhood has many stages. This is one of them and that's why I have to let go as difficult as it is. You four are amazing and I look forward to seeing you reach different milestones that'll lead you to become the great men I already see in you" she looked at them all.

Bandile: "Will you come visit on

some weekends?" Ntombikayise nodded quickly.

Banele: "Mommy's boys" he teased and they all laughed.

Bubele: "It's a cool place though right?" he looked at Bandile.

Bandile: "Yeah and it's within walking distance to campus so yeah" he looked around.

Ntombi: "So should I go sort payments out with Frank? Are you two sure that you want this?" the boys nodded. "Okay let me go do that before other students beat us to it" she excused herself.

Lefa: "I just wanted to apologize

to you four again for what I did to your father. He provoked me but as someone who spent years learning discipline as a part of my martial arts training, I should have walked away because I could have done a lot of damage. I don't hate your father and I wish he was here. My aim is not to replace him because he's your father and nothing can change that. But as a man who has real intentions with your mother I do want to be one of the male figures in your lives you can respect and come to for help and

advice. Once again I apologize for being the reason your dad is not here"

Bukhosi: "Our dad is the reason that he is not here. We love the man but he did a complete 360 on us so we are learning to know this knew man he's become. I personally don't blame you for defending yourself against someone who deliberately sought you out. I won't excuse bad behaviour just because it's my father. It's actually something that he taught me so I'm applying his teaching here. Yes, at

first it was not easy to get used to mom having someone in her life but I personally like you. You've become a man that I respect and we know that your aim is not to replace dad but there's no reason why you both can't be in our lives because we don't compare you two at all"

Bubele: "He said it all. Mama doesn't know this but we have frequent meetings where we evaluate our lives, talk about issues that bother us and call each other to order. Our only request is still that you please

treat our mother with the utmost respect. We are now adults so we know certain things aren't forever but for the time you two are together we just ask that you cherish her. One of those milestones to manhood will certainly involve moving out for good and we want to know that the partner she's with will treat her well in our absence too"

Lefa: "I promise once again to do that and more if possible". The quads nodded before holding their fists out to Lefa and he touched their clenched hands with theirs.

Bandile was sad that Bathandiwe wouldn't be joining him in PE as they planned because she failed matric but he was planning on being faithful to her. Bubele and Pinky were on and off so neither thought they'd last in a long-distance relationship.

Ntombi: "Okay that's all sorted. Now can we please get the things out of the trailer? I want to help you kids pack while I'm still here" she joined them again after a long while. Bandile went to hug his mother.

Bandile: "See what we'll miss? he

said softly and pretended to cry.
Ntombi: "It's what you get for growing too fast" she laughed softly.

Hlomphe: "They are really close to their mother. It is nice" he said to his father and Lefa nodded.

Babele: "I've also decided what I'll do for the year since I didn't get in at university"

Ntombi: "Upgrade or study at a TVET College?"

Banele: "Neither" he looked at his mother "I applied at correctional services for their learnership programme" Ntombi raised a

brow.

Ntombi: "You want to go work with criminals?"

Banele: "More like help in their rehabilitation. I think me not doing well in matric was a blessing in disguise. I never really wanted to go there, Ma. Hence I wanted to be at the South African Defence Force. Academics is clearly not my strong point"

Ntombi: "But hard work can fix that, Banele. Just look at Bandile"

Banele: "I'm not Bandile" he reminded her. She apologized for

the comparison.

Ntombi: "Okay if it's what you'd like to do then I will support you. How do you go about applying?"

Babele: "Dad helped me apply a few days ago so I'm now just waiting to hear from them. I didn't mean to keep it secret but I wanted to be sure about it before telling you"

Ntombi: "Will the training be in Cape Town?"

Banele: "I don't know but I think somewhere in the Free state"

Ntombi's heart broke a little but she faked a smile to not

discourage him. A year fell because she realized just how real them moving away was. All four went to hug her feeling as emotional as her.

Bubele: "You'll never get rid of us, Ma. We'll be far yet near because we'll always go where you are"

Bukhosi: "I'm just looking forward to being an only child at the house for once" the others laughed.

Hlomphe: "Is aunt Ntombi okay?" he asked his father.

Lefa: "She's sad that the boys are leaving home" Hlomphe wore a sad face.

Hlomphe: "I'm sad too because I've just met them" he said to his father before joining in the hug. The quads and Ntombikayise laughed softly when they felt that he was a part of the embrace and made way so he'd be in the heart of it. Lefa stood looking at them all and smiled. He wished Liyema could finally see that he had no intention of replacing him in the quads life because he didn't want Mimi's husband doing that in Hlomphe's. He was in the relationship long term and for the first time felt

he met his future wife but he was told it was too soon to make that decision because

Ntombikayise might not be ready to get into another marriage so soon. Finally he felt his life had balance. His business was picking up again, his son seemed happy and he had a great relationship. They all worked together to help the boys unpack their bags.

Ntombi was sure to put in a picture of herself for them to look at on a daily basis. They spent hours busy with unpacking and packing until the room looked

almost like theirs at home. They registered online so they were practically students all they were waiting for was for classes to start. Bukhosi's registration would be open soon and he prefers to go stand in line as he feared something might hinder the internet making his registration unsuccessful. They went out for a bite and Ntombi bought them a little bar fridge so they'd keep their food in their room. She knew from personal experience that some housemates had no regard for personal space. Liyema was

paying for their fees so she'd take care of anything else that they needed. If there's one thing she and Liyema have always been able to do was divide their responsibilities as far as the boys were concerned even before the divorce. Once their food cupboards and fridge was decently stocked Ntombi went to show them around the city. It was a beautiful yet windy day and lots of pictures were taken.

Lefa: "They'll be fine" he whispered to Ntombi as the two of them watched their boys from

a distance.

Ntombi: "My mind knows that but all else just refuses to admit it.

They were babies just yesterday"

Lefa: "I know what you mean by that" he kissed her "I hope your ex finally meets us halfway, baby.

I don't see why we can't all do what's in the best interest of the boys. I asked them to forgive him for what he did. Regret can be terrible and I imagine I'd be filled with regret for letting an amazing woman such as yourself go too but luckily I don't plan to do something so foolish" they

both smiled.

Ntombi: "He better behave from now on or my man's going to karate him" Lefa laughed out.

Lefa: "I have no desire to do so again but if he pushes me too far once again I'll definitely do it. A young gentleman who parked his car next to Ntombi's got Lefa's attention when he realised the hearing aid in the man's ear.

"Excuse me" he said to the guy and watched him turn his head to look at him. Lefa went to introduce himself and the young man introduced himself as

Gregory.

Gregory: "No, I don't mind you asking about my cochlear implant, sir" he replied when Lefa asked if he could ask a few questions.

Lefa: "Thank you. I'd firstly like to know if you were born deaf?"

Gregory nodded "And did the operation come with any complications?" he added.

Greg: "None whatsoever. I got the implants when I was ten and now I'm twenty so it's been ten years of learning. The first thing that I had to learn to do was to use my speech to communicate

which was not easy. Many think deaf people can't speak but truth is we can. Our hearing has a problem but our vocal cords are perfectly fine. We just don't hear what words sound like so we can't pronounce them well hence you'll hear the term "deaf accent".

Ntombi: "So you were completely deaf until you got those?" she couldn't believe it.

Greg: "Yes, mam. I'm still deaf because once I take the processor off, I can't hear anything. This is not a cure but rather assistances to those who want it" Ntombi

nodded before looking at Lefa.

Lefa: "How much did such cost?"

Greg: "Over the ten years it's costs us about R500 000" Lefa nearly fell over backwards "Yeah it's a lot from the operation, to the appointments with different specialists,, to insurance, to constantly maintaining the implant. So I won't lie to you and say it'll be easy. Going from hearing nothing to being able to receive some sounds is not easy either. I remember the first time that I heard a toilet flush, I lost it because I thought a

toilet was silent" he laughed at himself and Lefa and Ntombi smiled "I see the young boy over there signing" he pointed to Hlompho "Is he your son?" both Ntombi and Lefa nodded "Am I right in assuming that you're considering this option for him?" Lefa: "He's actually the one who is considering the option for himself but I am terrified of what could come after. I fear it might not be what he imagined it to be"

Greg: "It's not easy, sir so it will be important for him to stay

motivated. Truth is he might never get to even talk as I do because it'll be difficult to go from sign language to actual talking. I could talk to him"

Lefa: "Right now he's in too good of a mood to be reminded about it again and we'll be heading back to Cape town tomorrow"

Greg: "Thank god for technology then. I could video call him. I still communicate using sign language. Here is my card. So call me to set up that video call when you want more information. I'd be more than happy to help" he said with

a smile.

Lefa: "Thank you so much" he took the card.

Ntombi: "Thank you" she smiled.

Gregory: "You're welcome and I look forward to hearing from you. I've got to go" Lefa nodded before they both shook Greg's hand and watched him leave.

Ntombi: "There's no way he was born deaf, baby" she couldn't believe it.

Lefa: "I read it's possible. Well technically he's still deaf" he put the card in his wallet "The money though" he shook his head.

Ntombi: "Aren't there foundations that can offer the operation and hearing aid and the parents can take care of the maintenance and specialists care?" Lefa shrugged "Or you and Mimi could start saving. I could help too" she added.

Lefa: "I appreciate it, baby but I can't accept it"

Ntombi: "I care about Hlompho too, Lefa. It's not to score brownie points with you but because I'd like to help a child get what he feels is right for him"

Lefa: "I know you're not offering

to help to push your own agenda, baby but I really do not want to burden you with so much when our relationship is still so new. I fear messing this up" Ntombi kissed him.

Ntombi: "I understand". The two of them spent the day with their children doing all sorts of fun things. Once Ntombi showed Bandile and Bubele around the city more they felt a bit comfortable with staying at the new place for three or even more years.

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The longer Mrs E took to tell Lungile the more she risked the truth coming out the wrong way. What made her decide to come clean however was Cwenga's health. When Jester told her that the toddler might not be sick just needs to be introduced to his real family it made Mrs E think about a lot of things. She didn't believe much in what she regarded to be superstition but his words haunted her mind and that's why she sat across Lungile ready to reveal the truth.

Lungile: "I hope you didn't call me

here to discuss how we'll make Lefa pay for hurting Liyema"

Mrs E: "No, giving Liyema attention regarding the matter will make him think that he was right. It's good that we are not entertaining him on this. He'll see that we all feel he was at fault"

Lungile just gave her a blank stare not believing that those words came from his mother

"Don't look at me like that. I'm not going to encourage

hooliganism" she sipped her tea.

Lungile: "Okay I'm glad we're on the same page on that. So why

did you ask to meet me here?"

Mrs E: "You might hate me after this conversation so let me take the opportunity now to remind you that I love you so much and all I've done, I did because I felt it was right for you children"

Lungile: "Oh boy" he put his car keys and phone on the table and sat back to look at her "I know this is not good at all" he looked at her.

Mrs E: "It's not" she watched Lungile nod "There's something that I should tell you. Something I most probably should have told

you long ago but the time was just never right. Now the time has come because I'm given no choice" she took a deep breath "When your father cheated on me with multiple women, there was a time I decided it would be an eye for an eye" she confessed.

Lungi: "So you cheated back?" Mrs E nodded "That's actually not shocking. You've always served people what they served you but with a little extra to show them who was boss" Mrs E couldn't help but laugh "I'm really not shocked because your marriage was toxic.

We felt it and we saw it so nothing bad you tell me about it comes as a shock" he added with honesty.

Mrs E: "There was actually a time when our relationship was healthy"

Lungi: "It must have been before you had Mahlubandile. No woman in a healthy relationship would keep the fact that she gave birth to a child to the father of that child. A healthy relationship means openness and freedom to be yourself" Mrs E just nodded "So it must have been way before our

time" he added.

Mrs E: "Fair enough and I'm not going to dispute that. But even in our marriage the first few years were good" she looked down.

Lungi: "If you say so, Mama. Continue I'm listening"

Mrs E: "So I ended up having an affair with your father's employee who was about to make partner at the firm to revenge on Mlu. I ended up falling deeply in love with the man and it was no longer spitting Mlu but keeping it secret so Mlu wouldn't ruin it.

This gentleman and I were happy

in our little bubble for over a year but your father found out and he put an end to it"

Lungile: "How?"

Mrs E: "Mlu framed him for two murders which led to him going to prison for years"

Lungi: "Which sounds like typical revenge for him so no shock there either"

Mrs E: "I... I" she looked to the flatscreen TV in Lungile's lounge "I fell pregnant during that period of the affair, Lungile" she confessed in a low stutter.

Lungile: "What?" he shifted

forward "Now it makes sense" he shook his head "Liyema being your favourite is because he is the child of a man you deeply loved" he assumed. Mrs E wiped her tears.

Mrs E: "Liyema had already been born when I started cheating" she said quietly "It's you, Lungi" she added and started to cry.

Lungile: "What?"

Mrs E: "You're not Mlu's son" she broke down in tears. Lungile shook his head while smiling not because he was happy but because he was in deep denial. "I'm sorry" she wiped her tears "I'm so sorry"

she added remorsefully.

Lungile: "Did he know?"

Mrs E: "Yes, Mlungisi knew"

Lungile: "I mean your lover, Mama" he shouted causing her to jump in fright.

Mrs E: "Yes" she whispered "But he couldn't do or say anything because he feared that Mlu would have asked me to abort like he did with Mahlubandile"

Lungile: "Do you know how many times I wished Mlungisi was not my father?" he asked his mother while wiping tears "But now that you've told me this I know I

didn't mean it. I guess it's true that one should be careful of what they wish for" he stood. "What's my real father's name?" he asked. Mrs E told him it's Luyolo whom Lungile met as her driver and he felt his knees weaken making him balance with the kitchen table. Lungile laughed out when he thought back at the moment Alu said Cwenga had a slight resemblance to Jester. He remembered laughing it off but he realized it was not a slight resemblance but a huge one and with good reason. He started to

cry and Mrs E feared comforting him as he might push her away. She just kept apologizing instead. Lungile calmed down and asked Mrs E questions around Jester's arrest "So you let the poor man rot in jail even after you knew the truth yet you say you loved him?" he shook his head.

Mrs E: "My silence was to protect myself. I agree it was selfish but you guys still needed me"

Lungi: "Please get out" he said quietly while pointing at the door "Get out!" he shouted. Alu came running from their bedroom to

check what the shouting was about. Mrs E just took her bag and left their house. Lungile started to cry and Alu wrapped her arms around him to comfort him hoping he'd open up about what made him so upset. He calmed and told her the story and Alu couldn't believe it.

Alu: "You can't tell anyone that you are not Mlungisi's son, Lungile"
Lungile shot her a cold look "I know you think it's not the time to say that but it's true. The Elephant name carries weight. When you say Elephant when you

introduce yourself people take notice. What if Mahlubandile and Liyema fight you on their father's inheritance?"

Lungile: "Wow" he took his phone and keys "I just told you that I found out my father is not my father and all you care about is me losing the inheritance he left me?" he raised his voice.

Alu: "I'm saying it out of concern, Lungile. Liyema is very unstable at the moment. You just said this man just came out of jail. Would you rather have people know that you come from a big law mogul or

a jailbird?"

Lungile: "That's what makes me so angry!" he shouted. "The fact that the guilty man was the one who ended up having it all while an innocent man lost out on so much!" he added.

Aku: "No one forced him to sleep with your mother"

Lungile: "Mlungisi sent a young lawyer with great prospects to jail, Alunamda just because he made a mistake. Do you think it's fair? Alu kept quiet "I didn't think you would. If you had said yes I'd have wondered if I even

knew the woman I'm married to"
he walked to the door.

Aku: "You can't drive while you are
like that. What if you crash the
car? I won't be able to take care
of two children under five and an
immobilized adult"

Lungile: "Maybe a crash is not a
bad idea. That way I'll numb this
pain I'm feeling right now" he
opened the door.

Alu: "Lungile Elephant!" she
shouted behind him.

Lungile: "Just call me Lungile" he
said before shutting the door
behind him hard. Zoë cried in the

main bedroom and Alu ran to the door while looking down the passage not knowing if she should run after Lungile or go attend to the baby. She decided to go comfort Zoë instead. The news came as a shock to her so she regretted how she reacted to it. She knew her words were the last thing that he needed but part of her wondered what her divided family would think about her husband not being from the rich family her mother bragged about. She called Lungile seven times but the phone ended up

going straight to voicemail. She prayed that he would be fine.

When Nandi felt a sharp pain in her abdomen, she thought that her periods were about to start. She was out and about with Mashudu in his hometown to put final preparations for their traditional wedding. Married life had been blissful even if she and Mashudu still tried to learn more about each other as a married couple.

Mashudu: "Baby, take a painkiller please because we have to

finalize this today because we've got to be back in Pretoria tomorrow" he looked at Nandi who was not looking too good.

Nandi: "It's okay, baby. I've dealt with such for years now so it won't kill me now. We still have to check if the tent your mom got is big enough" she clenched her teeth tight and took a seat.

Mashudu offered her a bottle of water and waited for the pain to pass.

Gladys: "I suggest that you go to the bathroom to check if your periods have not started yet.

You're wearing a bright coloured dress so it will show if you spot" she whispered to Nandi. Gladys was the catering lady.

Nandi: "I've been doing that since this morning because my period pain started back then but nothing. It's never been so severe so I think we must postpone" she looked at Mashudu.

Mashudu: "Will you be able to drive home then I can finish up here?"

Nandi shook her head "I'll go drop you off and return then" Nandi stood.

Nandi: "Let me first go to the

bathroom"

Gladys: "First door down the passage" she pointed. Nandi didn't make it to the bathroom because she fell on her knees on the way and Mashudu rushed to her side. He picked her up and Gladys went to get cold water to splash on Nandi's face when she turned a bit pale. The pain was excruciating.

Nandi: "This is not period pain, baby" she grunted "I hope it's not cervical cancer or anything because Rose said her mother died from it" she started to cry.

Mashudu lifted his wife from the chair she sat and went with her to the car. Nandi laid on the backseat with tears flowing down both her cheeks. Mashudu was driving to the hospital like a maniac making the pain feel even worse for Nandi. She could never tolerate pain. Suddenly Nandi felt a strange sensation between her legs. She lifted her dress and took her underwear off to inspect and Mashudu nearly skipped a red robot when he heard her loud scream.

Nandi: "A head!" she shouted

frantically "It's a baby's head!" she added and her hands started to shake as she cried. Her body's instinctively told her to push and the more she did, a little human made its way out of her. Mashudu was shaking with fear, disbelief and panic but he had to keep a level head to not kill them all in a crash. When they finally reached the hospital an unexpected baby had already been born but Nandi was crying out of fear so she didn't want to touch the child. Mashudu went inside and called out for help and help came to the

car with him. Nandi and the baby were inside the medical centre in no time being examined by the best professionals. Mashudu's hands were shaking as he dialled his mother's number to tell her to meet them at the hospital. He didn't want to tell them what happened over the phone because he himself had no words to describe what he had witnessed. A doctor made her way to Mashudu after a long while of waiting for feedback.

Doc: "Your wife and your baby are both healthy and fine" she said

with a smile "But we've got a problem. Your wife is afraid of her own baby because she said that she was not pregnant.

Apparently, she believes she's bewitched. Will you please follow me and try to calm her down so I can explain to you both what's happening?" Mashudu nodded quickly before walking behind the doctor. He found Nandi looking like she had just watched a scary movie.

Mashudu: "Baby, I'm here" he kissed her cheek.

Nandi: "I think I'm being

punished for my grandmother bewitching my grandfather, Mashudu. That's not a baby" she started to cry.

Doc: "It is, Mrs Mambane" she walked closer holding the little bundle in her arms "You have experienced what most call "cryptic pregnancy". It's when a woman isn't aware of a baby growing inside of her. This baby is fully developed so you carried full term. He's healthy and he's not from bewitching" she assured Nandi "Please hold him and you'll see that he's human and very

adorable" she wanted to give the baby to Nandi but Nandi grabbed Mashudu and placed him between her and the baby while still crying.

Nandi: "Call my mother"

Mashudu: "My mother is on the way"

Nandi: "I said call my mother. Call Mahlubandile Elephant-Mbuzo!"

she lost it.

Mashudu: "Okay" he said and watched her cry more. Mashudu called Mahlubandile and told her what happened so she'd know the urgency of the issue.

Hlubi: "Did you just say Nandipha

had a baby? My Nandipha?" she asked in shock.

Mashudu: "Yes and no we didn't hide the news of a pregnancy from you. They say it's cryptic pregnancy or whatever. Ma please get here with Mr Mbuzo please. The next flight out please be on it please. Nandi's not coping"

Hlubi: "I'll be there as soon as I can. Yanda is out of town so... you know what let me book the next flight out. Oh shit this feels like a big prank but I hear her cry in the background. Give her the phone". Mashudu did as asked.

Mahlubandile spoke to Nandipha and assured her she was on her way.

Nandipha: "Mama, I think Makhulu bewitched me too. What if this is a tokoloshe?" she could hear how weird it sounded but she didn't care. She didn't want to touch the baby.

Hlubi: "Give Mashudu the phone" Nandi did so "Ask that they give her a mild sedative. She's not going to calm down. I'm sure by the time the sedative wears off I'll be there" she tried to give solutions to an issue she'd never

faced. Mashudu asked the doctor if it was possible and as much as the doctor hated it, she realized Nandi might cry herself into a coma. Nandi was traumatized and would possibly need psychological help once she woke up. Mashudu watched Nandi fall asleep as she pleaded with him to not leave her side.

Doc: "Mr Mambane, in all my years as a doctor I've never been in such a situation but I'm well informed of its possibilities. I assure you this is no tokoloshe but an innocent baby...your baby"

Mashudu: "You said it's a boy?"

Doc: "Yes, sir. Passed all his health checks too. Strong little guy" she smiled. Mashudu stood and went to the doctor. He watched his shaking hands go forward and felt the baby rest in his arms. When he saw just how much the baby looked like him in his baby pictures, he smiled.

Mashudu: "So she's not the first woman to experience this?" the doctor shook her head.

Doc: "No she's not. A few similar cases have been recorded. One woman gave birth to "twins" a

week apart because she didn't know that she had two wombs. One baby grew in one and the other in the other womb. Such is rare but possible. We'll get a psychologist to come talk to Mrs Mambane when she wakes up and to you as well. She woke up a woman without a baby and maybe had no plans to have any for a while to a woman who gave birth herself in your car. It's a lot so I can imagine the trauma but don't take it out on the baby"

Mashudu: "She gained weight but not the big swollen pregnant belly.

Many complimented me on treating my wife well so she was pregnant? But other than the little weight gain no other pregnancy signs showed"

Doc: "The stories of many women who have had cryptic pregnancy are similar". Mashudu's phone buzzed and his parents said they were at the hospital and he told them where they are. When the Mambane's arrived the last thing they expected to find was a grandchild.

Mrs Mambane: "Usually your grandmother is the first to

predict a pregnancy by looking at the woman but this time even she didn't see Nandipha was pregnant" she was shocked. The doc was more than happy to educate them also.

Mr Mambane: 'Clearly it was God's plan. Let me hold him?'
Mashudu gave his son to his father.

Mrs Mambane: "My poor daughter in law" she went to Nandi's side
"I'd be as terrified. In fact, the first thing that came to mind when you just told us was the same thing Nandi thought. We

don't hear such happening and when it does it's scary. I was scared when I knew I was pregnant, I can't imagine not knowing and having to catch your own baby" she added.

Mashudu: "My child is not a product of bewitching". He'd been asking Nandi that they start having a family but Nandi was not ready so he had to watch her take contraceptive pills every morning. He didn't want their child to come like a thief in the night but the baby was there and there was nothing they could do.

He hoped Nandi would stop seeing their son as a tokoloshe because he didn't want what Rose did to Nandi happen to their boy. He prayed she wouldn't be depressed but if it were the case he'd support her until she was well again. He was a terrified as her but the more he held his son the deeper the love felt. He welcomed the unexpected journey of fatherhood with shaky yet open arms and hoped Nandi would try to do the same. 

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A week had gone by and Nandipha's parents and her in laws had run out of options on convincing her to see her baby as an innocent baby and nothing else. The psychologist didn't diagnose her with post-natal depression because she showed no signs of having it but she did suffer from post-traumatic stress due to the fact that she had to catch her own baby at the back of her husband's car when she was not even aware of its existence. Her

refusing to feed the baby had caused great tension between her and Mashudu because he had settled into fatherhood already. Yanda handed his phone over to Nandipha hoping that his last attempt would change his daughter's mind.

Nandi: "Who is it?" she asked softly. Her voice had even changed because all she'd been doing was crying. The fact that everyone seemed accepting of the baby while seeming to ignore her fears made her even more depressed. Yanda: "Someone who I think is

going to put your fears to rest so you can see the miracle in this, Nana" he said before kissing her forehead and leaving her alone.

Nandi: "Lo" that was the only hello she could give whoever was on the other side.

Mrs Mbuzo: "MaNandi" only her grandmother called her that so she knew who it was "My beautiful granddaughter" Nandi heard sniffs and she started to cry too "Firstly let me apologize for the trauma that I caused you. Me using dark magic for my own selfish gain clearly affected

you mentally in a way I don't think you or the family realized. None of what I did involved you. Your name was not mentioned once in my consultation with the witchdoctor so you best believe that the muthi I used didn't involve you. Your father told me what happened and that you think the child is a tokoloshe passed on to you now that I'm in prison but I assure you that it's not. I never had a tokoloshe and even if I did you'd have been the last person that I chose to pass it on to. I asked the prison doctor

about this case and she says a few woman overseas have experienced it so it's not witchcraft. Please hold your child, Nandipha please" she sniffed more.

Nandi: "You promise that you didn't involve me, Makhulu?. I'm not bragging but I know I am your favourite grandchild and I heard witches pass their things on to their favourites" she wiped her tears.

Mr Mbuzo: "I had nothing to pass on to. Yes, I used witchery but I didn't have things such as snakes

and tokoloshes so I don't have anything to pass on to"

Nandi: "Okay" she said in a whisper.

Mrs Mbuzo: "My time is up now. I'll call again when I can. I love you, MaNandi and I'm sorry"

Nandi: "I'm sorry too, Makhulu for not visiting you. I wanted to come bring you a piece of my wedding cake and show you pictures but I couldn't bring myself to face you but I still love you"

Mrs Mbuzo: "I understand. I'll wait on all of you to be ready"

Nandi: "Should I give Tata the

phone?"

Mrs Mbuze: "Oh no...he only called because he wanted me to assure you that I didn't bewitch you. He's not ready to talk to me yet". Nandi heard someone saying "times up" before the beeping sound of an ended call came through. She called Yanda to come get his phone but Rose appeared instead. Mahlubandile called her own back up to come and talk sense to Nandi. Rose first gave Nandi a long and warm hug. She remembered the sad look on Nandi's face because when she

took Nandi home after giving birth it was a face she wore until the day she decided to leave. Rose began the conversation with some general conversation but Nandi told her to please get to the point.

Rose: "Let's not allow history to repeat itself, Nandipha" she pleaded.

Nandi: "Had I bought a pregnancy test and saw it was positive, prepared for the baby and gave birth the right way. I wouldn't be like this, sis Rose. You didn't have to watch a baby's head pop

out of you unexpectedly"

Rose: "True but to say he's a tokoloshe, Nandipha? He's a little boy who right now has been held by everyone but his mother.

Please you don't want to walk away from him and when he turns 18 and you finally realize he's human you want to be in his life because it won't be easy and let me tell you that it'll affect your marriage too"

Nandi: "Please give me my phone. I want to google such stories myself". The family had kept her phone and wallet from her to

avoid her calling a cab and running away. Rose took out her own phone and Nandi was shocked to find that she was not the only one "One woman says her baby came out when she was sitting on the toilet" she put her hand over her mouth "And he's now healthy. Apparently, she didn't even gain weight like I did" she added.

Rose: "I also felt relieved when I learned I was not the only woman to not feel a bond with her baby. The healing started then and I'm glad that you see that you aren't alone". Nandi didn't answer Rose

but instead went back to her reading to inform herself.

Nandi: "You can have them bring him" Rose smiled when she heard those words after an hour of sitting with Nandi. She stood quickly and wasted no time to go out to the baby ward where Mahlubandile and Yanda were with the baby. Mashudu had to be begged to go home to rest. Hlubi walked inside Nandi's room holding her grandchild. Nandi felt her heart skip a beat but she sat up straight looking at the blue blanket the baby was wrapped up

in.

Hlubi: "I think that he is hungry. The hospital has been kind enough to give us donated breastmilk, but I think he's ready for his custom made milk" she joked and watched Nandi smiled faintly. Mahlubandile hoped Nandi wouldn't hurt the child when she held him. She could feel Nandi's shaking hands as she put the little cute bundle in her arms. "He's yours" she added and watched Nandi start to cry.

Rose: "This puts a new definition to the saying "God works in

mysterious ways" she stood closer.
Yanda: "I don't appreciate being
made a grandfather in my prime
and I think he knew that hence
he was hiding and just chose to
surprise us" Nandi laughed
between the tears.

Nandi: "He looks like Mashudu"

Hlubi: "Proof that he's yours"

Nandi: "I don't know how to do
this, Mama. I was not given a
chance to read baby magazines
and such" Hlubi wiped Nandi's
tears with her thumb.

Hlubi: "You'll find that you
wouldn't even have referenced

from those anyway because babies are different. God wouldn't have trusted you with him had he not been sure you'll know what to do. The first time I felt I was bonding with Mivuyo was when I breastfed him. Would you like Rose and I to show you how?" Nandi nodded making Rose stand even closer. The two women used their experience to show baby Mambane and his mother how the feeding worked. He latched on like he had been doing it for months and when he opened his eyes Nandi smiled. She finally saw

what everyone meant when they said he'd just an innocent baby. He looked at her for most of the feeding process. Mashudu walked in to a sight that nearly made him dance.

Nandi: "I'm sorry" she whispered to him when they were left alone.

Mashudu: "I love you" Nandi smiled. "I know we didn't get a heads up but he's here and there's nothing I want to do about it because I love him so much" he added.

Nandi: "You must be God's favourite child Mashudu

Mambane. You wanted a baby so bad and I told you to wait and God was like "you know what, I'm giving that man a child" they both laughed "I love him too now though. I don't know how I'll explain at work that I gave birth and have to get unplanned maternity leave and I'm sure they'll think it's an April fool's joke"

Mashudu: "Well I sorted it out already" he kissed her "You're beautiful" he added.

Nandi: "Thank you. So should we cancel the wedding now that

we're parents?"

Mashudu: "Nope because we've paid deposits already and most are non-refundable" Nandi nodded

"This mean you were pregnant during our church wedding"

Nandi: "My baby is amazing though. Mommy was able to fit into her dream wedding dress and no morning sickness. I saw with my mom, they can be hell" they both laughed.

Mashudu: "I love how you said "my baby" it tells me that you've accepted this and together with the support of our families we'll

be fine. My mother volunteered to come live with us for a couple of months to teach us how to take care of baby" Nandi nodded "And we can't keep calling him baby forever" they both laughed. "I suggest Tshimangadzo because he is a wonder, a miracle" he looked at his boy. "Any second name suggestion?" he looked at his wife.

Nandi: "No because if I add he won't have enough space in the forms to write his name" they both laughed. "Tshimangadzo Mambane is perfect on its own"

she said with a smile. Though she stopped looking at him through bad lenses she was still afraid of what motherhood would bring but with her husband by her side and both their families she knew she'd be alright.

When Portia opened the door and found her mother standing in front of it she didn't know how to react. Ma Maduna was not the affectionate type so Portia and her sisters always knew their mother to have a tough exterior. Abo: "Makhulu" the toddler came

to the door to hug her grandmother.

Maduna: "At least someone's happy to see me" she gave Portia a look before walking pass her to get inside. She looked around their apartment "Not too bad" she nodded still looking around. I thought I'd come help you before you embarrass me and yourself. To hear that he is in hospital because he fought his ex wife's boyfriend is pathetic. It's not a reflection on him but on you. You failed as a woman"

Portia: "Go continue watching

your cartoon, Abo" Maduna put Abo down and she then ran to the TV area once again.

Portia: "What must I do, Mama? Kill Ntombikayise?"

Maduna: "You don't involve me in such" she clapped once "That would be pure devil's work" she put her bag down but her handbag was still clenched under her arm. "Come show me the kitchen and make me food and tea" she led the way to the kitchen herself because it was open plan. Portia took her mother's clothing bag to Abo's

room and found Maduna making tea already and putting leftovers on the microwave.

Portia: "Why are you here, Ma? I didn't tell Liyema you'll be here because I didn't know and he's being discharged today"

Maduna: "When?"

Portia: "Later"

Maduna: "Good" she said before taking out containers filled with what looked like dry leafs "This my girls, is going to help put an end to your man running after ass that he no longer has access to. I know that you have an ironing

board for an ass but he's seen something in it that he likes, all we gotta do is enhance the love" she said in a sneaky voice.

Portia: "I hope that's not what I think it is"

Maduna: "It kept your sister's marriage intact and you know that very well so now it's your turn. I want you all married and to men who can take care of you. Once he eats the food you prepared using this you can bring your entire family to live here and he'll accommodate us with a smile"

Portia: "Please leave, Ma" she

went to get her mother's bag in the room.

Maduna: "You add this and while you stir the pot you say that you want him to love you and only you. Say you want him to stop chasing after Ntombi but still be a good father because we don't want anyone to get suspicious"

Portia: "I said leave, Mama"

Maduna: "And go where because I came to help you?" she took her warmed up food and started to eat. Portia took the muthi and went to flush it.

Portia: "That man loves me"

Maduna: "Mmm and that's why he goes to war for another woman?" she sipped her tea. Portia left her mother alone in the kitchen to go get ready to pick Liyema up.

The two of them were on speaking terms again and Liyema could speak softly. When Liyema found Portia's mother at their place he was a bit shocked but he was polite in his greeting.

Portia: "I am going to make you a nice pot of butternut soup" she smiled.

Liyema: "Thank you but I'm going to Ntombi's to see Bukhosi and

Banele" he whispered.

Portia: "But...,"

Liyema: "I gotta grovel here, baby. You can make the soup since it's all I can down and I'll have it tomorrow or even when I'm back. It'll give you chance to catch up with your mother without me interrupting"

Portia: "Then take Abongile with you because I think she's bored"

Liyema: "No problem. Let me go shower and I'll get going" he held his throat that still had some discomfort. Being at the hospital humbled him somewhat and he

wanted to go apologize to Ntombi and the boys. Not being in PE and knowing that Lefa was has been torture but he tried not to get fuelled up by it.

Maduna: "I brought back up just in case. I know how stubborn you can get" Portia went to hold the other container but shook her head trying to knock some sense into herself. Liyema's issues with Ntombikayise had become exhausting making her mother's offer sound so sweet. She watched him leave the flat after about an hour with Abongile and

she wondered if she'd ever knock Ntombikayise from the pedestal that Liyema placed her on so she'd sit on it. She started on dinner and though Ma Maduna was quiet Portia could almost hear her mother's thoughts.

Lungile had been like a zombie for the past week. It was as though his mind had been abducted but he could function enough to get to his duties as an employee and a father. He took an apple leaving the beautifully decorated feast on the breakfast table.

Alu: "Baby, I'm sorry for being more worried about what my family members whom I don't get along with will say"

Lungile: "You hurt me. It proved to me that without the money and Elephant status you wouldn't be here right now"

Alu: "I would have but it seems I've got what will people say syndrome. Screw them because you and our kids are what's most important. I made you all your favourite to start the day on a slightly better note. So please sit so we can decide on a way

forward" Lungile looked at her for a long while. He put his apple in his bag and went to sit down. She really outdone herself and he was hungry "I suggest that you go talk to Tat'Rasmeni. That way you can get both sides of the story" she hoped he wouldn't get upset.

Lungile: "I've been thinking about doing that so much that I asked Zola for his address"

Alu: "When you're ready then do it. You've got to decide what you'll do to solve this because walking around like a bear with a sore

foot is not a solution"

Lungile: "I can't even talk to my siblings because Liyema had himself panel beaten and Nandi's unexpected birth has Hlubi busy"

Alu: "I'm here and once again I'm sorry" she leaned closer to kiss him. The two of them had a decent breakfast before Lungile stood to go to work. He took a different turn instead heading to where Zola said Jester lived.

When he found his mother at his biological father's place he had the instinct to turn around.

Jes: "Lungile, please stay" he

pleaded.

Mrs E: "I'm going to leave you two alone. I miss you, Lungi" she said as she stood by the door with him. When he didn't even give her a glance she walked out. Lungile looked at Jester not knowing what he planned to do.

Jes: "I'm not even going to ask you to forgive us for the lies but I am glad that you came. Please come in and close the door"

Lungile: "Did he really frame you or is it you and Zola's way of making me hate the man who raised me and see you as some

saint?"

Jes: "A saint I'm not because no saint goes to sleep with other men's wives but I am innocent of the crime I was made to pay for"
Lungile closed the door.

Lungile: "Why didn't you tell me when I was older?"

Jes: "And burden you with prison visits that might have never ended? Oh no, I'd have much rather love you from a distance"

Lungile: "Did you suffer? On the inside that is?"

Jes: "Greatly at first" Lungi's jaw tightened "But I didn't allow

them to push me around" he added.

Lungile: "Was Dudumashe in on it? I know he and Mlu did everything together"

Jes: "Lungile, it doesn't matter.

This" he pointed between them

"Is much more important to me.

Screw the past" he added.

Lungile: "I want to know if he was responsible for putting my biological father in jail to please his friend as he always did" he shouted.

Jes: "No" he lied "Dudumashe was not involved" he added. The last

thing that he wanted was for Lungile to revenge on Dudumashe which could turn ugly.

Lungile: "Good" he sat "So you are good with money?" Jes sat down.

Jes: "Your mother was kind enough to help" Lungile nodded.

Lungi: "She no longer speaks about Scott so are you two...?"

Jes: "Oh no, our meetings are always about you. Right now we were trying to finger out how we'll make you see things from our perspective but we decided we were within no right. So be angry at us if you want"

Lungile: "You best believe I'm angry"

Jes: "But with all that I'm happy to be sitting across you right now" he smiled "I also ask that when you're ready we do an introduction ritual as per my family traditions. I think Cwenga needs them"

Lungi: "I was thinking about that"

Jes: "I'm more than happy to do them"

Lungi: "This doesn't mean that I want you in my life. It's for my son and wife. We're tired of going

to specialists who can do nothing for him"

Jes: "I understand. Would you like a drink"

Lungile: "I might as well because I've got questions and since Zola thrives on secrets I hope you'll give me answers. Let me call my work and tell them that I'm not coming in" Jes nodded. While he went to get them both a drink Lungile was on the phone. Jes watched Lungile move about and he got reminded of his late brother. He knew that Lungile was not there to play happy

family but him being there was a start.

Dali: "Will you marry me?" he went on one knee in front of Indi who's bump had started to grow.

Indi: "Had I not been pregnant would you be on your knees right now?"

Dali: "Eventually I would have but I must admit me wanting our baby to come from a complete family sped up the process. I love you, Indiphile and I want to go introduce you to my father properly" he smiled.

Indi: "I feel like you are doing this because you feel obligated. Let's wait until the baby is born and should you still feel you want to marry me, we'll take it from there" Dali stood looking disappointed.

Dali: "Look at the slip for the ring" he took out a piece of paper from his pocket "It was bought while you and I had no idea there'd be a baby. I admit to have loved you and Kayise both at one point but that's in the past. The more time we spend together the deep in love I fall.

Please do me the honour of being my wife" Indi was still looking at the receipt.

Indi: "Please go on one knee and ask again" she smiled. He did exactly that and when he asked her again she said yes three times before kissing him. Dali felt content with what life decided to give him. He couldn't tell Indiphile that the ring had been bought so long ago because while with her he still hoped he'd marry Ntombi.

Dali: "This feels right. Thank you for saying yes" he said with a smile.

Indi: "I love you so much" they shared a long and passionate kiss. Dali could see how happy Ntombi was in her new relationship and it motivated him to stop thinking about the what ifs and be happy with the woman in his life.

Lefa: "So you mean to tell me that she had no idea that she was pregnant?" Lefa asked Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Absolutely none. Like, babe the baby just popped out of nowhere" she gave him his coffee before sitting next to him. She

loved to gossip with him occasionally because the news was safe since he was no gossip who'd spread things.

Lefa: "Wow" he couldn't believe it "What would you do had it been you?" he looked at her.

Ntombi: "Faint" Lefa laughed out.

Lefa: "I can actually picture you doing that" he nodded.

Ntombi: "Hey" she playfully hit his shoulder and they both laughed..

Lefa: "I'd be over the moon. I'd tell our story to everyone who cared to listen. Hopefully it would have been a little girl had we

been faced with such"

Ntombi: "Yeah" she said softly as she got reminded of the fact that she had not told him that she couldn't have kids.

Lefa: "What's that?" he looked at her "Is the baby talk making you miss Bandile and Bubele? They miss you too, Ngqangqa" he put his cup aside to kiss her. Ntombi vacated her house when she heard Liyema was on his way and luckily she had somewhere to go. Ntombi: "It's not that" she whispered.

Lefa: "Talk to me then" he held

her close "Nana" he said softly when she kept quiet. When she turned to look at him with shiny eyes he got worried "Please don't tell me Liyema disrespected you again" he said but she shook her head.

Ntombi: "Baby, when we started what's between us now I had no intention of making it long-term. In fact I thought I'd give no strings attached thing a go but here we are"

Lefa: "Do you regret it?" Ntombi shook her head quickly.

Ntombi: "But it meant not being

completely open to you about certain things. This is actually the very first time that we have the baby talk and though you didn't say it in so many words, I sense you want another addition someday" she wiped her tears.

"I... can't give you that, Lefa" she said softly.

Lefa: "Don't you see yourself doing motherhood all over again?"

Ntombi: "I've imagined myself starting over so many times I've lost count. As difficult as my pregnancy with the quads was, I loved the experience on some days.

I only got to breastfeed one of them and that was once or twice and I loved it so much but I couldn't continue. Then I lost out on a year of their baby milestones. With Amahle I at first couldn't enjoy the experience of having a newborn because I couldn't get attached as she was not ours to keep. So I've daydreamed about carrying another child and not have someone take him or her from me after a few days. I daydreamed about how breastfeeding would really be like, those moments where baby bites

the nipple and I'd swear a little inside. Experiencing all milestones in the first year like teething, crawling and such but it will not happen". She told him why it would not happen and she could see that it was the last thing that have expected she'd say. Lefa kept nodding while listening to her "I'm sorry" she added. Lefa: "Baby, I do wish that you'd told me sooner but when I think about how new our relationship is, I realize that we are still getting to know each other. I'm shocked, I won't lie"

Ntombi: "It's a deal breaker" she said with certainty.

Lefa: "It was wrong of me to throw baby hints when we haven't had a real discussion about it yet. I have seen you take contraceptives so I didn't think that you had no uterus"

Ntombi: "I can still get pregnant but because I don't have a womb it'll be ectopic so that's why I take contraceptives" Lefa nodded before kissing her. "Let me give you time to process it all. I can see that you are shocked" Lefa held her closer to kiss her but she

broke the kiss "Don't make rush choices, Lefa. I know you don't want to hurt me but I really need you to let this marinade because you might find it's a deal breaker. I apologize for letting things get so far. Uhm...yeah I'll get going"

Lefa: "Ntombikayise" he held her in his grip "I love you" he looked at her.

Ntombi: "I love you too but I've learned that in some cases it's not enough. I'll see you"

Lefa: "Baby let's talk about this"

Ntombi: "You currently don't have

any words and that's okay. When you do, you know where you'll find me" she gave him a kiss before rushing out the door to her car. Lefa threw himself on the couch. Because Hlompho lived with his maternal family almost all his life, he dreamed of having a baby permanently under his roof someday but as he sat and thought about the situation he realised that his dream had already come true because Hlompho was with him. His other dream was to finally meet an amazing woman and he found her

which made him realize that he didn't need time to marinate on what Ntombi just told him. He rushed to the parking lot but her car was not there. When Ntombi arrived home the first thing she saw was Abongile and she knew Liyema was still there.

Bukhosi: "Ma, what does it mean when a girl just goes cold and doesn't want to talk?" he attacked her with an unexpected question.

Ntombi: "Ivi?" Bukhosi nodded "Did you two have a fallout?" he shook his head "Girls, especially

teenagers can be difficult to read and understand at times, boy so I honestly can't tell you why she's like that because it could be a number of things. All I can advice is that you wait on her to open up"

Bukhosi: "But I miss her"

Liyema: "She won't stay away for long. She's playing hard to get"

Bukhosi: "Because she was hard to get hence I don't want to lose her"

Liyema: "You're going to university. They'll be prettier and smarter girls"

Bukhosi: "And that's why I didn't ask you about this"

Liyema: "Okay, I'm sorry. Get her a box of chocolates and take her out" he suggested.

Bukhosi: "No, I will do as Bhut Lefa does" Liyema felt like throwing up "Iviwe likes it when I compliment her and motivate her so her love language must be words of affirmation. I'll send random notes to her home telling her how much I love her. I'll send her texts telling her I can't get her beautiful face out of my mind. Yeah bhut Lefa speaks to

Mama's love language so I'm going to speak to my girl's to strengthen the bond" he spoke while walking away from his parents to go to his room.

Ntombi: "Let me here it" she looked at Liyema "My man makes your son a soft man who begs for love?" she folded her arms.

Liyema: "I've come to apologize so I'm sorry and if it works and he gets his girlfriend back I'll be glad. He's a lover clearly who falls hard just like you so it must hurt to be avoided"

Ntombi: "Am I a lover or do I

pretend to love? You come with so many analysis about me I can't keep up with you"

Liyema: "Please, Ntombi I'll prove to you I'm sorry"

Ntombi: "Okay"

Liyema: "Banele got in at the correctional services learnership"

Ntombi: "The one you went behind my back to help him apply for.

Last year, Liyema"

Liyema: "He said he'd tell you himself. I didn't want to break his trust"

Ntombi: "Fine"

Liyema: "Were you crying?"

Ntombi: "Allergies" Liyema nodded. Liyema excused himself to go talk to his boys. The noise that Abongile made worked on Ntombi's nerve and it was not like her because she usually loved the chaos kids brought. Makhulu went to her room holding a tray with tea and found Ntombikayise lying on her bed looking at the ceiling. Ntombi thanked the elder for the drink and she told her grandmother what happened. The fact that Makhuku climbed the stairs was proof of how well the healthy lifestyle Makhulu

started when she moved to Cape town helped.

Makhulu: "You two love each other so allow him time to process it"

Ntombi: "I love this man so much, Makhulu"

Makhulu: "Tell me something I don't know" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "Nto-Nto, Lefa is here to see you. Should I tell him to come up?"

Ntombi: "Yes, Tata because I have a feeling that we'll need privacy to talk things through"

Tamkhulu: "Is everything fine?"

Makhulu: "Just a little thing they

have to sort out"

Tamkhulu: "Just how little?"

Makhulu: "I'll tell you on the way out. Come let's give them some privacy" she stood to go to the door. Tamkhulu gave Ntombi a long look of concern before leaving. Ntombi stood from the bed and waited for Lefa to join her. It had been about an hour since their conversation. When he walked in he closed the door behind him and went to hug her. The fact that she didn't know if it were an I'm staying hug or the last hug made her cry. He held on

tighter but with care to not crush her ribs.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry for letting things get this deep between us" he kissed her moist lips that had traces of her tears.

Lefa: "Combined we've got five amazing boys. If no man finds contentment in that then I don't know what he wants. Like I said my goal is not to replace Liyema but I'd like to be one of the males in their lives they know they can turn to for anything. They are an extension of you as Hlompho is an extension of me. We love each

other hence we can love each other's kids and honestly the trip to PE made me realize that when we're together, it doesn't matter who Hlompho's mother is and who the quads father is because in the moments they are with us we are their parents whether biologically or not. I love what you bring into my life already so I don't care about another child because we are already blessed with five which is more than many can say"

Ntombi: "So you're not breaking up with me?"

Lefa: "And be the one waiting at some man's door to beat him out of regret of letting you go? Hell no because I'll crush the damn guy" Ntombikayise laughed softly.

Ntombi: "I believe you when you say you are happy with how things are. I hear it in the sound of your voice, the look in your eyes and how I felt when you said it. And I admit that I was glad you have a biological child especially when Hlompho came to live with you letting you get the full experience of fatherhood. I really love you, Lefa Gwala"

Lefa: "I love you more, sthandwa sam" they kissed "But I have brought someone with" he said with excitement before leaving the room. He walked back in holding a box and a little bark came from inside. Ntombi went to look inside and found a brown retriever puppy inside.

Ntombi: "Where did you get him?" she asked with a smile before taking the puppy out.

Lefa: "A friend of mine's dog had a few and because he can't afford more dogs he let me adopt her..it's a girl"

Ntombi: "Oh" she smiled.

Lefa: "And she needs a mother. I remember you telling me that you had a similar one growing up"

Ntombi: "Yes. Danger would on occasion give me his little house to sleep in when Nomvula kicked me out on rainy nights". Hearing that still stung Lefa and he didn't think it'll stop "So you want us to co parent because you'll be without a home if you take her to your place" she laughed.

Lefa: "Yes and I promise to come visit as often as possible. I brought food to show I'm a

responsible father and tomorrow I'll take her to the vet for her vaccines"

Ntombi: "What did I do to deserve such a great baby daddy though?" she joked and laughed before kissing him.

Lefa: "It must be Makhulu's prayers" they both laughed "Hopefully someday we'll get to live together so our new baby will experience both parents being under one roof" he joked.

Ntombi: "Wait until daddy saves for lobola okay" she said to the puppy "You weren't planned so

we'll have to take care of your needs first" they both laughed when the dog barked "I love her so much. She reminds me so much of my dog, baby. Having her brings good memories and there weren't many in my childhood so thank you" she kissed him.

Lefa: "I'm glad that I managed to make you smile. Jokes aside though, I do hope someday we can live together and raise our children. I know the boys are grown but you are home to them so wherever you are they'll forever gravitate towards and I

know Hlompho would absolutely love having you in the same house as us. I know I'm jumping the gun and most probably overwhelming you but I look forward to forever with you as cheesy as it sounds"

Ntombi: "It sounds good to me because I have pictured it mentally and the thought always leaves me smiling". Lefa kissed her passionately but the puppy wiggled between them "No more privacy only stolen moments now that we've got a new born" they both laughed.

Lefa: "We're crazy" laughter again.

Ntombi: "At least both of us are so they'll lock us up in the same mental asylum should we get worse" she joked and they laughed.

Lefa: "Let's go bribe someone to babysit" he took the puppy and the two of them walked to the lounge. When the family got the story everyone laughed.

Banele: "You should have gotten her a pitbull but she's cute.

What's her name?" Lefa and Ntombi looked at each other "Wow

your parents don't have a name for you. Let's call you Brownie because you are the colour of a chocolate brownie. Let's go introduce you to Bukhosi maybe seeing you will brighten his mood. You don't know how many times we have been asking for a puppy in this house and now that we're moving, they bring you" he held the puppy up in the air. Liyema started to sneeze reminding Banele why they never got furry pets.

Liyema: "My throat and nose are swelling so let me rather go" he

cleared his throat. "Look, man I'm sorry for what happened" he held his hand out to Lefa.

Lefa: "Don't sweat it, water under the bridge but I held the dog and since you're allergic my touch might trigger it more. I don't want to make a habit of sending you to hospital". Liyema ignored that.

Liyema: "Cool" he walked to the door "I'll see you boys again tomorrow" he said to Banele who nodded. Banele took the puppy to Bukhosi and his mood became better indeed. Ntombi knew that

Brownie was not to replace a baby but she was an amazing gift. It's as though Lefa knew what her childhood dog looked like because he got the exact same one. When Brownie was found chewing one of her "mother's" flip flops that had been by the sliding door her "father" promised to replace them. Ntombi remembered when her father came with her childhood dog and as she got chased by the adorable furry bundle on the grass it took her back to that day her father came with her first puppy.

Tamkhulu looked at Lefa and gave him a nod of gratitude while smiling faintly. Lefa nodded and smiled too before looking at Ntombi running around the yard with their puppy. ❤️

S2-INSERT 57 (NOT EDITED!)

It was the second month of the year and for many it already felt like they'd entered the new year long ago. Bubele and Bandile had settled in well at university and PE already started to feel like their second home. Bukhosi's

classes had also commenced and he could not wait to be sworn in as an attorney in a few years' time. Banele was getting ready to be one of over 400 recruits of the Correctional Services learnership programme at Zonderwater Training College next month. Coming home to finding only Tamkhulu and Makhulu home had become a norm to Ntombi. Sometimes she'd arrive to an empty house but not exactly empty because Brown would be roaming somewhere in the garden mostly up to mischief. She enjoyed

having the puppy around, but she loved it even more when Hlompho and Lefa came over to keep her company.

After realizing how expensive baby products are, Nandi and Mashudu postponed their traditional wedding until further notice. The expenses were crazy and they were grateful for the support of their extended families. Nandi's bond with her son was unbreakable and she couldn't believe that she once accused him of being a tokoloshe.

Settling into motherhood was not easy but her mother in law was of great help.

Amahle had not succeeded in getting information on her biological mother but her teen love with Chumani was growing. Lungile hadn't told his siblings about Jester being his biological father because he feared they might treat him as an outcast but as he sat across from Hlubi and Liyema he felt telling them sooner rather than later was best. He took a deep breath and

exhaled slowly through his mouth before telling them what Mrs E told him. Both Mahlubandile and Liyema's bottom lips were hanging on the floor due to shock. Lungi: "And that's why I haven't seen you two" he said after concluding his story "I needed to deal with this on my own" he added.

Hlubi: "Like how sure is Zola about this?". Lungile let out a soft laugh.

Lungi: "If you can see how much Mgcina looks like Cwenga you'd have no doubt yourself but just to

be sure, we had. DNA tests done and it was a 99.9% chance so he's my dad" he added.

Hlubi: "So it would mean that our fathers were enemies?" she asked in a whisper and watched Lungile nod "And that because they were both in love with our mother?"

Lungile nodded once again "Well that's a lot to take in" she added and watched him give her yet another nod.

Liyema: "And for that reason we must stay away from each other. Next thing Lungile will be taking out his revenge on behalf of his

father against our father on us. We want our father's inheritance". Mahlubandile gave Liyema a hard slap across the face "I was joking geez" he rubbed his cheek before laughing. He stood and held his hand out to his brother. Lungile stood and they shared an embrace "You know this doesn't change anything. You're still my little brother and I love you" he said to Lungile.

Lungi: 'For a second there I thought you were being serious' they both laughed "Thanks, bra.

I appreciate the fact that you won't allow this to change things between us" he added.

Liyema: "Can't you take a joke, Grandma?" he turned to look at Mahlubandile. He'd been teasing her about her new title since he heard about Nandi's baby.

Hlubi: "Mxm" she clicked her tongue "You've been saying and doing stupid things for the longest time now so what you said sounded exactly what you would have said" she stood.

Liyema: "Ouch" he held his chest.

Hlubi: "I'm sorry that you're

faced with this on top of everything else but Liyema is right, this doesn't change anything. I love you so much, phelo lasekhaya" she gave him a tight hug.

Lungile: "I love you too, Mafungwashe" he replied "This has actually come with some good. He had a little ritual for Cwenga done and my boy hasn't been sick since" he said with a smile.

Hlubi: "So will you tell the extended family? The Elephants that is"

Lungi: "I think Alunamda is more

afraid of that than I am. She fears they'll want their name back"

Liyema: "People think this name is a coat of honour but in actual fact it can feel like a burden" the others nodded "And I could bet half my money that Mlungisi knew but he kept quiet because he didn't want to give Mama a divorce. Chances of him not having known are slim"

Lungi: "My thoughts exactly. I mean he must have been suspicious since he knew about their affair"

Hlubi: "We'll never know and quite frankly I do not care. If this came with a silver lining such as Cwenga healing I'm glad that it's out. So are you two trying to build a relationship?"

Lungile: "I don't know, sisi. All I know is that I got my wish of not wanting to be an Elephant but it's not as good as the younger me imagined it would be. To know that the man who raised me jailed the one from whose seed I'm from hurts" Liyema put his hand on Lungi's shoulder.

Liyema: "If apologizing on Mlu's

behalf helps in anyway then we are sorry. I know uncle Jester and if he's anything like what he was back then I imagine you two will get along nicely in future". There was a loud knock on the door and all three turned to look at the door.

Lungile: "That's him. He can't for the life of him knock softly"

Hlubi: "Oh so now you know what we meant by you should learn to knock softer all these years? Like father, like son I see" Lungile laughed and went to open. When Jester greeted the siblings his

eyes fell on Liyema and he couldn't believe it was the little boy that he knew. Soon the two started to talk about the good memories they remembered sharing and Lungi could not help but feel a bit envious of Liyema for having childhood memories with Jester when he had absolute none

Jes: "He always used to have dry snot in and around his nose this laaitie" Mahlubandile cracked out laughing.

Liyema: "Ahh, you see now uncle Jes?" he shook his head and Jester laughed. "It's good to see

you" he shook Jester's hand.

Jes: "Great seeing you, Liyema"

he smiled "It's an even greater pleasure to finally meet you,

Mahlubandile. You've got no idea

how much we looked for you. So to

have you here is good because I

know your mother is happy"

Hlubi: "She must have loved you

because she kept me secret from

her own husband but I

understand her reasons. Thank

you for helping her look for me"

she said politely and Jester

smiled. The siblings promised

Lungile that they'd be back as

they had business to attend to and Lungi walked them out.

Lungi: "It's only when I heard Liyema tell stories about how "cool" of an uncle you were, do I feel like I've missed out" he admitted in a low tone.

Jes: "I'm not six feet under, Lungile Take your keys and we can go do cool things together". Alu walked out of the room looking a bit uncomfortable and Jes noticed she had been like that whenever he was around. She greeted and offered him a drink but he said no thanks to the offer because he

was going to take his son out. Lungile went to the room to go change his baby puke shirt quickly leaving Alu standing in one corner like a trapped mouse in her own house.

Jes: "I could wait outside" he looked at her "Since you're so uncomfortable with my presence. I could wait outside" he added and watched her try to loosen up "Look, Alunamda I know that my jailbird status scares you. You wonder if I'm not a chancer ready to rob your husband or hurt your family but I'm not. I'm a father

and grandfather hoping to get a chance to know his son and grandchildren after years of being robbed of the privilege. I don't mind you and Lungile being present whenever I see my grandchildren but please don't lock me out" he begged.

Alu: "I'm judging you, Tata and honestly I have been since I heard about you and who you are to Lungile. I guess I'm ashamed to have my family learn that my father in law was a criminal"

Jes: "Yet I've never created a crime" he corrected her.

Alu: "They won't see it that way"

Jes: "So in other words your real criminal of a step father in law was a hero because of the legacy he left behind. A legacy that's not as black and white as many believe. While your real father in law who is no criminal but was framed by criminals is seen as less because his legacy is that of years and years of rotting in prison. You don't have to like me but please do not poison my son against me. Allow my actions to prove I'm not here to cause havoc but just to know my family"

Alu: "One of the reasons I'm told a makoti is welcomed into a family is to unite her husband with his loved ones. Yes, I'm afraid of you because you're the first person I met who has been in jail but I'll give myself chance to know you for Lungi's sake. He is not admitting it but he's excited about you being around because you are an easy father. You listen to him, you share your favourite books and music with him which was something I'm told Mr Elephant never really did. So please don't disappoint me. My

judgement comes from a place of fear but I'm praying for that and working on it In our home we are Christians but when I married Lungi I knew I'm marrying into a traditional family so if the ritual you did for Cwenga was what helped keep him from doctor thank you for that"

Jes: "It's my duty so you need not thank me"

Lungi: "Baby, I'll be back in an hour or two's he kissed her.

Alu: "Enjoy" she smiled and watched the two men leave. The talk with Jes put her fears at

ease a bit and she'd only judge his actions from that moment forward and not his past. Jester took Lungile to a quad bike ride before the two of them enjoyed some cold beers while watching a game.

Jes: "I'm telling you, I was nonsense growing up. A rebel of note who was in the forefront of racial riots with a wet facecloth over my nose and mouth to block the teargas" Lungile laughed out "My mother used to tell me to wait until I get a child who would be exactly like me, a rebel so I'd

know the stress I put her in"
they both laughed.

Lungile: "Then you got lucky to not have had me in your life when I was younger. I used to be a rebel too. Not the good apartheid fighting type like you but the heavy drinker, weed smoker, Casanova type" Jes laughed.

Jes: "I was not lucky to have missed that at all" there was prolonged silence "But Rasmeni men mature well. Once we reach a certain age, we settle" he added.

Lungi: "That's true. Once I reached a certain point in my life

I decided it was time I committed to a woman, a job and family and once I did I never looked back. So should I tell Alu the bad news about Cwenga or let her see for herself when he's a teen?" they both laughed.

Jes: "He might be different and it'll be little Zoë who is the rebel. She'll might lead a revolution someday" he joked.

Lungi: "No that's my princess" he said with a smile. The two of them sat for a long while at the bar but they were too into their conversation to give focus on the

TV screen. Father and son outings were not something Mlu did with Liyema and Lungi and as Lungi sat with Jes he felt like he was having that experience. He couldn't bring himself to call Jes Tata yet and might never so he called him by his clan name Gcina which was also Lungi's clan name now and because the family perished, it might be up to him to revive the Rasmeni bloodline once again.

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When Bukhosi arrived at Ivi's home the last car he expected

vehicle he expected to see was an ambulance. He borrowed Ntombi's car to go visit his girlfriend who had been avoiding him every chance she got. He decided to go to her home to tell her to make up her mind once and for all but all that went out the window when he realised the ambulance was there for Iviwe. Nomsa, Ivi's mother was crying nonstop and not helping Bukhosi with the details.

Bukhosi: "Viwe" he ran next to the wheeled bed as the paramedics were taking her to

the ambulance "What happened?" he asked the paramedics but they ignored him and so did Nomsa. Everyone was in the ambulance and Bukhosi ran to the car to follow it to the hospital. He couldn't remember a time he felt more afraid for a loved one.

Nomsa sat like a zombie staring ahead so Bukhosi didn't bother asking her for details of how his girlfriend landed up on hospital. A medical staff member came to Nomsa but Bukhosi stood up first to go to him.

Nomsa: "Please tell me that she'll

be okay" she pleaded.

Nurse: "She's out of the woods. We performed gastric suction to get rid of the pills she overdosed on

Bukhosi: "Wait! She tried to commit suicide?" he shouted in shock.

Nomsa: "Is she fine?" she ignored him.

Nurse: "Because we sedated her for the procedure, she's still drowsy but yes, she's fine"

Bukhosi sunk to the chairs behind him. The nurse said Nomsa could go see her daughter and Nomsa

told Bukhosi to go home as he had no business being there but he sat and waited. He wasn't sure what he was waiting for but he sat waiting. When Nomsa made her way out of the ward after visiting hours Bukhosi went to beg the nurse to see Ivi. The nurse refused but when he went to Ivi to check up on her, he learned that she wanted to see him. It was against the rules but the nurse snuck Bukhosi in. Bukhosi: "Bunny" he whispered before kissing her forehead "What's wrong, Viwe?" she just

started to cry.

Ivi: "I don't know" she said after a long while "They said it's depression" she added.

Bukhosi: "But how? What happened between the festive season and now that brought it on?" Iviwe just looked at him for a long while before crying.

Ivi: "Nothing" she whispered "But I can't study now while I'm like this. I'll start in the second semester" she wiped her tears.

Bukhosi: "They won't take you to a centre right?" Ivi shook her head and he breathed "Don't cry.

It'll be fine" he whispered. "I love you and I'll support you no matter what" he kissed her forehead once again "Will they put you on treatment?" Ivi nodded.

Ivi: "You're young, Bukhosi and there are healthy girls at university. I don't wanna lose you Bunny but this is not easy. I can't seem to find anything in life to be happy about anymore"

Bukhosi: "You're beautiful and I love you. Once you've recovered we'll do activities to get in as much of the sun as possible. I'll read up on it and I'll ask Bandile

if there are herbs to make it better"

Nomsa: "Hey, out!" she said to him when she walked in to get her house keys that she forgot.

Bukhosi did not argue with Nomsa instead kissed Ivi's hand and told her that he loved her before leaving "What did you tell him, Iviwe?" she asked in a stern voice.

Ivi: "Nothing" she whispered.

Nomsa: "That better not be a lie"

Ivi: "Do you think he'd have walked out so calmly had I told him what happened, Ma?" she

raised her voice "Do you think that I'll tell my boyfriend that you made me terminate his child?" she started to cry.

Nomsa: "I'm sorry but you would have lost your bursary had you not, Nomsa. Even now with you saying you'll go in the second semester almost cost you. Unlike him who has parents paying for the private schools and now university cash, you relied on scholarships and bursaries. You'll have many more babies but not now. This also has to stay between us" she whispered. .

Ivi: "He wouldn't have left me.
He gave me a promise ring"

Nomsa: "Don't tell me about lucky
packet treasure" she shouted

"Would his mother have paid your
tuition too?" Ivi looked away "I

didn't think so" she added "You'll

thank me someday for this when
you have your degree in hand and

you can help me support your

brothers. You can't say anything

because if you do, you lose the

bursary still" she reminded Ivi.

Ivi: "All my will to live has gone

today, Ma. I feel like a zombie

and you just chased out the only

person whom I actually just want to be held by"

Nomsa: "He will soon meet other girls. You'd have been stuck with an unwanted baby"

Ivi: "When did I say I didn't want it?" she shot her mother a cold look "You didn't want it because it stood in the way of your investment. I'm your investment, right? Since you think I'll make the situation at home a bit better" she looked at her mom "You abused your authority over me by making me feel I wanted it too but now I realize you never

gave me chance to decide"

Nomsa: "I apologize for it driving you to suicide but it was for the best. Go to school and make something of yourself, Iviwe. You having sex was the last thing I expected because I didn't raise you like that. Truth is, that boy would have left you. Such rich boys don't make wives of you when you are nothing. When you have a degree and a career you'll see he'll see you as his equal and marry you. Rich children's parents look down on parents like me. I'm sure his mother had already

picked up a girlfriend who is going to be potential wife to him amongst her rich friends' daughters. Next time I'll take you to the clinic myself for an injection and you best tell that boy to use a condom. I love you and I'll be with you every step of the way. Get some rest" she kissed Ivi's forehead. Ivi felt numb all the sudden. All those deep emotional wounds just went numb and she wished she could just be held but by no one but Bukhosi. She wanted to tell him before telling her mother but

Nomsa found out about the pregnancy first and before Ivi knew she was at a clinic in the name of "securing her future". Bukhosi's scent still lingered in the paracetamol smelling ward and she curled up thinking about him. They were wreckless once when he ran out of condoms but she saw him pull out which was why she didn't understand how she got pregnant. She wondered if she would be able to keep quiet and stay in a relationship with him.

Bukhosi's head was on Ntombi's

shoulder and she'd occasionally kiss his crown. Ntombi wished they did not grow up so fast but he was a young man who was hurt by his girlfriend attempting suicide.

Ntombikayise sent Ivi a text to encourage her.

Tamkhulu: "That treatment makes them numb. It numbs good and bad feelings. I witnessed it with my cousin" he looked at Bukhosi .

Bukhosi: "What other option does she have, Tamkhulu? Bandile promised to look into healthy alternatives. How come I did not

see it coming?" he sat up.

Ntombi: "I'm sure even she didn't see it coming. Blaming yourself is going to prohibit you from supporting her. This is what love also is, supporting each other during bad days"

Makhulu: "I'm going to pray for her. Young children have become so suicidal and it saddens me"

Ntombi: "Can I go with you next time you go visit?"

Bukhosi: "Her mother told me not to go"

Ntombi: "Well she can't stop us. Ivi is an adult according to the

law so she can decide who she wants to see and who not. Or take at least some flowers and a fruit basket with you from us next time" Bukhosi nodded.

Bukhosi: "I pictured us learning varsity life together and now this. Clearly the signs were there. She not wanting to be near her and ignoring me"

Tamkhulu: "You'll show her the varsity ropes when she joins you. She's a bit delayed but she'll catch on. Come let us pray for her"

Bukhosi: "I really love this girl,

Mama. I picture us telling our high school love story someday to our kids" Banele put his hand over his face.

Banele: "Thinking way ahead"

Ntombi: "It can still happen" she smiled "And you stop telling your brother to loosen up just because you and Hlumelo have broken up" she looked at Banele.

Banele: "My brother is way too serious, way too soon. Next thing she'll be trapping him into a young marriage with a baby"

Bukhosi: "Not Iviwe" he said with certainty "If she were to get

pregnant, it wouldn't be a trap, I imagine she'd be as scared but yes... I'd step up. Maybe not with marriage yet but be there"

Banele: "Good for you"

Makhulu: 'Stop before you two argue. Give your hands so we can pray" they all held hands and prayed for Iviwe. Bukhosi was planning on visiting Ivi even if Nomsa called the cops on him. His love for her scared him too but because it was mutual it made it better.

When Liyema arrived home he

found Portia sitting on the couch looking serious. Her mother had finally left a few days ago after crowding the couple greatly. She was messy and had no way to speak to others. Liyema didn't tell Portia about Lungile and he did not know that she found out long ago. When she asked to talk he sat down wondering if he had done anything wrong.

Portia: "This is not easy but I've decided that it is best" she breathed "After watching you tirelessly chasing after Ntombi I started to plot by thinking of

ways to make you stop. It hurts to hear a man say they love you yet fight for another woman. You can only hide behind the children excuse for so long Liyema"

Liyema: "Portia....,"

Portia: "Let me finish please" he closed his mouth "I obviously cry to my mother as any daughter does and she came here armed with muthi to feed you so you'd look at me and me alone" Liyema felt his blood boil "I was as angry as you at first but I admit that I was considering it but then I thought about the fact that I'd

still be alone in the relationship. The muthi would have made you love me the way that I deserve but it would have been an illusion while my love for you is real. I'd have worked overtime to try and maintain the fake love by stocking up whenever I saw your eyes Lise that spark of "love" when looking at me. So I decided to tell my mother to leave because I didn't want to do things her way"

Liyema calmed down a bit.

Liyema: "I'm glad that you didn't do it. I do love you, Portia"

Portia: "I'm not finished. I want

to get married someday. And since you don't want to I don't see a reason why we must stay together when we don't want the same things in life. I can't compromise so much for a man who still gets jealous of his ex when with another man. So with that said, I propose we break up" Liyema's eyes shot open.

Liyema: "I don't want to. I learned my lesson regarding Ntombikayise because I do not want to die because of her. That man nearly killed me. So I'm here and I'm committed. I can't

promise a proposal tomorrow but since I know what you are feeling I will definitely give marriage thought. Thank you for not feeding me muthi because I imagine how stupid a person on love potion seem to others. I don't love Ntombikayise. It was just me throwing a tantrum because I imagined she'd crawl after me but I know it was childish"

Portia: "So we'll give this another go? But just us this time?"

Liyema nodded "Thank you" she kissed him.

Liyema: "And I'll start by taking you out tonight" he smiled "I'll take Abo to Granny Hlubi so we can enjoy time out"

Portia: "I'd like that. Let me go freshen up while you call Hlubi then" she stood. Liyema sat for a long while to let what they just spoke sink in. He was glad she didn't listen to her mother. He was still not keen on getting married again but he decided to keep that a secret in case he might change his mind. He hoped that he wouldn't get another jealousy episode as far as

Ntombikayise was concerned either.

When Dali appeared at Ntombi's front door she was shocked. They had not been in touch since Nandi's wedding but there was no bad blood between them. She stood aside and let him in.

Dali: "Lisakhanya tells me that the boys are at university" he smiled. A part of him would always have a soft spot for her.

Ntombi: "I finally got them out so I can be a free agent" they both laughed "Hlubi didn't tell me you

are in town" she walked towards the kitchen where she was busy cooking "Drink?" she looked back. Dali: "Water please" he sat and took in the aroma "Are you alone?" Ntombi: "For now... yes. Banele took Bukhosi out to cheer him up and the elders have a church meeting" Dali nodded. Brown barked a few times and Ntombikayise introduced the new family member with a smile. "So to what do I owe the pleasure?" she asked. Dali took out a beautiful envelope from his pocket.

Dali: "I hope this is not insensitive but I've come to invite you to mine and Indi's wedding" he put the envelope on the kitchen counter "It's for you and the rest of your family. The lobola is done and we want to get married before the baby comes"

Ntombi: "Thank you so much for the invite" she looked at it for a long while before looking at him with a smile "My family kinda grew beyond just my puppy. I now have a boyfriend and he has a son so can I bring them?" Dali didn't answer right away. He heard

about Lefa from Yanda but he did not know how serious it was.

Dali: "Yeah...why not?. The doorbell rung.

Ntombi: "That's him now" she smiled "Baby, it's open!" she shouted. Dali felt a sting when she said "baby". When Lefa arrived he couldn't wait to eat the food being prepared. Dali stood up to greet Lefa.

Ntombikayise introduced the two men.

Dali: "Let me get going"

Lefa: "Don't leave on my account" he looked at Ntombi.

Dali: "I just came to invite Kayise and her family to my wedding"

Lefa: "Oh congratulations" he shook Dali's hand with a smile.

Ntombi: "They're expecting a baby too" she smiled.

Lefa: "Double congratulations"

Dali smiled and nodded.

Dali: "I'm glad to see you so happy, Kayise" he looked at her

"This is a gem, man so take care of her" he looked at Lefa.

Lefa: "Will do. You take care of your woman and baby too"

Dali: "And the answer is yes, you may bring your partner and his

child along. I'll see you both at the wedding. Wear your best traditional wedding attire please" they all laughed "Let me leave you to your dinner" he shook Lefa's hand before smiling at Ntombi. They said their goodbyes before watching Dali go.

Lefa: "That is a man still in love" he looked at Ntombi and they spent a few minutes debating about it. "I'm a man, baby so. I know" he added.

Ntombi: "I'm not in love with him though" he kissed her.

Lefa: "I know. You looked like a kid

seeing candy after being forced to eat veggies for a week when you saw me" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Get over yourself" she felt him seductively hit her behind "we're alone too" she kissed him.

Lefa: "Mmm" he gave a deep moan before kissing her passionately "we're not being lovey dovey here while poor Bukhosi cries himself to sleep in his room right?" he had to make sure.

Ntombi: "No" she laughed softly "my poor boy though" she sulked.

Lefa: "I'm sure you feel helpless"

Ntombi: "So much, baby but Ivi is

going to come out victorious in this. They are one of a few teenagers who actually still love the old-fashioned way. So I'm hoping they pull through"

Lefa: "They will. So today Steel Brothers got a major contract. I swear those four will be billionaires soon"

Ntombi: "That's great. We need more black billionaires and millionaires"

Lefa: "Have you ever thought of starting your own company?"

Ntombi shook her head.

Ntombi: "I'm not business minded,

baby. I'd go bankrupt in a month"
Lefa: "That's nonsense" he kissed her "Maybe someday we can partner up and give financial firms a run for their money"
Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "You're serious?" she stopped laughing and he nodded "You want to do that with me?" he nodded. "But it would be unfair since you already done the groundwork for the business, baby" she tried to make excuses.

Lefa: "I don't care about that"

Ntombi: "My clan name is not Debeza" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Stop making excuses. A company can be rebranded. We'll call it His & Her Financial Solutions" Ntombi raised a brow "Okay we'll think of a name"

Ntombi: "H&H Financial Solutions" she smiled "But I still don't think I'm someone to partner with, baby. Get someone else"

Lefa: "We'll talk about it again.

For now I want to take advantage of the alone time" he kissed her. When his hands disappeared under her blouse

Ntombi felt her entire body tingle. They knew that anyone could walk

in on them and for some reason it added to the excitement but because they didn't want to traumatize the boys they decided to go to her room to love each other after a hectic week at work for Lefa. Both preferred to dine in rather than out because it allowed them to just be together without any chaos around them. When Ntombi felt Lefa's grip from behind her she smiled. He complained about hunger and she was as hungry. A text from Asakhe asking if Amahle was with her startled Ntombi but

another came in saying Amahle was home safe. She had snuck out to a party with friends and her new boyfriend, Chumani. Vusi forbade the teen from ever talking to Chumani after learning that she had a boyfriend. Asakhe asked Ntombi to go and support her I'm her next talk about the birds and the bees and Ntombi agreed before going to enjoy dinner for two with her man. The outfits they'd have worn to Nandi's wedding they decided to wear them at Dali's. The elders came home with full stomachs and

headed straight to bed. Bukhosi somehow spoke to Ivi over the phone and he was in a far better mood when they and their mom called the others to check up on them. ❤️

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When Mahlubandile went to get her usual morning newspaper and coffee before work she nearly choked when she saw that Elephant Attorneys was front page news. She gave the vendor R100 and could hear him call her back so she'd get her change but

she threw the still filled cup in the bin before getting back in her car instead. She heard the vendor say thank you before her car took speed to the office. Her phone suddenly started to ring nonstop and she knew it was either her colleagues or journalists. The media crowd outside the firm was the last thing that she expected. Journalist: "Mrs Elephant-Mbuzo, were you aware of the dirty dealings happening in your company?" a phone was in Hlubi's face before she knew it. She shoved it aside in frustration. Hlubi: "Excuse me" she said while

moving through the small crowd of journalists and their cameramen "I said no comment!" she snapped as the journalists refused to give way and attacked her with questions. She finally made it to the office door and pushed it aggressively before jogging in heels to get to Dudumashe's office quicker.

Karen: "Mam, how do we fix this?" asked a young associate.

Hlubi: "I wouldn't look like I am now had I known, Karen. Where the hell is Mr Dudumashe?" she snapped.

Karen: "He has not come in and I

doubt he will. All of these allegations are pointing to him" she looked at the paper.

Hlubi: "Make sure security keeps those vultures out of my premises!" she shouted before going to her office. She felt like she'd collapse but it was not the time to do that. When Ntombi got dropped off by Lefa she got as much a shock as Mahlubandile did.

Ntombi: "What the...?" she unbuckled her seatbelt. Lefa pressed his phone quickly and showed her the screen after finding the cause of the chaos.

Lefa: "Isn't there another

entrance?"

Ntombi: "No, baby" she took her stuff at the backseat and opened her door. Lefa stepped out with her just in case she'd need help reaching the entrance. When the journalists came flooding towards them he put her behind him to shield her.

Journalist: "Mrs Elephant, as financial manager of Elephant Attorneys, were you a part of the alleged money laundering?"

Ntombi: "What?" she expressed shock "No" she added quickly.

Lefa: "Let's go" he held her hand and led her to the office. A

journalist pulled Ntombi "I will hurt you!" he warned while pointing at the journalist. He pulled Ntombi towards the entrance once again with great difficulty.

Journalist: "We all know that you were married to one of the Elephant heirs, suddenly you became their Finance Manager and now there are money laundering allegations against the firm. Did they employ you because they knew you'd hide the criminal activities happening here, Mrs Elephant?" one asked on an aggressive tone and Ntombi held

on to Lefa's arm even tighter. They dodged the hundred questions asked and made it inside. Ntombi was shaking like a leaf on a windy day because it was a first-time experience for her. She knew journalists could be a bit forceful judging from what she saw on TV but only until she was the one asked the questions did she realise just how much.

Lefa: "Will you be fine?" he held her to try and calm her down. She nodded quickly blinking away the tears.

Ntombi: "I'm just shocked" she said in a whisper "Go, baby you'll

be late for work" she added
"Thanks for dropping me off" she
looked around and everyone was
running around like headless
chicken.

Lefa: "I'm my own man so I can
stay if you like" Ntombi shook her
head "Call me when you need me"
he kissed her "I love you" he
hugged her.

Ntombi: "I love you too, sthandwa
sam" she held on so tightly that
he didn't want to leave her but it
was her workplace where he had
no business meddling in. He gave
her one last kiss before heading
towards the exit. When

detectives and police officers in uniform came in, Lefa turned around to go stand next to Ntombi. The officials asked to be taken to one of the seniors and Mahlubandile arrived just in time. She asked what the matter was. Detective: "Mam, we'd like for you to come down to the station with us for questioning"

Hlubi: "why?"

Detective: "Because evidence of possible money laundering has come to surface and Elephant Attorneys is one of the companies mentioned. We'll question all your staff but for now we'd like to

take you and your finance manager down for questioning" Ntombi: "I didn't do anything" her eyes started to shine "Baby?" she held on to him. Lefa didn't know what to say or do.

Hlubi: "It's okay, Ntombi. Zandi, call Hans and tell him to meet us at the police station" the young receptionist had the phone against her ear in no time "You don't say anything until Hans is there with you" she said to Ntombi "It'll be fine" she held her friends hand. Hans had his own firm and Hlubi trusted it to help them deal with what was

happening because she didn't know who was involved in the alleged crime in her office so she needed someone to be objective. Lefa: "I'll drive behind you" he wiped her tears before giving her a comfort kiss. The detective showed Hlubi a warrant giving them permission to have access to their company records. What made the matter worse for Ntombi was the flashing of cameras as the journalists took advantage of the moment. At least they were transported in a private car and not a police vehicle. Ntombi also took comfort

in not being handcuffed.

Mahlubandile kept briefing her on what and what not to do.

Ntombi: "I'm not a lawyer, Mahlubandile" she snapped "I don't know how to keep as calm as you are right now" she added.

Hlubi: "I'm sorry but you must listen, Ntombikayise. The police are going to try and "catch" you out. They'll keep as much details of the evidence they allegedly have from you and ask you trapping questions. When you give an answer they are going to try and make your answers contradict their evidence. So please all I'm

asking is that you say nothing until Hans comes to you"

Ntombi: "I don't want to go to jail for something that I didn't do, Hlubi" she wiped her tears.

Hlubi: "Should there be any truth in this then you won't go there, I promise"

Detective: "You best believe that there's truth in it. All you gotta do is pray that nothing comes back to any of you. If you know you are guilty, I suggest you confess now"

Hlubi: "Oh shut up" the detective laughed. They finally arrived at the station and as Hlubi said they

separated them. Ntombikayise kept looking at the person questioning her as though she had no idea what he was saying. She was told to take a vow of silence until Johannes came and that's exactly what she did. Hans asked to speak to Ntombi alone and the investigator was not so happy about it.

Ntombi: "Stop referring to me as your client. A client is someone who needs representation long term. I'm innocent" she watched the green-eyed brunette sit opposite her.

Hans: "Hlubi asked us to

represent anyone who is being questioned at Elephant Attorneys. I'm going to get you out of here in no time. If they find that the laundering has been happening before you started working there, then they'll have no choice but to let you go. I must ask you this though. Were you aware of anything illegal dealings going on with the finances?"

Ntombi: "No!" she blurted out.

Hans: "I had to be sure, Miss Poti". The two of them went over the details of the case as he asked her some questions. Lefa

called the brothers to tell him that he's not coming in because he planned on waiting until Ntombi was released no matter how long it would take.

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Bukhosi and Iviwe were strolling in the park before sitting on a bench taking in the warm sun. He had his arm over her shoulder while her head rested on his chest. She had not told him about the termination and as much as the guilt was eating at her, she was not planning to either. She feared losing him and feared that in his rage he'd make it public

causing her to lose her bursary too.

Ivi: "I wish we could do more of this" she took a deep breath
"These past few weeks have not been easy" she added.

Bukhosi: "Stop shutting me out, Viwe"

Ivi: "You're in university now, Bukhosi. You have the stress of adjusting into that life so I can't add to that"

Bukhosi: "I'm a balanced guy so don't worry. How's the treatment treating you?"

Ivi: "It's okay, I guess. The therapist said it's temporary

since my depression was triggered by....by my father's passing. Even after all these years it still hurts" that was no lie but that was not the reason for her depression. He held her chin so she'd tilt her head up to kiss her.

Bukhosi: "You should talk to me, Iviwe. I'm your man" Ivi smiled.

Ivi: "And I'm a lucky girl to have a man like you. Bunny, can I ask you a question?" Bukhosi nodded

"If I were to tell you that I'm pregnant, what would you do?"

Bukhosi's eyes widened.

Bukhosi: "Are you?" Ivi broke eye contact before shaking her head

"You'd first have to go wake me up from my tomb after my mother kills me for getting you pregnant" they both laughed

"But after that I'd have supported you" he smile. Ivi's eyes started to shine but she blinked the tears away and a single tear fell "Iviwe, are you pregnant?" he looked at her but she shook her head.

Ivi: "I'm just glad to have a boyfriend who won't run should I be someday, Bunny" she wiped her tears.

Bukhosi: "Love you, Viwe" he kissed her "And I promise to

bring you here as often as I can. Why does it seem like your mother suddenly hates me?" he asked.

Ivi: "She is blaming everyone for my attempted suicide. I guess you too" she said softly. Nomisa did blame Bukhosi because she thought had he not gotten her innocent daughter pregnant, she would not have encouraged Ivi to terminate the pregnancy.

Bukhosi: "Does she also know that we are sexually active?" Ivi nodded "I know you said she told you to not have sex until you're 21 so if that's the reason why she hates me I'm sorry". His phone

rang but he switched it off before even checking who it was but the person called once again. It was Bubele and Ivi told him to take the call.

Bubele: "Mom is all over the news. She's been arrested. Why the hell did we find out on the internet?" he shouted.

Bukhosi: "What?" he stood. Bubele told him what he read online and Bukhosi hung up before telling Ivi what happened. He made sure that she got into a taxi safe before taking one home. He had a class in an hour but he was not going to attend, not when he

didn't know what was going on with his mother. When he arrived home he found Banele packing to go to Kroonstad in a few days and the elderly were sitting outside. Bukhosi called them all to the lounge before telling them what he read on the news.

Bukhosi: "Apparently someone leaked criminal information against Elephant Attorneys to the press just in time for it to make front page news. It's money laundering and since Mama is their finances manager, they took her and Dabs Hlubi in for questioning".

Tamkhulu: "What is money laundering?"

Banele: "It's a system where illegal money gets put into a legit business to clean it, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "My child would never be involved in such. Ntombikayise is no criminal. Take me to the police station she is at" he stood.

Makhulu: "My child should have stayed in her old company" she said out of concern "Vuyi, bring me some water" sis Vuyi was just as worried about Ntombi. She went to get Makhulu some water

Vuyi: "Should I make you camomile tea for the stress, Makhulu?"

Makhulu: "If you think it'll help because I'm suddenly not well"

Banele: "Maybe telling them was not a good idea" he whispered to Bukhosi.

Bukhosi: "Makhulu, Mama is innocent so please don't make yourself sick with worry" he pleaded.

Tamkhulu: "Did you call the taxi, Bukhosi?" he put his hat on.

Banele: "It's on its way, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "My dear, I'm going to stay at the police station until they release our daughter. There is no way Ntombikayise did what

they say she did. Vuyi please look after my wife for me, ntombam"

Vuyi: "Yes, Tata" she brushed Makhulu's back in comfort. The taxi hooted outside and the men stood to go to it. Ntombi's car was in service.

Makhulu: "Oh Vuyiswa, I don't know how many more things associated with Elephant Ntombi has to deal with. It's like this surname is a curse in my daughter's life"

Vuyi: "She'll be home soon, Makhulu"

Makhulu: "I'm starting to feel lightheaded. I'll lie down right

here" she stretched her legs. Vuyi went to their bedroom to go get a small blanket to cover her legs before making her tea. Makhulu felt relaxed somewhat after drinking the herbal tea. When Tamkhulu found Lefa at the police station already he was a bit angry that Lefa didn't tell them. Lefa explained that he didn't want to worry them because he didn't think they'd detain Ntombi for so long. Banele said he wouldn't go to Kroonstad if his mother was in trouble and no one tried to convince him otherwise. Bandile and Bubele were worried

sick and being far didn't help much but Bukhosi promised to them updated.

The Dudumashe family couldn't face the world that day. Too many phone calls were coming through and there were journalists outside their estate gate. Security was made tighter but that couldn't stop the police from confiscating anything that seemed like it would help build a case from their house.

Detective Conan: "Mam, if you know where your husband is then I suggest that you tell us

because keeping his whereabouts from us might come with criminal charges" he warned Sylvia who was Dudumashe's wife.

Sylvia: "Do you think that I care about him? When he shows up here I'm going to make sure that I deliver him to you on a silver plate. You best have roadblocks be put all over and put security at the borders. He is a flight risk. His friend fled a murder case years ago by crossing the border so I believe he'll try to do the same" she shouted.

Detective: "Please don't leave town because we might have to

ask you a few questions in connection with the case against your husband. Him running makes him come across as guilty"

Sylvia: "My children and I have got nothing to hide so you will find us here should you want to ask any questions". The police went on with their business for a long while before leaving. Sylvia broke down in front of her daughter's Ruth and Cikizwa.

Ruth: "Do you think that he really killed Tamkhulu and bra Ray and pinned it on an innocent man?" she asked her mother.

Sylvia: "I don't know but if he is

responsible for killing my father
I'm going to hunt him down
myself and I'm going to kill him
with these bare hands" she looked
at her hands before she felt a
burn in her chest.

Ciki: "I can't believe that he
actually cheated on you with
multiple people of different
genders too" she wiped her tears
"I feel like we have been living
with an imposter all these years"
she looked at the pictures in the
tabloids of their father and his
lovers leaked online.

Sylvia: "I don't care about that.
He's made a fool of me like that

many times before but the news of him killing my father is too much. I know a lot of incriminating things about your father and I kept quiet but should the police ask for my statement I'm spilling the beans"

Ruth: "Do what will make you sleep at night, Mommy. But who leaked these to the media? They could have come to us before humiliating us like this"

Bulelwa: "Wandile says he is on his way. The year had just started and our children has to miss classes until this dies down" she sat feeling stressed "I wouldn't

be surprised if this is Tat Mlu's mess. We know that Tata was his best friend and skivvy. I don't believe that my dad killed his wife's father and tainted a family legacy by associating it with money laundering" said the daddy's girl.

Ciki: "Then why is he on the run?"

Bulelwa: "Wouldn't you have been on the run if your name was all over the newspapers and tabloids?. Firstly Tata is no criminal and he most certainly isn't bisexual" she said with certainty.

Ruth: "We've got to give the

press outside the premises a comment or they won't leave. So just stop arguing because you are only adding to the stress" she shouted.

Sylvia: "Wandile has always been the family spokesperson so let's wait for him to come here"

Bulelwa: "Mommy, I know you're hurting but please let's not throw Daddy under the bus. Let's face the media as a united front and deal with all else privately"

Sylvia: "Do you think that I like this, Bulelwa?" she stood to look at her daughter "Explain those pictures" she pointed to the

tabloid.

Bulelwa: "Photoshopped" she stood to get away from her mother and older sisters. When Ruth got a call saying that her brother was arrested for tax fraud and also money laundering in his real estate company in which Dudumashe owned shares Sylvia collapsed due to stress. An ambulance was called to the Dudumashe estate which caused even more public debacle. The Dudumashe daughters have never felt more helpless in their lives.

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Jester got a call from an unknown number he knew that it could be Dudumashe or his criminal partners. He was as shocked as everyone to find that the news was filled with the same information that he had on Dudumashe. The pictures of Dudumashe with his affair lovers were exactly as those Jester took weeks ago. Someone stole his evidence and he wondered who else knew about it.

Dudumashe: "I am a dead man walking because of you" he whispered but Jes could hear the anger in his voice.

Jes: "I had absolutely nothing to do with what's happening"

Dudumashe: "You've angered people who can squash us both like cockroaches. Many think that I'm on top of the food chain but there are real players involved here. I know that I'm a dead man and I hope you've enjoyed your time as a free man because you are going with me to the grave"

Jes: "You leave my damn name out of this. I leaked nothing. Do not make your damn problems mine, you swine"

Dudumashe: "I've lost everything."

You've got to help me cross the borders"

Jes: "Hand yourself in because jail will be much safer than the streets. I'm not helping you do anything. You knew when you decided to be sell out that this day would surely come and I'm sure you were warned about naming and shaming already. Your day has come, satan" he ended the call. Someone knocked twice before entering. It was Lungile. Jester only had to give Lungi one glance to know that he was the one responsible "You stole my stuff and leaked it out" he

pointed at Lungile while walking towards him.

Lungile: "You lied to me"

Jes: "To protect you, Lungile!" he shouted "If Dudumashe's people find out then you've put your children at risk" Lungile started to show signs of worrying.

Lungile: "I was careful. I wanted him to know what it feels like to be a prisoner. Difference between you and him is the fact that you are innocent and he isn't"

Jes: "Good thing we never went public with your paternity. Go now and keep your distance from me until this dies out. Dudumashe is

going to mention me to his friends and I don't want them linking you to me"

Lungile: "He can't do that. You did nothing"

Jes: "He thinks I did. Go now and don't contact me nor visit. I'll tell your mother to do the same.

Delete all messages and calls from me. I'll be the one contacting you".

Lungi started to realise the consequences of his impulsive actions "Go" he held Lungi by the shoulder and led him to the door.

Lungi: "I put your life at risk"

Jes: "My life's been at risk many times before yet here I am.

Please go now. I'm going to see you soon" he promised.

Lungi: "I'm sorry, Tata" he said Tata for the first time.

Jes: "I'm not angry but help me by staying the hell away from me.

Go Lungile please" Lungile gave Jes a long hug before leaving. Jes

was saddened by the fact that he'd have to keep his distance

from Lungile again but it was

necessary. He called Zola and he

was confident that she'd be able

to take care of herself. Lungile

felt great after exposing

Dudumashe but he didn't think

about the fact that it might put

Jes's life in danger. He knew that Elephant Attorneys might sink but he felt it needed to happen in order for justice to prevail. He had full confidence in Hlubi's ability to raise the firm from ashes and give it a rebirth built on honesty and with Bukhosi about to qualify as a young lawyer in a few years he had faith in the business more.

Liyema: "Lungile is very lucky to not be Mlu's son. Even after years of being buried he still creates conflict" he said to himself as he drove to the police station. His phone had been off during a pitch

to a big client so he only got shocked by the news when he learned that there were journalists outside the building. He found his kids and the elders there when he arrived. Lefa went to pick Hlompho up at school and took him to his parents. Bonolo and Vakele wanted to know if Lefa was indeed in a relationship with a criminal and he had no time to answer questions he felt were offensive to Ntombi. He returned to the police station and was sad to hear that they had still not been released yet. Liyema learned that they weren't

charged so he demanded to know why they were kept so long. When Ntombi appeared with Johannes she ran to hug her family and could help but cry when she felt them all hug her.

Liyema: "Why did you take so long?" he asked Hans.

Hans: "They were trying by all means to pin this on her"

Lefa: "And?"

Hans: "The prosecution must prove that, at the time of the alleged offence, she knew or suspected that the property was criminal property. They couldn't prove it so she was not charged

but they will continue to look. They are hungry for an arrest because of the weight of the Dudumashe and Elephant name and she was a Elephant at some point. She can go home though". Lefa immediately went to the family and offered to drive them home.

Ntombi: "What about Mahlubandile?"

Hans: "She said she'll represent herself"

Liyema: "Dammit typical Mahlubandile" he said with gritted teeth.

Yanda: "She's good at what she does" he said with certainty.

Liyema: "Not when...,"
Mahlubandile appeared before he could finish his sentence and
Liyema went to give her a tight hug.

Hlubi: "I hate your father" she got herself out of Liyema's grip to go give her husband a hug.

Ntombi: "What happens now?" she asked Mahlubandile.

Hlubi: "They have to prove that the money they say got into our company illegally is indeed illegal and they also have to prove that we are linked to that. It's a

complex case so Elephant Attorneys will have to shut its doors temporarily. Dudumashe being MIA isn't helping much either. Go home, bestie. I'm going to take care of the rest. Give them everything that they ask of you. They will invade our privacy and might even freeze our accounts while investigating but it'll be over sooner rather than later. I'm sorry that you are caught in this but I knew nothing either. We'll prove our innocence" she gave Ntombi a hug. Ntombi: "I'm sorry for shouting earlier"

Hlubi: "All good"

Hans: "We're the best in such cases so you're in good hands"

Mahlubandile: "Be available for all my staff, Hans"

Hans: "My associates are ready."
he assured her.

Bukhosi: "Can we take our mom home?" Hans nodded.

Ntombi: "Thank you" she said to Hans.

Hans: "This is not the end so we'll talk soon" Ntombi nodded.

Hlubi: "Baby, where's Vuyo?"

Yanda: "With sis Luyanda" Hlubi nodded.

Hlubi: "I have to get to the

office to put out a few fires. The media won't rest until I give them an official statement"

Yanda: "Let me drive you there".

Ntombi had enough of the place so she was happy to be on her way back home.

Mahlubandile

went back to work and was sad to hear that Mrs Dudumashe was in hospital fighting for her life.

There was so many questions

that Dudumashe had to answer

but he was nowhere to be found.

Mahlubandile was certain he'd

skip the country like her dad did

when running from the

authorities so she knew it was up

to her to save Elephant Attorneys. Mrs E told Lungile to not confess to his siblings about being the one responsible for the firm being under scrutiny and Lungile agreed. He still didn't feel remorse for Dudumashe but it seemed innocent people paid more severely for his crimes.

When Bandile and Bubele saw Ntombi's face via video call they breathed. The thought of her spending the night in jail was too traumatic.

Ntombi: "Mama" she shook Makhulu gently. After hearing that the elder felt sick when she

heard Ntombi was arrested she wanted Makhulu to see her "Makhulu" she started to panic when Makhulu didn't respond "Ma" he said louder and shook her a bit too aggressively but Makhulu's eyes opened making Ntombikayise sink to the little vacant spot on the couch. The headache pills she took made her sleep too deeply. Makhulu: "Don't ever scare me like that, Ntombi" she hugged her granddaughter.

Ntombi: "They do not have proof that I'm involved because I'm not, Ma. Have you eaten?" she looked at her grandmother "Has

she eaten?" she looked at sis V. Vuyi: "Nothing since this morning. I cooked. I know that it's not a part of my job description, but I wanted to help"

Ntombi: "Thank you, Sisi" she helped Makhulu sit up.

Banele: "I'm not going to Kroonstad. Not while you're being investigated" Ntombi stood.

Ntombi: "I appreciate the support but putting your life on hold won't help. You're going to Kroonstad to finish what you started. I'm not going to prison" she hugged him.

Banele: "Just the thought of

losing you is scary, Mama. No matter how it could happen. I don't want to lose you"

Ntombi: "I'm here. For now let's all go wash our hands and enjoy the dinner that sis V made for us" she held both her sons hands "Are you going to join us?" she looked at Lefa and he nodded. They went to wash hands before sitting down to eat. Sis V didn't usually join them for a meal but Tamkhulu invited her to sit and eat and she accepted the invitation. Ntombi washed the dishes to try and get rid of the worst-case scenarios playing in

her head. Sis V's husband fetched her and soon everyone retired to bed leaving Ntombi and Lefa sitting on the couch.

Ntombi: "I need a long shower" she stood "Are you going to wait here?" she asked and he shook his head.

Lefa: "My mom said Hlompho could sleep over so I'll leave once you've fallen asleep" he stood to hold her hand and they made their way upstairs. Lefa watched Ntombikayise undress before disappearing into the bathroom. Craig called to get an update and he told her that Ntombi was

home. He took his own clothes off to go join her after hanging the phone up and he found her crying making him glad that he walked in just in time to comfort her. She wasn't washing herself but instead just stood under the warm water so he took it upon himself to help her and managed to make her laugh when he touched the spots she felt ticklish on. They made their way out of the shower and he watched her put lotion on her body before joining him on the bed. Ntombi: "Baby, what if someone framed me?" she looked at him

"I'm so confident in my innocence that I forget it's possible" she added.

Lefa: "You're not going to jail. I'm certain about that" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "I never noticed anything malicious. Can I even pride myself in being good at what I do?"

Lefa: "Yes because you are. You trusted everything was above board so you didn't feel need to go deeper. Plus you don't do audits.

This will be over soon"

Ntombi: "Yeah but what would be of Elephant Attorneys by then? I don't even think that I want to be associated with it afterwards.

I hope Mahlubandile is going to understand. Bukhosi was so eager to join the firm after completing his studies"

Lefa: "He can still do that. Let's let this play out but what I'm sure of is that you're innocent"

Ntombi: "Thank you for not doubting me. That police officer made it seem like I was moving money to offshore accounts. I sat there wondering if I was guilty by association even if I didn't know. What if I am?"

Lefa: "Nana, please don't get yourself worked up. You're not going to jail. I love you"

Ntombi: "If I go to jail will you visit?"

Lefa: "You're not going to jail, Ntombikayise Poti. The cops were using scare tactics but fortunately you had a lawyer.

They've got nothing against you. Give them everything they want"

Ntombi: "Yeah you're right" she kissed him "Want a cup of tea?"

Lefa shook his head. "I'm going to make myself a cup" she stood

and wore her gown "You've been with me all day, Lefa. Maybe you need to go home and spend time with Hlompho" she added.

Lefa: "Hlompho was the one who

told me to be here with you because he is a big boy" he said while brushing her thighs "Let's go make you that tea" Ntombi leaned forward to kiss him.

Ntombi: "After this we need a vacation. Well that's if they'll ever unfreeze my accounts". The two of them found the kitchen empty as expected and they took a few snacks to the bedroom to watch a series. Ntombi had never been so afraid in her life. She wondered if she ever signed off on anything illegal without knowing which might make a case against her strong but she prayed that

was not the case. She fell asleep in Lefa's arms and he waited a little while to make sure she's asleep before leaving. He was as concerned about her possibly being framed but he didn't want to think the worst. He would pitch the idea of them partnering up once she's been cleared.

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After a long family meeting Dali finally decided that he'd go visit Nolali. He saw the news yesterday and saw how stressed Mahlubandile was and he hoped they'd sort things out shortly. His father was the only one who

encouraged him to do what felt right while his siblings believed it would take his healing ten steps back. As he sat waiting at the correctional facility he fiddled with his hands feeling nervous. He was not sure why he felt nervous because he thought angry would have been a suited emotion for the occasion. When Nolali walked in wearing a blue correctional facility prisoner uniform that anger in Dali finally showed but he kept his cool. His heart racing with each step that Nolali took towards him. Nolali had seen Dali during her sentencing so she knew

very well who he was and she was certain that he only came to throw insults at her.

Nolali: "Hello" she said after a while of uncomfortably being stared at by Dali. He didn't say hello in return but instead just kept looking at her "You may swear at me. I'm sure that's what you're here for" she added.

Dali: "I actually have no idea why I'm even here. I guess I wanted you to see me so you can know how old the baby you killed would have been today" Nolali looked down a shamefully "How he would have looked too" Dali's jaw tightened as

he tried to fight tears "Maybe I am here to make you feel regret for what you did. One choice made differently would have made our lives turn out differently, just one" he held out a single finger. Nolali: "And you think that I do not know that? I regret not looking after the baby. I don't know where my motherly instincts went to whenever I looked at him. So I regret it very much. My children have not once visited me. My grandchild thought that I had bewitched her. I'm being bullied by children in here because my story was in the papers and

some of them are mothers"

Dali: "I do not pity you. From now on whenever you talk about my brother you call him Yakhikhaya, not baby. You took away a part of me. A lifelong friend given to me by God. You should have told Tata to go with his love child and never return. But I guess it all doesn't matter anymore"

Nolali: "Are you here to make me feel worse than I already do?"

Dali: "I guess I'm hoping to find closure. Hoping you'll tell me the truth of what happened that day"

Nolali: "My second statement was

the truth. He was sick and died but I knew your father wouldn't believe that so out of panick did what I thought was best"

Dali: "Yet forensics say he had a blow in his head which might have caused by falling or being hit against something"

Nolali: "I don't know what they are talking about" she looked down "Guard, I'm ready to go in" she lifted her hand.

Dali: "I came here hoping to free myself by forgiving you but to imagine it and to do it are two different things. I'm not there yet" he stood to leave.

Nolali: "I really am sorry" she said behind him but Dali kept walking. With a baby on the way he was hoping to let go of all grudges so he'd be a baggage free father to his child but as the many prison locks opened for him to exit he knew he failed because he felt more anger than before. He drove to his father's house where contractors were busy adding two extra bedrooms to the structure. It was a project that he and Dali teamed up on.

Mr Mbuza: "You look like you are ready to punch someone" he said to his son "No one expects you to

forgive her, Daluxolo" he added
Dali: "How did you get married to
such a woman? Dabs says she's
always been like that"

Mr Mbuzo: "Maybe to them but
to me she was kind until two
years into marriage. I do not
know where the shift started
but she loved me less and less
after that"

Dali: "Do you think all women are
like that?". He suddenly feared
Indi would change to.

Mr Mbuzo: "Had they been Yanda
wouldn't have been happy in his
marriage. Truth is men change
too after marriage but

unfortunately some individuals change for the worst. I just got unlucky so don't think Indi will turn out like Nolali. She is a calm young lady" he smiled "For now we must go and support Lisakhanya in this mess. She has been supportive of Yanda and his family issues so it's best that we do the same" Dali nodded.

Dali: "I hope it'll be sorted before my wedding date. I want to be married before the baby comes" Mr Mbuzo nodded. Dali went outside to check on the construction progress. Yamkela never moved back home as she

was living with her boyfriend. Yandiswa finally found stable work which enabled her to be independent of Yanda. Dali knew that they couldn't help Mahlubandile much but he hoped their presence would be supportive enough. 🖤

S2-INSERT 59 (NOT EDITED!)

As Mrs Dudumashe was wheeled inside her house by her daughter she suddenly wished she could go back to her youth and make completely different choices. When she was in hospital all she could

think about and dream of was her father. She'd never forget how she felt when she heard that he had been shot. It didn't come as much of a shock back then because he was at the forefront of the liberation struggle so a part of Mrs Dudumashe kinda knew that it might catch up with him but she didn't think that her then boyfriend would be the one guilty of killing her father when the regime couldn't.

Ruth: "I'm going to make you some real food" she tucked the blankets under her mother after

helping Mrs Dudumashe on the bed "Are you sure you are strong enough to be home, Mommy?" she asked. They would prefer their mother in hospital but Mrs Dudumashe insisted on signing her own discharge forms.

Sylvia: "I'm fine in my own house" she sat up "You know" she look to the big sized so down on her left while shaking her head slowly.

Ruth: "What, Mommy?" she sat down.

Sylvia: "Nevermind" she looked at her daughter. The door flung open and Cikizwa appeared.

Ciki: "Mommy, Mrs Elephant is here to see you" she said standing by the door "I can tell her it's not a good time" she added.

Ruth: "Yes...tell her not now"

Sylvia: "Let her in. Of all the people who has come to see me she's actually the only one who might know what I'm feeling. I need to know what kept her so strong" she looked at both her daughters "Please make us some tea and add scones if Zuko baked any" Ruth nodded before standing to walk towards the door. When the Dudumashe sisters left the

room Zola appeared. She and Sylvia are not as close as their husbands used to be but they were always able to maintain decent conversations. Zola went to sit on the empty side of the king size bed before reaching for Sylvia's hand.

Zola: "I was at the hospital but they said only family was allowed"
Sylvia laughed softly.

Sylvia: "And you let them tell you that? What happened to the fiery Zola?" both women laughed.

Zola: "I didn't want to traumatize your children" Sylvia

nodded "As fiery as I am, I see you're still stubborn. You told them to let you go" she added.

Sylvia: "That place made me worse. I asked them to bring tea and hopefully scones too. Will that be fine?"

Zola: "Perfect but let us not see on small talk because we both know there's a lot going on in that head and mind of yours" she made herself more comfortable.

Sylvia: "I knew that he was not a perfect man. You and I used to tell each other stories of how our husbands cheated on us" Zola

nodded "But murder was the last thing that I expected from him, Zola. I don't know how to handle this. The worst part is that he made Wandile a part of this too" she started to cry.

Zola: "I know that it is not easy when the man you love shows you colours that you never imagined on him. Luckily with me my boys were not close with Mlungisi because I made sure of that do none of them went down with him and I can only imagine the pain you as a mother must feel right now"

Sylvia: "I can't talk to my kids

about so many things because they don't know whose side to take. How did you stay so strong?" Zola took a deep breath. Zola: "I wish that I could tell you. I look back and realize just how much I overcame and I can't tell you how I did it. Just take it a day at a time". The door opened and a tray of tea and muffins was brought in.

Ruth: "I hope the muffins are fine because we don't have scones"

Zola: "It's perfect, Ruth. Thank you" she made sure the tray

balances on the bed and they watched Ruth leave them again. "How are they holding up?" she gave Sylvia her cup of tea.

Sylvia: "They are being strong for me but this has put strain in all their marriages. Wandile's wife took the kids and went to her mother. All because of one person" she sipped her tea.

Zola: "And you really don't know where he is?"

Sylvia: "Don't ask like that"

Zola: "Like what?"

Sylvia: "As if you are thinking that I'm lying about not knowing

where he is"

Zola: "It's not that I think you're lying but because I have been through something similar. So Mlu called me wanting help and since they were friends one would think they think the same way"

Sylvia: "I don't know where he is" she said honestly "So are you certain that he's going to try and contact me?" she added curiously.

Zola: "Not certain but I'm sure that he needs help financially seeing as all his accounts were frozen" Sylvia nodded.

Sylvia: "You know what the irony

in his alleged involvement in my father's murder is?" Zola shook her head "The fact that it was Tata that introduced me to this man. I remember not being into him much and Tata said he will be one of the big shots of the new South Africa because he was a law student at that time. I wish I told my father no. Maybe he'd still have been alive too"

Zola: "We can't turn back time so to dwell on the what ifs will only add to your stress. Now you must find a way to move forward. Had you walked away you might not

have had the kids you have"

Sylvia: "If I could turn back time knowing what I know now, I'd have walked away and chosen a better father for my kids. Ciki's marriage doesn't need this, Zola. It's been up and down for months and this might just be the last straw"

Zola: "I'm sorry to hear that".

Zola had nothing much to say to Sylvia so they just sat in silence while enjoying the treats on the tray. She wished she could tell Sylvia that now that the truth was out things would get easier

but that was not true. She hoped that Mrs Dudumashe would be strong enough to handle the emotions that are yet to come from the situation. When Sylvia dozed off, due to the medication she was given at the hospital Zola took the tray and went with it to the kitchen where she sat and spoke to the Dudumashe children for a while. They were set on finding out who the person who leaked the secrets to the media and police was and Mrs E couldn't stay longer because the guilt ate at her. She had no

intention of exposing Lungile, not to her other children and certainly not to the Dudumashe children.

Jester went to the door armed with a golf stick after hearing a loud knock on his door. It had been three weeks already but there had been no sign of his life being in danger. When he opened the door Dudumashe shoved him aside to quickly make his way inside.

Dudumashe: "A stick?" he looked back "You're pathetic" he added before throwing himself on the couch.

Jes: "What do you want?"

Shouldn't you be half way across the globe with a new identity by now?"

Dudumashe: "If only it was that easy" he laughed "I'm wanted by the cops, I'm wanted by my children's mothers and by a mafia" he added.

Jes: "Why are you making your problems mine?"

Dudumashe: "Because you are going to help me" he said confidently.

Jes: "Get the hell out of my place"

Dudumashe: "I could go to Lungile's place" he said with a smirk and watched Jester close the door "I knew you know... I always knew" he looked at Jester "When Lungile was about six people started to comment on how Lungile looked nothing like Mlu and so Mlu asked our "friends" to help him do a DNA test. I got the results first and because I had grown fond of Lungi, I arranged for false results claiming he was Mlu's. What I didn't know was the fact that you knew. When you spoke about

family that day you came to see me when I know for a fact you have no one I put two and two together. I realized that you knew, maybe since Zola was pregnant even" he added.

Jes: "What do you want?"

Dudumashe: "For now I want you to order us a nice meal. I haven't had a decent meal I'm ages.

After that, you can get me a drink and we'll talk while waiting for our food" he got more comfortable. Jester didn't try to argue with Dudumashe instead he ordered the food and got

Dudumashe a drink before sitting to listen to what Dudumashe's terms were.

Jes: "What must I do to stop you from bringing my boy into this?"

Dudumashe: "Not much actually. This hide and seek has actually made me realize something. I'm guilty yet I fear the authorities and you were innocent and had to take the fall for something you didn't do. I realize just how harsh the punishment we served you was. So I won't demand much since I took so much from you already. All that I want is for you

to get your underground contacts to arrange new identification for me and help me cross the border so I can take a flight out of the continent"

Jes: "Do you have the money?"

Dudumashe laughed out

Dudumashe: "I haven't eaten in two days so no... I do not have anything. You are going to pay for everything because I was told you stole from Zola"

Jes: "Then why don't you get the person who told you that to help you since they seem to get information that aren't public

knowledge?"

Dudumashe: "I've dragged my son into my mess enough. He can't help because like me his money is also frozen"

Jes: "I'm going to give you a few thousands only. That's not up for negotiation. You owe me not the other way around. You need me and even if I don't help you nothing's going to happen to me"

Dudumashe: "The only reason why nothing has happened to you is because I've been hiding from the big players. If they catch me, I'm going to sing and you best

believe I'll sing your name loudest and be sure to add that Lungile is your weakness"

Jes: "Keep him out of this" he said in anger.

Dudumashe: "All of that is up to you. Me going is not only going to save you but also many people. I made a video of myself naming and shaming the real thugs who are sitting in their offices wearing suits. I want to clear my boy, Mahlubandile, Ntombikayise and their staff. I'll make sure that the video gets to the hands of the cleanest cop that I know

because we've got many agents in the police force but this man is incorruptible so he'll make arrests for sure"

Jes: "Why don't you just ask for amnesty in exchange for the information?"

Dudumashe: "Then they'll come after my family. When I'm gone they'll think I don't care about my wife and children so they won't bother to try to hurt them to get to me. I've worked with these people since I was a young man being a front for many of their businesses so I know how

they operate. I should be at the boarder by the time this video gets to Detective Vilakazi" he showed it to Jes. Jester watched the video and some of the names that Dudumashe called out shocked even him. It was men and women that no one would suspect of being criminals. They were from different races and countries too. Jester wondered where Dudumashe would run to when he named and shamed even international business people in his confession "Have my new identity documents ready by tomorrow

because I need to get going soon to free the innocent people who are being crucified. Mlu and I have run out race but we've finally reached the finish line"

Jes: "Was is all worth it?"

Everything that you two did to gain wealth, was it worth it?"

Dudumashe: "At first you struggle to sleep but as time went by you tell yourself it's everyone for himself and you sleep better. My children never had to grow up poor like I did and neither are my grandchildren. Perhaps the wealth will stay in

my family for a few generations and for that I'll say yes, it was worth it" he said without flinching.

Jes: "So if you die right now, you'll die a happy man?" Dudumashe looked like one in deep thought

Dudumashe: "No" he got a bit emotional.

Jes: "I thought you said it was all worth it"

Dudumashe: "That was until you asked me that question. I won't die a happy man because my true wealth, my family is not with me"

Jes: "And that makes both you

and your friend sad men. He died without his family around and so will you. Even if you get to slip the country, you'll die alone in a foreign country just like Mlungisi did. All these years I have been planning the perfect revenge yet now I'm watching karma play it's role and I don't have to lift a finger. You were wealthy men all your lives but die poor not just financially but emotionally and mentally too. How ironic that best friends will both die alone on foreign land without their true wealth, their children".

Dudumashe wiped his tears quickly.

Dudumashe: Please get me those things so that I can be out of here"

Jes: "Don't think I'm helping you. I'm doing this to keep my son from any harm" Dudumashe nodded. Jes stood to make a quick call to his contact ordering a new identity for Dudumashe. He would do anything to keep Lungile safe even if it meant helping

Dudumashe run from his crimes. He was sure to send the video to his phone just in case Dudumashe

had plans to delete it and take innocent people down. "I need to take a picture of you. He'll know what to do with it" Jes added.

Dudumashe: "I need a shower. Please arrange some clean clothes for me, a pair of glasses. You also need to cut my hair in the center of my head so I'll look like I've gone bald" Jester couldn't help but laugh.

Jes: "Whatever, swine" he went towards the door "You better not try anything funny while I'm out" he pointed at Dudumashe.

Dudumashe: "If taking a shower

and a nap is doing something funny then I guess I'll try something funny" he said sarcastically before watching Jester walk out. He looked around Jester's bachelor flat and missed his big house very much. When he got to the bathroom he took a shower and the space was uncomfortable as he was used to bigger showers. When he was done he took his unregistered phone and positioned it before pressing the record button. He was sure to stand in front of a plain background to not implicate

Jester later on once the video goes out.

Dudumashe: "Sylvia..." he took a deep breath "I'm sorry for everything that I've put you through, darling. You've taken a lot from me over the years and I wish I could turn back time and love you right. As for your father, I was there when he was killed but I was not the one who pulled the trigger. Yes, I was a spy for the authorities and your father was a wanted man because of his political influence on comrades. I guess that you could say I killed

him though because it was I who gave the police his whereabouts. He was a slippery man so they'd never have gotten him had I not sold him out" he cried "I'm sorry for the pain that I caused you, your mother and your sisters. I tried to justify my actions by saying that I at least made sure that you, his daughter got a chance at the good life. Please apologize to the children for me and I promise you that Wandile's not going to go to jail. I'm not in control of myself, Sylvia. I'm just a pawn and making Wandile's

business a front was not something that I wanted but something I had no choice but to do but I made sure that should it come out he won't be implicated. The investigation will take months but I promise our son will be proven innocent because he is. Kiss the girls for me and all our grandbabies. I love you and I'm sorry. Please forgive me". He saved the recording before breaking down. Jes bought him clothes at the second hand stand by the roadside and when he walked back he found Dudumashe

sobbing. He couldn't help but smile as he took in the sight of Dudumashe broken. .

Jes: "Don't you dare cry in my damn place" he ordered and watched Dudumashe wipe his tears.

Dudumashe: "Back already?"

Jes: "A kind lady was selling her husband's old clothes. Your pants were R20, your shirt, R15 and the plastic glasses R5"

Dudumashe: "I'm not wearing that"

Jes: "Then go to your boutiques to buy your expensive suits then"

he held the door open and Dudumashe remained seated "I didn't think you would" he shut the door "Let's make you bald so I can take the pictures". That's exactly what he did and when the full clothes and glasses were on even Jester admitted that it was a good disguise. The pictures got captured and sent to the contact. Jester knew that he had all the cards in his hand. He could call the cops and they'd catch Dudumashe but should the real players get to Dudumashe, he feared Dudumashe will reveal his name.

Dudumashe still belief that it was Jester who leaked the information on him but he had no strength to take revenge. Jester made a few more calls to get Dudumashe out of the country so he'd get back to his life because he missed Lungile. He enjoyed watching karma deal with Dudumashe the same way it dealt with Elephant.

Vusi was on his way home from work and enjoying his jazz music. He couldn't wait to kiss his wife and hug his daughter after a

hectic day at work. The promotion not only came with an increase in money but also stress so he was at his happiest when he was in his car going home. Traffic was a nightmare but he finally made it into his neighbourhood. All was going well until he saw a young lady who looked like Amahle walking with a boy. As he got closer to the couple, he realized that it was his daughter and he nearly had a heart attack when he realised that it was indeed Amahle. He almost flew out of his car with full rage to go break the

pair up. Chumani ran away leaving Amahle to deal with the mess alone.

Amahle: "Tata" she couldn't even look him in the eyes

Vusi: "In the car now!" he shouted making her jump in fright before running to the car "You see how that boy ran when he realised that you are in trouble?" he asked before driving off "That's how he'll run when he finds out that you are pregnant. It's also how he'll run should thugs rob you while with him leaving you to be raped and killed". Amahle could

hear the anger in his voice do she decided it was best she keeps quiet. He drove the car into the yard so aggressively that Asakhe had to come out to make sure that it was him.

Asakhe: "What's wrong?" she asked when Amahle ran to her hoping she could be her protection.

Vusi: "I found this one kissing boys in the street. If it's what's she's used to there at the Elephants she must know that it won't happen here" he said while pulling Amahle away from Asakhe before leading her inside of the

house. Amahle felt the whips of the leather belt hit her bare arms and legs before she could even plead with Vusi to calm down. When Asakhe felt that it was enough punishment she went to shield Amahle.

Asakhe: "Vusimuzi, please stop. You know that Mrs Williams will visit soon and when she finds that we discipline the child with a belt, she'll have her taken away again" she pleaded with her husband she trying to comfort the crying Amahle.

Vusi: "I'm not going to just sit

and watch my daughter roam around the township with a boy when her homework is waiting for her. That boy wants one thing and that's sex. Should she fall pregnant then he will run"

Amahle: "Like you ran from my mother forcing her to dump me because she was alone" she blurted out.

Asakhe: "Amahle you're not helping the situation much. Please let us all calm down!" she shouted "Beating her won't make her stop seeing that boy, Vusi if anything it'll drive her out of here to his

arms" she added calmly.

Vusi: "You are not going to see that boy again" he said to her.

Amahle: "We go to the same school so that's impossible" he mumbled.

Vusi: "Then you are going to another school" he said before leaving them to go calm down.

Amahle: "He can't do that" she walked out after him but the car was out of the yard in no time "Why does he act like he had never been young?" she asked her mother.

Asakhe: "Because we don't want

you to make the same mistakes that we did"

Amahle: "He had no right to hit me. I could get him arrested for what he did. I'm a child but I've got rights too"

Asakhe: "Maybe that's why you children are so out of control. It's the many rights given to you.

Disciplining you is a way to show love"

Amahle: "Keep your love if it requires that I get hurt. He can't take me to a new school. If he does then I'll tell Mrs Williams what happened here just now.

You'll lose me as quickly as you got me" she threatened.

Asakhe: "With all that's going on with the Elephants. Ntombikayise being arrested and all. Do you think the law will let you go live with them? They'll put you in foster care and trust me you don't want to be a foster kid".

Amahle gave it thought.

Amahle: "I'm not going to break up with Chumani. I already took a slap from some girl who is jealous so I'm not going to do it"

Asakhe: "So you are willing to take a beating from other girls

over a boy but threatened to get your dad arrested for disciplining you and try to protect you from that same boy who has other girls?"

Amahle: "It's not the same" she whispered.

Asakhe: "Please come help me peel potatoes"

Amahle: "I've got homework"

Asakhe: "If you could kiss boys then you can go peel those potatoes. I'm your mother so stop arguing with me"

Amahle: "No you're not" she said before going to her room. Asakhe

had to use all her resistance power to not discipline Amahle too. Raising a teenager proved to be difficult and the fact that she only got to know Amahle recently made it more difficult but Asakhe promised Vusi that she'd love Amahle as her own and treat her as such. She knew part of treating a child like she birthed her meant not allowing Amahle to get away with disrespecting her so she went to Amahle's room and ordered Amahle to go to the kitchen to peel potatoes and watched the grumpy teen walk to

the kitchen to do as told. One thing Asakhe struggled with was her limits in disciplining Amahle as her stepmother. She was still learning how to enforce discipline without leaving Amahle feeling like she is unwanted.

Because of everything that has been going on Ntombikayise had to let Liyema and Portia be the ones to go to Kroonstad to go check that the facility Banele would be staying at for the next couple of weeks was good. Liyema felt it was good because he didn't

get to see off Bandile and Bubele. When Lefa borrowed Ntombi's car the last thing that she expected him to do is fill up her tank and buy them groceries.

Ntombi: "I'm going to pay you back, baby. Thank you"

Lefa: "It's a gift and you don't pay for gifts" he hugged her briefly.

Ntombi: "Hans says this could go on for months. So my money might be tide for months and with Elephant Attorneys accounts being frozen, no salaries can be paid either. I don't know how I'm

going to survive the next couple of months"

Lefa: "With your man's help" he reminded her.

Ntombi: "Why is it okay for you to help me financially but you didn't allow it? That's so sexist, Lefa" she unpacked the groceries.

Lefa: "Providing comes naturally to a man, well to me anyway" he held her from behind "And yes, I took care of Hlompho's needs and those of my parents" he said before she could ask.

Ntombi: "And yours?" she tilted her head to look at him.

Lefa: "Everything important is taken care of" he promised "You just accept my help please and I promise should I be in financial crisis next time, I'll accept your help. I realized only now that I'm helping you how it must have felt when I turned your help down. Partners?" he held out his pinky and Ntombikayise entwined it with hers.

Ntombi: "Partners" he kissed him. "Is Mimi still threatening to take Hlompho back after learning I'm your girlfriend?" she looked down. The last thing she wanted was

for him to lose his son.

Lefa: "I told her to dare try me. I'll take her to the highest court" he kissed her neck "How's Banele settling in at the college?" he asked.

Ntombi: "Apparently he didn't expect there'd be theory so he doesn't like that" they both laughed "But so far he says he's good. What he fears is me getting arrested and he gets deployed to guard at a prison I'm held at" she laughed softly "Told him that's good because he'll be there to protect me" she laughed again

but Lefa just held her tighter. Lefa: "I know you're afraid but I'm still sure that you are not going to jail. They have auditors on this and as an auditor myself I know it can take a while to conclude one. My woman only got her salary from Elephant Attorneys and she handled finances from clients she found in business with the Elephant Attorneys. All of that is going to be proven. Once all of this is over, we're going to save money and go on our first baecation" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "I'd like that very much"

Lefa: "Where is everyone?"

Ntombi: "Campus and the elders are visiting Othu's gran. They've become quite close since we introduced them"

Lefa: "Now I feel bad for leaving you alone"

Ntombi: "You and Hlomphe can come sleep over since it's Friday" she turned to face him "I can make us dinner and we can play games afterwards. Bukhosi is spending a lot of time with his girlfriend since the suicide attempt so I know he'll be out"

Lefa: "We'll be happy to. Do I have to bring pyjamas to this sleepover?" Ntombi laughed softly.

Ntombi: "Well yeah because we gotta keep it PG around Hlompho but once we're alone you better lose them"

Lefa: "Oh god now I can't wait" he kissed her "Let me go back to work and pretend to be productive when I'm actually going to be thinking about you" Ntombi blushed.

Ntombi: "Thank you for the groceries and petrol. I'm going to

knead dough and make homemade bread and lamb for dinner.

Hlomphe loves that combo very much"

Lefa: "Now I'm horny and salivating but I have to wait until later on because my phone is already vibrating like crazy so the gents must be wondering where I am"

Ntombi: "Go, baby. See you later" he kissed her before going to his car. He could not wait to spent time with her just unwinding. He got to work and focused on work while Ntombi prepared dinner for

them. She was still as stressed about the matter as before but she tried to keep busy and not think about it. Makhulu advised that she let go of everything that is linked to the Elephants but that was impossible because her biggest links to the Elephants were her reason for living. She had to accept that the family would always be a part of her life. Being home at least gave her time to also sharpen her sign language skills which was a positive amongst the negatives. She went to see Iviwe but

Nomsa was like a prison guard not allowing Ntombi space to ask Iviwe questions. She had a feeling there was more to Ivi's attempted suicide, but she just didn't know what and she didn't want to speculate. Bukhosi had been a great boyfriend but Ntombi had to keep reminding him to find balance between varsity and his relationship. She was proud of him for being by her side throughout the pain and confusions. Letting go of her kids has not been easy and it came with a lot of moments of feeling

lonely because Lefa and Hlompfo didn't live with her. She offered to take Hlompfo from school and Lefa called the school, so they'd release Hlompfo into her care.

Hlompfo: "Aunt Ntombi, I don't care about what is written on the papers. I know that you are not a bad person who steals money" he was sure to sign slowly and Ntombi got what he was saying.

Ntombi: "Thank you for believing in me" she smiled.

Hlompfo: "I'm so excited to go sleep over at your house" he said

before getting into the car.

Ntombi drove them both to her house where the two of them watched cartoons while eating snacks. She loved that they could connect even without Lefa.

Makhulu and Tamkhulu returned but they said they were tired, so they'd go rest. Ntombi dished up for them and took their food to the room. Lefa arrived with a small sports bag that had their stuff.

Hlomphe: "Can I come and chill with you for a while, Bhut Bukhosi?" he asked when Bukhosi

walked in. Bukhosi suddenly scratched his head.

Bukhosi: "Let's make it tomorrow. I'm really tired tonight". Hlomphe nodded after Lefa translated

"Ma, can I please go dish up for myself since it seems you guys won't be eating anytime soon?"

Ntombi stood "No, I'll do it myself" he said quickly.

Ntombi: "Okay" she sat back down and watched him dish up enough for an army. She didn't complain because she made more than enough. "He thinks I still do not know when he entertains Ivi in

that room. Do you think I should have him back in the house?" she whispered to Lefa.

Lefa: "You'll see him entertaining a girl in the house as disrespect, baby. So this way he gets to invite her over while still showing you the needed respect"

Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "I wouldn't mind her visiting though but if she sleeps over she would use the guest room"

Lefa: "That's what he doesn't want. You'll only drive him to on campus residence when you do

that"

Ntombi: "I guess you're right. I just hope they use protection"

Lefa: "Have Liyema talk to them about the importance of it but he seems like he knows the consequences of not using protection". He felt Hlompho tap his leg.

Hlompho: "I could get used to this. It's nice to have the experience of a mother and father at home and a big brother who wants nothing to do with me because he's hiding a girl" Lefa and Ntombi laughed.

Lefa: "How do you know that he has a guest?" he asked before throwing a cushion at Hlompho.

Hlompho: "She was tiptoeing past the kitchen window when I was drinking water. I knocked on the glass and she put her finger over her lips" he laughed "She is pretty" he nodded.

Lefa: "Do you have a girlfriend?"

Hlompho laughed before zipping his mouth and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "You hungry?" Hlompho nodded quickly. Ntombi stood to go dish up for the three of them and Lefa came to help.

Lefa: "Brown is actually growing very fast" he said when the puppy appeared. They had dinner and played games until Lefa had to go take a bath. He fell asleep on the couch with a biscuit in his hand and Lefa carried him to the room. He returned and Ntombi laughed when she felt him scoop her up from the couch and carry her to the room too.

Ntombi: "Are the doors locked?" she asked and watched him quickly run down to check. When everything was fine he went back to her.

Lefa: "Baby, is it wrong of me to also like this?" he went to join her on the bed "I mean coming home to find you and the children, eating with you guys and then retiring to bed with you" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "You aren't proposing right, sthandwa sam?"

Lefa: "Not yet but let's say the timing is right. Maybe in a year or so. Would you give marriage another go?" Ntombi broke eye contact.

Ntombi: "I would but just not now, baby. Liyema and I just got

married without a proposal or blessing from our elders. I don't want to rush again"

Lefa: "I understand and when the time is right, I promise to do things accordingly. What I am sure about is that I love days like these so much" they both smiled.

Ntombi: "So do I" she kissed him.

Lefa: "And since you said this is a no pyjama zone, I didn't bring any" he stood to undress.

Ntombi: "I didn't say it's a no underwear zone though" she laughed out.

Lefa: "Too late, everything is gone already". Ntombi closed her eyes to take in the sweetness of the kisses he left on her neck before giving the same love to other parts of her body. She also loved those moments of intimacy they shared. Whether it's with family or alone. She's seen him angry, sad and drunk. She's witnessed his habits and though some annoyed her she still loved him and could picture them share a space on a permanent basis someday but she didn't want to rush like she and Liyema did. Slow

worked well for them.

It was the following day and the day was stressful to Mahlubandile but as the sun started to go down there was a knock on her door. It was detective Vilakazi and Mahlubandile felt herself get sick when she saw his face. He's already seen Ntombi and Hlubi guilty which was what Mahlubandile hated.

Vilakazi: "He confessed on tape" he looked at Hlubi.

Hlubi: "So far you've given me details to things that I didn't

want to know in the past so why are you so vague now?" she folded her arms.

Vilakazi: "Dudumashe sent a confession video and in it he gave us some pretty big names"

Hlubi: "Of what use is that when you there is no physical evidence to prove it? It'll be his word against theirs"

Vilakazi: "He stored evidence for some odd reason. He indeed tried to cross the border. Looked nothing like his usual self but the authorities managed to identify him quickly"

Hlubi: "And?"

Vilakazi: "He tried to run away and that forced an officer to shoot him". Mahlubandile closed her eyes. As much as she was angry at Dudumashe she didn't wish him to get hurt "He is dead"
Hlubi sunk down to the chair next to her.

Hlubi: "Who is the person who told you about all of this to begin with?"

Vilakazi: "I can not give you that information but it looks as if you will be off the hook. I just came to give you an update"

Hlubi: "I deserve to know who the person who crippled my business is" she stood.

Vilakazi: "You know that I can't. This is a high profile case so I can't give names wrecklessly.

Goodnight and I'm sorry about your partner" he said before

going. Hlubi worked well with Dudumashe and the shock of his death hurt as much as he

destroyed her livelihood and

legacy. She couldn't imagine how

the Dudumashe family must be

feeling. She knew the newspapers

would be filled with the people

who were a part of the dirty dealings with Dudumashe and she wondered how many of them she knows. She also knew that had her father lived, his name would have been one of the first to be mentioned. ❤️

S2-INSERT 60 (Not Edited)

When Mahlubandile started to work at Elephant Attorneys years ago she didn't imagine it would possibly have to close its doors for good because she didn't think that a legacy could die. Once

the state's auditor completed his work it was found that five of their major clients were not legal. They had no online presence, employees and premises because they were just used as fronts to bring money into the company.

Yanda found his wife crying still in her pajamas at noon which was unlike her. Hlubi was the type to shower and dress up to go sit on the couch.

Yanda: "What can I do to help, Lisakhanya?" he sat down next to her "Because this is not working...you shutting everyone

out that is. I'm starting to worry now" he drew her close. Hlubi: "I think that I might have to close shop for good, Mbuzo. No one wants to touch us after the public humiliation" she looked at him.

Yanda: "Surely not all of your clients jumped ship. I mean you gave a public statement to say that you were all found innocent at the office...well except for that one guy who worked under Ntombi" he added.

Hlubi: "Baby, who is going to come to us for legal advice when the

media portrayed us as criminals?
Can you believe that one of the
local drug dealers came to offer
that we take him and his friends
on as clients?" Yanda couldn't help
but laugh "Not funny, Yanda" she
added.

Yanda: "I apologize" he said
sincerely.

Hlubi: "We were known for
representing people with integrity
who for one reason or another got
on the wrong side of the law. I
always turned down those I knew
for certain are guilty because
they made no secret of it. So now

we are some small time firm who get approached by guilty criminals. I'm not going to defend such" she stood.

Yanda: "Start over, Mahlubandile" he stood too "That was your father and Dudumashe's legacy but they unfortunately sought the wrong ways to get it but that's not a reflection on you. Start over, baby" he tried to motivate her. .

Hlubi: "How when my loyal service users won't even take my calls? If I start over it'll have to be in a new town"

Yanda: "So you propose we move?"

Hlubi shrugged.

Hlubi: "Maybe Jozi" she suggested "we'll be much closer to our daughter and grandchild that way" she added.

Yanda: "And that's what you want? I'll do anything to get you out of this depressive state even moving. My business is flexible"

Hlubi: "I don't know what I want. We have our perfect home here, both our families are here and our friends but this might have tainted my name for good, baby. I'm personally associated

with Elephant Attorneys. I wasn't some young lawyer given a chance as partner, I'm the second generation of the legacy so no one will believe me when I say I didn't know what was going on"

Yanda: "You know the truth and after two months of intense investigation the police do too."

Hlubi: "Maybe had they cleared me right after Dudumashe's death I'd have been able to salvage what I can but they implicated me long after Dudumashe confessed which made people think I was as guilty. The law

can be such an obstacle
sometimes"

Yanda: "I'm sorry, Khanya" he had
no other words of comfort "Go
shower and get dressed so that
Vuyo and I can take you out for
icecream" Mahlubandile looked at
her son who was playing with his
toy garbage truck.

Vuyo: "Vroooooooooooooo peep peep"
he said while controlling his truck
and Hlubi smiled. She forgot to
take in the little things during
the stressful time.

Hlubi: "I'd like that very much.
Maybe I'll think clearly

afterwards" she kissed Yanda before going to the bathroom to shower. She finished getting ready after an hour and came out in her casual wear "The sad thing about this is the fact that many are now without a job. The young lawyers can get something quickly because I gave them great recommendation but what about Rose? I don't even know anyone who needs a domestic worker" she went to pick Mivuyo up who was getting heavier by day.

Yanda: "When I hear anything I'll let her know. For now let's go

enjoy time out with our boy.

You've been neglecting us lately"

Hlubi: "I'm sorry" she smiled. The three of them went to the nearby park to avoid driving. The walk, playing and eating junk really helped somewhat.

Yanda: "I took the liberty of making us outfits for Dali's wedding. Indi is due soon too"

Hlubi: "Do you think he's happy?"

Yanda: "He actually is. Ntombi's relationship took him by surprise a bit. I told him about it but I guess seeing it with his own eyes made him think about the what

ifs. I'm glad he's marrying Indi"
Hlubi: "Ntombi's very happy. Lefa has been her rock throughout this entire thing so things turned out as they needed to"

Yanda: "I've been thinking about visiting, Mama" Hlubi took her eyes off Mivuyo to look at him briefly but turned her gaze at the busy toddler again.

Hlubi: "Are you ready to forgive her?"

Yanda: "I don't know. I just feel like going" Hlubi nodded.

Hlubi: "Just don't go shout at her please. I think she now learned

her lesson"" Yanda nodded "If you're not too busy, I think we must take opportunity of my free time and visit Nandi and her family"

Yanda: "She'll just worry and think that we are in financial trouble. Let's not go when she knows things aren't good this side"

Hlubi: "Our over thinker" they both laughed "I want to go over to Lungi's later. Since he told us about his paternity I haven't checked how he's holding up with that"

Yanda: "It can't be easy but he'll

be fine. He hasn't showed much face either" he took a chip from the pack Hlubi was holding and ate it.

Hlubi: "I didn't expect him too with the changes in his life". A sudden wind started to blow and Mivuyo was someone who struggled with sinus so his parents decided to go home to avoid a reaction. Mahlubandile still had no idea how she'd raise the dead business back to life. She was grateful for the fact that she could give her employees financial compensation before

shutting doors. She knew trying to find new clients while the ink on the newspapers was still fresh was a bad idea. She didn't know if Elephant Attorneys was going to rise from the ashes like a fenix but she wondered if it was meant to. Maybe it was meant to die because it had been sick for years. Yanda might be right, it was time to birth a new "baby", her baby. A baby that will be healthy from word go because she had no intention of starting a business based on crime.

When Lefa got a call from an old acquaintance from the states who moved back home to retire he knew that it had to do with finances.

Derick: "I can't believe that I got excited when I heard about your business only to hear that you got yourself into a contract that limits you" said Derick as he sat in Lefa's office "How the hell did you get yourself so tied up?" he asked. Lefa used to work on Derrick's smaller estates as a young accountant in New York so Derick was hoping a familiar

person would help him plan his financials as a new retired man.

Lefa: "It was desperate times" he admitted "But I love working with my partners. So you'll be needing a long term financial advisor?" Derick nodded.

Derick: "Yes and with the corruption in this world, it's hard to find a good one. My last one in the states let me invest in something that he had no clue in. I don't have time to research if investments are good, that's why I hired him" he said with frustration "So I was hoping

that you would have someone in your company who is good at that" he drank the water Lefa gave him.

Lefa: "Well I'm still new and then some sucker decided to sabotage my business which led to this agreement I'm in now. There is someone who I can vouch for though"

Derick: "One of your employees??"

Lefa: "No but she's good at what she does"

Derick: "What's her name so that I can check her out?"

Lefa: "Can you please give me

chance to talk to her first so she won't turn you down when you approach her?"

Derrick: "Just find me someone competent please, Lefa. I know that I've got a lot of money but it doesn't mean I don't feel it when some goes down the drain. Melinda and I are at that age where stability and trust is our main focus. Find us someone who has patience to work with elderly because things change so much in today's life so they must be able to sit and explain to us especially now with this digital currency

hype going on. I don't understand it at all but we are always up for new investment ventures"

Lefa: "I'll do my best, Derrick"

Derrick: "Also come over for dinner sometime to check out our new home. Bring the folks and your boy too"

Lefa: "And my lady?" they both laughed. .

Derrick: "Please bring her along. I didn't mention it because whenever we saw each other you said you're a single man" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Well I haven't been that

for a while now and I think this one has me on lockdown" he joked and they laughed.

Derrick: "Then I really have to meet her. It's good you found someone. When you're old like me and have all the time in the world trust me you'll want that someone special by your side" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "My dad said the same"

Derrick: "Listen to the man. Let me go. I'll hear from you" he stood to shake Lefa's hand. Lefa walked the old man out and ran into Craig when he was on his

way back to his office. He told Craig the news.

Craig: "This isn't you bailing right?"

Lefa: "No but this is me wanting to have clarity on something. Our agreement states that I, Lefa Gwala is to give my attention to Steel brothers only for six months but an employee or partner of Debeza Financial services can take other contracts on behalf of the company right?"

Craig: "Yes, man. Are you thinking of employing people?"

Lefa: "I can cope with the work

here on my own but obviously can't share my time for contractual obligations but yes, I'd like to have someone join me at Debeza"

Craig: "As long as that person won't want your help and attention 24/7" Lefa shook his head "Then do what you feel is best. The initial agreement was for Debeza to give us full attention but that's because you worked alone. You told us that you wanted to be the one bound to us but not your business and because you'll be bringing in help for it, we

can't turn back on a condition we signed off on. Grow your business, man" he patted Lefa's shoulder "But right now I'd like your help on something" Lefa nodded. The two men walked to Lefa's office to discuss Steel Brothers business. Lefa was so excited about hearing what Ntombikayise has to say about her helping Derrick.

Ntombi got home from running a few errands and found Mahlubandile sitting with her grandparents.

Ntombi: "I hope that you're not

here to apologize again"

Hlubi: "No, I'm here to visit you guys. This unemployment is not easy at all"

Tamkhulu: "Why do you think your friend is busy renovating the bathroom?" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "I just bought new mat sets and some bathroom

accessories, Tata" she sat down

"So you're really not opening shop again?" she asked Mahlubandile.

Hlubi: "Best, every client is gone.

Non wanted to be associated with us. I'm thinking about moving"

Ntombi: "Haibo, Mahlubandile

that's a bit extreme. Let's just go out with the ladies to release stress"

Makhulu: "That sounds like a good idea. People forget and next month they'll talk about something else" Ntombi nodded.

Hlubi: "Yanda says I must start over" Bukhosi walked in and greeted. He asked Mahlubandile about the latest at Elephant Attorneys and was sad to hear that they were still closed.

Bukhosi: "Please do not give up, Dabs. I wanted to be trained by you for my articles. I wanted to

be the next generation Elephant at the firm" he pleaded.

Hlubi: "It's bad, Khosi"

Bukhosi: "I know that but you are a bad ass attorney with great business ethics. I'm even willing to be your PA on my free time for free. Please don't let the firm just die. Take small clients again like a new business" he suggested.

Hlubi: "I'll try but I'm not promising anything. I might have to go look for work"

Bukhosi: "Do you even know what a CV looks like?" Mahlubandile

laughed.

Hlubi: "Just go refill my coffee cup and stop asking nonsense. I want to hear what you've covered in school so far. If you'll be my apprentice someday, you'll have to show potential now" Bukhosi jumped up to go to the kitchen with her empty cup to fill it up.

Tamkhulu: "Advocate Elephant" he smiled "He really does look up to you, Hlubi" Hlubi smiled. It was a relaxing afternoon and Bukhosi showed Hlubi what he'd been up to at university before Hlubi went to help Ntombi put her new

bathroom accessories in her bathroom. Lefa's toothbrush indicated to Hlubi just how serious the couple was and she was happy for Ntombi. They called their friends whom they had not seen much to arrange for a girl's night filled with wine, latest gossip and dancing. Lefa arrived at Ntombi's place after work and talked to her about Derrick.

Ntombi: "So you want me to help him under the Debeza Financial services name?"

Lefa: "Did you even give my request as partner thought,

Ntombi?"

Ntombi: "More than anything lately, babe. You just have not given me the details of how this will work. Are you employing me right now?"

Lefa: "I want you to be my equal. I will do auditing and you financial planning. Having Derrick means he'll tell his other rich retired friends about how well we handle his money. You recently did research on crypto currency and such. He wants to get into that. I think the universe is aligning things" Ntombi laughed softly. "I

know I said I don't believe in such but yeah" he added while laughing.

Ntombi: "So there won't be a buy in amount? I just become a part of your business like that?"

Lefa: "Well if you feel we need office space and assistance then get that. Get yourself a young graduate you can train and when we're at a good place we can hire that person. We can work together on our business plan.

Anything that needs money, we can go at it together. We'll figure it out once we sit and discuss it

properly but you must be willing to try" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "What if we fight, Lefa? What if we can't separate work from home? What if it ruins us as a couple?" Lefa pulled her chair closer.

Lefa: "What if we become one of a very few powerful business partners in the industry? What if we work exceptionally well together?" he asked with a smile.

Ntombi: "That's possible too" she smiled.

Lefa: "I don't think about what if will happen should we break up

because I don't intend on that happening. We'll definitely fight but let us not fight about work at home and let us not fight about home at work"

Ntombi: "What about your agreement with Craig?"

Lefa: "You're not a part of that. So what do you say?"

Ntombi: "I don't know... I'm so scared. Shouldn't you be doing this with your wife or something like that someday, Lefa?"

Lefa: "Who said you're not my future wife?" Ntombikayise shrugged "Am I overwhelming

you?" he asked in a whisper "I'm sorry" he added.

Ntombi: "I'm scared" she whispered "I'm not business minded hence Liyema doesn't even bother talking to me about many things happening in his business though I've got shares there. I don't want to hold you back once the six months are over" she added.

Lefa: "We'll learn together. I do not have anything figured out, baby but I'm someone who likes learning. I don't want to be your boss because then we'll really

have difficulty working together. If we break up and you want nothing to do with me, I'll try to buy you out if you want"

Ntombi: "I can help the elderly people you talk about but I'll need time to think more about being your partner. I know it seems everything is falling into place but I don't want to make a mistake and ruin our relationship"

Lefa: "I'd rather lose the business than lose you because I can always start over but where will I find another you?" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "Do you always just go into things like this?"

Lefa: "If they feel right I do" he said honestly. The two of them sat down and discussed the terms and conditions briefly before Lefa went to pick Hlompho up from karate classes.

Tamkhulu: "He wants to grow with you and I see it as a good thing. He's tired of hearing that you went from being unappreciated to almost going to jail while working under someone else. He's giving you chance to be in control"

Ntombi: "What if he proposes next?"

Tamkhulu: "If you're not ready you tell him. If you're ready go for it. You two might be Africa's power couple in business. I honestly admire the young man. He's appreciative of what life gives him because he grew up with nothing. He's a hard worker. He's family oriented and he just seems to fit well here at home. He's not perfect but his intentions are good. I'd welcome his cows with open arms"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Hold your horses there, old man. No cows will be coming into this yard" Tamkhulu laughed. Tamkhulu: "That's a man who has his eye on marriage. If you don't want that you best tell him before he sends letter" he left her to think about that. Ntombi didn't think about that much. She went to get her laptop to look up couples who were in business together. She was shocked to find several success stories. She also researched what went into starting a financial firm. She had a lot to think about and Lefa left

the ball in her court so she knew that he'd be okay whether she agreed or not.

Hlubi: "So it was you?" she asked in a hurt voice when she heard Mrs E and Lungile talk about his involvement in leaking the information.

Mrs E: "Mahlubandile, please understand where he was coming from"

Hlubi: "Under... I worked hard to make Elephant Attorneys what it is, Ma. People didn't want to do business with it years after

Tata's murder story broke out but I was sure to convince them that I'm not my father. What he did killed the business" she wiped her tears "He might as well have killed me with it" tears just kept coming.

Lungile: "You are better off without it. Just think about it. You can now start over".

Mahlubandile gave him a hard slap leaving his cheek on fire.

Mrs E: "Hlubi, please" she pleaded.

Hlubi: "Your sons will never know how important that business was to me because they never wanted

anything to do with it. It would have been just as easy for Liyema to destroy it because they feel nothing for it. But with me it's different. That was the only way that I felt connected to my father, Lungile" she shouted "I still sat on the office chair and used the desk that he did because I know that his hands were on it making me feel closer to him. I took pride in being the only child who could carry on his legacy. Not his legacy in crime but in law. As terrible of a man he might have been, he was a

kickass attorney!" she said while crying.

Mrs E: "We can work in rebuilding it"

Hlubi: "I thought that you were only this protective of Liyema but it turns out it's a privilege for both your sons. Don't I deserve what you give them, Zola? I bet you knew from the beginning that it was him yet you kept quiet. I know that I'm strong but dammit I get tired too. Bukhosi might never get to live his dream of continuing a legacy because of his selfish uncle" she pushed

Lungile.

Lungile: "I'm sorry but I wanted Dudumashe to pay for what he did to me father"

Hlubi: "where the hell does Elephant Attorneys fit into that revenge plan?" she shouted but Lungile didn't answer "Oh" she pointed at him "I see now...it's to punish my father for what he did to yours" she added "Are we now going to be those kids who go your father did this to mine so I'll do the same to yours, Lungile? As much as Tata was not perfect, he raised you and took you to the

best schools. Maybe he showed love by providing but because you guys wanted the time you couldn't see it. Well I got nothing from him and you took that one thing I felt was a gift from him" she cried.

Lungile: "Please let this not cause a rift between us"

Hlubi: "I can't even look at you. I had nothing to do with what my father did to yours, Lungile. You could have shown me what was happening so I'd be prepared for the public humiliation. You just didn't give a damn because you

have your father so why should you care. I hope that you are happy with yourself" she walked to the door.

Mrs E: "Mahlubandile"

Hlubi: "Leave me alone please. I can't stand to look at either of you right now. One of the things that made me deal with my past was my love for law. You just took away one of my remedies, Lungile. Had it been Liyema I would not have flinched, but you are the last person I expected this from. Mrs Dudumashe's ill health is also on your hands because you made a

joke of her family by going to the press. Enjoy daddy's attention because you took away the only thing that connected me to mine. It must be nice to have been loved by my dad and now get love from your dad too when I never knew a father's love. It must be nice to have a mother in your corner since birth to. One who kept your paternity a secret so you'd be raised in privilege but who couldn't face the man whom she eventually ended up marrying after I was born to give me that same privilege. Your privilege was

meant to be mine, that's how we're playing it right? We remind each other about the fact that we're only bound by a mother. Your actions reminded me of that.

"Don't call me and do not come to my house" she banged the door behind her.

Rose had been stressed out about her being unemployed once again. She loved working at Elephant Attorneys because she got along with everyone. When she arrived home from looking for work she became furious when she saw

that her second born cooked two types of meat.

Rose: "I'm not working anymore, Petronella!" she shouted "where do you think the money to buy more food is going to come from?" she put the chicken in container "This meat we're going to eat tomorrow" she put it in the fridge.

Pet: "I was just doing what Tata told me to do. He said that I should cook both because they're both going to expire tomorrow" she said softly.

Rose: "I don't know why you all

can't think, man" she sat down when she felt a headache come along.

Pet: "Mama, the electricity is about to be finished" she said in a fearful whisper.

Rose: "I left R50 on this table before leaving" she pointed to the table "where is it?" she looked at her daughter.

Pet: "Your husband took it" she said with a subtle attitude "He stopped looking for work when you started working. He'd wake up with us pretending to look for work but when you leave, he tells

us to go to school and locks the door" Rose stood not believing her ears. She always complimented her husband on trying hard to find work and would encourage him when he came back with nothing but to hear that he came back with nothing because he didn't even try made her angry.

Rose: "Please go and help your sister with homework" Pet was about to go but Rose called her back "Before you do that, please go borrow money from Ma Tobi. Tell her that I'll return it tomorrow after coming from

town" Petronella shook her head shamefully.

Pet: "I don't like borrowing money from people. Let Fezi do it because she's young and it'll be less embarrassing" she pleaded with Rose.

Rose: "What'll be more embarrassing will be your friends asking why Eskom decided to loadshed your home only"

Petronella walked out shaking her shoulders with attitude to show her mom that she didn't want to borrow any money from anyone.

Rose's phone rang and she smiled

when she saw her grandson's face on the screen because it was Nandi calling. They greeted and engaged in small talk.

Nandi: "Please send me your meter number, sis Rose. Pet sent a WhatsApp saying that you don't have electricity" Rose took the phone from her ear for a while to let the moment of shame she felt subside "Sis Rose?" Nandi added thinking something was wrong with the network.

Rose: "Uhm...we are okay, Nandi" she lied.

Nandi: "Send it anyway. Rather

there be more electricity you see?"

Rose: "Nandipha did you speak to your husband before offering?"

Nandi laughed softly.

Nandi: "Mashudu and I have taken care of all important things, we split the change and one doesn't dictate what the other does with their pocket money so don't worry." she laughed.

Rose: "Did you send money to Mahlubandile?"

Nandi: "Mama doesn't need any"

Rose: "I don't either because she

gave me a nice send-off package"

Nandi: "I'm just going to ask Pet to send me these numbers because you are being stubborn if not proud"

Rose: "More like thoughtful"

Pet: "Ma, she says she doesn't have any money to borrow you"

Rose put her finger over her lip to sush Pet and watched the teen put her hand over her mouth.

Nandi: "I heard that. I'm going to send you money to your account. It's not much but once I have more I'll send it"

Rose: "Nandipha please don't. Those are the kinds of deeds you do to a parent who raised you"

Nandi: "Nonsense. I sent it already" Rose felt her phone vibrate against her cheek "Pet told me that you had to pay Bhut Sonwabo's debt with the package you got" Rose gave Pet a cold stare.

Rose: "Thank you for your help but by next month I'll be working" she said with certainty.

Nandi: "Sis Rose don't hesitate to ask Mama for help. She might have a "resting bitch face" but

she is a sweetheart. I personally can't always help because with the baby, we are on a tight budget but press on Mama"

Rose: "I will and I will pretend you didn't just say she has a bitch face" Nandi laughed.

Nandi: "She says so herself though. There's also a debt counselling service I know about that your husband can go to for help. If he continues with the debt then even if you find work you'll never enjoy your pay. Ask Pet to show you how to buy electricity directly from your bank. My boy is

crying and daddy is straight from nightshift so he's sleeping. I love you guys and I'll call again soon"

Rose: "I love you too" she smiled.

Pet: "Love you, sis Nandi" she shouted.

Fez: "Love you, Sisi" she shouted with a sweet voice from the room and Nandi laughed before ending the call.

Rose: "Why did you tell her about your father's debt? How do you even know about it?"

Pet: "I heard you shout at him for it" she looked down. Sonwabile walked in dancing before kissing

Rose on the cheek.

Rose: "What's making you so happy when I'm so stressed?"

Sonwabo: "I made a bet on a good horse and I know that it'll win. We're about to be rich"

Rose: "Sonwabo, that is my money that you are using. My last money" she stood.

Sonwabo: "A woman should not have money. She takes what her husband gives her"

Pet: "But Mama is the one who went to work"

Sonwabo: "Hey, hey" he pointed at her "You'll know what I mean

when you are married. Dish up for me"

Rose: "We'll eat the chicken tomorrow"

Sonwabo: "I mentally prepared myself for both beef and chicken so that's what I want. It's not up for debate. I'm going to the toilet so please dish up now" they watched him walk out slowly and shut the door of the toilet.

Rose: "Is that bank account Nandi opened for you still active?" she whispered and Pet nodded "Good

..now do the cellphone transfer

and take the money that Nandi sent to me just now and send it to you" she gave Pet the phone "Quickly Petronella" she said nervously while looking at the bathroom door.

Pet: "Mama now I'm shaking too so just wait a bit"

Rose: "He has the card but the notifications of money coming in are on my phone. Delete everything that says that I sent you money. Did you tell him that you have a bank account now?"

Pet shook her head quickly "Good don't tell him. When you're done

you show me how you did it.
Whenever Nandi sends me money
I'll transfer to you. Petronella
this is me trusting you,
mntanam. No buying airtime please
unless you ask and I say it's okay"
she pleaded.

Pet: "I don't want to starve,
Mama. I don't want to go back to
eating pap with rama again. I
sent the rest of the money in
your account too and left R200.
Does he know how much was on
it" Rose shook her head quickly.
She heard the toilet flush and
went to dish up the food. Pet

deleted all messages of transfers from Rose's phone and of receiving from hers just in case. Sonwabo had recently started to gamble and the money didn't stay home and even the package that Elephant Attorneys have Rose had been spent like no other. Rose wondered if it was the unemployment stress that sudden made her husband gamble. Maybe he was seeking other manners of making an income since employment didn't work out. She felt bad for going behind his back but she felt she had to.

Sonwabo: "Rose, I keep tabs of how much I spend and how much I gave you. Let me see if the bank didn't rob us. They usually send a message. I know exactly how much should be on there"

Rose and Pet looked at each other.

Pet: "I was playing games on her phone so it's dead. I'll go charge it quickly" she walked pass her father to the bedroom and transferred the other money back but only kept that Nandi sent earlier on. She deleted all messages once again "Oh it's on"

he walked into the room "Let me quickly check something" Pet gave him the phone and he checked the balance "Oh they didn't rob us so much but they took money because of the lousy charges. Tomorrow I'm withdrawing everything" he gave Pet the phone and went back to the kitchen.

Rose: "I need money for groceries"

Pet: "I'll give it to you tomorrow" he promised "I will also go look for work but if my horse wins then I won't have to" he smiled.

Rose: "What happened, Sonwabo?"

Why gamble with money we don't even have?"

Sonwabo: "A man makes a plan. I'm multiplying our money. I'm glad you gave me the card because it's the man's duty to work with family finances.

Tomorrow I'll have more and we'll go to KFC"

Rose: "Okay" she gave him his food.

Sonwabo: "Thank you" he smiled "I think it's God's plan for you not to work with your exes wife anymore. It might have attracted bad luck in the long run"

Pet: "So far it attracted money"
she said sarcastically.

Sonwabo: "Zip it" he warned "We'll
find more work. You can also ask
Nandi for money. She's rich and
educated"

Rose: "Nandi's far from being rich"

Sonwabo: "On second thought
don't ask because I'm sure her
husband handles the finances in
the house like here"

Rose: "They actually bring their
money together and pay for
everything and split what's left
and whatever the other does
with theirs is their business.

Maybe we should try it and then I won't have a problem with you gambling since you'll be gambling your money"

Sonwabo: "Never my father taught me that the man handles money. I'll give you what you need but the man is the head of the home. Nandi's weak husband can do that but not here. You must go there" he pointed out "Far away from here with that suggestion" he said before eating. Rose just shook her head and sat to eat to avoid adding fuel to the fire. Sonwabo had not been

employed for a long time and when she got a job she could see that his ego took a knock. It was even worse when he learned Mahlubandile was Yanda's wife because in his mind it was as if it was Yanda who also happened to be Rose's ex that put food on the table when it should have been him. He's been following any get rich quick scheme that came his way and what hurt Rose was that he did it with money she worked hard for. She planned to keep quiet about any money that Nandi sent her and hoped she

could trust her daughter to not say anything but she knew Pet wouldn't. There were moments that she regretted letting Yanda go after Sonwabo started gambling because she for the first time felt she'd have been much better with him but she fought those thoughts away because she was not going to allow herself to lust or even fall back in love with the husband of a woman who did so much for her. She just had to be clever and outsmart Sonwabo so he wouldn't know that there was another

source of income from Nandi, well the only source of income. To Mahlubandile and Yanda she painted Sonwabo well because he was a good man but his relationship with money was poor making her and the kids suffer. She hated bringing her daughter into grown up business and forcing her to be deceitful but it was needed in order for them to eat. She wished that she was in Ntombi and Hlubi's shoes where she didn't have to worry about where the next meal for her and her kids will come from. She'd look

at the two women drive their cars and wear nice clothes and she'd wonder what that life was like. The fact that they attracted financially stable men made Rose even more envious but she was sure of one thing and that's the fact that both those women were kind unlike the attorneys at the office who would sometimes look down on her. There were moments when Ntombikayise would buy double the lunch she ate and called Rose to join her. She gave her kitchen appliances that were in great

condition but Rose couldn't help but wonder what paying for a microwave cash was like. She wanted to be a nurse but allowed Mrs Mbuzo fool her into trapping Yanda with a baby which derailed her dreams. She wondered if it was too late to pursue that dream and if Sonwabo would even agree for her to go study because once she finishes she knew she'd get paid more than she was as a cleaner which could test her marriage a lot. So much was going through her mind and a tap on the hand by her youngest

reminded her that she was not alone. She started to eat her supper once again with the spark of a dream she put away returning to mind. She knew if she went to Mahlubandile or Ntombi they'd help as best they could but she wondered if a career at her age was worth her marriage potentially ending. 

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Ntombi has fortunately worked with a few retired people in her

previous job so when she met Derrick and Malinda she was prepared. She felt the need to explain herself to them about the Elephant Attorneys saga because she was certain that they read the papers. Her being cleared of all charges and being Lefa's partner made Derrick decide to work with her. It had been nearly a month of working with them to help them reach their financial goals. They were wealthy people but Ntombi knew it didn't mean she should be careless with their money. Derrick wanted to invest

in crypto currency and Ntombi explained to them how that worked and answered all their questions regarding that venture. Derrick would give Lefa feedback on occasions and all great reviews but Lefa was not surprised to hear that Ntombi was doing a great job. He couldn't wait for the restriction in Steel Brothers to be over so he'd finally get back to being a free man. Mahlubandile has also been very busy trying to get her new business off the ground again. She wished that Bukhosi had already graduated so

he'd be her young apprentice but she was certain that she'd have to take on small cases first like any new establishment. She wanted to start something new but still honor the legacy of her father so she decided to go with Mlambo Attorneys which is their clan name. She didn't want to exclude her father because had it not been for the foundation that he built she wouldn't have trained at one of the best law firms and earned her stripes as an attorney. She also realized after the night out with friends and

spending more time with Mivuyo and Yanda that she didn't want to move. She made the suggestion from an emotional point. She hadn't seen nor heard from Lungile and her mother and she had no desire to because she was still angry.

The Mbuzo house looked beautiful with the extra rooms added and the new coat of paint. A large white tent stretched out to the street because it was the day of Dali's wedding to his sweetheart Indiphile. A wedding was exactly what everyone felt they needed

after the drama that they had to face during the past few weeks. The tables were beautifully decorated and would surely go well with the attires of the guests. As Dali put on his blue and white beads, he felt he made the right decision. He couldn't wait to meet his little boy either but he wanted the him to be born to married parents as he felt it gives a child stability in life. It was the one thing he never had and he wanted to gift it to his son. Mr Mbuzo walked inside the room looking handsome

in his black and white traditional clothes. He never got to see Yanda get married so he felt blessed to be a part of Dali's wedding. He prayed that his daughters find good men too but he wouldn't be disappointed if they never got married as he understood that everyone's path is different.

Mr Mbuzo: "I'm so happy that the new structure will be blessed by a wedding. I wanted the pastor to come pray for it but this is the perfect way to bless it" he stood behind Dali helping

him fix the beads at the back.

Dali: "I'm just glad that they managed to finish the building before the wedding. I do feel bad for Indi though. Yesterday her ankles were swollen"

Mr Mbuzo: "Trust me the excitement won't even allow her to give attention to that. We tend to treat pregnant women as sick and it annoys them. Your mother had that look she'd give me when I used to be too much" they both laughed.

Dali: "Indi understands that I'm as excited as her so she should

just bare with me until such a time I can also hold our baby" he turned to face his dad "Do I look good?" he asked with a smile.

Mr Mbuzo: "Like royalty" Dali laughed "Here" he gave his son a stick with a round top. It was decorated with beads that matched those Dali had draped over his body and head. He started to feel like royalty indeed.

Dali: "Thank you, Tata" he smiled and Mr Mbuzo smiled and nodded "We decided to name our son Yakhikhaya Mbuzo" Dali watched as Mr Mbuzo's eyes glistened. "It

was a name that not many got to be introduced to so we are honoring him that way. It was actually Indi's idea" he added with a smile.

Mr Mbuzo: "Maybe it'll be a case of an ancestor returning. Thank you for the honor you've chosen to give him. I'm certain that Khaya is going to grow up to be a great man someday as his uncle would have been" Dali nodded in agreement. Yanda walked in looking as royalty himself in his black and gold traditional wear. Yanda: "Are you ready to be a

wedded man?" the brothers both laughed "I'm happy for you. You got the girl, the wedding and the baby at the end. Everything that I wished for you happened" he added.

Dali: "You're just happy it's not with Ntombi"

Yanda: "No disrespect to her but yes, I admit that I am. I have a feeling it would have caused a lot of drama and it's better to conceive naturally"

Dali: "Let's not say things that might end in insulting her, Yanda. I still have a lot of respect for

her and perhaps even love so had things not turned out as they did we'd have made our relationship work"

Yanda: "Okay let's not get serious. I'm sorry that I spoke out of line. So are you ready?"

Dali: "As I'll ever be" he smiled

"Does anyone know the name the Mbuzo sisters will give Indi?"

She's quite concerned about that" the men laughed.

Mr Mbuzo: "That is between the women. Let me go out because I see the men of the community arriving" he looked out the thin

laced window before walking out. Yanda: "Yandisa gave Mahlubandile a lovely name so let's hope Yamkela is as good at it. Come let's go and get you married". Ma Nozulu made sure that the singing never ran dry because she wanted everyone around to know that there was a wedding. She wanted the wedding to be in Qwa Qwa but because both Indi and Yanda's families were in Cape Town they decided to cut on spending money on transporting family members. When Dali heard singing outside

he knew the bride and her entourage had arrived. His heart skipped a beat a little when Lefa, Ntombi, Bukhosi and Hlomphe walked in with nearly matching outfits looking as though they were officially a family. He was happy for her but like Liyema he felt she was the one that got away but he didn't have a choice but to watch her run into another man's arms. All the guests were seated with only the bride's side half empty as they were still singing outside. Unlike the typical father of the bride

walking his daughter down the aisle, Indi was accompanied by a few of her family members in song as she walked down the aisle.

Dali's smile was wide when he saw how beautifully the dress she had on hugged her baby bump. It had been months of getting to know each other for him and Indi. When they first started to date he was too hung up on Ntombi to go all in but after the news of the baby he put his second foot in and showed he was there to commit. Indi was certain that he only married her because of the baby

but because she wanted to raise her son as she and her brothers and sisters were with both parents under one roof she was hoping that he'd be madly in love with her someday as she was with him. Tears started to roll down her cheeks when she got closer to her husband to be. Her father put her hand in Yanda's after shaking his son in law's hand and the couple watched the bride's family fill their seats. Both happy to see that the tent was big enough to accommodate all their guests. The pastor

started the ceremony to officially declare the two husband and wife. It was sweet and brief and rings were exchanged in no time before the pastor said they could deal it with a kiss. As Dali was busy smooching his new wife Lefa looked to his side where Ntombi was looking to the front with a wide smile on her face clapping hands for the couple. He felt ready to do the same with her but she said she wanted them to go slow because she was married to Liyema too quickly and that didn't end up in a fairytale. She

caught him staring and he watched her blush before leaning closer to kiss him.

Lefa: "I love you" he signed with a smile.

Ntombi: "I love you too" she signed back before giving him another kiss. Hlomphe sat next to Bukhosi but caught the little moment between the lovebirds and it left him smiling. The couple went to a little side table to sign and officially become Mr and Mrs Mbuzo. Ma Nozulu was sure to sing to express her joy once again and soon the air in the tent was

filled with happiness. Everything was to be done there and it was convenient to the guests who didn't have cars to go from venue to venue. Nandi couldn't make it because her son was not feeling too well but they made a length videos giving the couple well wishes.

Dali: "Mommy and Daddy are married" he whispered to Indi's belly and left her laughing.

Indi: "I'm glad that I met you, Daluxolo Mbuzo" she smiled "I look forward to being your wife and mother of your children" she

added.

Dali: "Children?"

Indi: "Yes, did you really think I'll only give you one?" she laughed softly. .

Dali: "Give me as many as you want, Mrs Mbuzo" he kissed her making the guests ulululate in cheer. The couple felt exposed which led to both blushing.

Indi: "I'm glad everything went well. Now we just wait for Yakhikhaya to arrive so that I can stop feeling so tired" she sighed.

Dali: "I'll give you a foot massage

when we're alone later on"

Indi: "Hopefully more than a foot massage" she said in a flirty tone leaving Dali feeling excited already.

Dali: "Your wish is my command".

The catering services finally arrived with the food after delaying. Indi had started to fear that their guests would go home on an empty stomach. It was a self serve and each guest took a plate to go fill them with the yummy feast.

Mr Mbuzo: "I'm not one to say much but I wanted to welcome

Indiphile into the Mbuzo family. We are not perfect, my child but we are filled with love. Dali's mother would have loved you as much" Indi smiled "May your marriage be everlasting, my children. Thank you" he said when everyone had food in front of them. More speeches were made and some left the guests in stitches. Indi's uncle started to dance and everyone knew that he had a little too much to drink but he got the party started. Soon some of the guests were on the dancefloor with him shaking what

their mother's have them. Indi's feet were too swollen so Dali stood to dance with his sisters but Indi stood after a while to dance with her husband and everyone looked at them.

Dali: "My wife and I would like to thank all of you for being here. Your presence made the day extra special. We hope that everyone had enough to eat but if not don't be shy to stand and get some more food please. I'd now like to ask my beautiful wife to stand closer so that we can cut our wedding cake" he held his hand

out to help Indi stand. The two of them held the red ribboned handle of the knife before slicing through their wedding cake. Each taking a piece to feed the other before kissing. The Mbuzo ladies later took Indiphile inside the house where they helped her put on her makoti attire. Yamkela gave her the name Simamkele before the ladies of the community gave her advice and encouragement. Dali loved the name and already started to call his wife Sima.

Hlubi: "I'm so glad to have a

sister to do things with" she hugged Indi when they were alone in the kitchen.

Indi: "Are they a nice family?"

Mahlubandile laughed at the question.

Hlubi: "There are a few mean ones but if I could survive my mother in law, you can survive anything.

Other than that the Mbuzo's are good people. Very cultured too"

Indi: "I'm glad that you are here.

It makes it less nerve wrecking"

Hlubi: "One thing about the

Mbuzo makotis is the fact that we get along. I'll put you in our

WhatsApp group now that you're officially one of us. Most are in Qwa Qwa and PE but you'll fit right in when we all meet" Indi gave a nervous smile.

Indi: "I hope so. Let me go give my father in law the tea that he asked for" she took the tray and left.

Ntombi: "Makoti, where are my biscuits?" she teased and Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "I actually wanted to talk to you about something. Since you're now partnering with your man, I was thinking it's good for

your company to handle my finances. I won't be able to afford a full time person as of yet so I'll be making use of your services on a part time basis until I'm back in the groove again"

Ntombi: "So you'll start afresh?"

Hlubi nodded "Aren't you scared?"

Hlubi: "Pettrified but it's worth a try. You fall down six times, you get up seven times right?"

Ntombi nodded "Don't tell me you haven't given him an answer, Ntombikayise"

Ntombi: "I will soon"

Hlubi: "Just take the risk. It

might lead to distraction but it might also lead to beautiful things. You won't know until you try, Bestie"

Ntombi: "Mmm okay" she said softly "Anyhow I've come to let you know that we're leaving.

Please tell Dali and Indi thank you and it was a beautiful day" she smiled.

Hlubi: "Thank you guys for coming. I've got to show Sima how to get into the "good books" of the Mbuzo's" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "So glad I'm done with that life"

Hlubi: "whatever" they hugged before Ntombikayise walked out to where her male entourage stood waiting for her. Many stayed behind to enjoy the last moments of the celebration because the drinks were in abundance. Lefa drove Ntombi and the boys home.

Ntombi: "So did you think about Derrick's offer to pay for Hlompho's implants?" Lefa shook his head and Ntombi nodded.

Lefa: "I'm not ready to have that happen hence I didn't tell him anything. Should I be ready

then it'll definitely be financed by me, not some rich client who doesn't know what to do with his money" Ntombikayise nodded once again.

Ntombi: "I understand, sthandwa sam. So I've been thinking" she looked at him smiling "Let's do it, baby. Let's be more than just romantic partners" Lefa smiled.

Lefa: "The best news I've heard all month" he hugged her "We can rebrand it by giving the business a new name. You had amazing suggestions for me and I want to implement them all so I'm glad

that you'll be a part of that" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "I was thinking that you have 55% stake since this is your baby and both Steel Brothers and Derrick are your clients. I'll take 45% because I'll also put some of my money into the business account. I suggest that we get a junior who is hungry for an opportunity. We'll take interns when we're stable and have time and extra staff to train them. Now I'll need someone with at least 3 years experience to help me because I'll be approaching

new clients wanting financial advises. Mahlubandile might be a client soon". Lefa couldn't help but get a bit turned on by listening to her talk business, their business.

Lefa: "Are you happy with the percentages we'll have? I say that we go 50-50%"

Ntombi: "What if we have a difference in opinion in something and neither refuse to back down?"

Lefa: "Then I'd rather we consider having someone we both trust have a small stake. That person must be objective and unbiased. Because should I always

flex my bigger stake in your face by overriding your decisions it's bound to affect our personal relationship"

Ntombi: "Baby, you see why I'm afraid of doing this?" she looked down.

Lefa: "With great planning we're going to do just fine, sthandwa sam. I suggest that we have equal share and give a small stake to another person whom we both agree on and trust" Ntombi took a deep breath before looking at him.

Ntombi: "Promise that we won't

lose each other one way or another in this?"

Lefa: "I promise. We'll outline our dispute resolutions, salaries, duties, etc clearly"

Ntombi: "So we look for an investor who's going to hold 10% while we each have 45%?"

Lefa: "Yes and combined we are still majority stakeholders but should you and I have differences the third party will be able to be mediator"

Ntombi: "Do you have anyone in mind?"

Lefa: "I actually do. I've been

watching Babini at work, baby. He's business partners with his sisters husbands but the man doesn't take sides based on who is his favourite. He makes decisions based on what's good for the company"

Ntombi: "Othu and Poppy said the same thing about him actually" they both laughed "Then we must compile a proposal for him and make an appointment to pitch it to him. Does he have any knowledge of the finance industry?"

Lefa: "He's learning through me

and he is a naturally curious person. He's ideal because he won't want to be a part of the day to day operations of the business but will want let's say quarterly reports on its progress"

Ntombi: "And we both know him on a little personal level too so we know we can trust him" Lefa nodded "I won't let myself be bullied by the way" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I never even thought of that. So we're doing this?" he asked excitedly and Ntombi smiled and nodded. He lifted her up in a tight hug before spinning her

around "I love you" he felt her legs wrap around his waist so he held her firm to support her.

Ntombi: "Some men like being in seperate offices from their wives to catch a breath but nooo...not Lefa Gwala" they both laughed. .

Lefa: "You said wife" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "You know what I mean geez" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Well I like my woman. It's not my business that some men don't like their "wives" he kissed her "You will have to lock your office door when I'm on the

premises through" he added.

Ntombi: "Oh?" she asked playfully.

Lefa: "Yeah because I don't think my body will be disciplined enough so you must make precautions to keep it away from you because your desk might be turned into a bed" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombi: "Oh my word this is going to be a very interesting partnership" they both laughed "Any criminal activities brought to the business will be a deal breaker. It'll break our personal and professional partnership, baby" she warned.

Lefa: "I've got no intention to tarnish our children's legacy. Who knows maybe one of the boys will change to accounting and Hlompho might aspire to go into the industry too. They must find it in good shape should that happen"

Ntombi: "I'm glad that we are on the same page" she kissed him "Let me go get my laptop. What better time to start than now right?" she smiled.

Lefa: "My thoughts exactly. I'm going to make us coffee so long" he hit her behind seductively after putting her down and

watched her run upstairs while giggling like a teenager. He did a little happy dance because he had a good feeling about having her as a business partner. When Ntombi came down with her laptop she found him pouring hot water into their cups. Dali's wedding ended early so there was still a couple of hours left to the day and while Bukhosi and Hlomphe were busy playing games in the lounge, their parents were busy planning a legacy for them. Ntombi realized just how lucky her boys are to have parents who

put in the hard work today so they'd reap the rewards tomorrow. She hoped that the quads and Hlompho would appreciate the hard work their parents put into giving them the best of the good life. Neither Ntombi nor Lefa were materialistic but they never wanted to worry about money as their parents used to when they were growing up. Both wondered if they'd be as hungry for success had they are up privileged but Ntombi watched Liyema work hard in his business though he

could have easily just fell into an already established law firm.

They first compiled a draft proposal for Babini and would polish it when they felt less tired.

Makhulu and Tamkhulu were in their home village to attend a funeral and Ntombi hoped that they would not say they wanted to stay there again because Makhulu's health was much better. Ntombi didn't want them far from her again and she told them that in so many words and she hoped they'd come back home to her.

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Mrs E called for a family meeting two days after the wedding because she hated the rift between her children. Liyema was taking Hlubi's side so it meant the brotherhood was starting to break. Mahlubandile told Mrs E and Lungile to not dare set food at her in law's house for the wedding because she didn't want her mood to be spoiled. They were hurt but stayed home as ordered. Alu and Mahlubandile's friendship had also started to suffer. It came to a point where the one

would ask the ladies if the the other was invited to their outings and if the ladies said yes, they'd avoid going.

Mrs E: "This has gone on for too long. It's like it's me and Lungile against you two" she looked at her other children.

Liyema: "Well you kept his secret and allowed him to destroy Mahlubandile's only source of income"

Lungile: "You're the last one to talk. How many times has she not kept your secrets? From love child to lovers" he pointed at Liyema

"Now that you're not the one benefiting you judge" he gave a look of disgust.

Mrs E: "This was exactly what I didn't want to happen" she snapped "So yes, I've kept your dirty laundry for you as a mother should sometimes" she added.

Hlubi: "I guess in my case I was the dirty laundry hence you hid me from them" she said sarcastically and Mrs E felt defeated.

Lungile: "Mahlubandile you don't have to remind her of that every single moment. It's me who was wrong here and I'm deeply sorry.

I wasn't thinking"

Liyema: "As much as I wanted nothing to do with the firm I'd never have destroyed it. It fed me and took me to the best schools"

Lungile: "We heard you, Saint Liam" Liyema's fist clenched tighter.

Mrs E: "What's with all this childishness?. I feel like we repeat this every other quarter. Mahlubandile we are sorry. So sorry that we decided to put money together and help you rebuild. We heard that you

wanted to start afresh"

Hlubi: "Funny how that money you both will be putting into the business belonged to the man whom you both now denounce because your true father is in town who also happens to be your true love right?"

Lungile: "That was low"

Hlubi: "Yet true"

Lungile: "You want your father's inheritance, Mahlubandile?" his question left Alu's heart beating fast as she sat the tray of drinks down on the table. She didn't want him to give Mr Elephant's

money back because it was what afforded them comfort "Take it!" he shouted leaving Alu's eyes wide open.

Hlubi: "I don't want it!" she shouted.

Liyema: "You hurt us. My son wanted to be the next generation at that firm, Lungile. You took away a damn legacy. It's not about money but the damn legacy!" he shouted.

Lungile: "And I will never know the legacy that my father would have left me had yours not locked him up for all my life, Lungile"

Hlubi: "How would you have reacted if Alu cheated on you, Lungile?" she looked at him "Would you have just forgiven and forgotten?" she watched him but he kept quiet "Thought as much. Yes he went about the wrong way to punish your father but your precious mother is not innocent either" Mrs E gave Hlubi a pleading look "She did the exact same thing to my father. She killed Zingisa and framed my father for it. So Lungile had you known your mother as you now pretend to then you'd have known

that she avenged her lover long ago. My father's name is forever going to be associated with murder but at least yours got his name cleared and let me tell you...a name is more important than materialistic things. I had to work hard to clean my father's because of what your mother did. She avenged her lover so you didn't have to avenge him again. I'm tired of you people" she stood.

Liyema: "You had Zingisa killed?" his mind was still stuck on that "My father died far from home

because he ran from a murder that he never committed?"

Lungile: "At least your father got away. Mine spent time in jail for a murder...murders that he didn't commit" he shot back.

Hlubi: "Just shut up wena!" she shouted.

Lungile: "In my own house? Never!" he protested.

Liyema: "Why did you have her killed?" he asked his mother in a whisper "why let him take the fall?" he added.

Mrs E: "I don't know where Mahlubandile got that but I had

nothing to do with that" she lied.

Hlubi: "I never expected you to confess but Liyema she did it" she looked at her brother "we can't go to the cops because well they already found our father guilty so case closed and even if we get them to open it we won't have evidence"

Mrs E: "So you'd have me prosecuted to avenge your father? Had he gone with me to that old woman to terminate you Mahlubandile, you wouldn't have been sitting there because he'd have made sure that it would be

done. Had I not protected you from him Liyema you might have been in jail right now doing time for fraud and perhaps worse because he'd have eventually reeled you in and trained you to be mini him. So go on and avenge your selfish father" she looked at them.

Alu: "I ask that we all try to calm down. So much that you'll surely regret has already been said. So let's not add more to it please" she pleaded.

Hlubi: "I don't want to be here anyway. I never want to hear

from you again. Leave me alone"
she stood and walked out.

Liyema: "I don't see how we are going to move past this. So much has happened. So much has been revealed. So many have been hurt. I just... I don't know" he said softly before walking to the door.

Lungile: "Liyema, I'm sorry" he wiped a tear "I don't want to be without you two" he added "My actions and words are out so I can't take them back but I'm sorry"

Liyema: "Too much needs to be processed. Time will tell" he closed

the door behind him and Lungile started to cry.

Mrs E: "They'll come around"

Lungi: "Maybe I should give them all that belongs to their dad. The name and inheritance"

Alu: "Lungile no" she pleaded.

Mrs E: "I agree with Alu. Both you and Liyema gave a portion of your inheritance to Mahlubandile so you'd get equal so this crying of hers that you got her inheritance is just emotion talking. I love you all equally as untrue as it may seem sometimes. I've risk my life for all three of you at some

stage. I've kept secrets to protect you all at some point. Mahlubandile is just lashing out because she had a tough upbringing and I'm not going to tell her that her feelings are invalid. Give them both time"

Lungile: "Did you kill Zingisa?"

Mrs E: "No and I'm offended by the question. Let me go and let out steam of my own. I'll see you all later" she took her bag and left.

Alu: "Well that didn't go as planned" she sat.

Lungi: "I'm going to lie down a

little bit" he stood and walked to the bedroom. He was forced to take leave because the family conflict had started to take a toll on him. Alunamda sat hoping that Lungile wouldn't do anything foolish and mess with their stable finances.

When Bubele walked in with his friends making a lot of noise Bandile got frustrated. Bubele had been gone for two days and all was to go and party. The noise got louder and the door flung open and Bandile watched his hands

clench in a fist.

Bandile: "Bubele, can't you see I'm trying to study here?" he stood from his desk.

Bubele: "Don't worry. I've just come to change and I'll be out" he promised.

Bandile: "We are about to write, Bubele. You got under 20% in two assignments already. What the hell?"

Gabe: "Dude chill. You guys won't even need to type a CV after studying like the rest of us. Your desks are already waiting in the many family companies anyway"

Bubele's friend was quick to say.
Bandile: "If that's your mentality then why the hell do you waste our parents money by being here, Bubele?"

Dina: "Are you always this uptight?" asked a young lady
"Geez here I thought your brother could hook me up" she added.

Bandile: "Do what you've got to do and leave me alone please" he looked at Bubele "Can you all go and wait for him outside?" he said while pushing the mumbling group of friends out of their room.

Bubele: "The hell, Bandile? Why are you acting like Bukhosi right now? Geez I wish Banele was the one with me" he said while taking his shirt off. He looked for a clean one but realized all were dirty. "You only did your laundry?"

Bandile: "Do I look like sis V or Mom to you?" he asked sarcastically "You think you'll go party and I'll play domestic worker for you?" he looked at Bubele "Don't you dare take my shirt, Bubele" he stood to grab his clothes from Bubele's hands. The two wrestled for a while and

the shirt ended up torn "Look what you did, Bubele" he pushed his brother.

Bubele: "Mxm, I'll buy myself a new shirt on the way"

Bandile: "It must be nice to have parents with money"

Bubele: "Mxm" he clicked his tongue before leaving the room.

Bandile immediately went to the brothers group on WhatsApp to tell the others what happened.

Bukhosi: "Tell mom immediately" he was the first to reply to the text.

Banele: "How long has he been like

that?" Banele also came online.

Bandile: "Weeks now. I can't even study, guys. He brings them at the most inconvenient times. He also has this girl he brings too much and I'm forced to sleep in the lounge. I can't focus because I'm stressed" he typed quickly.

Bukhosi: "When it starts affecting your studies then it's serious. Call one of the parents and have them deal with it"

Banele: "Call dad because mom is just a bit too lenient. Dad will be in PE before you know it. While at it beg to have your own room" he

advised.

Bandile: "I don't want to snitch though"

Bukhosi: "Sometimes it's to save him from himself. Remember how we dealt with Banele?"

Banele: "I hate the snitching part too but it's snitching when you tell mom though. Dad is a dude so he was once like that I'm sure"

Bandile: "I'll tell the old man then. How's the training so far, Anele?"

Banele: "Not too bad actually..

Apparently I can continue my studies while working"

Bukhosi: "Just don't be a corrupt warder?"

Banele: "Whatever 🖕. Gotta go. Chat later" he went off.

Bukhosi: "Look, Bandile I know that it feel like betrayal when you tell on a brother but when that brother has no respect for you he betrayed you first. Tell the parents whether it's mom or dad but try dad because yeah he's a man and was once young so he'll give better advice. Glad you're focusing on your studies. Let's get those qualifications, bra" he said

in a voicenote.

Bandile: "I miss you guys, man. I wish I chose UCT too. Being away from home is a struggle. I now feel like deputy parent to your brother" he sent a voicenote back.

Bukhosi: "He has parents so tell them so they can deal with him Varsity life is fun and he's making you hate it. I love it to bits. Stay strong. We'll see you soon. You're coming for the winter holiday right?"

Bandile: "Is that a trick questions?" they both sent

laughing emojis before going back to their business. Bandile dialed Liyema's number and they made conversation before Bandile told Liyema what was going on.

Bandile: "He basically isn't taking this seriously since his friends told him that he'll forever be taken care of because he's an heir"

Liyema: "We'll see how he reacts when we no longer send him pocket money"

Bandile: "I don't understand why Bubele says these are his friends when he's the only one spending. He's wasting your hard earned

cash and I can't just sit and watch with the mentality of there's more where it came from. Being here has actually made me realize the bubble the likes of us live in. Some kids are sleeping in libraries because they've got no where to go, dad. Then there's Bubele flashing money he didn't even work hard for. So talk to him because I'm tired. I also ask that I have my own room.

Sharing is difficult because he disturbs me while I study"

Liyema: "I'll deal with it immediately. I'm sorry that he is

behaving so badly. Thank you for telling me"

Bandile: "Will you tell mom?"

Liyema: "She is the one paying for your accomodation and pocket money so I got to" Bandile nodded. The two of them spoke more and Liyema was glad to hear that Bandile was giving his all at school. Liyema tried to call Bubele but his phone was off. He called Ntombikayise and together they agreed to cut Bubele's pocket money. They'd send enough for food to Bandile. Ntombikayise left Bubele a lengthy voicemail

regarding his behavior and Liyema made arrangements to go to PE immediately. They didn't want to let this go on for long.

Ntombikayise thought that the Banele issue was the last of it but clearly not and Bubele being far from home made the situation even worse but she was glad that Liyema would go to check it out himself.

Tamkhulu and Makhulu realized just how much they missed the village when they spent time with family friends and family.

When Bandile, Makhulu's son saw how healthy his parents look which was the opposite of how they looked when they were in his care he felt ashamed.

Bandile: "Mama, I had to hear from strangers that you are back home" he took his hat off.

Tamkhulu came out from the room holding his cane.

Tamkhulu: "Get out of here, Bandile" he shouted. Lwazi came from his bedroom to come check why Tamkhulu was shouting.

Lwazi: "Malume Bandile, your presence clearly upsets them so

please go"

Bandile: "This is Mlandu business, kwedini. You think just because you are house-sitting these are your parents. Go look after your father's house because this house belongs to my parents" he pointed to Lwazi.

Makhulu: "You want Lwazi to go so that you can finish us off?" she said in a shaky voice.

Bandile: "Haibo, Mama" he acted shocked.

Tamkhulu: "We give life to you children and see you as our greatest blessing but when we're

old you chunk us aside"

Bandile: "Give us another chance"
he pleaded.

Makhulu: "You misused our grant money, Bandile. You didn't even buy us toiletries. You'd sell your father's cows off one by one without permission forcing us to sell all of them against our will.

Not forgetting that your wife fee me poison that left my legs weak"

Bandile: "You've got no proof of that"

Makhulu: "I'm walking now am I not? It's because I am far away from your wife. What do you

want?"

Bandile: "To ask that my family and I please come live here. We had to sell our house to pay off a debt" Tamkhulu laughed.

Tamkhulu: "This is now Ntombi's land. Why do you think Lwazi lives here"

Bandile: "You gave my birthright to Ntombikayise who is the child of a daughter when it's your son's kids who should be getting the land?"

Tamkhulu: "I gave her nothing. She bought it all" he lied "So if you want to live here call Ntombi

but I wouldn't waste my breath if I was you because she's angry at you for treating us like dirt. You tried to have your mother killed slowly to go claim policy money. That's why we can't even enjoy our old age at our house because we fear you...our own son" he shouted.

Makhulu: "Go now before things get out of hand, Bandile. Since you listen to your wife even when she advices wrong, go and live with her family. Like Tata said, this is now Ntombi's land and we don't know if she'll sell or someday

retire here"

Bandile: "You just got paid yesterday. At least one of you give me your grant please. I'll qualify for my own soon"

Tamkhulu and Makhulu couldn't help but laugh.

Tamkhulu: "Lwazi, take us to the bus station. I don't know what this one might do if we stay here"

Lwazi: "The bags are in the car already, Tamkhulu"

Bandile: "Mama, please" he even went on one knee. Makhulu's motherly instincts had her hand close to her chest to take out

money to give him but Tamkhulu shook her head looking at her.

Tamkhulu: "If he'd able to sleep to kill his mother to get her policy money then he's able to come up with ways to make money. I'm not going to feel guilty for not helping. I gave him some of my cows so he'd multiply them but he can't use money well. Come, my darling let's go. We don't want to miss the bus. Ntombikayise already fears that we're going to stay here and I would never put my life at risk like that. Had we not ran to Ntombi's then this one

would be fat because of the policy payout" he took Makhulu's hand and led her to Lwazi's car.

Makhulu said goodbye to Bandile with a broken heart but she knew Tamkhulu had a point. She can't forget what Bandile did to her. They were in the car on the way to town to catch a bus.

Lwazi: "Tamkhulu, how sure are you that they tried to kill Makhulu?" he asked curiously.

Tamkhulu: "Because I didn't drink tea made by his wife but my wife did and she got sick. A few months after living with

Ntombikayise my wife suddenly got strong again. We've also heard rumours that he was desperate for money and we know we're on his policy. Bandile has always been sneaky and his wife makes him worse" Lwazi nodded. Makhulu: "But I felt sorry for him just now. What's he going to eat?"

Tamkhulu: "What he ate when he won that money from the Powerball". Lwazi expressed shock.

Lwazi: "He won the lottery?"

Tamkhulu: "Yes and he stayed far

away from us. When the money dried up, he couldn't keep up with the high lifestyle changes they made so they started to lose those things. That's someone's grandfather so he should act accordingly. I do miss my grandchildren and grandchild though. It's sad to leave without seeing them"

Lwazi: "Nolwazi is now an alcoholic and she blames everything on Ntombi. I don't know what I'll do with that one either. We can't throw them to the wolves either because their family"

Makhulu: "I miss the environment here but I just realized that I'd much rather be in the city". She also missed her grandchildren but to be near Bandile was something she didn't want either. She could not believe one could give birth only for that child to turn on the parents. Lwazi was also worried about his twin and even considered taking her in but that could come with a lot of trouble for his own family because Nolwazi was her mother's

daughter and it was difficult to live with such a person. 

S2-INSERT 62 (Fast forwarded) (UNEDITED)

A year had gone by and a lot had happened in between. Ntombi and Lefa's business took off and they launched it as Transparent Finances because they wanted the name of the company to embody one of their core business values. When Lefa joined Ntombi at the office space they had been renting things became more

stable. Ntombi assisted clients to determine their expenses, income, insurance coverage, financial objectives, tax status, risk tolerance, or other information needed to develop a financial plan. Answering client questions about financial plans and strategies and giving financial advice. Most of her clients were individuals who had retired or had gotten hands on a large sum of number. Lefa on the other hand inspected financial statements to catch errors, misstatements and fraud. He also performed audits on systems and

accounts and was sure to give audit reports based on his findings and recommended improvements. Unlike Ntombi his clients were corporations of different sizes and operations. Babini was a 10% stakeholder who did his part on marketing the business to those in need of financial solutions. He was not involved in the day to day runnings as he was busy at Steel Brothers. Steel Brothers appointed full time accountants but would make use of Transparent Finances for their

audits as they liked how Lefa handled things. Ntombi's fear of failing in business faded because she and Lefa had different contributions to the business yet they had a common goal of wanting it to succeed. They've got 5 people permanently employed under them already as the workload got more with each new client. Their relationship was also blossoming and it became more difficult to Lefa to live in separate houses. Mahlubandile got Mlambo Attorneys off the ground with great struggle. Many

still didn't want to do business with her but she managed to secure some clients though the money was not as good as it were at Elephant Attorneys. Bukhosi would go help her any way that he could in his free time to gain practical experience early and to help rebuild the legacy he'd been dreaming to be a part of. Iviwe never told him that she terminated their baby last year and she managed to deal with the pain of such a traumatic experience the best way she knew how. She was also in her second

year of studies and still deeply in love with Bukhosi. Bandile was doing great in his agricultural studies and had plans to use Tamkhulu's land in the rural area to develop a vegetable farm someday. Banele completed the correctional services learnership and got placed at Polsmoor prison for practical experience. It was there that he realized that he was not emotionally strong enough to be in a prison environment all his life. He enrolled at a TVET College and studies Marketing Management. Liyema

and Ntombi decided to give him the freedom to find himself as he still seemed a bit confused. When Bubele's allowance got cut he became more rebellious which resulted in him dropping out to go work in retail. The Elephant siblings still had not been able to patch up their broken relationship after what Lungile did. Mrs E and Jester decided to give their relationship another chance which led to Mahlubandile and Liyema's anger rise. Liyema and Portia were doing good too but he had not mentioned marriage as she

hoped he would after a year of dating. Vusi gave up in trying to keep Amahle from Chumani. It seemed the more he forbade the relationship, the stronger the bond between the two became. Makhulu and Tamkhulu were still doing good. Dali and Indi had baby Yakhikhaya Mbuzo and Dali felt like he had struck gold when he held his boy for the first time.

It was a lazy Saturday morning. Lefa had a cup of coffee in one hand while the other was pressing the laptop. Ntombi

entered his bedroom with a towel wrapped around her body and he immediately took his gaze from the screen to her. The fact that she was busy humming and didn't seem to be aware of him staring made the moment even more beautiful to Lefa. He smiled when she let the towel fall to the ground before taking her lotion's container to moisturize her skin. It took all of him to not jump her because he was still enjoying the view of her. When Ntombi lifted her leg to rest her foot on the bed so she'd moisturize her leg

she looked up for brief second before looking at her leg. She realized that he was staring so she looked up again and he didn't even try to be subtle about it. She blushed and used her hands to cover her delicate parts leaving Lefa laughing softly.

Ntombi: "Stop it" she let out a blushing laugh.

Lefa: "I can't help it" he moved forward to the edge of the bed to get closer to her. Their physical chemistry had always been on fire and as he drew closer Ntombi felt her body surrender already "Stop

hiding, baby" he held her hands so they'd stop blocking his view.

Ntombi: "I've gained weight again. You must stop with the chocolate gifts, baby"

Lefa: "I love your body. I enjoy watching you jump up and down to get into your jeans" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombi: "Next time I'm going with my lotion and clothes to the bathroom. You act like you're not watching but you are" she kissed him.

Lefa: "Of course I am" he held her thighs and she felt his warm

hands travel from the side of her thighs to the warm inner part and she felt her legs fail her already. "I love you" she felt his lips leave traces between her inner thighs and moan escaped her mouth.

Ntombi: "Love you too" she whispered with her eyes shut.

Lefa: "What was that?" he teased her even more.

Ntombi: "I love..." her sentence cut short by the amazing pleasure she felt as he caressed her body with his hand and mouth. Lefa knew that he

wouldn't get more out of her at that stage but the moans that drove him crazy. Both loved the moments when they had enough time for foreplay before joining bodies. Ntombi's phone rang as they held each other's sweaty bodies after starting the day on what they felt was a great note. It was Othunyiweyo inviting Lefa and Ntombi to dinner later on. The couple agreed to honor the Knights with their presence. Ntombi: "It's strange of her to invite us on the day. Usually Othu wants days to prepare" Lefa

kissed her neck.

Lefa: "Maybe it's her way of telling you she misses you. Lets go make something to eat" he whispered but buried his face in the space between her neck and shoulders instead of getting up.

Ntombi: "Let go then" she giggled trying to shake him off but he held on tighter.

Lefa: "I'm stuck" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Then we'll starve, baby"

Lefa: "You're delicious" he nibbled on her ear playfully and she tried to push him away while laughing.

Ntombi: "Stop it" she laughed louder "You're so crazy" she added and tilted her head back to look at him.

Lefa: "Okay let's get up before Hlomphe knocks at the door saying he's dying of hunger" he let go and sat up but Ntombi held him from behind.

Ntombi: "But I didn't really want you to let go" she said in a baby tone and he laughed. Lefa stood with her clinging on his back like a child "You're strong" she smiled.

Lefa: "I'd go out with us as naked had there not been a child

in the house" Ntombi laughed before letting go to stand on her own feet. She put on her gown and threw his at him. The two of them went to the kitchen and were shocked to find Hlompho already sitting with a bowl filled with his favourite cereal.

Lefa: "Since when do you prepare your own food?"

Hlompho: "Since I'll be turning 11 in a week" he smiled. Ntombi had Leda looked at each other impressed "So did you ask her?" he looked at his father with excitement. Ntombi was good at

sign language so she understood Hlomphe without the need for Lefa to translate.

Ntombi: "Ask me what?" she asked Hlomphe while looking at Lefa. She caught Lefa just as he was giving Hlomphe a subtle "keep quiet" sign. "Baby, what's going on and please don't lie?" she asked Lefa.

Lefa: "I can't lie because I don't even have a single cover up story in mind at the moment. I'll be right back and I'll tell you what he's on about" he looked at Ntombi "You don't say anything

else" he said to Hlompfo before leaving the two of them alone.

Ntombi: "Will you give me a clue?" she asked Hlompfo before sitting down. Hlompfo shook his head quickly.

Hlompfo: "You'll see". Lefa returned after a while looking different, more nervous it seemed.

Lefa: "Nana, we've been together for little over a year now and I have honestly never been as happy before. Yes, we have our fallouts both at work and home but we argue fairly and never shout at each other as though

the other is a child. I love working with you, I love being in a relationship with you, I love our little blended family, I love waking up next to you after spending the night together. I just love loving you, Ntombikayise" Ntombi was looking up at him as he spoke. She wondered if there was a but in there. A "but I can't do this anymore for whatever reason". Her heart was about to leave her chest, well so it felt to her. He watched her sink to the floor on one knee before revealing a little box with a ring in it.

They'd been having lots of marriage talks over the months especially after realizing that they could run a business together. "Will you please marry me, MamTshawe?" Lefa added with a nervous smile. She couldn't remember Liyema proposing, well not in the traditional sense where a man would ask a woman for her hand and then send his elders to hers. With Liyema it was the wedding and all else followed and Ntombi wondered for a while after the divorce if it contributed to them ending. Lefa watched her

eyes start to shine as he waited on anticipation.

Ntombi: "Yes, baby" she said softly
"Yes, I'll marry you" she signed so Hlomphe could understand. The young boy jumped from his seat to go hug both adults as he couldn't contain his excitement. When Lefa slipped the band in Ntombi's finger her tears rolled down. He leaned forward to kiss her and wipe her tears in between.

Lefa: "I love you" he smiled.

Ntombi: "I love you" she laughed softly before looking at her engagement ring "How long have

you had this?" she looked at him
"It's beautiful, baby" she added.
Lefa: "It's been a month now. I
wanted to ask when the time
was right and I planned to do it
tonight in front of our friends but
this one just had to open his big
mouth" he looked at Hlomphe.

Hlomphe: "I told you she'd say
yes. Who wouldn't want a son like
me?" the adults laughed "Let me
go and tell Bhut Bukhosi that
she said yes" he ran out to his
room to text Bukhosi.

Ntombi: "My boys knew?"

Lefa: "Bukhosi and Banele helped

me pick the ring" he confessed "I also kinda asked Tamkhulu's blessings and kinda told him to expect a letter from my elders"

Ntombi: "Kinda?" she laughed.

Lefa: "Okay I did it all and with knowledge of I was doing"

Ntombi: "Baby, I just have one condition though when it comes to being your wife"

Lefa: "I'm listening"

Ntombi: "I'm not sending my grandparents to an old aged home" he smiled.

Lefa: "I'm glad that you aren't because my parents won't be

going to one in their golden age either. I don't mind living with them under one roof but we'll work out the details of accomodation later. For now can I please get a kiss from my future wife?"

Ntombi: "Of course future husband" she smiled before kissing him. She let out a little scream of excitement afterwards and looked at her ring again. She was not going to allow her failed marriage to stand in the way of trying again. She was happy e Lefa and to take their relationship to the

next level came as natural as breathing. She didn't even feel the need to think about it because she wanted to spend the rest of her life with him. Hlompho didn't just tell the quads about their parents proposal but also his grandfather and grandmother because he was excited for his father.

Amahle and Thulisa went to the clinic to go and enquire about birth control and condoms. Schools were closed for the winter holidays so they didn't have to

explain to their parents where they were going because they were alone at their homes.

Amahle suggested that they put on some of Asakhe's make up to look a bit older than their usual age. The teens were nervous and debated with each other about whether or not they should go in. They signed a form at the gate where the security sat before going to the double door entrance. It was a cold day but the clinic was packed none the less and with some familiar faces too.

Thuli: "Go to the receptionist and

ask to speak to someone" she whispered to Amahle while giving her friend a little push.

Amahle: "Walk first" she whispered back and Thulisa shook her head quickly.

Thuli: "You are the one who said that she's ready for sex, Amahle. I'm here with you so go" she pushed more. Amahle walked to the glass area that separated her and the receptionist. She greeted the middle aged woman "I'm here to ask about" she looked around "About contraceptives" she added in a

whisper before looking around once again.

Receptionist: "You are ready for sex but can't even talk about things associated with it properly" the rudeness left Amahle feeling ashamed of what she was doing.

Yamkela: "Amahle!" called Yanda's sister and Amahle felt like hiding "What are you doing here?" she walked closer to the teen. Amahle looked at the receptionist and then back at Yamkela.

Amahle: "I'm sick" she coughed three times.

Receptionist: "Heee" she let out a laugh before clapping once "Girly, if you don't need my help please give way for those who do" she said with arrogance and watched Amahle leave the area "Next" she shouted. Yamkela knew Amahle from when she was living with Ntombikayise and now they shared a community. She'd seen Amahle and Chumani numerous times kissing at street corners sometimes in broad daylight.

Yamkela: "Thulisa, you're here too" she said when she and Amahle got outside "Why are you

two here and the truth this time? I see you're not sick" she looked at Amahle.

Thuli: "Amahle wanted information about contraceptives" she blurted leaving Yamkela with widened eyes.

Yamkela: "Come sit here both of you" she picked her daughter up and they went to sit on the benches outside "So you guys are having sex with those smug boyfriends of yours who think they are charmers?" she looked at the girls but neither answered "I was once like you. Running

after boys at a young age and having sex at an early age. Look where I am now. I've got three kids from different father's and rely on SASSA to provide for them because the fathers are long gone. When you have sex at a young age you get distracted by it and you neglect school and don't obey parents at home because this new phase makes you feel like you are woman enough to make your own choices. I didn't finish school because he was running after a boy instead of chasing good marks. At least you two are

smart enough to visit the clinic but if I can give advice I'd say stay away from sex until you're at least in matric. My transport is here. Do you two need a lift?" the teenagers nodded. They all went to climb into Yamkela's friend's car and we're thankful for the lift because it had started to rain. The advice that Yamkela gave was no different from that Asakhe and Ntombi already gave her. To keep her away from Chumani her parents even arranged she spend weekends at Ntombi's but they couldn't force

her when she didn't want to. When Chumani texted Amahle to ask where she was she told him to come to her home because the parents were not there. Chumani rushed there and if he could he would have flown to reach faster. They sat watching TV and he'd occasionally try to initiate sex but Amahle would stop him.

Amahle: "I think that we should wait until I'm in matric, Chumani"

Chumani: "You almost got me there" he laughed thinking she was joking but he stopped when he realised that she was not

"You're serious?" Amahle nodded

"Do you know how many girls throw themselves at me, Amahle? I've had to say no to them and they would sleep with me like that" he snapped his fingers. Amahle's heart sank.

Amahle: "I don't want to get pregnant" she whispered.

Chumani: "That's why I've got this" he took out a condom "we'll be safe" he kissed her. They kissed for a long while before he started to take off the many layers of clothing she had on.

Amahle: "No, Chumani" she said

when she managed to break the kiss briefly but his lips collided with hers again. His kiss forceful leaving her feeling scared "No" she pushed him away.

Chumani: "You know that you want me to take your virginity" he said confidently before going to kiss her again. She got out of his grip and went to stand on the other side of the lounge.

Amahle: "Go" she ordered.

Chumani: "So it's true that you have slept with many of the cheese boys at your old school" he laughed.

Amahle: "No" she defended herself.

Chumani: "Then prove it. Let's do it so I'll know that I was your first"

Amahle: "I'm going to press the alarm and it'll alert my dad that I'm in trouble" she got closer to the emergency button.

Chumani: "I'll tell the entire school that you are a hoe who slept with cheese boys. I can't believe I wasted my time with you. You're not even that beautiful. I didn't you a favour by dating you" he told his jacket and

left her feeling crushed. A part of her wanted to call him back so she'd prove that she was a virgin but he banged the door before words filled her mind again. She was worried about the rumours he'd spread because he had a lot of influence on other learners.

It had been a while since Liyema got together with all four of his boys and the rain was not going to stop him from spending the day with them. Bandile arrived just yesterday and it always felt good to be home.

Banele: "Dad, my two friends and I ask that you please train us for the 18 months practicals needed to obtain our diploma" he looked at Liyema.

Liyema: "We've had many students do their in service training with us. I'm not going to let you in just because you're my son and they are your friends. You guys better pass. Is this what you want to do... marketing that is?" Banele nodded.

Banele: "It's not all fun and games as many believe but it allows for a lot of creativity. I

don't like the studying part so I can't wait to finish that" Liyema laughed. "And you?" he raised his brow looking at Bubele "Are you going to waste your time folding clothes for the rest of your life?" he added.

Bubele: "Sorry I'm not making you proud, dad" he answered sarcastically. Liyema clenched his jaw.

Liyema: "What happened to wanting to be a Springboks player someday, Bubele?" Bubele shrugged "So you'll just live with your mother for the rest of your

life?" he asked.

Bubele: "She's not complaining and I'm going to move out someday soon. Can we not talk about this?" he pleaded.

Liyema: "How will you afford rent when you get R3000?" Bundle threw his spoon in his plate feeling frustrated.

Bubele: "Many have raised kids on much less so I think I'll be fine"

Bukhosi: "Well on the flip side,

Mom is getting married" he said with excitement hoping to lessen the tension in the room. Liyema looked at Bukhosi.

Liyema: "What?" he asked.

Banele: "We went with Bhut Lefa to choose a ring for her and he popped the question this morning and she said yes"

Liyema: "And you guys are okay with that?"

Bandile: "Yeah why not? She's happy"

Liyema: "Okay" he said in a whisper. He didn't expect that Ntombi would remarry so soon. He couldn't hide the disappointment and he didn't try to either. There was a certain mourning that he felt after hearing the news.

Perhaps it's the realisation that another man loves her after he failed to do so.

Lefa's paternal grandmother Hazel Gwala visited her son's home for a week after attending a friend's funeral in Cape Town. Bonolo was not particularly looking forward to her mother in laws stay because Hazel had a tendency to be rude. When Vakele and Bonolo got the news that Ntombi and Lefa were engaged they were happy. Lefa had spoken to his parents about his

intention of marrying Ntombi and he got their blessings. Ntombi didn't visit as much as Bonolo would have liked but she enjoyed the occasions when her future daughter in law visited. The Gwalas met the quads and they liked the young men that Ntombi raised.

Hazel: "Why didn't you tell this girl to come and see me? If she's going to marry into this family then I must also meet her"

Vakele: "Lefa prefers it this way, Mama"

Hazel: "How old is she?"

Bonolo: "Why does it matter?"

Hazel: "How old?"

Bonolo: "I don't know her exact age but I'm guessing early fourties. She looks like she's in her thirties though" Hazel clapped once.

Hazel: "And you are happy that your son is marrying an old woman who won't even be able to give him children?"

Vakele: "That is non of our business"

Hazel: "He should have gotten someone younger. Not someone who comes from a marriage with

four children. Who is going to support her four children?"

Vakele: "They own a business together so I'm sure that she is capable of providing for her children"

Hazel: "Let me call him and tell him to come here with this Makhulu so that I can see her" she took her phone out and dialed Lefa's number. Lefa was a bit surprised by the request but he asked if Ntombi would be okay with it and she said that she doesn't mind.

Bonolo: "She is a good young lady

so please do not make her feel uncomfortable. Let the way you treat her not be different from the way that you treat Noluthando." she pleaded.

Hazel: "Nolu is perfect for Kgethang because they met at the right time when she was able to give him kids. She didn't come from divorce and all her children are Kgethang's" she said. Bonolo hated the comparison going on and wished she could call Lefa and tell him to not bring Ntombi but Ntombi had to meet Hazel at one point or another since she'll be

married to Lefa soon. Bonolo had no terrible experience as Hazel's daughter in law but she heard from others that Hazel was not always so long. Lefa, Hlomphe and Ntombikayise arrived for their lunch date in no time. Ntombi was comfortable around the Gwalas so she was at ease when visiting them. She didn't imagine that Hazel would have a problem with her because she had no reason to. The cold look in Hazel's eyes when she greeted Ntombi made Ntombi's confidence drop a bit. Lefa: "I thought that you only

wanted to meet a makoti after the lobola" he looked at his grandmother.

Hazel: "That's the old me. Now we must check if these women are good for you" she faked a laugh.

Bonolo: "Don't be one of those couples who are engaged for a long time please. We need a wedding in this family. It's always funerals and rarely weddings. We must go big too" Ntombi smiled.

Lefa: "Mme, we've just got engaged so we'll talk about that

soon" he looked at Ntombi.

Vakele: "Are you happy that your father is getting married?" he asked Hlompho and watched the boy nod while smiling.

Hlompho: "He was shaking before asking her" everyone laughed and Hazel asked Lefa to translate.

They enjoyed the lunch and Ntombi felt like Hazel didn't like her much.

Hazel: "So how many children are you planning to have?" Ntombi looked at Lefa.

Lefa: "We're happy with our five, Makhulu" he held Ntombi's hand.

Hazel: "Well her four are not from when she was an unmarried young woman, Lefa. They have their father's surname and clan name. I don't understand how you can count them as being yours. If they were, they'd be here but you just mentioned that they are out with their father" Vakele closed his eyes for a second.

Lefa: "We are content with our blended family, Makhulu" he added and Hazel nodded "There's somewhere that we've got to be so we've got to get going" he looked at his family.

Vakele: "Thank you for coming and enjoy whatever it is you'll be doing. Congratulations once again. I look forward to witness you children getting married" he said with a smile.

Ntombi: "Thank you, Tata" she smiled. The couple left with their son after Ntombi helped Bonolo clear the table.

Hazel: "She is not even beautiful. Where have you seen a husband being more beautiful than the wife?" she said a second after the door shut behind the couple.

Bonolo: "Ntombikayise is one of

the most beautiful women that I've met actually"

Hazel: "I don't think that you and I were looking at the same person. I saw so many beautiful younger girls here so why did he choose her? She won't be excited about marriage like him because she has done it all already. Noxolo, advice your son to get out while it's still early"

Bonolo: "I'm sorry, Ma but I'm not doing that" she went to the bedroom.

Vakele: "I've got to fix a pipe in the kitchen" he stood and left his

mother. Hazel dialed Noluthando's number to get more details on Ntombi.

Hazel: "What is the real reason why she can't have kids?" she whispered "I know that Lefa wanted more" she added.

Nolu: "Makhulu I can't tell. It's best that you ask her"

Hazel: "Noluthando, you know that you are my favourite grand daughter in law of them all. I thought that you and I have a bond. Whatever you say will stay between us" she promised.

Nolu: "Makhulu" she said

doubtfully.

Hazel: "Nolu I'm going to keep asking about children and if something is preventing her to have any then tell me so that I'll stop asking"

Nolu: "Ntombi can't carry babies again" she told Hazel the entire story and Hazel put her hand over her mouth shocked.

Hazel: "So it's like Lefa is sitting hungry under a fruit tree that can't feed him because it doesn't produce any fruit"

Nolu: "Makhulu this stays between us. If Ntombi hears I

told you it will ruin our friendship"

Hazel: "I'm going to keep the news to myself, I promise. How are you and Kgethang and the children? I miss you so much"

Nolu: "We are good, Makhulu. Too busy to visit but we'll make time to visit soon" she promised. The two of them had a lengthy conversation. Bonolo was shocked to hear from Hazel that Ntombi can't have kids but she chose not to get involved because she was certain that Lefa was aware of that detail. She warned her mother in law against involving

herself and Hazel agreed. She didn't like Ntombi from the moment she heard about her and what Nolu revealed made it worse. She planned to talk to Lefa and ask if a childless marriage was indeed what he wanted. 

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Lefa was shocked to see his grandmother walk inside his office. Their relationship with Hazel was good so he stood quickly to go give her a tight hug before

directing her to one of his office chairs.

Lefa: "Who dropped you off, Makhulu? Was it Tata?" he sat down next to her. He was finally able to buy Vakele the second hand bakkie that he saw. It was not brand new but it took Mr Gwala from point A to B.

Hazel: "He just had to give me the address. I found the place myself" she said sounding proud of herself "You forget I lived in Cape Town for a number of years before going back home" she smiled "How are you?" she

brushed his upper arm.

Lefa: "I'm great thanks and you?"

Hazel: "Happy to see you children after a long while especially you since you've been so scarce lately. I must have a word with Ntombi, she can't keep you away from us so much" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "We both keep each other from each other's families, not because we want to but we are heavy at work building a strong foundation for our business"

Hazel: "You held the Debeza clan so high with the old company

name, Lefa. Why did you change it?"

Lefa: "My partners aren't Debeza, Makhulu"

Hazel: "Vakele said the other one doesn't care much about such details so I'm certain you refer to your female partner. If she was going to give you babies she wouldn't have cared about her not being a Debeza because the children would have been" Lefa's smile faded.

Lefa: "We spoke about this, Makhulu" he raised a brow "Ntombikayise and I don't want

more children" he added.

Hazel: "You don't want any or you can't have any?" she watched Lefa stand to go to the phone.

Lefa: "I'm going to order us coffee and biscuits from the café on the ground floor" he said to Hazel before speaking on the phone "I have a feeling that this is going to be a very long and unpleasant conversation.

Unpleasant to you though,

Makhulu" he said after putting the phone down "You sound like you know something so tell me what it is so that I can clarify it" he

went to sit back down.

Hazel: "Well... I heard that your fiancée can't have children" she said softly while looking at her fingers.

Lefa: "And who is your source because I don't remember discussing Ntombikayise so in depth with Mme and Tata" he could feel his anger build a bit but he kept his cool.

Hazel: "It was not her fault, I'm the one who pushed. Nolu told me her story" she could see Lefa's jaw clench "She sold her body in carrying her ex husband's

children?" Lefa kept quiet for a long while to collect his thoughts to avoid giving an impulsive and later regretful answer.

Lefa: "Makhulu, I don't know if you know this but if you don't then I'll tell you. I love Ntombi's children as she loves my child. I'm not going to scrutinize the manner in which they were conceived because I'm glad that they exist. They bring joy to her life, they respect me regardless of the fact that they have a present father and Hlompho has found great big brothers in them.

They have all made effort to learn how to communicate with my son when most of my family aren't even bothered to especially the Gwala side" Hazel looked down "You have just basically accused my woman of prostituting her body and I'm not going to stand for such. I love you so much and I know that you are concerned on my behalf regarding the children's issue but Ntombi and I spoke about this long before I even proposed marriage to her. Mimi gave me a child yet she was not the woman for me.

Why would I let go of a woman I know and feel is meant for me just because she can't give me children that will biologically ours?" he added on a calm tone.

Hazel: "I'm sorry that it sounded as though I accused her of some sort of prostitution because I wasn't. I was just asking whether a woman who'd sink so low is a woman you really want to marry?"

Lefa: "How is her carrying a child for someone sinking low?"

Hazel: "It's not right. Children aren't lab rats. She was able to

give those babies away as if they didn't come from her. I bet you had the man not married her she'd never have looked back" there was a knock on the door and Lefa stood to open. A waiter delivered their order and Lefa quickly reached for his wallet to pay before closing the door again. It was once again a bitterly cold day so the tea was always welcome. "Thank you" Hazel added when Lefa put the tea and biscuits in front of her.

Lefa: "Ntombikayise told me everything about that particular

time in her life. What led to her becoming a surrogate down to how she added up marrying the father of the boys"

Hazel: "Tell me then maybe I'll understand better"

Lefa: "I'm the one she's going to marry, Makhulu and she told me so I don't have to call a family meeting to make the family understand. You know I tell Tata everything yet this detail I didn't because my woman told me in confidence. I'm not going to reveal such details to the family only for them to call her out on it every

chance they get. You're doing that already without even knowing the facts so how then will you be when you hear everything?"

Hazel: "I just love you, Lefa. I want what Kgethang has for you"

Lefa: "Kgethang's wife had no right, absolutely non to discuss my future wife with you behind my back" he raised his voice but breathed to calm down.

Hazel: "She is concerned"

Lefa: "I didn't ask her to be. I think what's worse is the fact

that Ntombi actually regards Noluthando as her friend hence Nolu knew about Ntombi's issue"

Hazel: "Okay let us not fight. I'm sorry. I apologize on Nolu's behalf too. I'm happy for you" she

brushed his hand. "I'm happy that you're finally settling down.

So will you live with her grandparents too?" she asked.

Lefa: "We get along well so yes.

Them living with her indicated to me that she'll even take my

parents to live with us should

they at some point be too frail to

live on their own. Ntombi and I

are both family oriented people which is one of the things that make our bond stronger" Hazel nodded.

Hazel: "I suggest that we do everything in December when the entire family can gather"

Lefa: "Tata already sent a letter to Ntombi's elders. The two of us have already started to attend pre marital counseling too"

Hazel: "Why does it seem you're more excited than her?" Lefa laughed.

Ntombi: "You clearly don't spend time with Ntombikayise, Makhulu.

She's already collecting bridal magazines" he laughed while shaking his head "we're both excited" he smiled "But no one is more excited than Hlompho and I know it's to be able to call the quads his older brothers officially" he laughed. Hazel could see the joy in his face but she still was not convinced Ntombi's for him. Hazel: "You must speak to the ex husband. Ask him what led him to cheat. Maybe she contributed to that"

Lefa: "No thank you. I don't care why he cheated but his cheating

allowed me to be with an amazing . Why do I get the feeling you don't like Ntombikayise?" Hazel faked a laugh.

Hazel: "I do not hate her. As your grandmother I've got to ensure that she's a good match for you. I just imagined you'd go for someone in her early thirties"

Lefa: "I'm happy with my choice, Makhulu" he said confidently and Hazel nodded. She decided to sip her tea to avoid making him suspicious of her dislike of Ntombi. When she was done she asked Lefa if she could go say hi to

Ntombi and he led her to Ntombi's office. He was not surprised to find Ntombi with a heater right next to her and clothed as though it was snowing outside. Ntombi went to hug Hazel but got the coldest hug she'd ever gotten from an elderly person.

Lefa: "I think you'll be much more comfortable in this office, Makhulu because the heater is on and its occupant is warm hearted" he looked at Ntombi with a smile "I've got a meeting with Mr Jacobs in 10 minutes. Will you be

okay?" he asked Ntombi.

Hazel: "I don't bite" she answered before Ntombikayise could give her answer.

Ntombi: "I'll be fine" she smiled to hide her nervousness. She didn't want to be alone with Hazel. Lefa gave Ntombi a peck on the cheek before hugging his grandmother goodbye. Ntombi watched him walk out and close the door behind him "Would you like anything to drink, Makhulu?" she asked politely.

Hazel: "No thank you. My grandson made sure that I got

some good tea. So why don't you go to the meeting? Or does Lefa do all the work?"

Ntombi: "Mr Jacobs is here to get feedback on his auditing process which Lefa is busy with. I don't do auditing but he does ask for my input sometimes"

Hazel: "So you are not good at auditing?"

Ntombi: "Same way financial planning isn't Lefa's strong point, Makhulu. We are opposite sides of the same coin in business and in our private life and we feel blessed to be because we teach

each other new things on a daily basis" Hazel just frowned while nodding.

Hazel: "You were married before. Why don't you give other ladies a chance at marrying a good man?"

Ntombi: "That good man being Lefa?"

Hazel: "Just think about it. You've been married, you got the kids and all that comes with marriage and now not even three years after divorcing you are doing it again when there are so many young childless women Lefa could choose yet you took him.

Isn't that selfish?"

Ntombi: "If love is selfish then I guess I'm the most selfish, Makhulu. Had Lefa wanted those never married, childless women he wouldn't have asked me to marry him. Just because a few see me as damaged goods for being a divorcee with children it doesn't mean that he does. I don't see him as damaged for having a child out of wedlock either" she said in the most respectfully tone she could find within herself.

Hazel: "I'm thinking about you here. Children to men are like

wealth. They are their true legacy. You think that he's going to be happy with having one when you gave your ex husband four?"

Ntombi: "He hasn't complained so far and if he does then I'll deal with it should the time come but for now I'm going to take in all the happiness I'm feeling as selfish as you think it makes me"

Hazel: "Don't say I didn't warn you. Marriage needs children"

Ntombi: "You had children yet you were never married, Makhulu" she shot back still with grace and

Hazel's eyes shot open.

Hazel: "How dare you disrespect me like that? It's because of women like you who want all the men to themselves that women like me aren't married"

Ntombi: "If there's one lesson I'll never forget from my grandfather is that someone who has a problem with me for no apparent reason is dealing with issues of their own which I'm mirroring. No disrespect, Ma but I'm not to blame for you never having been married"

Hazel: "Sies I wonder how you are

with your grandparents if you can disrespect me like this. I hope that Lefa sees your true colours before he married you. Without children you bring absolutely nothing to the Gwala family so we won't recognize you one bit" she took her bag and left. Ntombi went to close her office door and took in those harsh words that left a stinging pain on her chest. She remembered how much the Elephants praised her for giving Liyema four children and boys at that so she knew what Hazel said could be true. In most

African families a bride who doesn't pop babies is as good as worthless and Ntombi felt herself feel nervous. She took a tissue from the box on her desk and wiped the tears that rebelled against her after trying not to cry.

Kgethang listened to Lefa address the issue of Nolu discussions confidential details about Ntombi to the family. He closed his eyes to listen to the mixture of pain, disappointed and anger in Lefa's voice. Kgethang

himself had no idea of what Nolu revealed to Hazel.

Kgethang: "I'm sorry that she did that. I'm going to talk to her"

Lefa: "Please do before things get ugly. I've got to go. A client just arrived" Kgethang looked at the screen after hearing beeping on the other end of the line. He wasted no time in going over to Nolu's workplace. He knew that her work was not the right place to discuss it but Lefa's anger rubbed off on him. Nolu went to hug him when she saw him enter

her workplace but could see that he wasn't happy.

Kgethang: "Can we please go and talk in private?" he asked while looking at the open space work area. Nolu nodded before leading him to the boardroom "Why did you tell my grandmother things that Ntombikayise told you in confidence as her friend, Noluthando?" he asked her before she could even close the door "Do you realize that this could ruin my relationship with my brother?" he added "My wife going behind her friend's back, a friend who also

happens to be my brother's future wife. I thought you liked Ntombikayise" he looked at her. Nolu: "Makhulu promised that she wouldn't tell anyone"

Kgethang: "Well she's using it to try and convince Lefa out of marrying, Ntombikayise" Nolu looked shocked "Have I not told you to put brakes on that mouth of yours, Noluthandi? Even now I caught you gossiping with your colleagues instead of working like your boss hired you to do"

Nolu: "I wasn't gossiping" she mumbled.

Kgethang: "What does Buhle's old looking plastic weave have to do with your work?" Nolu looked down when she realized that he heard part of her conversation with colleagues when he walked into her workplace "The same Buhle you claim to be one of your work friends yet in her absence you laugh at her" he added.

Nolu: "I'm sorry that I told Makhulu Hazel, Kgethang" she said softly.

Kgethang: "Please call Lefa and Ntombi and apologize to them. I'm not losing my brother because

your tongue has diarrhea. How do you think Ntombikayise is feeling right now? No man, act like the adult that you claim you are. Stop trying to score brownie points from my family because truth is you can't always impress them. If you impress them all the time it means that you are not being yourself. Fix this because I actually happen to like Ntombikayise for Lefa. What they discussed behind closed doors is none of our business. Fix this" he repeated before walking out to calm himself. He drove back to his

work without getting the lunch he planned on getting. Nolu dialed Ntombikayise's number and Ntombi answered after a long while. Ntombi didn't even know that Nolu told Hazel everything or at least what she knew.

Ntombi: "I accept your apology but I won't trust you with anything ever again, Nolu. It was not your place to talk about me to your grandmother in law"

Nolu: "Please apologize to Lefa for me. I know that I've broken our trust so I understand if you won't be my friend anymore"

Ntombi: "I've got a lot of work to do. Chat some other time. Bye" she hung up before Nolu could say more. Ntombi kept herself busy with work and there was a brief knock on the door before Lefa let himself in.

Lefa: "Chocolate for my sweet lady" he put a chocolate slab on her desk.

Ntombi: "Noooo, baby we agreed that you'll stop with the sweet office treats" she said in a sulky tone and he laughed.

Lefa: "It's dark chocolate" he tried to convince her.

Ntombi: "Thank you but it makes no difference. Just check" she lifted her many top layers of clothing to reveal the unbuttoned Jean and he laughed "Don't laugh, it's your fault, Lefa" he held the waist of her jean and gently pulled her close to him.

Lefa: "More of you to love"

Ntombikayise blushed.

Ntombi: "You just enjoy having a winter teddy bear" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Winter, summer, autumn, spring it's doesn't matter" he kissed her "However I was really

cold last night without you, I must admit"

Ntombi: "I'm making myself scarce so you'll miss me more"

Lefa: "Well don't because I need you" he sulked "was meaning to ask about where we'll live after we're married?"

Ntombi: "Is my house not ideal?" .

Lefa: "I don't know how I feel about just moving in with my bags, baby. Will it really feel like my house too?"

Ntombi: "So we go house hunting? I never actually got a chance to choose a house that I like.

Liyema and I were supposed to
but we just put it off until well
we got divorced"

Lefa: "What kind of house have
you dreamt of having before you
hit married?"

Ntombi: "Definitely not a double
story house like my current one. I
wanted a home with a long
passage for some off reason. It
should be open and cosy. I think
the only thing I like about my
current house is the spacious
backyard. We now eat from our
garden and it's amazing"

Lefa: "I just want a house big

enough to fit our family in. I don't care if it's double or not but yes a garden is a must for me too" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Property is not easy to come by though"

Lefa: "That's why we'll start looking now"

Ntombi: "We spend less on the wedding and more on what we'll need after it right"

Lefa: "Perks of marrying a financial advisor" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Baby, you're sure you want to marry me right?"

Regardless of what others might

say"

Lefa: "I'm sure" he kissed her.

"As long as you and I are open with each other I don't care about other people's opinion about our relationship" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "Is the rest of your family nice?"

Lefa: "They are okay but what I'm certain about is the fact that my immediate family adores you"

Ntombi: "I'm sure had it been up to your gran my lobola would be two chicken but I actually learned that in the old days gifts to the

bride's family were fruit and beaded jewelry. So this money thing is new" she joked and they both laughed "She doesn't seem to like me much" she added.

Lefa: "She does. She's just always been known for being dramatic at first. Plus I started saving for lobola after I started that contract with Steel Brothers"

Ntombi: "Liar" she laughed.

Lefa: "It's true" he also laughed. I can't wait to wake up next to you every single morning. I can't wait to annoy you for the rest of our lives either" they laughed.

Ntombi: "I annoy you as much so bring it on. Stop trying to button my jean it's painful" she hit his hand away.

Lefa: "I'm just wondering why you would bother wearing it to begin with"

Ntombi: "I'll go jogging this afternoon. You go to your martial arts training which keeps you in good shape and being busy forced me to stop dancing. Where do you find time to train?"

Lefa: "Good time management. It's a skill, Mrs Gwala" Ntombi laughed "Easy on the weigh loss.

I'm really not into slender women. Nothing against their body structure. Women are all beautiful regardless of size but my preference is you. Do you know how much I actually stare at you when you come from the shower? Even when you're fully clothed. Aside from what you are wearing now. I swear you have on every item in your wardrobe. It's not that cold" he laughed.

Ntombi: "Leave me alone. I'm cold"

Lefa: "I'll keep you warm later on"

Ntombi: "You love sex though" she joked and watched him laugh out loud.

Lefa: "Of course I do" he admitted "with you" he added with a smile. "Are you complaining?" Ntombi shook her head quickly before they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Baby, what if pepper spray has korobela ingredients in it and that's why you're like this because I sprayed you?" Lefa laughed until his eyes became teary.

Lefa: "The things you say

something" he shook his head
"Then you got me good, baby" he
added with a smile "Just don't
repeat that because desperate
people will start pepper spraying
their crushes" they kissed "Will
you come keep me warm tonight?"
he asked.

Ntombi: "What will I get in
return,?"

Lefa: "Intense TLC" he promised.

Ntombi: "Okay, king I'll come" she
smiled.

Lefa: "Thank you, queen" he kissed
her once again before getting

back to work. They were discreet at the office when it came to showing affection though their staff knew about their relationship but they wanted to respect their employees. Lefa went to his training after work while Ntombi went for her first jog in the chilly weather. When Ntombi entered her house looking like she was on the brink of collapse Makhulu sat and watched her granddaughter from the kitchen wondering what possessed Ntombi. Makhulu and the boys could not help but laugh when

Ntombikayise literally crawled to the kitchen. She could walk but she wanted to add a bit of exaggeration to the moment. The dog came and jumped on top of Ntombi thinking she was playing.

Ntombi: "Eish, Brow-Brow you don't even allow mommy to be a bit dramatic" she brushed its fur.

Makhulu: "Your grandfather is going to take her to the garage as soon as he arrives. He doesn't understand this entire dog in the house business" Ntombi laughed.

Bubele walked in looking sad.

Ntombi: "I thought your shift

ends later today" she looked at her son.

Bubele: "I got fired"

Ntombi: "Why?"

Bubele: "I took a picture with an exclusive brand of shirts and posted it on Instagram" the other boys laughed out.

Ntombi: "Did you offer to pay for it so it can be yours that way they won't fire you?"

Bubele: "They fired me because it was not on the shelves yet, Ma. I basically showed the competitors what new stock we've got before they could advertise"

Bukhosi: "And you didn't think of that before doing it?"

Bubele: "Leave me alone" he ran up the stairs quickly.

Ntombi: "I really hope that Bubele figures out what he wants in life. This up and down is starting to make me worry"

Bandile: "He'll come around" he said with certainty.

Banele: "And everyone thought I was the black sheep in this home" he laughed.

Bukhosi: "Maybe we all are in some way or another. Don't worry, Ma he'll be fine. I think he

doesn't know where he fits in society as of yet"

Ntombi: "Well I hope you three aren't aspiring to fit in either. Be yourselves"

Bandile: "Yes, mommy". Tamkhulu walked in and as Makhulu said Brown was immediately taken to her bed in the garage.

Tamkhulu: "The Gwalas have sent us a letter" Makhulu ulululated and Ntombi was left blushing "This is how it's done, Ntombikayise. Not that eloping nonsense" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Yes, Tata"

Tamkhulu: "Let me go and make some calls" he went to their bedroom.

Makhulu: "So will you tell me why you are running in this cold"

Ntombi: "Ma, my weight gain was part of the reason why Liyema no longer found me attractive. I don't want to repeat the same mistake with Lefa"

Makhulu: "You've been eating fruit salad for three days now, Ntombikayise. It's winter so it's not really the heartiest meal and you need other nutrients. Does he know that you are starving

yourself for him?"

Ntombi: "I'm eating just not what you are eating, Makhulu. I'm not doing it for him alone but for myself too. Already his grandmother has plenty to say about me. I don't want her to say I look old next to him"

Makhulu: "I must meet this old woman involving herself in children's business. So are you seeing any progress, miss fruity tooty?" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I think I am" she studied her body "Let me go shower" she drank some water

and went to her room. Makhulu put her hand over her face when Ntombi ran down the stairs again and back up five times. The boys were laughing themselves into a coma because they'd never seen her so serious about physical exercise besides the dancing.

When Rose came back from work she found Sonwabo busy cutting 5 liter bottles. Some were already filled with soil. She found a job working as a part time domestic worker. It didn't pay much but she was able to buy food. She and

Sonwabo had an ugly fight a few months ago where she took her kids to go stay with her aunt for a while. Sonwabo had gambled all the money she had and won but instead of saving the winnings, he put them all back in gambling in hope to double it. He lost everything and it infuriated Rose very much. Nandi sent money whenever she could but Rose never went to ask Mahlubandile for help fearing that Sonwabo would think she's asking Yanda for help.

Rose: "And then?" she picked up

one of the containers.

Sonwabo: "Well since the government refuses to help me feed my family by granting me a job, I decided to feed us myself"

Rose: "I don't understand, Sonwabo. Please don't tell me this is one of your get rich quick schemes again" she felt herself get exhausted already.

Sonwabo: "I promised after fetching you from your aunt that I'm done with that. I bought some seeds so I'm going to plant"

Rose: "In containers so small? Use the backyard"

Sonwabo: "This is winter sowing. It'll give my plants a headstart in the spring"

Rose: "What are you planting?"

Sonwabo: "Cabbage, carrots and spinach for now. You'll see that they'll grow well. I'm trying to provide, Rose" he went to fill three more containers with soil and Rose couldn't help but smile to herself.

Rose: "Do you need help?" she was tired but she wanted him to know that she's supporting him.

Sonwabo: "I'm almost done, mfazi wam"

Rose: "Then I will go and cook your favourite meal then. Since the children are away for the school holidays, we can play some jazz and enjoy the evening"

Sonwabo stood straight to look at her. He couldn't remember the last time they shared such a moment and just the thought of it made him excited.

Sonwabo: "Are you going to dance with me like you did the night that we met at bra Fix's?" Rose blushed thinking about that night. She was having her coke at the tavern when a tall skinny

gentleman walked up to her and asked her to dance. They were young at the time but she would never forget that day "You have been starving me since you've returned home. I'm a man, Rose so please let that end today. I'm sorry for wasting our money" he added.

Rose: "I'm going to go bath and wear that red nightdress" she watched Sonwabo look excited.

Sonwabo: "If I knew planting would have made you wear your special night dresses for me then I would have started long ago. I

haven't seen you in them and thought you threw them away"

Rose: "Sonwabo" she walked closer to him "I'm not distant because I'm punishing you but because I've been watching your masculinity drop. I don't mind you controlling our home's finances but I do mind if you are throwing hard earned money down the drain. It made me not want to be close to you. Seeing you doing what you are doing right now makes you so manly. I submitted to you all those years ago without you even asking or demanding

because you were the husband that I needed. When you lost control, I rebelled because I felt I had to be both the man and woman of the house since you were neglecting your role. So keep flaunting this masculinity and I will be the wife that you deserve"

Sonwabo: "I just kept look outside in order to provide for you. I forgot that I have this" he pointed to his mind "And these" he held his hands up.

Rose: "well I'm glad that you realized that you are in control of your life. Maybe we can even sell

some of these to our neighbors once they've grown well" she said with a smile.

Sonwabo: "Then I better get back to work then" he rubbed his duty filled hands together.

Rose: "Let me go cook. I plan to feed you well tonight, Myirha" she said in a soft feminine tone which left Sonwabo drooling already. He watched her enter their home he and couldn't help but do a little dance of excitement before getting back to work. He dialed Tamkhulu's number. The two of them met in church long ago but

they didn't talk to each other until the day that Sonwabo was alone with Tamkhulu waiting for other church men to arrive for a meeting. Tamkhulu was a vocal person so he started to talk to Sonwabo until the conversation reached marriage.

Sonwabo: "Your plan worked, Tat'Mlandu. She is now kind to me again and is now cooking my favourite meal" he said with excitement.

Tamkhulu: "I'm glad to hear that, Nyana. I told you that a man is always able to provide

when he sees opportunity and not struggle. In a few months your garden will blossom. Just do exactly as I said you should. Not all women seek superficial things. Rose just wanted you to help her feed her babies. If the system doesn't work for you, create your own"

Sonwabo: "Yho Tat'Mlandu, I felt like a failure for so long. Hence I would take control of her money because it made me feel like I'm contributing something by taking charge of something but I was doing it the wrong way. I don't

know how to thank you, Tata. My first crop will definitely be shared with you" he promised.

Tamkhulu: "Share with your family, Nyana. I have a little paradise of my own that I started with my grandsons. What we can do is trade. I don't have cabbage but I do have potatoes" Sonwabo laughed softly.

Sonwabo: "Potatoes for cabbage it is then, Tata. I don't know why I didn't talk to you sooner. You joined the church long ago but I just passed you"

Tamkhulu: "Everything has its

own time"

Sonwabo: "You should be a marriage counselor at the church, Tat'Mlandu. Young and old couples whether married for years or about to enter marriage need you" he heard Tamkhulu laughed on the other side of the line.

Tamkhulu: "I don't know everything, Sonwabo but I'm honored. Let me leave you to get back to work. Don't forget to talk life into those seeds. Nature is alive"

Sonwabo: "I'm doing exactly as you told me to do. I'm no longer

going to water grass for the neighbors to get jealous but plant food to feed my family. Thank you, Tat'Mlandu. May more people meet you, xhego. We need people like you to remind us of how self sufficient we are" he could go on and on in complimenting Tamkhulu but no words would be enough. He felt like a man again and like the head of the home without having to make his wife feel oppressed. Tamkhulu told him that a woman who felt oppressed will either rebel or get depressed. He knew Rose's struggle with depression so he

didn't want to add to that and when she left home it showed that she was tired. So she became both depressed and rebelled which made him realize that he could lose her for good. He went back to work and got all his seeds in the rich soil before watering it. He placed the containers outside by his doorstep and couldn't wait to see the seeds penetrate the soil with green leaves. The aromatic scent of spices hit his senses from inside the house and he knew that Rose was making his favourite chicken

curry and rice. The children being with his mother made the excitement more because he could show affection to his wife without interruption. Rose played their favourite music and after Sonwabo washed his hands he went inside the house and took her in his arms to dance while the food simmered on the stove. Rose excused herself so she'd go bath and Sonwabo took the opportunity to taste the curry and it was great. They had dinner and Rose was shocked when Sonwabo offered to wash their dishes. He'd

never in all their years as a married couple done so. She left him in the kitchen and slipped into her silky knee length nightdress that he loved. Rose knew that it wouldn't be on her long when he entered their bedroom and quickly undressed himself before switching the light off to join her in bed.

Tamkhulu loved helping couples at church or even random strangers at the grocery shop so Sonwabo's success story left him in a good mood. He went to open the door

and Lefa was there to pick Ntombi up.

Tamkhulu: "You know the drill by now, Lefa" Lefa laughed while following behind Tamkhulu.

Lefa: "She won't be ready anytime soon" he said "So yes I know the drill, Tamkhulu so I'll just sit with you and wait" he added.

Tamkhulu: "I'm actually glad. There are some things that you and I have to discuss" Lefa suddenly felt nervous. The two men both sat down "My wife and I have been talking after we heard that you proposed

marriage. Ntombi revealed that the two of you will be buying a new home"

Lefa: "Do you think that it's not a wise idea?"

Tamkhulu: "Oh no it's not that. I don't think I'd be comfortable just carrying my bags into a home either. She never really liked this house that's why you'll constantly find her doing one thing or another to it to make it seem "more her". So do seek a house. Makhulu and I have decided that it's best for us to rent a small flat" Lefa was shocked.

Lefa: "Ntombi has not told me that" he sat back.

Tamkhulu: "She doesn't know yet"

Lefa: "What are the reasons for you wanting to go rent,

Tamkhulu? Did I do something that made you feel you won't be welcome in our home?"

Tamkhulu: "No, no we just don't want to impose. Ntombi wanted us to come live with her while still married to Liyema and he actually said he didn't mind but we felt we'll be in the way. I know had we agreed we'd have blamed ourselves for their divorce.

Wondering if taking us in contributed in any way. We can't go back home because we don't trust our son so the flat option is best"

Lefa: "Best for who, Tamkhulu? The last thing that I want is for Makhulu's health to go backwards again. You're elderly and you need to be surrounded by loved ones or you'll get lonely. I know you have each other but I know being with the boys and Ntombi adds to your health"

Tamkhulu: "That's very true but we will cope"

Lefa: "Who is going to cook for you and clean? Makhulu does those things occasionally here because she no longer can do it full-time. We are at work and when we return we want to go straight home. So I don't see how this decision is best. It certainly won't be best for Ntombi because she'll stress. She'll basically be more at your flat than home which won't be ideal for our marriage anyway. We spoke about this and I really don't mind. We can even build an independent door for you two if it'll make you feel less dependent

and we won't bother you but moving into a little flat when the garden here is your life won't be ideal"

Tamkhulu: "We just feel like we will take up space"

Lefa: "Not to us, Tamkhulu. I'd like for my parents to live with us should they reach a point where they can't care for themselves someday or with Kgethang whichever home will be ideal for them at that time. I can't expect my wife to welcome my parents when I allowed hers to go live alone knowing they are not

as physically strong as before to take full care of themselves. We'll find the perfect home, don't worry. We won't step on each other's toes"

Tamkhulu: "Only if you are sure"

Lefa: "100%" he nodded and so did Tamkhulu. The boys walked in soaked from the rain.

Bukhosi: "It's so cold" he went to stand closer to the heater.

Lefa: "Go take off the wet clothes you'll feel better" Bukhosi took off his jacket and Ntombi watched her mat get wet from the drops dropping from the

jacket.

Ntombi: "Guys go dry those clothes please because you're making my floor wet"

Bandile: "Hug" he opened his arms.

Ntombi: "Don't you dare, Bandile Elephant" she warned with a smile.

Bubele: "Huggies" he didn't even give her a chance to respond as his arms were around her in no time. Ntombi let out a scream before laughing. She hit him away and soon they all went to hug her.

Ntombi: "You guys are the worst. I honestly think girls would have

been better" she said while laughing. She took the damp jacket off and threw it at Banele. Bukhosi: "We'd have corrupted her too" he faked an evil laugh.

Ntombi: "At least my sweet Hlomphe is not like this" the boys laughed.

Bukhosi: "The same Hlomphe who put toothpaste on Bandile's brows while he was sleep?"

Ntombi: "Don't lie"

Banele: "Bhut Lefa" he looked at Lefa so he'd give witness.

Lefa: "It really did happen, baby. He's really not as innocent as he

pretends to be around you. You're just lucky" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I don't believe it"

Bandile: "It must be nice to be his favourite. Saved from all his little pranks" the men laughed

"But he's about to get worse because he's about to officially be the brother of the master of pranks" he pointed to Bubele.

Bubele: "I take it as a compliment" he said with a smile.

Bukhosi: "Can we go get him? I mean with the parents gone" he rubbed his hands together with a sneaky smile on his face.

Tamkhulu: "Don't worry, I'll make sure they behave" he put Ntombi's heart at ease.

Bukhosi: "Mom we were thinking. Dad really loves this house and trust me he misses it too. So why don't you offer it to him?"

Bandile: "That way we can keep it as is and visit between yours and here like we're doing now"

Ntombi: "That means I'll see less of you because you are here more than you are at his place because this is your home"

Bubele: "When will you realize that you are our home" he stood

closer.

Ntombi: "Don't hug me again, Bubele" she warned and he laughed and promised not to.

Bubele: "You're our home and that's why I couldn't stay far from you"

Ntombi: "Mmm you just didn't want school"

Bubele: "That too" he laughed softly "But we'll spend equal time in both homes"

Bukhosi: "Don't lie. We'll spend more time in mom's so I hope you folks won't mind. Do you guys perhaps have enough for a

mansion so we'll all have our own room?" he looked at Lefa and Ntombi.

Them: "Nope" they said simultaneously.

Bukhosi: "I guess it'll be back to sharing but if dad buys this house I'm not giving my backroom to any of you" he looked at his brothers.

Banele: "Whatever" he threw a wet scarf at Bukhosi.

Ntombi: "We'll talk about approaching dad but for now please go and chance. I don't want my babies to get sick" she

looked at them all.

Lefa: "Hlomphe's going to be dropped off by his mother later on so I'll bring him"

Bandile: "When the cat is gone the mice come out to play"

Tamkhulu: "Hey" he held his cane up.

Bukhosi: "When the cute cat is gone, the mice have to hide from the big scary one" he joked and everyone laughed. Lefa loved the vibe and he didn't want to break up the family structure at Ntombi's "Mamzo, don't tell dad that we gave you inside

information regarding the house. He doesn't want you to know he's crying over it" he added and Ntombikayise laughed and nodded. The boys went to change after saying good-bye. They were sure to spend enough time together since Bandile would be heading back to PE in a week.

Lefa: "I hope that we have put the matter we spoke about to rest, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "we have, Ndoda. Let me go and join my wife in bed, it's cold" he stood "I'll make sure the five bulls behave while you aren't

home. I'm like a dolphin. I sleep with one eye open"

Ntombi: "A dolphin sleeps with one eye open?" Ntombi looked at her grandfather.

Tamkhulu: "Yes because if they were to shut down completely they risk drowning" he walked pass them.

Ntombi: "Dolphins can drown?" she gave him a confused look and Tamkhulu nodded before walking away. She wasn't clued up on animals so she didn't know much about them.

Lefa: "Where does he get so much

intel?" Ntombikayise shrugged.

Ntombi: "So what matter did you two put to rest?"

Lefa: "It's between men"

Ntombi: "Oh so you're having secrets with him already?"

Lefa: "He's my future housemate so I must" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Then tell me"

Lefa: "Don't want to, Miss curious" he hugged her from behind as they walked to the door "We're off. Come lock the door" he shouted.

Banele: "Okay!" he shouted "Tell Hlompho to bring his sleeping bag.

We're going to sleep outside" he shouted.

Ntombi: "What?" No" she protested "They'll freeze to death"

Lefa: "They are boys so let them do what their adventurous instincts lead them to"

Makhulu: "I'll make sure that they don't sleep in the cold, my baby" Makhulu said from their bedroom. The door was slightly open so she could hear.

Tamkhulu: "Stop trying to baby these boys. Our ancestors used to live in the open with wild animals

for goodness sake"

Lefa: "My point exactly"

Makhulu: "Go, Ntombi I'll keep them inside. All six of them. Your grandfather sometimes just blends in with the youth and I have to be the adults all on my own" they could hear Tamkhulu' laugh "The struggle of being a woman surrounded by men" she added and Lefa laughed with Tamkhulu.

Ntombi: "Thanks, Makhulu". The two of them walked out

"Ntombikayise forgot she had to take her jacket off but the cold

wind reminded her. She wanted to go wear another.

Lefa: "You won't need it. I'll put on my heater, borrow you my warm pajama top and we'll cuddle on the couch talking about our future" he put his over her head for the rain until they got into his car. Ntombikayise didn't go with Lefa to pick Hlompho up from his parents avoiding Hazel. Mimi preferred to drop Hlompho off there instead of at Lefa's and no one questioned it. Ntombi has met Mimi and her husband once and though they weren't friends

they were able to be civil for Hlompho. Hlompho was excited about spending the night with his brothers so he didn't even bother going home first. Lefa found Ntombikayise laying on the couch under a blanket already in his pajama top. He took his wet clothes off and joined her. The two of them made future plans and even checked out houses on property sites to get an idea of what they'd both like. Ntombi ended up falling asleep midway through a movie as she'd always done and Lefa held her tighter

while watching the movie alone. He'd never felt more content in his life.

It was Mahlubandile's birthday the following day and she had an intimate lunch to celebrate it. All her friends were there with their partners and so was Liyema and Portia. Yanda advised her to invite Lungile because a year was too long of a time to be angry at him so she did do. Lungile was sure to clear his schedule to be able to attend.

Alu: "Thank you for the invite. It

really means a lot to him" she whispered to Mahlubandile when they hugged.

Hlubi: "He should thank Yanda" she decided to be honest.

Lungi: "I hope this is a start of a new beginning for us. Happy birthday, big sis"

Hlubi: "Thank you" she hugged him back.

Liyema: "It's actually good to have you both in one room again. I've had to divide my time between you two"

Hlubi: "Let's not bring family politics to today's business please.

I don't want my guests to feel uncomfortable" the brothers nodded.

Othu: "I hope we're not late" she walked in with Craig and went to hug the host before giving Hlubi her birthday gift. Soon all the guests arrived and were seated. Yanda had everyone at the table sing for his wife and Hlubi didn't know what to do with herself so she sang along.

Hlubi: "Thank you so much and I know you were singing for the food but it's alright" everyone laughed "I'm glad you could all

make it guys" she smiled. Lunch was served and the conversations around the long table were flowing. They were at a public place so the vibe was lively too. Hlubi invited Rose and Sonwabo but Sonwabo said they both won't go because of Yanda's presence. Hlubi cut her beautiful red velvet cake before it could be served to everyone.

Liyema: "I'd just like to say something before the lunch ends" he looked at his sister.

Hlubi: "Go ahead" she watched Liyema pick up a glass and fork

before tapping the fork against the glass. The table went quiet as all looked at him. He stood.

Liyema: "I'm sorry for interrupting your dessert. I just felt like this is the perfect opportunity to do what I've been planning to do for months now.

Portia please stand" Portia looked around before standing up. She watched Liyema go on one knee "Will you please marry me?" he opened a box that had a ring with a huge diamond ring in it. Portia's hands started to shake.

Portia: "Is the sky blue?" Yes, I'll

marry you" she held her hand out and couldn't wait to feel the ring slide in her finger.

Babini: "Don't go swimming. With the size of that thing you'll sink right to the bottom" everyone laughed.

Liyema: "Only the best for my girl. This is actually the first time I propose to a woman properly so had to make sure that I pull out all the stops" there were faint laughs around the table as everyone was looking at Ntombikayise.

Portia: "I'm engaged" she dangled

her hand and everyone clapped hands. Once the hype died down Ntombikayise walked over to Liyema.

Liyema: "I know that I was insensitive when I said I never really proposed"

Ntombi: "I have actually come to congratulate you" she smiled.

Liyema: "I didn't do it because you did. I actually had the ring long before you got engaged"

Ntombi: "It really doesn't matter, Liyema. Congratulations" she smiled "Remember how difficult it was for you to let go of the house

during the divorce?" Liyema nodded "well I might sell soon so if you are still attached to it, I'm giving you first buying option"

Liyema: "So you're selling my house to me?"

Ntombi: "Yes because I know how much it meant to you. I think this time I want to be involved in such matters and since Lefa and I are about to get married, we're looking for a house that's ideal for us. If you buy ours, the boys will not feel like they have to let go of another part of their upbringing and Portia always

seemed to like the house too"

Liyema: "Good points. I'll talk to my beautiful fiancée about it"

Ntombikayise nodded. "Funny how we got engaged in the same year...life" he added.

Ntombi: "It's a strange thing. I'll see you around. Please tell the boys before they see your proposal on a random stranger's social media page" she said before going back to her friends.

Lefa: "What did he say?"

Ntombi: "He said he'll think about it. I hope we find a home soon though"

Othu: "My neighbor across us is selling. Their house is gorgeous. I could give you their number and you two can go check it out" she gave Ntombi the number.

Ntombi: "Thanks, friend. I think we'll know our house when we see it" she smiled at Lefa.

Lefa: "Definitely" he kissed her cheek.

Ntombi: "Is anyone else feeling a bit under the weather?"

Mzu: "Me and we both had lamb chops so I think that's it because I'm feeling nauseous" he wore a look of disgust.

Lefa: "Let me take you home"

Poppy: "Wait, when is the wedding guys?" the couple laughed "Baby, I'm sure it'll pass soon" she looked at her hubby.

Ntombi: "We don't know. Maybe once the lobola negotiations are over we'll know. Guys we got engaged a few days ago so bare with us" the group laughed "we might even have a courthouse wedding. We've got a house to buy so a fancy wedding is not a priority" she added.

Mandla: "Girl, do you. Expensive weddings are overrated. Some

divorce while still paying wedding debt"

Lefa: "That's what we're trying to avoid... paying for a wedding cake people long ago out of their systems"

Craig: "It must be nice to be able to work with money as a profession and apply it to your personal life. I'm sure that decision came from an accounting standpoint" the couple laughed. Mzu had to excuse himself after having the urge to throw up and Mahlubandile went to talk to the manager after two of her guests

fell ill after eating the lamb. The manager apologized and offered to pay for Ntombikayise and Mzu's meal. Ntombikayise drank some ginger tea when she arrived home and felt better right after but Poppy said Mzu was still not well even after having warm water with raw ginger.

Mahlubandile was worried sick but Ntombi assured her they'd be fine the next day.

The quads and Hlomphe went to watch a new action movie after talking with Liyema. They invited

Amahle along because they thought Amahle would be bored at home.

Bukhosi: "What do you guys think about dad suddenly proposing?"

Banele: "It's his life. I learned after the divorce that we got no say in their lives"

Amahle: "I'm so glad that I moved out. I don't think I'd have been able to live with another man who's not dad"

Bandile: "You are living with another man already who is not dad because I know this dad you're talking about is Liyema"

Amahle: "Mxm" she clicked her tongue.

Bubele: "Oh shit!" they all looked at him "The reactions I've gotten online for the picture I posted. I think that I should be an influencer" he looked at his siblings.

Hlomphe: "Why is Bhut Bubele so exited?" he asked Banele and Banele told him.

Amahle: "Doesn't it get annoying to translate everything to him?"

Bukhosi: "We are only translating because we are with you and you don't know a word of sign

language. We're not fluent either but we understand him"

Amahle: "So I'm the one who's annoying?"

Bandile: "He didn't say that, Amahle. So how's school? I hope you stopped focussing on boys"

Amahle: "Chumani and I broke up"

Bandile: "Good"

Amahle: "I didn't say good when you and Bathandiwe broke up,

Bandile. Don't be insensitive"

Bukhosi: "What the hell is this, Amahle?" he shouted while looking at his phone "Why on earth have you posted half naked pictures of

yourself on social media?" Amahle nearly died of shock. Indeed there were half naked pictures she remembered sending Chumani after he begged her for them. She tried to access her Facebook account but couldn't.

Amahle: "He blocked me from accessing it. I can't believe that he did this" she started to cry "Tata is going to kill me" she added.

Bubele: "I feel like giving you a hiding myself. You know that you're not supposed to send nudes to a boy. We've been giving you

inside information on how boys operate, Amahle. We told you to never give a boy leverage over you. Now some sick old man might find these and jerk himself off looking at them. The world is sick" he shouted.

Banele: "Where does this boy live? Take us to him right now. He is going to delete these pictures whether he likes it or not". They had Ntombi's car so Amahle didn't hesitate to lead them to Chumani's home but he was not there. They were sure to drop Hlompho at home first to not

expose him to what might turn into violence. They went to the shop he likes hanging out at and found him. Banele gave Chumani three hot slaps across the face before holding him against a wall. Chumani's friends all ran away. The quads forced Chumani to delete the pictures and finally gave Amahle access to her page again.

Chumani: "It's no use, I sent them to my friends too"

Amahle: "How could you do that? I trusted you with those pictures and Facebook password, Chumani."

I thought that you loved me. You promised to delete them after seeing them too" she shouted while crying. Banele wanted to rough up Chumani more but the shop owner came to stop him. Banele: "We're taking you home" he pointed to Amahle "You're going to explain to your father before he finds out from social media" he added as they all made their way to the car. Chumani had long ran away too. He wanted to revenge on Amahle for what he believed was a waste of his time kind of relationship. He'd

heard about the quads but never met them and the beating from Banele made him regret his actions because he feared they'd return again. Amahle pleaded with the quads to not take her home because she feared what Vusi would do but she knew she'd have to face the music eventually. She felt heart broken and the notifications on flooding in were from school mates and she was not ready to deal with it. She couldn't believe that a boy she loved so much could do that to her. She promised to tell the

elders herself after gathering the courage so her brothers gave her time to get over the shock and pain. The pictures having first appeared on her Facebook account would make it difficult to prove she was not the one who posted them. 

S2-INSERT 64 (NOT EDITED)
Bonolo had enough of her mother in law already because all that came out of Hazel's mouth was how bad of an idea she thought Lefa marrying Ntombi was. It

had gotten to a point where Bonolo kept asking Vakele when Hazel would be going back home. Bonolo: "Here is your tea, Ma" she put the tray on the table "Don't you miss home?" she asked hoping Hazel would say she did.

Hazel: "Noxolo, are you chasing me away from my own son's house?" she asked while putting six spoons of sugar in her tea "I'm going to wait for my brothers right here" she looked at Bonolo.

Bonolo: "So you'll be here until after the lobola negotiations?" she asked quickly and clearly

shocked. Bonolo felt her shoulders feel exhausted when Hazel nodded.

Hazel: "So you best get used to having me here" she sipped her tea "Where are you going dressed up so nicely?" she asked as Hazel mumbled things on her way back to the bedroom.

Bonolo: "To my stokvel meeting" she lied.

Hazel: "Vakele said you all gather on the second week of each month so why are you lying" Bonolo felt like strangling Vakele for talking everything with his mother. She

turned and her heeled boots clicked on the tiles as she made her way back to the lounge "Are you going to meet another man?" Bonolo never felt more offended in her life.

Bonolo: "When your son married me he knew he had a loyal woman for the rest of his life" she defended herself.

Hazel: "Then prove it by taking me with you wherever you are going"

Bonolo: "I see you everyday, Ma. Even more than Vakele because I'm the one left with you all day.

I deserve a break. Even my husband is not as suspicious of me as you are right now"

Hazel: "You are hiding something from me. Prove it's not a man then I'll let you go on to do whatever it is"

Bonolo: "I'm going to meet Ntombi's grandmother" she blurted out and watched Hazel put her cup back on the tray.

Hazel: "You aren't even family with the woman yet" she pointed out.

Bonolo: "It's to plan Ntombi's Amabaso celebration (kitchen

tea)"

Hazel: "Where do you as mother in law fit in all of that? That's for her family and friends to do. Don't come here with your basotho ways. Remember that you are a Xhosa bride. Already Vakele was soft enough to allow you to give his Xhosa sons Sotho names and now you'll find even the grandchildren have Sotho names"

Bonolo: "When we got married we decided to honor both cultures through our children, Ma. I've never stripped my boys from their Xhosa lineage. All traditional

affairs they've had were from the Xhosa side because I know that they are Xhosa men because their father is a Xhosa man. If you have a problem with their names take it up with them because they are adults now who are capable of changing their names any day. I'm going to meet Ma Mlandu and together we're going to gather Ntombi's friends and to this for her because I heard she never had amabaso" she said before going to her room to take her coat.

Hazel: "I'm still coming with you"

she stood to go dress warmly.

Bonolo: "Do you have taxi money? I only have enough to go and come back for myself" she stood by her bedroom door buttoning her coat.

Hazel: "You'll use the money you'd have come back home with to pay for me. We'll see once we're in town how we'll return" she put on her hat before wrapping a scarf around her neck. Bonolo walked to the door leaving her behind "You no longer see me, Noxolo. It must be old makoti privileges where you feel like you are a Gwala by blood

instead of marriage. You need to be reminded that you can't just talk anyhow with your husband's mother" she walked pass Bonolo to go stand outside. Bonolo didn't answer her but instead just locked her house. They were lucky to get a taxi only after walking a short distance.

Driver: "Someone hasn't paid and we're nearly in town" he shouted and everyone in the taxi started to look around at the next person.

Hazel: "Did you pay for me, Noxolo?" she whispered.

Driver: "If that person doesn't pay I'm going to turn this taxi around and drop you all off where I found you" he warned and people started to mumble while asking the person who didn't pay to pay or get out.

Hazel: "Noxolo" she whispered with urgency.

Bonolo: "You never asked me to pay for you, Ma" she looked at her mother in law.

Hazel: "Haibo" her eyes shot open.

Driver: "5, 4, 3....," he counted down to show that person that he'd really make that U-turn.

Hazel: "Noxolo, please pay for my taxi fee" she pleaded.

Bonolo: "I'm sorry, driver. I thought my mother in law would pay for herself. She forgot her wallet at home. Here it is" she gave it to the person sitting in front of her to pass to the driver.

Driver: "Dankie, Mama" he said when the money reached him.

Hazel: "I always knew you don't like me" she shook her head. The ride was silent and Bonolo preferred it that way. They reached town and went to the

place that Makhulu and Bonolo agreed on. Bonolo had seen pictures of Makhulu on Ntombi Facebook page so she knew the face that she was looking for.

When she spotted Makhulu sitting with Tamkhulu she smiled and walked to their table.

Bonolo: "Ma Mlandu?" she asked with a smile.

Makhulu: "Ma Gwala" she stood to hold Bonolo's hand "Such a pleasure to meet you. This is my husband Tat'Mlandu" she looked at Tamkhulu.

Bonolo: "Lefa has told me so much

about the both of you. Pleased to meet you too, Tata" she shook Tamkhulu's hand "This is my mother in law Hazel Gwala. Ma these are our future makoti's grandparents" she introduced them with a smile.

Tamkhulu: "It's a pleasure to meet you both"

Hazel: "The pleasure is ours, Tat'Mlandu" she said while shaking Tamkhulu's hand. Bonolo looked as her mother in law wore a blushing smile and even did a little bow while holding Tamkhulu's hand ever so

gracefully.

Makhulu: "It's a pleasure to meet you too, Sisi" she took Hazel's hand of her husband's and Bonolo watched as Hazel's smile fade.

Tamkhulu: "I'm not staying. I just had to make sure that my wife finds this place and that she's not meeting some crook" they all laughed but Hazel overdid it a bit.

Hazel: "Oh we're not crooks, Tata and you can stay" she said in a more feminine tone.

Tamkhulu: "My wife told me what's going to be discussed and

I know that I won't add any value to the discussion" he looked at her "Have Lefa's mother call our phone when you are done. I'll find something to do around here until you're finished" he whispered to Makhulu and she smiled before nodding.

Makhulu: "Don't forget to buy that thing you said you need for the leaking tap" she reminded him and he nodded.

Tamkhulu: "You ladies have a good lunch. Someday soon we'll be united through our children" Bonolo smiled.

Bonolo: "You enjoy your day too, Tata. I can't wait for that day to come". The ladies watched Tamkhulu walk out before sitting down.

Makhulu: "The lying that I had to do to not let Ntombi get suspicious of this meeting" Bonolo laughed.

Bonolo: "She must not know. I want this to be a surprise. I don't know why I'm glad she never had amabaso before. I guess it's because I look forward to see her face when she walks inside the venue" she and Makhulu

laughed.

Hazel: "She didn't have any before because she ran after a man without the blessings of her elders" she thought out loud.

Bonolo: "Ma" she felt embarrassed.

Makhulu: "Look here, Hazel. If you don't want to be here you are welcome to go, sisi" Makhulu raised a brow.

Hazel: "I was just pointing out that it's good that she'll have one this time because it'll be blessings from her elders meaning the marriage will last"

Bonolo: "I apologize for what my mother in law said, Ma Mlandu. Can we please continue?"

Makhulu: "As long as Hazel knows that I'm not going to sit here and listen to her insult my grandchild. Ntombikayise tells me everything so I know where you stand with her. I don't know why you came here pretending that you want to contribute in making her happy"

Hazel: "I said I'm sorry"

Makhulu: "You actually didn't.

Bonolo said it on your behalf.

Shows that maturity really had

nothing to do with age. If you need to be schooled on manners we can dedicate this meeting to doing that"

Hazel: "Yho" she clapped once

"Now I see where Ntombikayise got the rudeness from" she mumbled.

Makhulu: "Bonolo, I think it's best we postpone for a time you'll be free to come on your own, sisi."

Bonolo: "No please don't, Ma Mlandu" she pleaded.

Hazel: "Hayi I'm sorry that my words sounded immature to you, Sisi. We spent our last money to

meet you here. Some of us don't have the luxury of living in town line you" she folded her arms.

Makhulu: "I suggest that we let Ntombi's best friend Mahlubandile in on the planning. She'll know exactly what Ntombi would like"

Makhulu decided to ignore Hazel.

Bonolo: "That's a great idea.

Maybe we can ask the guests to bring vouchers instead of gifts. I know they'll be buying a new home but I saw Ntombi already has every household appliance"

Makhulu: "That's just the thing. I'm not sure if they'll sell the

house with the furniture or move into the new home with the old furniture. Maybe they'll want to fresh start by getting new stuff. I'll throw some hints here and there and here what she had to say"

Bonolo: "Great idea. I don't propose we use a venue we'll have to pay for"

Makhulu: "An absolute waste because we have homes. It can be hosted in one of them"

Bonolo: "Lefa's flat is just way too small. Do you think her friends would mind if we do it at one of

their houses?"

Makhulu: "In the next meeting I'll gather the entire committee. We can find out from them" Bonolo nodded.

Bonolo: "I'm so excited" she said with a smile and clapped hands.

Makhulu: "Let us get something to eat and drink. My husband gave me some money to spoil myself" Bonolo smiled.

Bonolo: "May Vakele and I reach our golden years as in love as you and your husband clearly still are, Ma"

Makhulu: "He's my perfect match.

The one choice I'm glad that I made was that of marrying him"

Hazel: "You keep him close too. A man prefers to breath"

Makhulu: "I was advised by my elders after getting married to not take marriage advice from unmarried people. I've followed that advice for years and I don't intend to abandon it today" Bonolo coughed so much after choking on who knows what that water had to be brought to the table. Hazel had no come back from that and Bonolo couldn't imagine there being any.

•
Liyema and Portia sat at the little café that was at the ground floor of Ntombi and Lefa's office building. Lefa and Ntombi went down certain that the couple was there to discuss the house with them because the four of them had no other reason to meet.

Portia: "My father says that you proposed only because you saw Ntombi is no longer available" he gaze fell on Liyema who was busy wiping his glasses after a few rain drops fell on them.

Liyema: "I was going to propose long ago. I bought that ring long ago" he put his glasses on to get a proper look at her.

Portia: "So when are you sending a letter to my family. It's been two weeks now, Liyema and it's not like you've got to save for lobola first"

Liyema: "I'm still talking with my uncles, Portia" Portia nodded.

Liyema watched as Ntombi and Lefa walked out of the lift holding hands. They were a beautiful pair and even he admitted it. She had a glow

about her and Liyema could hear her giggle softly as Lefa looked as though he was tickling her. Portia sat and smiled watching them.

She remembered her grandmother advising her to marry a man that loved her more than she loved him but that was the complete opposite of her relationship with Liyema. She loved him more and it gave him a bit of power over her life but fortunately she felt he hadn't misused that power.

Ntombi: "Hi" she looked at the couple.

Lefa: "Afternoon, guys" he shook Liyema's hand before they sat down "Have you guys ordered" he asked the couple.

Liyema: "Portia ordered a huge slice of cake for herself even though we agreed we won't be staying long" he laughed.

Ntombi: "I don't blame her. The cakes here are great. I'd have a slice with you but I'm on a diet" the ladies both laughed.

Liyema: "Portia is one of those lucky ones who can eat anything and not gain weight. You were never as lucky" he laughed.

Portia: "Can we talk about the house?" she said quickly when she noticed Lefa and Ntombi's facial expression change "Please because we don't have time" she added.

Lefa: "What have you decided on?" he looked at the couple opposite them.

Liyema: "So you are really willing to give up the house? You've lived in it since before the boys were even born. Before we even became lovers"

Ntombi: "And that's exactly why it's easy to let it go. It was never our dream home but yours.

Do I'm sure that I want you to have it" she smiled "Lefa and I already saw two house that we absolutely love" she looked at her fiance before he leaned forward for a kiss "It might not mean much to me but it does to the boys and I know to you as well. I remember you offering to buy me a new house during the divorce settlement because you wanted to continue living in the current one but when you made that offer I was not in a good place. I said no because I felt you wanted to take everything from me when

you'd already taken so much but I'm now ready to let go"

Portia: "I love your house. I love the stairs" she looked at Ntombi with a smile.

Liyema: "I think it's only fair that you give it to Mr below market value. You did get it for free after all" he looked at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "I'm only giving you first buying option because I know your attachment to it, Liyema. I can put it on the market and watch people try to give me a great offer on it. Homes aren't easy to

come by these days so many would love the house and if I sell it's lost to you forever. The selling price is reasonable and you know that" she sat back. Portia gave Liyema a desperate look.

Liyema: "Okay we accept" he said after a while "Portia loves it and so do I and since we've decided to extend our family, we'll need more space"

Portia: "We have?" she looked at Liyema and he just looked at her "Oh I forgot about that" she acted like she knew what he was on about.

Lefa: "All the best for the two of you"

Liyema: "Appreciated. The other issue is the lobola, Ntombikayise. We gifted the Poti family with cows yet the Mlandu family brought them back. My family can't accept them back"

Ntombi: "And you're telling me that now after all these months, Liyema? Your family kept them and now suddenly you don't accept them back?"

Liyema: "They didn't think you'd remarry. So the Elephants will return the cows to your elders."

They say that Lefa's family should come to them if they want to have you as their makoti because according to them you are an Elephant makoti"

Ntombi: "What the...,"

Lefa: "It's okay... we'll fix it" he held her hand.

Ntombi: "But..."

Lefa: "Baby, we'll fix it" he promised. Liyema and Portia promised to keep in touch regarding the house. Ntombi and Lefa made their way to their floor.

Portia: "Is that why your family

hasn't made your intentions clear to mine?"

Liyema: "I think so"

Portia: "Liyema did you tell your elders to do this? Because they didn't seem to have an issue with taking the lobola back and suddenly when Ntombi is about to get married, they want to return them?"

Liyema: "These people are clearly the ones hung up on Ntombi, not me. I want over and done with so I can lobola you"

Portia: "Fix this I'm tired of being in your ex wife's shadow"

she stood and left him. Liyema ran after her and found her standing next to the car.

Ntombikayise called Tamkhulu immediately to tell him what Liyema had just said.

Tamkhulu: "His family spoke to me. I was sure to put them in contact with the Poti family and they heard that both the Poti's and Mlandus are united in the matter. Stop stressing yourself. Such matters are for me to concern myself with, not you"

Lefa: "I told her that, Tamkhulu" he said in the background.

Tamkhulu: "Men know best when it comes to such. You concern yourself with other things. I've got to go. I'll see you later" he said before hanging up.

Ntombi: "I have to go. I want to spend some time with the boys since Bandile is going back to PE tomorrow"

Lefa: "There's still days left before they reopen. What's with the rush?" Ntombi shrugged.

Ntombi: "I think he got himself a girlfriend there" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Then there's Hlompho who

doesn't want to come home. Chase him away today, baby" Ntombi's eyes shot open.

Ntombi: "Don't try to make me the bad guy" they both laughed "He's not inconveniencing anyone at the house so let him be. You just miss your housemate" she added.

Lefa: "I'd spend the nights there too but I don't want to seem disrespectful to the elders. Once you're my wife, I can sleep next to you every night and no one will call me out on it. I'm going to head over to Steel brothers. A few

things I've got to to discuss with the men" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "We're not doing badly though, baby" she stood closer to close the gap between them

"Aside from those months when we couldn't pay ourselves of course, we've been doing well"

Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "We're building this empire" Ntombi smiled and nodded before hugging him "I love you" he added.

Ntombi: "I love you" she kissed his cheek.

Lefa: "No I don't remember

having a second lip that's on my cheek. Give me a proper kiss" he poured and Ntombi laughed before kissing him.

Ntombi: "Now go before you're late for a meeting with one of our biggest clients"

Lefa: "One more kiss"

Ntombi: "Lefa"

Lefa: "Please" he pleaded and Ntombi shook her head before kissing him.

Ntombi: "Remember when we first had an argument and had to face each other at work?" they both laughed.

Lefa: "You locked your office almost all day" he smiled "I think we're better now at conflict resolution" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "Go"

Lefa: "Kick Hlompho out of your house" he said while walking out.

Ntombi: "I'm not doing that" she laughed when he shook his head.

She took her bag and went to meet all five boys at their favourite spot. Bubele tried being a social media influencer and Ntombi had no idea how he'd make money but she decided to give him some time to get it off

the ground. She'd have preferred him to give her a business plan but he said it doesn't work that way but assured her he'd be his own boss. Ntombi and Liyema assisted Asakhe and Vusimuzi in disciplining Amahle. Vusi didn't waste time, he just took out his belt and gave her a hiding.

Liyema's parenting style was different so Vusi was sure to tell the Elephants that they had no say in how they must raise their daughter and since that day Ntombi decided to allow them space to do what they felt was

better discipline.

Hlomphe: "It's going to be so nice when you are married to my father, aunty Ntombi. I won't just spend time at your house during holidays but forever"

Ntombi: "Well it won't just be my house. Your dad and I have decided to buy a new home"

Hlomphe: "My brother's told me. It's going to be such fun. Also when you are married I'd like to call you mom too" Ntombikayise was taken aback by his words.

Banele: "He'd been saying that for a while actually. He just feared

you'd say no" he signed and spoke.
Ntombi: "Are you sure?" Hlomphe
nodded "Did you speak to your
parents about it?" she had to
ask.

Hlomphe: "Dad said I can if I feel
like it and if you are comfortable
with it. Mimi said as long as I no
longer calm her Mimi but Mom she
doesn't mind"

Ntombi: "Then I'd be honored to
have another person call me Mom"
she smiled.

Hlomphe: "we'll all have two
mom's and two dad's" he looked at
the quads.

Bukhosi: "Because we're cool like that" Hlomphe laughed. Ntombi knew that if they all had a choice they'd have chosen to have their biological parents together but they had to accept what life offered them instead.

Ntombi: "Why are you leaving so early?" she looked at Bandile "Cape Town no longer for you?" Bandile laughed.

Bandile: "I don't want to go back to school tired. These four don't give me time to rest" he rubbed his eyes.

Bubele: "Rest is for the dead"

they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Then go sleep at your father's"

Bandile: "Abongile is worse so no thanks" he looked at his mother "You spent enough time with me though" he added.

Ntombi: "It doesn't feel like it" she sulked.

Bukhosi: "So will we be bhut Lefa's groomsmen too? Tata said he'll have a huge ass wedding so we will have to all be his best men"

Ntombi: "We won't have a huge wedding and that you'll have to

discuss with Bhut Lefa because my business is my bridal party" she smiled.

Hlomphe: "I love being a part of a big family. So many people to live" everyone just smiled. Ntombi, Lefa and Hlomphe's mother set up a savings budget for Hlomphe's implants. They didn't tell him because it might be years before they could reach their target but it felt good to be a few rands closer each month. Lefa was still afraid to have Hlomphe do it but when he found a wish list right before Hlomphe's birthday a few

weeks ago he realized that the implant was top three so he decided to try and grant his son that wish. They had a great time and Ntombi liked being the rose amongst the thorns.

Amahle pretended to not know where Chumani lives after Vusi demanded she tells him. She didn't know how but Vusi found the place and as they drove there Amahle felt like disappearing.

Amahle: "Tata, I said that I'm sorry. I just want to face the music at school, take the teasing

and move on"

Asakhe: "We must make the parents of this not aware of the damage their child had done. You don't even want to go buy bread right next door"

Amahle: "I don't want Tata going there and beating Chumani up"

Vusi: "So you still take his side though he's done you so bad, Amahle?" he shouted.

Amahle: "I don't want you going to jail for beating a minor" she whispered and Vusi regretted jumping to conclusions. They stopped at Chumsbds house and

Vusi was the first to walk out. Asakhe had to beg Amahle to go in with them. They found Chumani's young sister and Chumani home and their mother was on their way home from work according to the kids. Chumani kept a safe distance from himself and Vusi because he was afraid of what might happen. When Cwayitha walked in Vusimuzi couldn't believe that she was Chumani's mother.

Cwayitha: "You?" she looked at Vusi "Why are you in my house?" she asked more.

Kim: "Mama, Chumani posted dirty pictures of Amahle on Facebook" the forward teen blurted out.

Cwayitha was in the dark.

Chumani: "It wasn't me. My friend posted them. He said Amahle deserves to pay for hurting my feelings" he lied "She is cheating with a..."

Cwayitha: "Hey keoo quiet" she stopped him from talking "So your daughter is dating my son?" she looked at Vusi.

Vusi: "This can not be happening" he sat down.

Cwayitha: "Define dirty pictures

to me" she looked at Chumani.
Kim: "Her without any clothes.
She's only wearing a panty and
bra on them" she said before
anyone could give answers.

Cwayitha waved her hand in front
of her face suddenly feeling hot.

Cwayitha: "How could you?" she
matched at Chumani and gave
him a few hits on the back.

Chumani: "I'm sorry, Mama" he
ducked to avoid being beaten.

Kim: "My friends said they saw
them having sex on school
premises"

Amahle: "That's a lie" she

started to cry. She felt the humiliation all over again.

Chumani: "Stop talking nonsense" he pushed his sister who was two years older than him.

Vusi: "Amahle, did you have sex with Chumani?"

Amahle: "No, Tata" she promised while wiping her tears.

Cwayitha: "They did. Why else would she send him pictures of her body. Clearly he's used to seeing it" she blurted

Asakhe: "You had sex with your cousin?" Amahle's eyes shot open.

Vusi: "Let us go" he held Amahle's

upper arm but she let herself
Fred from his grip with
aggression.

Amahle: "What did say, Ma?" he
asked with panic in her voice.

Vusi: "This is Chumani? Baby
Chumani?" he looked at the teen
boy.

Asakhe: "Oh Jesus" she clapped
once.

Cwayitha: "Yes and..." she stopped
talking and lookef at Amahle "Is
this Nozibele's child? She looks
like her" she started to cry "Why
didn't you tell the family that you
got the child, Vusimuzi?" she

shouted while crying trying to hit him but he blocked her attack "Now my sister's child had sex with my child!" she broke down "Sies" she cried as though someone had just died.

Chumani: "We didn't have sex" he shouted.

Amahle: "He's my cousin?" she asked while pointing at Chumani. The sleeve of her jacket wiped her lips as she looked at him with disgust. Yes, they never had penetrative sex but they kissed and occasionally allowed their hands to roam to intimate places

on each other's bodies. "I asked you, Tata" she broke down in tears "I asked you to tell me who my mother is or where her family is but you didn't" she looked at Vusi "You are to blame for all of this" she added before running out. Asakhe ran after her and caught her just as she was about to exit the yard.

Asakhe: "Let's go home" she stopped a local taxi and the two of them left Vusi behind. She didn't want Amahle to go cry to Ntombi when she was there.

Cwayitha: "My mother had been

weeping for her granddaughter. Nozibele died of drug overdose. She fed herself drugs until they killed her because she couldn't live with the judgements she got from others. You denied Amahle yet today you are able to claim her and keep her from us? I'm going to the highest court and we'll get our child back. Go!" she pointed to the door "You couldn't be a father's backside always complaining about being too young until you eventually denied her. Only after Nozi dumped Amahle did your family act like they cared.

You are a snake, Vusi. That's not your child. You drive Nozi to dumping that baby. Now our children had sex because you couldn't just try to find one of us and tell us that the child is no longer lost in the system but is with you"

Vusi: "Had your son known how to keep his zip up this wouldn't have happened"

Cwayitha: "Like you kept yours up and denied the consequences of it? she asked sarcastically "That's Nozi's child. You never paid damages for that child so she's

not yours. Since Nozi is dead she's mine"

Chumani: "No, you can not take Amahle. It's just so...so wrong"

Cwayitha: "I'm going to deal with you shortly" she pointed at her son "Go!" she looked at Vusi. Vusi turned around and left. He didn't drive straight home because he wanted time alone. The news about Nozi hurt him. He didn't want Amahle but when Nozi had a letter sent to him saying she dumped the baby, he knew that the baby found just a day after receiving that letter was his. He

could feel it and that's why he went to his mother. The Gala family tried to win Amahle but their living conditions didn't convince authorities they were fit to take her hence she was given to the people who found her. He never saw Nozi after her court appearance and sentencing and at the time he didn't care. He didn't care about anything for the longest time until Asakhe made him realize just how important having Amahle in his life would be. He wondered what happened to Nozi. Truth was that he

introduced her to drugs because he smoked himself but managed to not get hooked as she was. He ruined Nozi's life in so many ways and Cwayitha would be sure to tell Amahle everything that he did. From introducing Nozi to drugs right down to denying paternity. He knew that Nozi was probably high when she dumped the baby but it wasn't something he openly spoke about. Amahle struggled academically and he would sometimes wonder if it were the effects of the drugs that Nozi smoked while pregnant.

Drugs that he introduced her too. She was a sweet girl when they met. Top of her class with dreams of being a social worker because she wanted to make a difference in their community. He on the other hand was a rebellious teenager with no dreams who hung out with the wrong crowd. He could still remember the day that he made her take her first puff of a joint that he rolled. It was weed mixed with other stuff he couldn't remember.

Vusi: "Try it" he said while blowing

the smoke in her face. As he sat in the car he wished that she saw that as red flag number one. No boy who respected a gurl would blow smoke in her face and laugh as she coughed from its fumes.

Nozi: "You know that I don't smoke" she said ever so innocently.

Vusi: "Stop being such a goody goody. It doesn't make you sexy"

Nozi: "Will I get addicted?"

Vusi: "It's weed, you don't get addicted to weed". His tears rolled over his cheeks as he thought of her innocence face. The fear of saying no to him and risk being

dumped. He didn't notice that fear that day but as the moment played in his mind like a perfectly well produced movie he saw that fear.

Nozi: "Only once" she took the joint in her hands. Vusi remembered how good he felt about himself when saw her inhale and then exhale the smoke after coughing through the first puffs. The drugs took effect on her quickly because he remembered how she acted out of character. It was a turn on to him back then and the out of

character mood in Nozi made her give her virginity to him. After months of trying to pushed her, he finally got to sleep with her. It was during a moment when they were both too out of it to even remember but when Nozi sobered and realized what had happened she was filled with regret and more fear. Vusi remembered her run out after a long while of passing out and he though he'd never see her again but she returned to feed her new addition. Their relationship was that of drugs and sex until she

revealed she was pregnant. They didn't think about condoms not contraceptives so Amahle was bound to be of existence.

Nozi: "I'm pregnant" she said with tears in her eyes.

Vusi: "Go and tell the father of the child. Don't think that I didn't see you smoke with Victor lately, Nozi" he remembered pointing at her right between the eyes. Her head even jacked backwards as he did. She'd come to him again and get the same rude response. He remembered asking her why her tummy wasn't

showing through her school uniform if she's supposedly pregnant. He'd never forget the shock he felt when she pulled up her school jersey to show how she wrapped her tummy tightly with a bandage to prevent it from showing too much. The next time he heard from her was through the letter saying she had to throw the baby away because her parents didn't know she was pregnant and she didn't want to be a mother. The next time he saw her after that letter was when she got jail time for

dumping Amahle. He remembered seeing a post asking men to picture their daughters dating boys like them. It further asked if the man reading would be happy if their daughter dated someone like them and Vusi didn't feel happy when he pictured Amahle with someone like him. He for some reason saw himself in Chumani and he felt he needed to protect Amahle from that. He sat and wondered if life was serving him his karma through his daughter. He knew he'd have to tell Amahle that it's his fault

her mother spiralled out of control. That he was the one who introduced her to the drugs that eventually led to her death. 💔

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During the holidays Amahle found it was much easier to deal with the humiliation of being spoken about on social media after Chumani leaked her pictures but school was not to be closed forever. As she walked to the corner where she usually met Thulisa halfway she felt like

disappearing because even the workers who were on their way to work seemed to be talking about her.

Thuli: "Mahle, walk faster. You know how Mr Gumbi gets when we're late" she took hold of Amahle's hand and pulled her.

When she heard sniffs she let go of the hand and looked back at the crying Amahle "You have to face the music so rather sooner than later. I told you... I told you not to send Chumani those pictures. We both saw how that girl's boyfriend leaked their sex

video last year. These boys don't respect us" she watched Amahle wipe her tears "Where have you been the last week?" she walked at Amahle's pace.

Amahle: "The suburbs with my adoptive father" she said quietly.

Thuli: "Are you moving back there?"

Amahle: "He said the state wouldn't allow it because they already made their decision on which home is best for me. It's not like my parents are to blame for this so I can't complain to Mrs Williams about anything"

Thuli: "So if you could, you'd go to the suburb and go back to your fancy school?" she sounded like she was hurt.

Amahle: "No because my adoptive parents are getting married to other people. I don't like the people they are engaged to so I wouldn't have gone back" Thulisa breathed again.

Thuli: "It'll pass, Amahle. We'll deal with things together as best friends. I even dumped Thulani because he is in Chumani's circle. If Chumani could do that then so can Thulani"

Amahle: "Thulani is sweet, Thuli. Don't dump the guy because of me"

Thuli: "Sweet or not, peer pressure is a thing" she held on to the straps of her backpack as they quietly walked to school.

Amahle's heart started to beat out of control when she saw her school. Part of her wanted to run back and never return.

Mandi: "Ja, sfebe" said Mandisa who also happened to be Chumani's ex so Amahle was not surprised by the attack "You thought you'd keep him with

those little things you call breasts? Honey, you only have nipples" she was sure to speak loud enough for everyone to hear so the crowd laughed.

Thuli: "Don't mind them" she held Amahle's hand again and they made their way through the crowd.

Mandi: "He's my man and he always will be. Those Mandi loves Chumi forever writings all over the school should have proved that to you. He does not want you and now no boy will. Who wants a hoe?" everyone laughed again.

Amahle felt her anger rise and she turned to walk to Mandisa. She punched Mandisa so hard that her nose bled.

Amahle: "Now you don't have anything to say huh?" she pushed Mandi around before watching the older teen run to the direction of the staffroom "Does any of you have anything to say? Let's settle it right here and now!" she looked around and everyone went quiet.

Thuli: "You know Mandisa is a teacher's pet, Mahle. You should just have walked away" Amahle

walked pass Thulisa ignoring her friend. They went to sit at a their usual spot waiting for the bell to ring.

Principal: "Miss Gala!" she called out "In my office right now!" the sternness in her voice proved just how much trouble Amahle was in. Amahle walked the head of the school until they reached her office. She found Mandisa with a big piece of toilet paper over her nose while her head was tilted up. For some reason she felt good about what she had done "Sit down" the principal ordered.

Amahle: "Thanks, mam" she pulled the chair next to Mandi and sat.

Principal: "I will not tolerate violence in my school, miss Gala.

What have you got to say for yourself?" Amahle told the

principal what happened "That's

why teachers are here. You don't

just punch a fellow learner

because you didn't like what they

said about you" she added.

Amahle: "Mandisa is prone to nose

bleeds. It's just that now it

chose the perfect time to happen

because it makes it look as

though I punched her hard which

I didn't"

Mandi: "My nose is swollen"

Amahle: "That nose is big naturally so just stop with the drama" she said with attitude.

Principal: "First it was the explicit pictures on social media and now you injured your fellow learners.

Here is a letter that asks your parents to come and see me. You won't be allowed on these

premises until I see your parents.

So the longer you delay giving it to them, the more your schooling

will suffer and you can't afford that because you are below

average"

Amahle: "Mam, please I'm sorry"

Principal: "Please make sure that your parents get that letter, miss Gala. Miss Vakalisa is who you should be apologizing to not me" she looked at Mandi.

Amahle: "I'll bring my parents" she stood not wanting to apologize to Mandisa "Bye, mam" she swayed her backpack to the back and over her shoulders. She gave Mandisa one last dirty look before exiting the office. The bell had already rung so Thulisa was in class already. Chumani who was

always a late comer came running to school premises.

Chumani: "Where are you going?" he asked casually but Amahle ignored him "Mahle" he held her elbow but she pulled her arm back.

Amahle: "Voetsek" she pushed him.

Chumani: "For what it's worth I'm sorry. Trust me my uncle gave me a beating I'll never forget after hearing that I posted naked pictures of my own cousin"

Amahle: "You are a dog, Chumani..."

you're not my cousin. Because of you I might get suspended. I curse the day that I met you and I sure as hell don't want to be a part of your family"

Chumani: "Please don't punish my mother because of me" he pleaded.

Security: "Hey" they both turned to look at him "Are you in or out? I'm closing this gate" Chumani looked torn but he was working to get into his mother's good books and a good attendance record would help so he ran inside the gate quickly. Amahle walked home

slowly so she wouldn't find Asakhe still at home. Luckily she had her own set of keys because she arrived home before anyone else. She looked at the time on her phone and stood at the corner when she realized it still was not time for Asakhe to leave. She would give them the letter just not so soon after getting it. Asakhe rushed out the gate at about the same time she did each morning. Amahle watched her mother run to the spot where she'd find a taxi to work. She made sure Asakhe was on a taxi

before going back home. Their neighbours curtain moved and Amahle knew it was best she tell her parents about what happened at school before the nosey neighbour.

“He ruined our sister's life so he must pay” Cwayitha held her hand over her face crying. Seeing Vusi again a few days back brought back bad memories. After the Amahle saga they decided as a family to return back home to PE..well their mother decided because they were still

young to make such choices.

Nothing brought their mother more heartache than watching Nozi just lose control of her life until she eventually died.

Snake: "Do you want me to deal with it?" said the family's black sheep. Cwayitha didn't know what he meant by that but she was certain that it was illegal.

Lulupho: "I'm suddenly feeling nervous after you asked your question, Solomzi" he looked at his younger brother "There's nothing that we can do about this. He is her father and he is no longer the

boy that we knew. He know has a job and a wife so the court will never give us Amahle" he said with certainty.

Snake: "So we're going to allow the man who killed our sister just go unpunished while we can't even see our niece?"

Lulupho: "Nozi took those drugs on her own. Even after coming out of juvenile prison, she decided to take those drugs. We thought juvenile would be like rehab for her but we were clearly wrong"

Cwayitha: "Would you be able to live with yourself not knowing

what happened to your child?"

Lulupho: "A child she threw away, Cwayitha. Let's not act as though Nozibele was innocent in all of this. Amahle was lost to us because Nozi hid the pregnancy from Mama and Tata. Let's not forget that Nozi's arrest was what led to the heart attack that killed Tata. Had she told the parents that she's pregnant instead of wrapping her belly up to make it seem smaller than we would not be sitting here right now" he shouted.

Cwayitha: "She was desperate

and probably high when she dumped the child. Desperate because she was forced to go through a pregnancy all on her own and give birth on her own. Had it not been for her best friend telling us Nozi was pregnant we'd never have known that the baby that was found was hers. Can you imagine how traumatic that must have been? She was sick for weeks after giving birth due to an infection. He taught her how to use drugs and that's what led to where we are today" she pointed a finger on

the table to make her point clear.
Lulupho: "Well we are here right now. Nozi is gone and Vusi won custody over Amahle. I asked around after you told us you saw him. She was raised by millionaires so if he could fight people with big money and win what chance do you think we stand?"

Cwayitha: "We'll tell them that he killed our sister" she folded her arms.

Lulupho: "You are not hearing me, Sisi. I'll come back later once you've calmed down. Vusi didn't kill Nozi. The bad influence that he

was on her did but that won't hold up in court" he took a cigarette pack from his pocket and drew one out before standing. Snakes: "Grootman, please give me one or two" he could see Lulupho's face turn to that of annoyance but Lulupho took out three cigarettes and gave it to Snakes "Thank you, bra" he clapped his hands a few times before taking the cigarettes. They watched Lulupho walk out "I say that we make this bastard pay. We silence him forever then the court will give

us Amahle. There's no way that they'll let her stay with her stepmother when her real mother's family is still alive" he added.

Cwayitha: "No"

Snakes: "I would have taken care of it all but okay" he lit his smoke.

Cwayitha: "Go and smoke outside" she ordered "And don't think this is me taking you in. You're going back to PE with Lulupho. I have enough on my plate with Kimberly and Chumani" she stood to go clean her house.

Snakes: "I've changed"

Cwayitha: "Yet you're talking about killing someone?"

Snakes: "Shhhh" he put his finger over his lips "The walls are thin" he added "Jail taught me a lot. I don't want to do this but seeing my sister so hurt doesn't sit well with me and the fact that it's because of the same person who hurt my other sister makes my blood boil" he added before going outside to smoke. Cwayitha's phone rang and her mom's name showed on the screen.

Ma: "Did he agree to give you my granddaughter after Lulupho

spoke to him?"

Cwayitha: "Ma, Vusi refuses to meet with Lulupho. So I don't think that he'll agree for Amahle to live with you"

Ma: "At least a visit then. I can't die without seeing her, Cwayi"

Cwayitha's heart broke.

Cwayitha: "Lulupho and I will try to talk to him again. Maybe when he hears that we just want Amahle to visit, he'll agree. For now please don't stress, Ma. I don't want you getting worse. You still have to meet your granddaughter"

Ma: "Oh but what has Nozi done?
Yes, we'd have been disappointed
but we would never have forsaken
her"

Cwayitha: "Let Nozi rest, Ma.
It's done so we must just move
on. I'll call you later. I'm putting
Solomzi on a taxi home first thing
tomorrow. I have a feeling that
he's not going to behave"

Ma: "I told Lulupho to not take
Solomzi with but he said he
wanted to teach Solomzi
responsibility and involving him in
such serious family matters was
a start. Tell him to come home. I

don't want you to have more troubles that side. I just wish your brother would grow up"

Cwayitha: "Me too, Mama. Talk later. I love you"

Ma: "I love you too" she hung up.

Cwayitha: "Solomzi!" she called out and he appeared by the door after a long while "Mama wants you to go home. She says the junkies in the area noticed she's alone with the kids so they seem to be targeting the home" she lied.

Snake: "Those aren't junkies but my friends. They're watching the

house because I asked them to. Mama and the kids are safe" he assured her. He knew that Cwayitha was the one who wanted him gone because he heard her say it "I'll go home with Ta Luza. I know you don't want me here" he added.

Cwayitha: "I love you but I admit that I can't handle you. Worse part is I'm raising a boy and I don't want you to influence him"

Snake: "Thanks for the vote of confidence" he said sarcastically before leaving her standing by

the door. He went to see his old friends because he went to PE straight after being released. Cwayitha hoped that when it was time to leave Solomzi wouldn't give them any trouble because she meant it when she said she was not not going to take him in.

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After trying to make an appointment with Liyema, Hazel finally sat across him. She asked someone to google Liyema and that way she got his office number. It took days but she

was not one to give up.

Liyema: "So you are Lefa's grandmother?" he looked at her confused and watched her nod

"Uhm okay so why have you come to see me, Makhulu?" he sat back.

Hazel: "I'm just here as a concerned grandmother. It's not that I hate Ntombikayise but I want to get to know her better from someone who is not going to be biased" she said.

Liyema: "You do realize that she's my ex wife right?"

Hazel: "Exactly why I'm here. You can tell me the type of wife she

was to you. First please tell me how you two even got together"

Liyema: "Why does it matter?"

Hazel: "Lefa says that he knows how but he doesn't want to tell me. Please put an old woman's heart at ease, my son please" she pleaded.

Liyema: "This is the mother of my children, Makhulu"

Hazel: "And I hear that that was not the initial plan. I don't understand what they mean by that so please explain to me"

Liyema: "Well she was supposed to be just my surrogate. Carry my

children for me but not be a part of their lives" Hazel nodded. She knew exactly what it meant she just thought playing dumb would get her the answers she needed.

Hazel: "And she applied for this in court? Where does one apply and do they get paid" Liyema took a deep breath before summarizing the Bonga issue to Hazel. Hazel wondered if Lefa knew that his fiancée was an ex con before she became his business partner.

Hazel: "Yet you married her?"

Liyema: "She accepted things about me other women ran from

so I found myself marrying her without giving it much thought or discussing it with my family. But now that I look back I think she only agreed to be a part of the children's lives. She refused to let go of them after birth. Didn't even tell me that she was pregnant. After she left my house I spent all those months thinking that the procedure had failed because she told me that her womb was torn"

Hazel: "So she could be lying about her not having a womb?"

Liyema: "Oh no, I was there

when they told her that they had to remove it due to her bleeding too much after giving birth"

Hazel: "So she married you to gain access to the children?" she took a deep breath "What led to you cheating?" she had to know.

Liyema cleared his throat.

Liyema: "Our marriage just became routine and felt like a chore"

Hazel: "So she bored you. It's because you started to feel that she didn't love you but loved the life that you gave her. You basically washed this girl. From

having nothing to being married into a family with money"

Liyema: "She put herself through school. I didn't pay a cent on her studies because she had a bursary who also placed her in a good paying job afterwards"

Hazel: "It sounds to me like you cleaned her up. She saw no need to keep the wife act up hence your marriage started to be boring. She knew that even if you leave her, the children would be at legal age so you wouldn't be able to have custody of them. So that's why she gave you the

divorce so easily and moved on so quickly. A true wife is single for over five years after divorcing or the death of her husband. She never loved you, my son"

Liyema: "I've said that but everyone shut me down so it feels good to have someone see things from my point of view"

Hazel: "Men cheat so if she wanted to fight for you she would have. What woman would let her ex husband marry the same woman he cheated on her with? A woman who loved you would have let you both go through hell

before allowing you to get married"

Liyema: "I'm just glad that someone is saying what I've been thinking. I stopped saying it because no one listened to me, not even my own mother"

Hazel: "Absolutely nothing is as annoying as seeing just how manipulative someone is while others see them as good. I don't even know you or your situation all that well but I'm able to see that you were the victim of manipulation"

Liyema: "I'm just glad someone

sees it. I kept quiet after your grandson nearly killed me for speaking up against her. I was in hospital unable to speak so I started to know my place since then"

Hazel: "Lefa doesn't just fight. She's manipulated him too. My poor grandson. I'm sure with him she wants to take his business. Once it's making big money she's going to take it all and divorce him. At least she can't trap him with children like she did you" she felt her anger rise.

Liyema: "I'm happy now, Makhula.

I'm going into this marriage
sober minded"

Hazel: "Of course you are because
she's beautiful. No one goes sober
minded into a relationship with an
unattractive woman like Ntombi"

Liyema found himself laughing.

Liyema: "She's not too bad
actually" he smiled.

Hazel: "Her makoti name will be
Nomnyamazana" they both
laughed.

Liyema: "Will that be all?"

Hazel: "Oh yes" she stood "I can't
believe she has a share here and
in Lefa's business. She's sucking

men dry this girl. I hope my Lefa will open his eyes soon" she put the chair back in its place.

Liyema: "Tell him to marry out of community of property and he'll be fine. Should they divorce then he won't have to share his assets with her. I had to give her half of everything even though she didn't work for most of them"

Hazel: "Write that out community down so that I don't forget it" she watched Liyema do as asked before giving her the piece of paper "Thank you. I wish all the best of luck in your new marriage.

She looks young and is beautiful. If she wasn't taken already I'd have paired her with Lefa" she laughed.

Liyema: "That one is mine, Makhulu" he stood to walk her out. Liyema was glad that someone saw things as he did. It felt like a little silent victory. He still felt that Ntombi agreeing to marry him was a part of an agenda. He couldn't help but wonder what girl would agree to marry a man on the same day that he proposed without thinking about the traditional

processes. He still felt played and Hazel seeing things from his perspective gave him some sort of comfort. Hazel couldn't believe what her ears had just heard. She was glad she followed her intuition when it told her to speak to Liyema. Everyone gave great reviews about Ntombi and something told her that Liyema would give her the bad that no one wanted to dare utter. She was going to advise Lefa on the out of community of property contract and make him see it was what's best for Hlompho. She felt

Ntombikayise not going to have children in the marriage gave her no right to inherit Lefa's assets should they part. She felt victorious that day. The only thing she liked about Ntombikayise was her grandfather.

Vusi got a text saying that Amahle was chased away from school. Their neighbour was known for gossiping so Vusi called Amahle to make sure it was true. When she didn't answer he asked for an extended lunch break to go home.

He indeed found her home earlier than expected and Amahle gave him the letter.

Amahle: "She teased me and I punched her" she gave a short explanation. She was still angry at him.

Vusi: "Amahle, this is not how I want you to end up. I don't want you dropping out, chasing boys and booze and ending up pregnant"

Amahle: "You mean like my mother?" she asked with attitude.

Vusi: "No, like me. I finished matric at 23 because I dropped

out. I chased friends, girls and substances which led to me impregnating your mother"

Amahle sat up when she saw how sincere he was "Your mother and I started to experiment with drugs at a young age. Mandrax to be specific" he looked at her "I admit to being her recruiter.

Nozibele was sweet, beautiful and not to mention smart. She wanted to be a doctor but for some reason changed to nursing and let me tell you had she not gotten addicted she'd have been a doctor or nurse today"

Amahle: "Why didn't you stop her?"

Vusi: "How when I myself was deep in the addiction? All I did was help her get her hands on it so she'd feed her addiction. I thought that it was a way of showing love but you don't kill someone you claim to love. I loved her but I didn't love her right. That's why I want to protect you from these boys out here who are worse than what I used to be"

Amahle: "Did you really let her deal with a pregnancy alone?"

Vusi: "I allowed by friends to make me believe that your mother had slept with some of them. I see now that it was jealousy. They couldn't understand why an A student would be with a junky like me. I let her go through the pregnancy alone because I thought you weren't mine. I lied so much about her and made it sound as though she was the poison. Even your stepmother knows me to be the saint as far as my relationship with your mother is concerned. She's not really happy with me

either"

Amahle: "To the Elephants you made it sound as though you were there throughout the pregnancy but she was evil so she threw me away instead of giving me to your mother. You said my mother refused to let Makhulu raise me when the truth is that Makhulu didn't know about me until I was found. You lied to the court, Tata and it can land you in big trouble. Had you stepped up maybe Mama would also have gotten her life together like you have. Maybe she'd have gone to med school and

I'd have been the daughter of a doctor today. Instead I'm the daughter of a woman who died of a drug overdose and a liar of a man"

Vusi: "Please don't tell Mrs Williams this. I don't want to lose you, Amahle. I love you so much. Part of the reason why I make better choices is you. After sobering up I made decisions that would finally lead to you living with me. When I would just disappear during my visits while you still lived with the Elephants it was because I'd relapse to

alcohol. I knew them seeing me in that state would ruin my future plans. I one day just decided to get up and be a better man. I met Asakhe at a rehabilitation center and my life was never the same after that. You are here because she made me a better man and I don't want to lose either of you" Amahle started to cry "I'll go to school with your mother and we'll sort this out" he looked at the letter.

Amahle: "Also stop hitting me when I've done wrong. Talk to me or take my stuff away but don't

hit me. My adoptive father never hit me because he said he didn't want me to think being hit by a man is a sign of showing love. So don't do that again" she broke down.

Vusi: "I've never looked at it that way. We were hit so I thought it's how it's supposed to be. I'm sorry and yes, Liyema was right. I clearly still have a lot to learn but you are better off here with me than with your mother's family. They are poor. Yes I'm not rich but I don't have to worry about where your next meal will

come from and I heard your mother's brother was in jail apparently for rape. Please Amahle I won't have a peaceful life knowing you live with such a monster"

Amahle: "I don't want to be a part of Chumani's family either. I just wished you gave me a name when I asked about my biological mother. I do not want another home because I've settled here. I'm sorry for saying that I wish you died" she wiped her tears.

Vusi: "Words said out of anger. Let me get back to work. Lock

the door because I found it unlocked just now. We'll see you later. Try to read your school books so you don't fall behind"

Amahle nodded. Vusi stood and took his car keys. He decided to lock the door from outside with his own keys because Amahle was not one to do as told. When Amahle heard the two gun shots right after her father had left she for some reason knew that he was the one being shot at. She'd heard gun shots before but never at such close range. Vusi taught her to lie down in such moments

and she did and after a while of not hearing anything she stood to go to the door. It being locked frustrated her and soon there was a frantic knock on the door and Amahle knew that her father was hurt, she could somehow feel it. She finally found her own keys and went to open the door. Vusi's car was white so part of his blood painted it red. The community had started to gather. He was still alive but bleeding heavily. The ambulance and police arrived after a long while and Amahle got inside with her father not having

even locked the house. She didn't care about it at all. An oxygen mask was put over Vusi's face to help him breathe and Amahle's head was spinning as she watched the paramedics do their thing. Vusi's phone was ringing in his pocket and Amahle took it out. Asakhe heard what happened from the neighbors and when Amahle confirmed it Asakhe nearly collapsed. They arrived at the hospital and Vusi was wheeled in leaving Amahle feeling scared for his life. Asakhe got dropped off by a colleague after a

long while and they both cried in each other's arms.

Amahle: "I don't... I don't wanna lose him, Mama" she stuttered between sobs "I didn't mean it when I said I wish he was dead and my mother alive" she added and Asakhe just held her tighter. They sat without receiving any information for hours until a doctor finally approached them.

Doc: "He is very lucky. Both of the bullets missed his vital organs and we were able to remove both. He lost a lot of blood but we gave him some. The surgery was

successful and he is stable" he said with a smile leaving Amahle and Asakhe relieved "we'll let you know when you can see him" he said before going. The ladies both sunk to the chairs relieved to hear that he'll be fine. The police went to ask Amahle a few questions and because none of the neighbors saw anything they suspected that Vusi got hit by stray bullets during a supposed gang fight. It was strange to both Asakhe and Amahle because their area was considered a "safe zone" because not much violence

was from it but from another near by area hence they always heard shots from afar. Asakhe asked that the police find whoever came to her home to shoot her husband immediately and the cops promised they'd do their best.

Since it was Friday night Ntombi was finally able to enjoy some cocktails and wine with her friends. They all gathered at Zuko's house as Zuri was sleeping over at Nomandla's.

Zuko: "I don't remember school

reopening on a Friday in our days. It was always Monday" they all laughed.

Othu: "These kids are are spoiled so what do you expect. We spoil them and then the government adds to that too" she shook her head before sipping her drink. She coughed a few times "what the hell is in this?" she hit her chest gently while looking at Zuko.

Zuko: "Magic"

Othu: "To make me an ancestor?" they all laughed.

Yandi: "Hey" she warned while laughing. The others tasted and

indeed there was something way too strong for them to down.

Zuko: "You guys are sissies" she showed them she could drink up.

Alu: "I'm so glad that we can be social together again" she looked at Hlubi.

Hlubi: "I can hold a grudge until I die. Yanda is my better half indeed. He spoke some sense into me"

Poppy: "I'm also glad we don't have to choose who to invite anymore. Pity Nolu had to betray Ntombi's trust"

Ntombi: "Don't even go there. I

think I now know why she complains about not having friends. Maybe she gossiped about the ones she had and broke those friendships" the others nodded.

Mandla: "I don't understand why we women are like this. Men don't discuss each other when they are together. Nolu had no business even mentioning your name to her grandmother"

Yandi: "Maybe she's one of those makotis who would do anything to be liked"

Alu: "But ladies let's admit that we've all done something to

impress our in laws. I remember having the same hairstyle done as Mahlubandile so she'd think we have that in common" the others laughed.

Lucia: "At least that's okay. To gossip is not the way to do it. What happens if you run out of news? Will they still like being around you? I'm actually glad she's far and doesn't know and see what happens in our daily lives" they all nodded.

Zuko: "On the bright side we managed to help extra people this winter" she raised her glass.

Othu: "Yes, queens" they toasted
"Goodness it feels good to help
and not want anything in return.
May we never get discouraged"
the others smiled and nodded.

Hlubi: "So lady, now that you are
in the process of buying a new
house. What will you need to
furnish it with?". They wanted to
get an idea of what gifts to get
her her amabhaso.

Ntombi: "Nothing. Lefa and I
have furniture already. I'm not
giving your brother my furniture"
they all laughed. They realised
just how difficult getting her the

right gifts will be.

Poppy: "So you need nothing?"

Ntombi: "Nothing that I can think of. We don't want to spend money unnecessarily. We're saving for Hlompho's implant. It will take us years but yes that's one of our priorities. Next month his family will be meeting mine. We're doing well at the pre marital counseling too" she smiled.

Poppy: "Now all that needs to happen is for the granny to drop dead before the wedding"

Othu: "Poppy oh my god"

Poppy: "Kidding" she laughed. "Or

am I?" she laughed and Othu gave her a look "Okay yes I am" she laughed again.

Ntombi: "The Elephants treated me so well. I can't imagine being hated by my in laws"

Poppy: "Girl, some of us have grown thick skin by now. Mine hate me but you don't see me cry over it"

Ntombi: "Well you're like a Van Damme in your own right that's why" they all laughed. She quickly stood to go to the bathroom to throw up "Zuko your mixture just got rejected by my body. Shows

how poisonous it is" she shouted after rinsing her mouth.

Lucia: "If I didn't know any better I'd say a baby Gwala was on the way" she looked at Ntombi as she made her way back to the lounge.

Ntombi: "May I please have a glass of water?"

Zuko: "You know where everything is. In a different situation I'd let you fill a container with vinegar and pee in it. If the vinegar foams up and changes colour we'd have known there was a bun in the oven" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombi: "I wouldn't have laughed had that come from Yandi but it's unlike you to have such old wife's tales" she pointed at Zuko.

Yandi: "I heard there are a number of homemade pregnancy tests"

Ntombi: "I need water and then wine. You ladies better stop drinking that poison"

Lucia: "Now I'm scared. Come with the whole bottle please, friend" she said to Ntombi.

Hlubi: "Don't think she heard you. Let me go get it" she stood and followed Ntombi to the kitchen.

She laughed when Ntombikayise was raiding the fridge instead "That's not water but cheese" she pointed out the obvious.

Ntombi: "I'm ending the diet today. I wonder when the pizza guy will be here?"

Hlubi: "Best, have you been careful?" she had to ask Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "Yes, I've been eating good so don't worry it's not those starve myself diets"

Hlubi: "I mean sexually, Ntombi. Have you been safe?"

Ntombikayise looked at her.

Ntombi: "Yeah" she nodded after a long while.

Hlubi: "That was a long pause, Ntombi" she raised a brow "I remember you saying that your your cycle is too heavy after starting on the pill again. Did you by any chance stop?" she asked quietly and watched Ntombikayise shake her head quickly while looking down "I hope so because then the assumption of a pregnancy would be possible but we both know that it won't be a happy kind" Ntombi stopped chewing.

Ntombi: "I'm not stupid, Mahlubandile" she looked down.

Hlubi: "Not stupid just forced by circumstance. I know how heavy contraceptives can be on one's body sometimes and it's enough to make you wish to quit"

Ntombi: "I said I'm not stupid, Mahlubandile" she repeated and Hlubi nodded.

Poppy: "Ladies, are you growing the grapes to make the wine from scratch?" she shouted and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Yes" she joked before taking the bottle. Hlubi hoped

that Ntombi didn't do what she thought she did. The pizza came and it was a wonderful night of catching up, celebrating little milestones in careers, giving others advice on raising toddlers and just sharing love. The men knew that the wine flowed like a mountain stream during ladies night so each asked their lady to call when it's pickup time. Ntombi dialed Lefa's number.

Lefa: "Ready to be picked up?"

Ntombi: "Baby, Yandi offered to give me a lift when Babini comes to pick her up. My home is on the

way so yeah" she said quietly.

Lefa: "I thought we'll finish the series we started at my place"

Ntombi: "I just think it's best that I be at home. Makhulu complained about a headache. I'll see you tomorrow"

Lefa: "Ah, baby but I haven't seen you all day due to my out of office meetings" Ntombi laughed

"But I understand. I'll see you tomorrow. Please text when you're home safe"

Ntombi: "I will"

Lefa: "I love you"

Ntombi: "I love you too. Don't

watch the remaining episodes without me, Left" she listened to him laugh.

Lefa: "I'll try". They spoke briefly before hanging up.

Ntombi: "Friend, would it be an inconvenience if you guys drop me off at my place?" she asked Yandi in a whisper.

Yandi: "No, we pass your neighborhood anyway so it's okay. I know Babini won't mind" she smiled.

Hlubi: "I thought you're going to Lefa's"

Ntombi: "Something came up

Lefa won't be able to come fetch me so I'll just go home to allow him time to sort the issue out" Ntombikayise was never really good at lying but the others believed her but not Hlubi.

Hlubi: "I hope he sorts whatever out"

Ntombi: "It's nothing big" she faked a smile.

Yandi: "Trust my punctual hubby to be the first to arrive.

Ntombikayise are you ready to go?" Ntombikayise nodded "Bye, ladies. Let's do this again very soon. We've got a wedding to plan"

Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Bye, guys" they hugged the ladies before going to Babini's car. Ntombi gave Babini a brief update on business until they reached her place. The Zwenis were kind enough to wait for her to get inside the house before driving off. Ntombi went to her bathroom and took out her vanity bag. Her contraceptives were still half full when they were supposed to be finished. She'd been taking them poorly for the reason that Mahlubandile mentioned. She went to the kitchen and took the white

vinegar out of the cupboard. The boys were out for the night and the elders probably fast asleep so she was alone. She knew that there was no accuracy in the homemade test well at least not that she believed there was but she did as Zuko said. The vinegar had no difference at first but changed from its clear color to a pale brown colour almost as though it was weak beer.

Ntombikayise's heart started to beat like no other. She jumped up when her phone rang as it startled her.

Ntombi: "Baby" she said while.

Lefa: "Are you home?"

Ntombi: "Yes, my mind got occupied with something else when I got home. I'm home"

Lefa: "Is Makhulu feeling better?"

Ntombi: "What?"

Lefa: "Her headache" he reminded her.

Ntombi: "She said she has a headache?" Lefa sat up on his bed.

Lefa: "You said she does. What's going on, Ntombi?"

Ntombi: "Oh yes, I found her

sleeping. Tamkhulu sorted her out. But now I'm having one so I'm not thinking straight"

Lefa: "Is it one of those serious ones? You said you used to get migraines that landed you in hospital"

Ntombi: "It's a little pain. Migraine wouldn't even have allowed me to talk to you over the phone"

Lefa: "Hlomphe is at his grandmother's since my dad picked him up from school today. Want me to come doctor you back to health?"

Ntombi: "I'll be fine. I just need to sleep. Goodnight, Lefa"

Lefa: "You're worrying me"

Ntombi: "Nothing to worry about. I love you, Gwala"

Lefa: "I love you" she hung up first leaving him feeling uneasy.

Ntombikayise dialed

Mahlubandile's number.

Hlubi: "I know that you love me but we've just parted" she joked and laughed.

Ntombi: "I did the vinegar thing. It changed, Hlubi. Yes, I'm not committed to the contraceptives as I should be" she confessed.

Hlubi: "Oh shit" she said the first thing that came to mind "Okay no use panicking over an inaccurate test. Tomorrow we'll get real ones and we'll take it from there"

Ntombi: "What if they are positive?"

Hlubi: "Then you tell Lefa" Ntombi shook her head quickly.

Ntombi: "I'm not going to tell him, Mahlubandile"

Hlubi: "Ntombi, you can not deal with this alone"

Ntombi: "He'll be so furious. He'll ask why I never asked him to condomize again. I'm just going to

let nature take its course"

Hlubi: "Don't you dare,

Ntombikayise Poti. That could come with deadly consequences...

literally. I don't want to lose you

and I know Lefa certainly doesn't want to either, nor your kids" she

warned "Sleep and tomorrow I'll

come with the tears okay. Or

better yet we can go see a doctor

so we'll be advised on what the

next step is should it be positive.

We'll it from there. You didn't stop

the pills but just took them part

time so they were still in your

system and effective. Let's not

allow one vomit and a lame test make us panic. Get some sleep and I'll see you first thing tomorrow. We'll decide what to do after that test. I honestly don't believe it'll be positive. I know it'll be negative but to put your mind at ease we will test". Ntombikayise listen to her go on and on. She didn't sleep a wink all night. So she just did as much research about ectopic pregnancy as possible. While married to Liyema she never made the mistake of being so wreckless but when she returned to contraceptives her

body didn't take kindly to it. She'd tried them all over the years and the pill was the one with less side effects but no anymore. She knew Lefa wouldn't be able to forgive her for not communicating her struggle with the contraceptives because he would have offered to use condoms again. Ntombikayise herself didn't know what outcomes she was expecting after such wreckless behaviour. 

S2-INSERT 66

Bandile had four six packs of beer

and a huge pack of pork chops in hand heading to his best friend Daniel's home. He and Daniel studies towards the same qualification and hit it off from day one. When he opened the gate the Desha household's two huge dogs greeted him. They'd gotten to know him so the two furry friends jumped and sniffed at Bandile forcing him to hold up the plastic that had the meat before they could tear it up.

Daniel: "Ntwana yam" he greeted Bandile before taking the beers out of his hands "The others are

inside already. Thanks for these, man" he pointed at the food. "We invited girls. Well some came with their girlfriends but we need company too. I can't party with you bunch alone all day" he shook his head "Rasta said that he organised something" Bandile raised a brow before walking behind Daniel to the backyard. Bandile: "And you trust Rasta with that important duty?" he asked. Rasta was not a Rastafarian he just got the nickname because of his beautiful thick locks. Bandile greeted the

others who were invited to the braai "What a pathetic attempt at making a fire" he looked at the braai stand while shaking his head and everyone laughed.

Rasta: "Then go for it then, braai master"

Bandile: "I didn't need an invitation" he started to work his magic. One thing Tamkhulu taught them was how to make a perfect fire for outside cooking so Bandile worked his skill with confidence. Daniel went inside and soon the music was blasting but everyone was wondering when the

girls Rasta organised would arrive. Bandile had the meat on the braai soon enough while enjoying beer and a chat with his university friends. He also got introduced to Daniel's other friends. The vibe felt good and Rasta answered his phone and excused himself. When the ladies that he invited to join appeared neither of his friends could believe that he managed to invite such a good-looking bunch. Finally the boys felt they could enjoy the party. Those girls who came with their boyfriends were sure to

keep their men close.

Rasta: "Friends, this is my girl Cindy and these are her friends. They will introduce themselves" he said before giving the lady in his arms a kiss. Cindy's friends were indeed not a shy bunch as each introduced themselves.

Daniel: "Will you please come and help me get drinks for you and your friends?" he bit his bottom lip trying to charm Tammy who was one of the pretty ladies who for some reason decided to match outfits but in different colours.

Tammy: "We don't drink beer" she

said in a blushing tone.

Daniel: "And that's why I ask that you go with me to choose" he smiled and Tammy looked at her friends.

Uni: "Savanna for me please, chommee" said Uni who kept her eyes glued on Bandile whose focus was on the meat. Soon they all gave their orders and Daniel and Tammy walked inside the house to go take the drinks. Some of Daniel's friends came with their girlfriends and Cindy's friends made acquaintance with the young men who seemed to have no

plus one. Uni walked over to the braai area with a smile.

Uni: "It seems everyone has a friend" she said softly and Bandile looked up.

Bandile: "Nha it seems there are a few free agents" he looked around. He was not in pursuit of a girlfriend but company now and again was good.

Uni: "So aren't you a free agent?" she blushed "I mean...your girlfriend is not about to come out of the house to claim you right?" she looked at the open sliding door.

Bandile: "I hear the braai master should not get distracted because he might burn the meat so I'm on my own" he teased.

Uni: "Oh please, I'm hardly a distraction" she brushed his shoulder and the two of them made prolonged eye contact "Also being close to the braai master means that I'll get the biggest, most delicious piece of sausage"

Bandile nearly choked on his saliva. Uni was flirting and anyone with eyes could see it.

Bandile: "Then stick around, girl. I might actually have that delicious

peace of sausage for you" he watched Uni place a part of her upper lip between her teeth while grinning.

Uni: "I'll just help you then. Work hard for that meat. What do you want me to do?"

Bandile: "It would be a shame to make a pretty lady like you work with coal. So just keep me company while I prepare to feed you all. I'm Bandile by the way" he held his hand out.

Uni: "Uni" she smiled.

Bandile: "What's Uni in full? For all I know it could be unicorn" Uni

laughed out.

Uni: "Let's keep it at Uni until you earn the privilege to get the full name" she said. Bandile took a moment to appreciate her beauty. Her make up so perfect that she looked as though she was going to a better and more posh event. Daniel gave Uni her drink and Bandile got another beer. While others were trying to get numbers, others trying to get their person to private areas, others were just dancing and having a great time. Uni didn't leave Bandile's side and even took

a few selfies with the "braai master". Daniel would stand in for Bandile on occasion to allow him time to rest. They did so until all the meat was cooked perfectly and served with rolls. Bandile excused himself to go to the toilet and he swore that if Uni could accompany him she would have but she went to stand with another group until he'd be back. When Bandile lowered the handle of the bathroom door he found the door locked. He'd been to Daniel's home many times before so he knew where the other

bathroom was. Daniel strictly told his guests to use the bathroom that Bandile found occupied but since they were friends Bandile didn't think that Daniel minded him using the one deeper in the house. Daniel said that he was home alone so Bandile just opened the door and what he didn't expect to find was a naked girl fresh out of the shower who screamed her lungs out after seeing him.

Bandile: "I'm sorry" he didn't know what to do.

Her: "You're still staring" she

shouted and Bandile realized that he indeed was staring but he bowed his head soon after she pointed it out "Get the hell out!" she threw her deodorant at him and he quickly ran out and closed the door behind him.

Bandile: "I'm sorry" he said to her.

Her: "I'm going to kill Daniel. I swear my parents won't find their son alive when they come back!" she shouted. Bandile knew that she was furious. It was clear in her voice. When he looked at his hand he realized that he had her

sweet smelling deodorant in his hands. His burning bladder reminded him of the reason he went to the bathroom to begin with. He went to check if the other was still occupied and was relieved to find it empty. He relieved himself and washed his hands afterwards but he took the deodorant again. Daniel had told him about a sister that he had but Bandile was never lucky enough to see her. He's seen pictures on social media and it matched the girl he found in the bathroom but he thought the

pictures did her actual looks no justice. She was beautiful. Her skin as smooth as that of honey but he shook his head to get her nakedness out of his mind but it proved to be difficult. He returned to the bathroom and found the door wide open and she was not there. He put the deodorant in his pocket and went back to the party.

Daniel: "What took you so long?"

Uni was starting to complain. "You don't keep a lady waiting" he put his arm around Bandile's shoulder. He didn't hear his younger sister's

scream because the music was too loud.

Bandile: "The toilet was occupied so had to wait" Daniel nodded. Uni went to meet him halfway and led him to where the others were dancing. They sat down and spoke but suddenly Uni bored Bandile because he was curiously thinking about Daniel's sister. He was sure to nurse one beer after that because he wanted to be sober when giving her back her deodorant.

Uni: "Let's go" she said clearly drunk "we'll get a cab to your

place. You said you live alone so we'll have privacy to know each other" when her purple lips touched his Bandile stopped it immediately.

Bandile: "You're drunk, Uni. Better go to one of the rooms and sleep it off"

Uni: "Then come with me" she pleaded "Don't you know that a passed out girl is at risk of sexual abuse at a party?" she asked.

Bandile: "I'll lock and check in every 15minutes" he promised.

Uni: "Arg" she dismissed him "You're boring" she said before

standing up to go to a group of other young men. Bandile looked to where Daniel was and couldn't find him anywhere. He went to look in Daniel's room where his friend was passed out naked with Tammy. He closed the door once again and a door right at the end of the passage opened. Daniel's sister appeared.

Her: "Hoping to find yet another nude exhibition?" she asked sarcastically.

Bandile: "That was a mistake and I am terribly sorry" he explained why he used that bathroom.

Her: "And you haven't figured out that men can actually stand and pee? she rolled her eyes "Well if you haven't then let me be the first to tell you that you can. You take your penis out, point it at a tree and you release your beer filled pee" she said with attitude and Bandile couldn't help but laugh.

Bandile: "Next time I will remember that" he watched her walk pass her "I'm Bandile by the way" he said behind her.

Her: "So there's more of you?"

Usually a Bandile exists in a family

with many kids" she looked back and Bandile followed her.

Bandile: "There's three more of me. We're quads" he watched her turn her head to look at him again.

Her: "Hmmm" she just pouted with attitude before looking forward again.

Bandile: "And you are?" he leaned over the kitchen table watching her try to decide on what to take from the fridge.

Her: "Kwanele" she said casually before taking a container out of the fridge.

Bandile: "Is that why you're the last born? You gave your parents so much grief from the second you were born they just decided it's enough, no more after this one" he smiled when he got her to laugh.

Kwanele: "Actually they knew they'd never get a greater gift after me that's why" she said with confidence "Shouldn't you be out drinking and charming skirts off?" she pointed out.

Bandile: "So you think I'm charming?" he wore a smirk.

Kwanele: "To drunk girls maybe

but not to me" she raised a brow.
Bandile: "Ouch" he held his chest
and she laughed "I think you are
beautiful. I know drunk me would
have thought the same thing" he
drew a chair and sat.

Kwanele: "I'm not a part of the
entourage of girls that my
brother organised for you. So take
those lame compliments outside"
she sat down and ate a cold piece
of chicken.

Bandile: "There's plenty of braai
meat available"

Kwanele: "Last time I ate
something that Daniel and his

friends made I ended up high for days so no thanks" they both laughed. Kwanele had woken up not feeling herself. She had PMS which led to severe mood swings so she was surprised to laugh at things that Bandile said.

Bandile: "So why haven't I met you before? I know of you but never saw you here" he took the cold piece of meat she gave him.

Kwanele: "I was at boarding school for all my high school life and this year studying at Rhodes university. So I guess when I'm here you are wherever your home

is"

Bandile: "Cape Town" Kwanele nodded "What are you studying?"

Kwanele: "BCom Accounting... chartered accounting. You?"

Bandile: "Agricultural Science"

Kwanele nodded "I'd really like to get to know you better, Kwanele Desha" he looked at her. Her cheeks full of food as she chewed. She looked at him while chewing. She had a wide forehead that she clearly didn't try to hide like many usually did and it suited her face perfectly.

Kwanele: "My boyfriend won't like

that much" she said after swallowing.

Bandile: "So my future wife is in a relationship with someone she thinks she'll spend her life with not knowing that her clown is waiting for her?" he joked and watched her laugh. The first marriage joke he'd ever made.

Kwanele: "So you're a clown?"

Bandile lifted his shoulders

"Handsome clown you are" she whispered softly before standing.

Bandile: "Don't you know you must keep your options open?"

Kwanele: "Meaning I should

cheat? Makes me certain that you want me to have an affair with you" she raised a brow.

Bandile: "I want you to get to know me which could eventually lead to a relationship. I'll come visit you at your place and you can come to mine. Grahamstown is right next door"

Kwanele: "Don't think my brother will like his friend dating his sister"

Bandile: "What if I promise to be the best boyfriend ever?"

Kwanele: "Don't you all?" she looked at him.

Daniel: "Didn't you say that you are not in the mood for people?"

he came down the passage without a shirt on "Why are you bothering my guests, Kwanele?" he shook his head.

Kwanele: "More like keeping them from leaving since their host left them" she walked to the sink

"Stop being on my case. Not today, satan...not today" she pointed at her brother.

Daniel: "Sorry you had to bare with her. Come let's go. More booze to finish" he tapped Bandile's shoulders.

Bandile: "I think the ladies should be taken home now. They're too drunk to even speak" Kwanele looked over her shoulder at him. He had a beautiful dark chocolate skin tone and a powerful jaw line. She wondered what his parents looked like to have given birth to such a handsome guy. The fact that he wanted the drunk ladies taken home told her that he was considerate but then she realized it could be just to impress her. It was a beautiful day though still cold and Kwanele decided to go out in her pyjamas a bit to get some

winter sun but when she felt her period pain intense she walked back in to finish the dishes. She was home only for the weekend because her parents asked her to come make sure Daniel didn't burn the house down. Though older than her they trusted her to be more responsible. Tammy woke up and fixed her weave while walking towards Daniel. His attention went from Bandile to her as he hugged her from behind and led her out.

Kwanele: "He wants to show his friends that he tapped that" she

shook her head "Typical man" she added while wiping the dish.

Bandile: "Some of us haven't tapped anything"

Kwanele: "Because you are barking at the wrong tree. Plenty willing girls out there so go to them"

Bandile: "After I get your number I'll go straight home" he promised.

Kwanele: "No" she said quickly. He walked over to her side and she had to look up because he was taller. Suddenly her thick pink onesie felt too hot. He smelled great and when he stood in front

of her, his presence just became more intense. She leaned backwards when he leaned forward thinking he wanted to kiss her but instead he took a dry dishcloth and dried the dishes she was washing. It were dishes they marinated meat in "That's not going to make me soft" she warned.

Bandile: "Just putting to practice what my mother taught me" he took a big Tupperware bowl and dried it "So why accounting?" he looked at her.

Kwanele: "I was just always good

at it. Got distinctions in economics and accounting in matric. You...why Agri?"

Bandile: "I want to be a food producer not just consumer"

Kwanele smiled and nodded.

Daniel: "Bandile, what are you doing? he walked in "Let Kwanele do the dishes, man. I'll dry them afterwards. I can't believe that you made my guest work" he looked at his sister.

Kwanele: "I didn't ask him to"

Bandile nodded.

Daniel: "Don't care. I'm going to put my shirt on. You're needed

outside, man. Leave my baby sis alone. Some of the friends who spoke to her never wanted to visit me again because she scared them off" Kwanele laughed and Daniel couldn't help but laugh too "I'll dry the dishes. She knows how we do things. Don't worry yourself, man" he walked to his room. Kwanele took Bandile's phone on the table.

Kwanele: "Unlock it" she gave it to him.

Bandile: "It's unlocked" she was shocked to get access after swiping. She'd never met someone

with no security on their phone whether male or female. She herself had a very complicated one. Bandile smiled as he watched her type her number and save it. Kwanele: "Maybe the universe really does want me to give a clown a chance just to hear what he has to say" they both laughed Bandile: "The clown is grateful for the chance. We'll talk soon" Kwanele nodded "Here" he gave her, her deodorant and she laughed.

Kwanele: "Thanks" she took it "I actually haven't applied any. Was

wondering where I put it. Luckily I don't have an odour yet" she lifted her arm and he laughed.

Bandile: "I'm never going to forget our first meeting" Kwanele blushed while laughing.

Kwanele: "And you were sure to get a good look too. I saw that so you have a lot of apologizing to do"

Bandile: "When are you going back to Grahamstown? I can start apologizing tomorrow"

Kwanele: "I have another commitment"

Bandile: "Okay, till we meet again"

then" he opened his arms and she looked at the foamy water in the sink while smiling before moving forward to reach his embrace.

Daniel: "Let's go, Bandz" Bandile watched Kwanele move backward quickly before she could even hug him. Bandile looked at her with a smile before leaving her. Luckily Daniel shouted while still in his room so he didn't get to see that hug that nearly happened.

Kwanele shut her eyes and blushed thinking about what had just happened. She couldn't remember a guy ever having that

effect on her. She smelled her deodorant container and it had a hint of his scent on it which left her smile wider as she took it in. It was mixed with hers and she for some odd reason loved the combination of feminine hygiene and masculine hygiene. She opened it and applied it in her underarm before getting back to washing dishes. When she walked pass the sliding door looking out to where Daniel's guests were she didn't like the sight of another girl hanging over Bandile but she reminded herself that he's not

her boyfriend. She had no such a thing. She went back to her bedroom and even the period pain decided to take a backseat and allow her to just take in what had happened. She didn't even get his surname. Bandile decided it was best to leave the party to not give Kwanele the wrong idea. He couldn't remember Bathandiwe making him feel so alive by being in her presence. The missed opportunity to get a hug made him want to see her again even more. He got inside a taxi and was on his way to his place. He dialled

her number as soon as he got home. Kwanele didn't expect him to call so soon. She wanted to get to know him better as much as he wanted to know her better. They decided they'd deal with Daniel when the time comes.

Vusi was stable but he was in no condition to go back home. The police asked him about any enemies and Vusi told them he had none. He knew there was bad blood between him and Cwayitha but he couldn't call him enemies. .
Asakhe: "I think that we must

rent the house, Vusi. That way we use the money to pay rent for a flat in town" she rubbed his upper arm.

Vusi: "It won't happen again Sakhe"

Asakhe: "You don't know that. Amahle and I don't sleep because we are afraid"

Vusi: "What about Amahle's school?"

Amahle: "We can get transport. When I lived with the Elephants they hired transportation for us"

Vusi: "It's more expenses" he looked at his wife. .

Asakhe: "It's just money, we're talking about our lives here which are irreplaceable. The only extra expense will be Amahle's transport. We will use the rent money we get for the house for a flat. A small two bedroom one will be enough"

Vusi: "So like a coward, I should vacate my own house?"

Asakhe: "I don't want to either but it's best. Please consider it. Think about us. We are women so more vulnerable especially with you here" Vusi closed his eyes.

Vusi: "It was a driveby shooting

that was none of my business"

Asakhe: "So you think. It could have been aimed at you specifically. You might not have enemies but you don't know who regards you as their enemy for whatever reason. You got that promotion when many had their eye on it. Please Vusimuzi don't try to play hero"

Vusi: "I grew up in the township. I don't see myself not greeting my neighbour"

Asakhe: "Me neither but we've got no choice. At least let's try for this year then. Liyema gave

me some flats that are not expensive. We can price our house's rent the same as those flats.

Many people want a place in the township. We'll rent it for a year. Have a contract and all stating it's only for a year"

Amahle: "Please, Tata I'm scared" she said quietly and Vusi breathed out loudly.

Vusi: "Okay but it's temporary" the ladies smiled.

Asakhe: "Thank you, sthandwa " she kissed his lips "The doctor said you'll be out of here in a few days. The neighbours were kind

enough to look after our house to ensure its not looted"

Vusi: "You see? Suburban neighbours don't do that. They'll just say it's not their concern"

Asakhe: "Only a year. When no one comes after you then we'll move back. If no one comes after you we'll know that it wasn't a personal attack but wrong place at the wrong time situation. I already spoke to someone who is willing to drive Amahle. When he takes the others to schools in town he'll pick Mahle up and take her to hers" she explained.

Vusi: "Okay, Asakhe. We must sort out the school issue soon. Amahle can't miss more class" Asakhe nodded "How are you two?" he looked at Amahle.

Amahle: "We are okay. Just a bit rattled but okay and glad you're fine. Bhut Liyema was here and sis Ntombikayise sent her love"

Vusi: "Tell them I said thank you" the ladies nodded "Start looking for the flat then and someone with sober habits to rent our house. Make sure it's not a family because it'll be difficult to evict them when time comes" Asakhe

nodded "I gotta go because the medical funds will run dry soon. I can't afford a cash payment"

Asakhe: "we'll handle that. Just heal". They planned their

temporary move more though

Vusi didn't like it. He was doing it for his ladies.

When Cwayitha accidentally got access to Snakes phone, she nearly had a stroke when she found

Amahle's half naked pictures on

his phone. She quickly went to

show Lulupho while Snake was still bathing. Kim and Chumani

were fortunately out with

friends.

Lulupho: "It is in his pornography folder" he said shocked "This boy literally saved his own niece's picture together with those of porn stars" he stood and went inside.

Snake: "Haibo, bhuda" he said when Lulupho walked in while he was still naked. Lulupho didn't even waste time. He took a broomstick and laid it heavy on Snake's naked soaped up body.

Snake was slippery but Lulupho made sure that Snake didn't get away.

Lulupho: "Why the hell do you have Amahle's naked pictures in your pornography folder, Solomizi?" he put in so much force in hitting his brother that Solomizi started to bleed from the mouth.

Snake: "I'm sorry, Bhuti" he cried out. The broom broke on his skin.

Lulupho: "Bring me the mop, Cwayitha. If this boy didn't learn anything in prison then I'll teach him a lesson. Mama was too soft with him now look" Cwayitha did as ordered and Lulupho just kept hitting Solomizi. Cwayitha didn't stop him because she was as

disgusted by the findings. Solomizi managed to get away and went to a corner where his bags were. He took out a gun which made both Lulupho and Cwayitha freeze.

Lulupho: "You want to shoot? You want to make Mama mourn yet another child?" he shouted
"Shoot, Solomizi!" he ordered.

Cwayitha: "No, Solomizi. Don't shoot please. Yhooooo!" she sunk to the floor crying "Lord, what have we done to you to deserve this? Have we not suffered enough?" she cried.

Lulupho: "You think that you are a man? Then shoot. Let more of us perish because you best believe that Mama will die should she have to put another child in a grave"

Snake: "Get out of my way, bhuda" his snot ran from his nose as he too was crying. He wore a long winter coat that belonged to Chumani over his sore naked flesh. He still pointed the gun at his brother while the other hand buttoned the coat "Get away from the door" he ordered.

Lulupho: "Cwayitha call the police.

Tell them that we might know who Vusi's shooter is" Snake let loose a shot which had Lulupho on the floor.

Cwayitha: "Bhuti!" she shouted and crawled to him. Solomizi jumped over both of them and made a duck for it. The community had started to gather after hearing the shouting and when a shot was fired the police got called. The members of the community chased after Solomizi not giving him a chance to get away. They too gave him a good beating and left him bleeding as

they waited for the police to arrive. Lulupho was not shot, Solomizi shot up and not at him to warn him. Cwayitha was beyond herself. When Chumani heard what was happening home he too ran as quickly as he could. He found his uncle unrecognisable with blood oozing from all visible parts of his body. Chumani was relieved to see his mother was okay. The police arrived and took Solomizi for medical care before they'd take him into custody. Police: "If the gun is indeed that which shot Mr Gala then he's not

going to see the light of day again. Let's not forget he's out of parole"

Cwayitha: "I'm just glad that he's behind bars. I shudder when I think about what he could have done to my niece. Had I not seen those pictures" she started to cry. "I know he's a criminal but when he was accused of rape, I defended him saying not my brother" she added.

Kim: "He's made me touch his penis a couple of times growing up, Mama but he stopped as I got older. That's why I haven't

been around since his arrival" she said standing at the door crying. Cwayitha collapsed after her daughter spoke and an ambulance had to be called.

Chumani: "Did he do more?" he walked to his sister furious and sad. Kim shook her head.

Kim: "He just made me fondle it until his body would just react in a strange way. I was a child and afraid to talk especially since he threatened to do more" she broke down. Lulupho was crying too as he tried to wake his sister up.

Officer: "He died on his way to

hospital" another copy entered and gave them the news. An ambulance came for Cwayitha and there was too much grief to process. Lulupho didn't want to lose another sibling and he knew Cwayitha didn't either but when people like Solomizi who abused their own nieces became less in the world society couldn't help but rejoice a bit. Chumani never felt as deeper of a regret about leaking those pictures. He realized that somewhere out there could be a Solomizi targeting Amahle too and after Kim told them

about her abuse he felt no better than Solomizi. He felt he added to the abuse of woman too and for that he felt he could never forgive himself. Lulupho was afraid to even tell their mother about the loss. He knew that it would be the last nail in the coffin for the elderly but it had to be done. Solomizi had been exposed to Lulupho's daughters too and he dreaded asking them if their uncle touched them inappropriately in any way. No parent was prepared to hear such but he had to ask them.

When Ntombi saw the positive results in the two pregnancy tests that Mahlubandile brought in the morning she couldn't remember the last time she cried that much but then it hit her. The last time she shed so much tears was when Liyema took the boys all those years ago. Luckily Makhulu and Tamkhulu were out early for a church conference. The boys didn't sleep home as they partied close to Liyema's place they decided it was responsible they sleep at their dad's.

Mahlubandile sat worried sick about Ntombi who told her she wanted to be left alone after an uproar of tears. Ntombi's phone being off didn't help much either and she couldn't share the news with Yanda. She took her phone.

Lefa: "Lefa, hello?" he said answering his phone and didn't recognize the number.

Hlubi: "Lefa, hi it's me, Mahlubandile. Ntombi's best friend. I kinda stole your number from her phone" Lefa's eyes shot open.

Lefa: "Uhm..."

Hlubi: "Oh no, it's nothing sinister" she promised "Please can you go check in with Ntombi" she added hesitantly.

Lefa: "She told me that she will be too busy at church today and after just wanted to be alone"

Hlubi: "She's home" Lefa's brows drew together "It's just one of those days where a woman's hormones are all over so that's why she asked for space" she added.

Lefa: "Shouldn't I respect that?"

Hlubi: "Sometimes but trust me this time she wants to be held

and by you. We sometimes don't know what's good for us until we receive it"

Lefa: "Uhm...okay I'll drive there right away"

Hlubi: "Alone if possible"

Lefa: "Mahlubandile you're scaring me right now" he took his keys.

Hlubi: "Just go hold your woman. Don't tell her about this call or she'll never trust me again.

These hormonal imbalances are secret to us so it'll be like breaking the girl code"

Lefa: "Okay. Let me go. Should I take her anything to balance the

imbalance?" just when he thought women couldn't get more complicated he got faced with that.

Hlubi: "Her favourite snack won't hurt and a lot of understanding"
Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "You might actually be sending me into a warzone where she could slap me" Hlubi nodded.

Hlubi: "She's not the type. Now go" she hung up regretting what she did soon after. She convinced herself that it was good for Ntombikayise. Hlomphe was out with Hazel and Lefa imagined it

would be the most frustrating outing due to communication but Hazel insisted. He drove to the store to get Ntombi's favourite chocolate because that was her favourite snack. He imagined he was a man with an abundance of understanding so as he drove to Ntombi's he suddenly felt nervous. He wanted to see her but she was clear in saying she wanted to be alone and he decided to respect that. He knocked on the door for a long while and when he turned the knob it was locked so he went to the backdoor. The door was

open but the burglary gate was locked.

Lefa: "Baby!" he called out.

Ntombi sat up quickly, her heart beating fast when she heard his voice "Ntombikayise, please open. I know you're here, babe" she heard him pull at the gate. She knew that he wouldn't leave until he saw her and she was certain this martial art of his enabled him to break doors too so she stood from the couch to walk to the door. She knew she looked terrible "Hi" Lefa added with a smile when he saw her. He didn't

see the terrible look she saw when looking in the mirror. He was just glad to see her. Her vision became blurry until she couldn't see him so she blinked to let the tears fall. Lefa pulled at the gate a few times desperate to get to her "Open the door, Nana" he pleaded. When he saw her standing just crying he reached his arm inside to reach for the hooks where the keys are usually hung but couldn't reach it "Ntombikayise, open the door please" he pulled at the gate again. He didn't see her yesterday

and for the entire day that day so he didn't know what might have happened between the last time they saw each other to when she stood crying in front of him. His mind went crazy with the worst scenarios which made him yank the gate more aggressively.

Ntombi: "You'll break it" she said after coming back to reality.

Lefa: "Open please" this time it was more of a demand than a request.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry, Lefa" she apologized in advance.

Lefa: "Baby, open" he watched her go to the kitchen counter where her keys were. Her hands were shaking as she tried to fit the key in the keyhole so he took the stack of keys from her hands gently and opened from the outside with urgency. He slid the gate to his right and just as he thought the barrier between them was out of the way she moved backwards apologising.

Lefa: "Ntombi, stop before you trip and fall" he got closer to her. She stopped allowing him close and though he had no idea why

she was acting the way she was, he held her so tightly hoping to take whatever pain away "What's going on? Did someone hurt you?" he dreaded her answer. She held on so tight that had he had a weak physical structure she'd sure have fractured a rib or two. Ntombi: "I'm...", she couldn't finish her sentence.

Lefa: "You're what?" he held her face in his hands and kissed her moist lips.

Ntombi: "Pregnant" she said with closed eyes to avoid seeing those beautiful brown eyes turn to

those of rage. He wasn't angry but just numb. Maybe that was his anger but he just looked at her and waited for her to look at him. She finally did. Her face wet with her own tears.

Lefa: "You're what?" he had to ask again.

Ntombi: "Pregnant" Ntombi whispered and watched him walk to lean over the kitchen counter "I'm sorry, Lefa" she put her sleeves over her eyes to block the tears.

Lefa: "How did that happen, Ntombi? Well I know how but

weren't you preventing such from happening after we tested and stopped using a condom?" his voice that of a defeated man. She explained to him what led to them facing the situation

"Communications, baby...why didn't you tell me that your body was taking strain. We'd have gotten back to other prevention measures" he didn't raise his voice but Ntombi knew that he was angry. He felt a lump throw in his throat and he sunk to the tiled floor and leaned with his back against the counter "A condom

could have prevented all of this" he reminded her.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry. I know it doesn't change a thing but I'm sorry. I also know that you will not want to continue with the lobola negotiations next week. I'll tell Tamkhulu that I pulled out" she looked at the green grass outside. Lefa looked at her and she turned her head to face him.

Lefa: "Are you kidding me?"

Ntombi: "We can't start a marriage while trying to get over the loss of a baby, Lefa" she shook her head "And you still

angry at me for being so stupid"
she watched him stand.

Lefa: "We can do this" he nodded continuously while she shook her head "All that we've got to do is go to the hospital so that they'll do whatever procedure needed" he added.

Ntombi: "I'm not going to go and take an abortion pill, Lefa" she protested.

Lefa: "Ntombi" he said quietly and she shook her head.

Ntombi: "No, I'm going to let my body take care of it naturally. If I go and do it, I'll have to get

over the guilty. I'm not going to do it" she said stubbornly.

Lefa: "Well I'm not going to wait for a day when I find you bleeding to death in your office, Ntombikayise. I'm taking you to hospital" he was afraid of losing her. He scooped her up with ease and she was kicking and screaming in his arms. Her desperate cries made him realize that he could be hurting her so he put her down and watched her sink to the floor crying. He started to cry too and sat down looking at her. They remained that way for a long

while before he took one of her sneakers that she kicked off while trying to stop him from taking her to the hospital and went where she still sat. He slipped it into her white socked foot. She flinched when he held her not because she feared him but because she thought he'd pick up to take her to the hospital again. When she realized it was to hug she held on to him. Lefa: "I'm sorry" he kissed her neck "Get up from the cold floor please" he didn't want to try pick her up again. She slowly stood

with him. He locked the gate and closed the door because the wind started to pick up. Ntombi left him and went to her room but didn't block him from entering. It had started to get dark so her room had a faint sun ray shining in giving just enough light for her to see where she's going. She laid on the bed on her belly and her face buried in the pillow. The bed moved and she felt Lefa's warm body against hers. His hand resting on her lower back.

Lefa: "I don't want to cancel the negotiations and I don't want to

postpone it either. Yes, not many go into marriage after such happened but I still want to marry you" he whispered "Baby, please say something" he pleaded "Did I hurt you?" she felt him scan her body and she shook her head. "Let me in then" he kissed her bare back before lowering her top.

Ntombi: "I'm just sorry for laying this on you. I know learning that marrying me meant not having more children who will be biologically yours hit hard. Now I'm making you get over the loss

of a baby you didn't think would exist. I was stupid and I'm sorry to bring you into that" she said in a whisper "I know that had the circumstances been different you'd have been happy" she added.

Lefa: "Same applies to you and hence it's so difficult to go to the doctor but baby, your body is taking strain. An embryo growing in your tubes can come with serious health issues. I researched it. Yes, I'm still angry that you didn't tell me to use a condom but reminding you doesn't help at all. We're here and we

must make the best decision for your health"

Ntombi: "It's our child, Lefa" she said quietly. He held her hand and kissed her multiple times. He was well aware of that fact, the fact that it was their child. He was certain that it would have been one of the most beautiful creations but it was not meant to be. The longer Ntombi remained pregnant, he risked losing her too. He held her until she finally fell asleep and he was glad that she did. He stood to go switch on the house lights but found the boys

home already.

Bukhosi: "We thought no one's here"

Lefa: "Your mother isn't feeling well" he went to the kitchen "Is there perhaps anything she can eat when she wakes up?" he asked.

Banele: "There's always leftover in this house. What's wrong with her?"

Bubele: "We found the kitchen seats knocked over"

Lefa: "I was just chasing her around and fooling around when a migraine hit her" he lied. The last

thing wanted was for them to accuse her of abusing their mom. Bukhosi: "Eish not that devil again. She doesn't eat anything when she's like that. Is she fast asleep?" Lefa nodded "Good she always felt better afterwards. Did you make sure that the room is dark?" Lefa shook his head. "I'll go sort it out" he ran upstairs. He found Ntombikayise looking off as she made her way out of the room "I was about to switch the lights off. How bad is the migraine? Bad enough for medical attention?" Ntombikayise shook

her head.

Ntombi: "I'm fine. Just make me food and tea please" they both walked down. Ntombikayise's eyes met Lefa's and soon the others fussed. They all offered to make her food.

Lefa: "I feel bad for trying to force you to go to hospital. I don't want you fearing me, Ngqangqa" he whispered as they sat on the couch.

Ntombi: "I don't, sthandwa sam" she looked at him.

Lefa: "Have your food in bed. I thought you'd be out for hours"

Ntombi shook her head.

Ntombi: "First thing tomorrow we can go see a doctor" she looked at him.

Lefa: "Thank you" he watched her get closer until she was in his arms. He kissed her and when Ntombikayise tilted her head she saw a hint of fear in his eyes.

They were shiny too so clearly emotions were still high "I love you" he gave her passionate kiss and Ntombi bit her bottom lip after they broke it.

Ntombi: "Please spend the night, baby. I don't want to be alone. I

actually thought I would do this without involving you but I don't want to"

Lefa: "I'm not going anywhere" he promised "I'll ask the boys to go get Hlompho from my parents" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry, Lefa"

Lefa: "I know it wasn't done on purpose. Tomorrow we'll start to deal with whatever but for now I just want to hold you. I'm thankful for Mahlubandile for advising me to come"

Ntombi: "A part of me knew she would but I'm glad she did"

Banele: "Leftovers for our patient and some rooibos tea" he put the tray on the table. It had two plates on it.

Lefa: "Please go get Hlompho from my parents. You still remember where it is?"

Bubele: "I remember where it is" he jumped for the car keys.

Ntombi: "Guys please"

Bukhosi: "I've got an assignment to finish. So you boys enjoy"

Bubele: "I'll drive to and you from" he looked at Banele and he nodded.

Ntombi: "Seatbelts" she reminded.

Bukhosi was out the backdoor and the others the front door. Lefa took one plate and fed Ntombi. She laughed.

Ntombi: "I can feed myself"

Lefa: "We'll finish one plate together and tackle the other" he fed himself "Should the boys have thought of pranking me with laxative in my food I'm going to run to the toilet with their mom" he joked and Ntombikayise laughed. He would feed her and feed himself with the same spoon. He fed her more from both plates and Ntombikayise didn't point it

out. She had her tea between feeding until nothing was left. Lefa suddenly held her belly. He knew that their little one was in there and alive in all sense an embryo is kept alive by its mother's body.

Lefa: "Remember when I told you that you are glowing?" he looked at her. She nodded and hid her face in his neck. Lefa kissed her forehead and suddenly hoped for a miracle. He didn't know where else a baby could grow besides a womb but he hoped that their baby miraculously found a cosy spot

somewhere his/her could grow to term without harming mommy. 

S2-INSERT 67 (SHORT AND NOT EDITED)

Lefa had not slept a wink last night as too many thoughts both good and bad flesh through his mind. He was glad to see that Ntombi fell asleep and as he remained awake he'd occasionally just look at her. He still hated himself for trying to force her to do something that she didn't want to. He eventually fell asleep.

Ntombi woke up and was greeted by his closed eyes. She didn't wake him up but instead stood to go to the bathroom to brush her teeth. She decided to also take a shower so she'd be ready to go to hospital when Lefa woke up. Makhulu and Tamkhulu were up dressed in their church uniform. Usually Lefa made it a point to be up and gone before the elders got up but his body betrayed him on that day. The TV was on and when Ntombi peeked to the lounge she was shocked to see everyone was up. She greeted them all and went to

join her grandparents in the kitchen. The kids followed too. Ntombi wondered if they noticed anything.

Ntombi: "Why is everyone up so early?" she looked at them all.

Tamkhulu: "You are the one who is up later than usual. It's almost ten" Ntombikayise raised a brow.

Bukhosi: "You good?" Ntombi nodded. "Hlomphe is still snoring and Banele. We even had breakfast already" he pointed to the empty bowls in the sink. Lefa walked down the stairs looking

like one who was not sure if he should walk down the rest of the stairs or up again.

Makhulu: "Good morning, Lefa" she smiled "Stop looking like a naughty schoolboy caught doing something he was not supposed to" she laughed and watched him walk down. He greeted everyone and knew Hlompho was still asleep.

Lefa: "It's just that... I'm usually out before anyone can wake up" he gave a nervous laugh.

Tamkhulu: "Then we better get

you two married soon so that you won't feel obligated to sneak out like a teenager". Lefa felt put on the spot.

Ntombi: "What will you have for breakfast?" she looked at her fiancé.

Lefa: "Whatever everyone else is having, baby thank you" he smiled "How are you feeling?" he asked.

Ntombi: "Physically I'm feeling good" she smiled.

Makhulu: "You must go see the doctor just in case"

Ntombi: "Lefa is taking me to one later on, Ma. We decided it's best

that I go straight to hospital"
she went to take out eggs from
the fridge.

Tamkhulu: "That's a good idea"
he nodded.

Bubele: "Ma, are you wearing new
make up?" Ntombikayise wore a
confused face "Just that you look
different" Lefa looked at Ntombi
and smiled. Makhulu caught the
little moment between the two
and raised a brow.

Ntombi: "It must be the healthy
eating that I had been doing"

Makhulu: "You've eaten healthy
before and I don't remember it

having such great effects" the boys nodded "Engaged life clearly loves you" Ntombi laughed softly "But it did nothing for those hips though, they are still wide" she added.

Ntombi: "Wow, Ma just when you were doing well with the compliments" she shook her head while smiling.

Lefa: "That's a compliment too" he looked at her curves in a seductive way.

Tamkhulu: "Hey, pasop" he warned Lefa.

Lefa: "I'm sorry, Tamkhulu" he

raised his arms up in surrender while laughing. Hlompfo came down flashing his thin upper body and Banele was yawning right behind him "Are you going to eat eggs with bread?" he asked Hlompfo.

Hlompfo: "Cereal for me please"
Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "Banele please make Hlompfo cereal" she watched her son have a bit of morning attitude "What will you have?" she asked him.

Banele: "I'll get cereal too" he scratched his head as one who

had parasites on his hair.

Hlomphe: "Are you on your way home already?" he asked his father.

Lefa: "I'm taking aunt Ntombikayise to see a doctor"

Hlomphe looked at Ntombi to check for any signs of sickness.

Hlomphe: "Then why are you letting her work if she's sick?"

Lefa raised a brow not having an answer for the very valid question. He wasn't certain if calling her sick was even right but he didn't want her overdoing it.

Lefa: "She's not sick. Just a

routine check-up" Hlompho nodded. Banele put cereal before him and he thanked Banele before pouring his own milk. A car hooted outside. Tamkhulu: "That must be our transport. We are going to see you all later to hear what the doctor said" Ntombikayise nodded. Makhulu: "Hopefully it's nothing serious that requires you to be admitted" she kissed Ntombi's cheek "we're definitely going to pray for a clean bill of health" she smiled.

Ntombi: "Thanks, Ma"

Tamkhulu: "Ma Mlandu, I don't

want to be late" he said while at the door already.

Makhulu: "I'm right behind you Tata ka Ntombi" she took her bag and her hymn book while shaking her head. Tamkhulu waited for her so she'd exit first. When his wife was out the door he lifted his hat in the air to say goodbye before he put it on his head.

Bukhosi: "Let me go finish my school work"

Bubele: "It's always school with you" he looked at his brother
"Just have a lazy day today" he

suggested.

Bukhosi: "I wish I could but I can't. I don't expect you to understand"

Bubele: "Oh so now you think you're better than me?"

Lefa: "Boys please" he stopped the growing argument "I'm sure he didn't mean it like that,

Bubele. Varsity is just demanding"

Bubele nodded "Next time Bukhosi don't make it sound as though you're superior just because he's not studying. Books aren't for everyone" he looked at Bukhosi.

Bukhosi: "Sorry, bro and indeed you

might be the next self-made millionaire varsity dropout" he playfully brushed Bubele's hair. Bubele: "I'm working on it. Let me go shower" he hit Bukhosi's shoulder before running up the stairs laughing.

Ntombi: "Will you guys please look after Hlomphe while we're out?"

Banele: "We'll have a lazy Sunday of attacking the snacks and TV. Do you have homework?" he asked Hlomphe.

Hlomphe: "Mathematics" he answered "My dad and I usually do it Sunday nights" he added.

Ntombi: "Banele will help you. We'll check if it's correct when we return. Did you bring your books?"
Hlomphe shook his head.

Lefa: "I'll help him when we're home, don't worry". Bukhosi went to his room while Hlomphe and Banele took their food to the lounge. Hlomphe was closer to Banele than any of the other boys and Ntombi thought that maybe it's because Banele was more fluent in sign language than the others. Lefa went to take out two plates when he saw Ntombi switch the stove off. She dished

up for the two of them and he thanked her with a kiss. Neither of them wanted to talk about what would happen in an hour or two so they ate in comfortable silence. Ntombikayise went to wear her sneakers and jersey when they finished having breakfast. They said goodbye to the kids and were soon on the road. Lefa's music was all that filled the car until they reached the emergency room.

Lefa: "Hi" he said to Ntombi and watched her turn her gaze from the car parked next to them to

him. He didn't want to be where they were as much as she but he felt he had no choice. He unbuckled her seatbelt and held her so she'd turn her entire body to face him. She felt his cool lips n hers "We're going to be okay" he assured her. Ntombi: "Everything is going to change after this appointment, baby. I'm going to be part of the many women who have experienced a miscarriage. I should be so happy right now" she smiled faintly.

Lefa: "All I know is that I'm not going anywhere. I'll be here every

single step of the way. Now before the procedure and long after it too. You hear?" Ntombi nodded "Ready?" she shook her head.

Ntombi: "But it's not like I've got a choice. I had a choice to prevent all of this but I chose to risk it and now we're here"

Lefa: "I love you" he kissed her again before opening his door.

Ntombi did the same and waited for him to walk over to her side. She reached for his hand and the two of them made their way inside. It was nice and warm

inside and they took care of the admin. They were told to wait a little bit and Ntombikayise clung to Lefa like someone was going to steal him. She just needed to feel him close as it brought comfort. When the medical personnel said Ntombi could come through they both stood slowly from the waiting area seats and followed behind her. They were met friendly staff indeed and Ntombi was in a hospital gown in no time. The first thing that they made her do was take a pregnancy test. Lefa waited in the room in

anticipation and stood when Ntombi came back.

Ntombi: "Still positive. They said they'd draw blood to do a blood test too" he helped her back on the bed. Dr Potgieter came in and Ntombikayise was glad to see that their paths had crossed again.

Dr: "Miss Poti" he said with a smile "I thought I told you to never come back to this place again" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Trust me I don't want to be here either. This is my fiancé, Lefa Gwala" Dr Potgieter

shook Lefa's hand "The doctor treated the last migraine I had" she looked at Lefa and he nodded. Doc: "I'm glad that you decided to give love a chance again" he said while looking at her file. The nurse came in and drew Ntombi's blood before walking out once again. "Have you been having any mild bleeding?" he asked her to lie on her back.

Ntombi: "No, Doctor" she laid looking at the ceiling as he pressed her abdominal area a bit.

Doc: "No pain?" Ntombi shook her head quickly "So just the usual

pregnancy symptom?" Ntombi nodded "And you say that they performed a hysterectomy after you gave birth to your quadruples?" he asked.

Ntombi: "They said that I bled too much so they had to"

Doc: "That unfortunately does happen. All quick tests came back positive so there is a high chance that you are indeed pregnant.

While we wait for the blood test results I'll have a transvaginal ultrasound done to check if the embryo indeed attached itself to your tubes" Lefa shifted forward

on his seat.

Lefa: "Is it like the normal one?"

Doc: "Unfortunately this one is a bit more invasive. I'm going to insert a scope into her vaginal canal and it'll give me imaging of her reproductive system. If the foetus attached itself in her tubes I might be able to detect it"

Lefa: "Any complications that come with that?"

Doc: "It's safe and she shouldn't feel any pain during the examination either. A little pain might occur when the device

enters the vagina but that should be about it"

Lefa: "Is there a way for a baby to survive during an ectopic pregnancy"

Doc: "The baby can't survive outside of the womb" he looked at Ntombi and she nodded quickly before looking at Lefa's disappointed face. Let me go and get the scan" he excused himself. Lefa sat besides Ntombi and held her hand.

Ntombi: "I hope that I won't get admitted. I don't want to explain myself so soon after all of

this" she said softly.

Lefa: "If you need to stay overnight then we'll come up with some excuse" he promised. The doctor returned pushing a machine that had a black screen on it. The doctor told Ntombi to relax. Ntombi felt uncomfortable with having her boyfriend in the room while another man had full view of her vagina but it was necessary. Indeed there was a slight discomfort when the device entered her. When Lefa felt her flinch a bit he looked at her.

Lefa: "Pain?" he whispered and

watched her shake her head.

Ntombi: "Just very uncomfortable, baby" she watched him smile before kissing her forehead.

Lefa: "I don't like having another man see so much of you either" they both laughed softly "But this is an exception" he added. He noticed that Dr Potgieter was not even bothered with Ntombi's treasure. His focus was on the screen so Lefa could focus on Ntombi.

Ntombi: "I love you" she held his face in her hand and he kissed her palm.

Lefa: "I love you more. You should take the entire week off so you can recover or however long you'll need" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I don't think it's a major surgery, baby. They might even give me pills instead"

Lefa: "But still"

Ntombi: "Okay, I promise to take it easy afterwards" she smiled.

They got lost in their conversation and Ntombi even forgot her legs were spread wide while the doctor operated his device. Lefa could only imagine how difficult it was on her. She not

only had to deal with the emotional pain of the matter but also the physical pain of it so he felt good about himself when he managed to make her forget by giving her kisses and even teasing her.

Doc: "Everything looks good. There's no sign of an ectopic pregnancy" he said with his gaze still on the screen.

Lefa: "So the home pregnancy tests could have been wrong?"

Doc: "It's possible, sir. I advise that we wait for the blood tests. It's very difficult to actually

diagnose an ectopic pregnancy" he said before continuing what he was doing. When 35 minutes passed the Doctor was nearly certain that Ntombi wasn't pregnant. Their conversation came to a halt when there was a sound in the room that was not there all those minutes they were in the room. Lefa looked as the doctor fixed his glasses to get a clearer look at the screen. Lefa didn't know that sound because Mimi kept him at bay for most of her pregnancy but Ntombi knew that sound all too well.

Ntombi: "It's a foetal heartbeat" she whispered so quietly but Lefa heard her. He looked at the doctor.

Doc: "It's a heartbeat" he looked at the pair "There is the sac" he pointed at the little black dot and there is the little bugger" he pointed to a dot within the sac with a smile "Your baby is nestled perfectly inside his/her mother's womb" Lefa stood to go look at the screen. Dr Potgieter showed him everything once again and Lefa looked at Ntombi who had her hands over her eyes crying. He

went back to her and removed her hands over her face. He let out a little laugh of disbelief and his own tears ran free. He placed his forehead against hers and the two of them just cried. Dr Potgieter couldn't help but smile as he watched them and his emotions suddenly got the better of him. Ntombi was one of those patients that he never forgot about so he was glad that she decided to let love in again. He was sure to make her decent as he waited for them to take in the happy news. He lost count of

the number of times Lefa told Ntombi that he loved her and the number of kisses he planted on her face. Finally the couple wanted an explanation of where a womb suddenly came from.

Doc: "The only logical explanation is misdiagnosis. It actually happens more often than we care to admit. In a public hospital it's easy for such a mistake to happen because the poor institutions are understaffed. I think your file got mixed up with that of someone who had a hysterectomy after birth. Wombs

don't grow back so I'm certain that it was a misdiagnosis" he smiled. "Based on the information that you gave me and the imaging in front of me, I'd say that 8 weeks along. Baby is growing where he/she must and I'm honestly happy with the results the scan showed. There are no abnormalities in your reproductive system. I could actually kick the person who left you thinking all these years that you had your uterus removed because it means some woman out there found out the hard way

that she doesn't have any but medical staff are also just human so I apologize on behalf of that doctor. No ectopic pregnancy and we don't have to wait for the blood test. Your baby was sure to let us know that its alive with that heartbeat. With all of that said I'd just like to be the first to congratulate you" he shook Lefa's hand and then Ntombi's. Lefa: "Thank you" he smiled proudly. Ntombi sat up on the bed holding her belly while smiling. Dr Potgieter explained all that Ntombi already knew about her

getting iron supplements and such. He excused himself so she'd get dressed in her clothes again. Lefa lifted her up in a hug and held her in his arms as he looked up at her for a long while.

Lefa: "I knew from the first day that I met you that I want to build with you. I'm so happy I could burst" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "We are going to have six kids" her eyes widened "who in modern times have six kids?" they both laughed.

Lefa: "You and me and many others I think" he kissed her

"Get dressed so I can go spoil you rotten" she smiled.

Ntombi: "First they said my womb is torn but I got pregnant. Next they say it's gone yet now I'm pregnant. It's frustrating because both diagnosis came with so much heartache"

Lefa: "I'm sorry" he put her down.

Ntombi: "It's okay" she started to get dressed "Baby, you really aren't upset with me right? I mean I still stopped taking the pill without talking about other prevention measures" she wore

her jean.

Lefa: "I came here thinking we'll walk out crying but instead we're celebrating. Any anger that I had yesterday is gone"

Ntombi: "Thank you" she smiled
"Please can we keep this quiet until after the wedding" Lefa frowned and she laughed "Please" she pleaded.

Lefa: "But I'm excited" he sulked like a little boy.

Ntombi: "I know but please just until the end of the first trimester then"

Lefa: "You're killing me,

Ntombikayise Poti but okay"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Thank you". He helped her get dressed and the doctor returned.

Doc: "I took the liberty to print these for you two" he gave them printouts of the scan "It's very unlikely to hear a heartbeat so early but I'm glad. I think it put your minds at ease" Lefa nodded before taking the scans.

Lefa: "It does. Thank you so much, doc" he shook the doctor's hand. .

Doc: "Take care" he smiled at

Ntombi and she thanked him.

Lefa: "My lady's pregnant!" he shouted and the doctor laughed before leaving them. He literally told everyone they passed that Ntombi was pregnant. Even the hobbo by the side of the road was told and was happy with the couple he didn't even know.

Ntombi: "Lefa, shhh, baby" she had to put it to a stop "We're nearly home and I'm not ready for anyone to share" she added.

Lefa: "Baby, I spent hours stressing at the hospital so I can't contain my joy. I had to

express it and telling strangers helped with that" Ntombi laughed and shook her head. "Can you believe that I actually haven't showered?" he revealed. Ntombi: "Yet you've been raising those arms in the air with such confidence" they both laughed "we'll take a shower together when we get home" she added. They reached home and found the house empty. Not even Bukhosi who claimed to have a lot of schoolwork was home.

Ntombikayise checked her phone and found texts from them saying

they went out for air and they borrowed her car. The lovers went to the bedroom where they got rid of their clothing before going to take a shower together. Lefa didn't even give in to the sexual advances Ntombi made because he feared she'd slip and fall in the shower during the moment of heat but there was plenty of foreplay which involved washing each other and just fooling around. They dried themselves and were on the bed kissing shortly after. Ntombi gave Lefa full access of her

freshly bathed body and he was sure to love everyting spot on it. He moved his lips from her soft lips to the curve of her neck before going even lower to her tender breast. While his tongue caressed her erect nipples his hand lovingly caressed the other twin and he'd take turn before he went lower. She held onto his head and moaned louder the lower she felt it travel. She didn't want to have a climax before him so when she felt the pleasure get more intense she stopped him. He knew why, he's learned to read

her non verbal communication so he smiled before positioning himself between her warm thighs. Her folds wet and warm and as usual drove him to a point of no return as he thrust himself inside her slowly. He smiled when he got reminded of the fact that the body that he was one with also carried his baby. When she clung to him and her moans became louder he knew that he was doing something right and his own body couldn't hold off any longer though he didn't want the moment to end. He loved her until

her body tensed as she reached the edge. His own release following just half a second after. Lefa: "I love you" he said still thrusting slowly. Her bottom lip was between her teeth and her eyes narrow by the drunkness of what he was doing to her.

Another faint wave of pleasure forcing her to close her eyes.

Ntombi: "I love you too" she whispered and looked at those intoxicating eyes of his "I love you too, baby" she repeated and held on tighter.

Lefa: "You're beautiful" she titled

her head to look at him as they laid side by side.

Ntombi: "Thank you. You're handsome too" Lefa laughed "who do you think the baby will look like?" she smiled.

Lefa: "You" he said without hesitation.

Ntombi: "I want her to have your eyes though" he smiled.

Lefa: "Her?"

Ntombi: "We've got five boys already" she reminded him.

Lefa: "Imagine having five older brothers" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "And a dad who knows

Kung Fu. I feel sorry for you, pumpkin" she looked at her belly and Lefa laughed "You'll date when you are 30" they both laughed "But another boy would be as much of a blessing" Lefa nodded "But I do hope to have someone to dress up in pink though" she smiled.

Lefa: "Let's wait and see" he kissed her hand. They day dreamed more about the future. More love making happened until they both fell asleep but a doorbell interrupted them. Lefa wore his jean and went to the

door to answer. Ntombikayise put on her gown and followed after a while. Mahlubandile stood with a huge fruit basket.

Hlubi: "I know that no words are enough to comfort both of you but it'll get better. Just don't allow anything to come between you" her eyes were red clearly she'd been crying.

Lefa: "I'll be right back" he ran to the room.

Hlubi: "I didn't mean to upset him"

Ntombi: "Trust me Lefa is a lot of things today but upset is not

one of them" she looked up

"Something happened, Something good" she looked at Hlubi.

Ntombikayise told Hlubi everything and Mahlubandile started to cry.

Hlubi: "You're not pranking me, right?" Ntombikayise shook her head "Oh my god I'm going to be an aunt again" she shouted and hugged Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "Shh" she laughed "It's not public news and it shouldn't be until after a few weeks please" she pleaded.

Hlubi: "This body of yours is just

so mysterious. If it doesn't renew a womb, it regrows it but I don't freakin care as long as it's doing well. Oh my goodness I'm so happy. So I can't tell anyone?"

Ntombikayise nodded. "Okay...okay I can keep quiet" she tried to convince herself. Lefa came down with a shirt on "Congratulations!" she shouted and he smiled.

Lefa: "Thank you" he looked at Ntombi. They went to enjoy a chat over a cup of tea. Lefa wanted with everything in him to call Kgethang but he feared he'd tell Nolu and she'd once again talk

out so he decided he'd keep quiet until after the first trimester as Ntombi asked him to.

Mahlubandile went home so happy she wanted to shout it from a mountain top but she couldn't either. Lefa helped Ntombikayise peel veggies as she was busy cooking dinner. The entire family came home minutes apart. The first thing that Makhulu asked about was how the doctor's appointment went. Ntombikayise and Lefa exchanged a look once again which Makhulu noticed but unlike the one in the morning that

one came with some masked smiling which left Makhulu very suspicious.

Ntombi: "He said everything is okay, Ma" she smiled.

Makhulu: "That's great. Anything else we must know?" the couple both shook their heads quickly "Mmmm" she left them to change out of her church uniform.

Hlomphe walked from the lounge

Hlomphe: "Dad, we've got to go home and do homework" he looked at Lefa.

Lefa: "I think we must spend the night here again?"

Hlomphe: "I never slept over on a school night"

Lefa: "Don't you want to?"

Hlomphe: "Of course I do but I'm just wondering why you suddenly agree. Last time you said no"

Lefa: "Well it's a new day"

Hlomphe: "Are you okay?"

Ntombikayise laughed.

Lefa: "Yeah"

Hlomphe: "I swear we saw you smile alone. We were laughing at you" Ntombi laughed.

Lefa: "So you guys think I'm one of your cartoon characters?" he signed and said it out loud and

heard the boys laugh and so did Hlompho.

Ntombi: "But you have been wearing a little smile and it's just weird" she laughed too.

Lefa: "I'm happy" he smiled.

Hlompho: "So I must go get my uniform and books at home!" Lefa nodded "we might as well just move in already. This up and down is starting to be exhausting" he left the kitchen to go ask the older kids to take him home so he'd get clothes.

Ntombi: "Lefa You're giving the game away, baby"

Lefa: "Baby, I'm happy" he smiled
"I can't hide it" he added "I don't
even want to leave your side at
the moment. This living apart is
really going to test me. I wanna
be here for everything" he looked
at her.

Ntombi: "And I want you to be"
she hugged him from behind "I
love how fussy you are" they both
laughed.

Makhulu: "What are you two not
telling us?" Ntombikayise let go of
Lefa.

Lefa: "We found a huge client,
Makhulu"

Makhulu: "At the doctor?" the couple laughed.

Ntombi: "We got the good news while we were at the doctor, Ma"

Makhulu: "Mmmm" she raised a brow. Ntombikayise knew keeping the news from Makhulu would be difficult but she was going to try. She wanted it to be her news with Lefa until the end of the first trimester. Mahlubandile was another concern but Ntombi hoped Hlubi's excitement wouldn't make her tell anyone. They continued to cook and Makhulu would give them the suspicious look making them

try to act as normal as possible. Hlompho came with his books and Lefa helped him with his homework. Having another person whom he'd have to help with homework in future made him excited. They didn't expect the day to end so wonderfully but none of them were complaining.💖

S2-INSERT 68 (NOT EDITED)

A few weeks had passed and when Amahle heard who shot her father and Kim's story she decided on her own to not get

involved with her mother's family. She'd walk pass Chumani at school as though they never spoke to each other in their lives let alone date. She felt sorry for Kim and realized that not growing up with Nozi's family was a blessing in disguise. She could not imagine the pain that Kim was going through and to have to deal with it all on her own. There was no longer a need to move to town as Asakhe suggested they do for safety sake. Vusi was grateful to be alive because he was certain Amahle would have been taken

from Asakhe had he died. Solomzi was laid to rest in PE and their mother didn't take the news as hard as her other kids thought. Lulupho was glad to hear that his daughters didn't experience the same painful ordeal as Kim which left Cwayitha wondering why Solomzi chose to traumatize her child like that. Cwayitha didn't go to the funeral because she wanted nothing to do with Solomzi even beyond the grave. She managed to get therapy for Kim through a local NGO and part of her blamed herself. They

stopped trying to force the Amahle situation when they heard Amahle say she wanted nothing to do with them. It hurt but they understood her reasons. Nozi dumped her when she was an infant, Chumani leaked naked pictures of her on the internet and Solomzi molested his own niece. They understood that everything associated with their family traumatized Amahle. All they asked was for their mother to see Nozi's child just once next time she visited Cape Town. The Gala family didn't say no nor yes

but them not saying no left Cwayitha feeling hopeful. There was too much bad blood between the two families. From Vusi introducing Nozi to drugs which eventually ended her life to Solomzi shooting Vusi. Neither family found closure and decided to give each other space to reach a point of healing.

Jester and Mrs E gave their love another go and were public about it. Mahlubandile decided to let go of the anger towards Lungile but she was not sure she'd ever trust

him again. Her business was picking up and for that she felt grateful though the cases she got were still not to the level of those of Elephant Attorneys.

Mivuyo was growing strong each day. Nandi and her family were also at their happiest and Rose's marriage was good again. She helped Sonwabo plant his veggies and they were coming along nicely. The Dudumashe family had also finally found their closure as best they could after the media stopped hounding them. Portia and Liyema were kind enough to

allow Ntombi to stay on at the house while they were still house hunting. Well it was Portia who convinced Liyema to not kick Ntombi and her grandparents out. Ntombi's baby was growing and though difficult they managed to keep the news of the pregnancy secret even during their lobola negotiations. They finally found the perfect house for them in Poppy's neighbourhood and Lefa was glad because the house hunting would surely have been exhausting to Ntombi as time went by. Hlompho was happy to

finally have stability and not move between his father's place and Ntombi's. They all loved the house very much but Bukhosi would remain at the old house because he loved that he could bring his girlfriend around without anyone noticing as he had privacy to do so. Bubele and Banele decided to move with Ntombi. Everyone did their bit to pack the furniture and appliances into boxes ready to move into the new house. Lefa's furniture was sold at a second hand store but he kept stuff that was dear to him.

When Bandile got tired of waiting for Kwanele to make her way to Port Elizabeth again he used his savings and hired a car to drive to Grahamstown. They had not seen each other since that day of the party and the cellphone communication was just not enough for Bandile anymore. He knew that he could possibly find her with another guy but he decided he'd deal with that when he's there. Kwanele was playing hard to get as her friends advised her to. Had they not,

she'd have gotten into a taxi to PE just to go see Bandile but her friends said guys got tired of a girl who tries too much and since she didn't have as much dating experience as the others she decided to listen. She had just washed her hair a few minutes ago and sectioned it before plaiting it. She had no plans for the day so she didn't feel need to do much effort in her appearance that day. Her phone rang and when Bandile's name popped up on the screen she let out a little teen scream of excitement.

Kwanele: "Hi" she smiled.

Bandile: "Hi, beautiful" he smiled to after hearing get voice "You busy?" he looked at the building she lived at.

Kwanele: "Why?" she asked curiously.

Bandile: "Because I'm outside your res and would really like to see you"

Kwanele: "Don't lie" she laughed.

Bandile: "I'm serious" he laughed too "Come to the gate and you'll see" he added. Kwanele jumped up.

Kwanele: "Bandile Elephant, don't kid around" she looked out the

window thinking she'd spot him "I don't see you" she said still scanning outside.

Bandile: "Come out and you will"

Kwanele: "Uhm...okay" she blushed.

Kwanele hung up and quickly changed out of her pyjamas. She didn't want him to see her in sleepwear again. She borrowed her only weave to a friend so she wrapped a headscarf around her head nicely and took one last look at herself in the mirror to make sure she was looking good. A few drops of perfume were sprayed filling her room with her scent.

She took her phone and locked her room. She had no roommate as she made use of off campus residence much like Bandile. She walked to the gate and felt like a fool when there was no Bandile. A car parked not far from the gate opened and when he stepped out of it looking more handsome than she remembered him to be she couldn't help but smile. The butterflies in her tummy were flattering about leaving her feeling so exposed.

Bandile: "Hi" he said when he stood before her smiling.

Kwanele: "Hi" she blushed "I thought that you're lying" she confessed to doubting him.

Bandile: "Well here I am. Do you have a few hours to kill? I'd like for you to show me around town"

Kwanele: "So you're not afraid of my boyfriend?" she laughed softly.

Bandile: "Clearly you're not afraid of losing him because you're standing right in front of me knowing that I like you" Kwanele giggled.

Kwanele: "Whatever" she looked to the side and back at his handsome face "Okay I'll show

you around town" she added.

Bandile: "You're looking cute by the way"

Kwanele: "I was about to tell you to wait so I'd go change" she looked at her casual wear. He too was casual.

Bandile: "No need. I also hired a car for us"

Kwanele: "I see" she looked at the vehicle "Let me go get my bag and we'll get going" she pointed back and he nodded.

Bandile: "Kwanele" he called out behind her as she walked to the gate and watched her turn

around to look at him "I'm still dying for that hug, Mamiya" he watched her put her hand over her mouth to cover just how much she was blushing. She turned around and walked back towards him. Her arms wrapped themselves around his neck and she felt his do the same around her waist. Both enjoying the embrace before finally letting go. Bandile looked at her but she could barely look at him. She let out another soft laugh before walking to the gate again until she disappeared from his sight.

He waited for her to return and she came back looking as though she had applied some make up but it looked so natural one could barely notice. Bandile was sure to play music that had messages of where he'd like to see their thing going and Kwanele was smart enough to get the hints.

Bandile: "You look uncomfortable" he said before looking at her as he waited for the traffic light to change.

Kwanele: "I've just never been picked up by a guy with his car before" they both laughed.

Bandile: "It's not my car so relax. Where would you like for us to go first?" she gave him the name of the place. He liked how decisive she was. With Bathandiwe he always had to decide for her.

Kwanele: "So you really just came here to see me?"

Bandile: "I'm here aren't I?" the car started to move again.

Kwanele: "For all I know you got stood up and I'm second option"

Bandile laughed.

Bandile: "No such, I promise. I just got tired of not seeing you face to face" Kwanele smiled

"That cute dimple face" she looked out her window blushing. Kwanele: "Stop" she giggled "But thanks" she looked at him "Who taught you how to drive?" she kept the conversation going. Bandile: "My mom. It wasn't because she was keen. She just wanted four personal drivers. I swear when we got our licences, she made us drive her everywhere" they laughed. Kwanele: "You guys close?" Bandile nodded "That's adorable" she smiled "I noticed that by the many pictures on your social media

pages. She's beautiful" she said quietly.

Bandile: "Thanks on her behalf" he looked at her briefly before focusing on the road again "Can you drive?" Kwanele shook her head "Want me to teach you?" she looked at him.

Kwanele: "Would you?"

Bandile: "Wouldn't have offered"

Kwanele: "When?"

Bandile: "Soon just not today.

Today I just want to have fun with you". They arrived at the place that sold huge burgers and they ordered the day's special. As

they spoke and laughed between juice sips and burger bites, Kwanele was glad that he came. It beat the plans that she had for the day. She showed him around town and without even noticing her hand was on his or perhaps she did notice she just didn't feel uncomfortable with the affection. Bandile had been to the town but only passing through so he was glad that he got a tour. Kwanele saw two of her friends and she took the next turn to avoid them. She wasn't ready to introduce him to them. They were

known for tagging places without being invited and that was the last thing that she wanted that day. Bandile leaned against the car and watched her talk about things that she liked. He held her hand and she started to speak less and less as he pulled her closer to him until there was no longer space between them. Her heartbeat was raised more as he leaned forward. They both first just looked at each other as their lips were inches from each other. He rubbed his against hers in a teasing way and she laughed

quietly as her chest moved up and down quickly. It was not her first kiss but it was her first intoxicating kiss. Her hands held the sides of his face and she stood on her tippy toes as his hands were on the side of her hips. The sound around them just went quiet as their lips moved. Bandile smiled when she still had her eyes closed after he broke the kiss. She opened them and smiled. He kissed her dimples, he just couldn't resist them.

Bandile: "Does this mean that I can come back again soon?"

Kwanele nodded.

Kwanele: "I don't have a boyfriend by the way" she confessed.

Bandile: "Kanti what am I?" she put her face against his chest laughing.

Kwanele: "I guess I do have one then" Bandile smiled "what about Daniel? A friend of his once had a crush on me and Daniel was sure to break that friendship" she looked concerned.

Bandile: "He's dating other people's sisters too" he pointed out "we'll deal with that when

the time comes. I just don't want to ruin this day by thinking about that" he put his arms around her shoulders.

Kwanele: "You really left no girlfriend in Cape Town?"

Bandile: "None" he promised.

Kwanele: "And you aren't with me to play with me? I know Daniel so it's hard to believe his friends are any better than him when it comes to girls"

Bandile: "I'm not going to play with you. I really like you. I'm not one to put in much effort in relationships. That's more my

brother Bukhosi but look where I am today" he laughed. He kissed her again. They enjoyed the rest of the day until the sun went down. It felt like the sun went down earlier than usual to Kwanele as he drove her back to her place. She showed him which room was hers so he'd knock on her door next time he was in town.

Bandile: "Go inside. I don't want my baby to catch a cold" he brushed her upper arms gently.

Kwanele: "I don't even feel the cold but you've got to go though

to avoid driving late in the night"
Bandile: "I'll see you soon" he
promised.

Kwanele: "I actually can't wait"
she smiled.

Bandile: "Bye, baby" he planted a
soft kiss on her lips and drew her
closer for a longer one.

Kwanele: "Bye, babe" she said
after they broke the kiss. She
stood at the gate and watched
him walk to the car.

Bandile: "Go inside" he said. He
watched her turn around and jog
inside the house. He didn't want
to go but missing a class to see

her was bad enough so he couldn't do that again. Kwanele wanted to plead with him to stay longer but she knew driving too late could be dangerous. When his car drove off she felt her heart break a bit but she walked to her room smiling as the memories of the day just flooded back. She was in a relationship with her brother's best friend and she knew Daniel would throw a fit when he finds out but in that moment she didn't care. She was too happy to care about anything else. Bandile got to PE safe and called her to

tell her that he arrived safe. The love was new and it felt great.

When Ntombikayise and Lefa arrived at their new house with cars filled with household items and family. They found the truck waiting for them already. Bonolo and Vakele cleared the day to help the couple move in. They were happy that the lobola negotiations went well. Lefa got angered by Hazel advising him on the type of marriage contract he should enter with Ntombi. They had already discussed which

suited them best and were happy with it. What hurt Lefa more was Hazel pointing out that Ntombi would not give him children. It took all of him to not rub the pregnancy in her face just so she'd keep her opinion to herself. He loved her but the more she spoke down on Ntombi the less respect he felt because she had no valid reason to not want Ntombi.

Vakele: "You children will live nicely here" he said when he stepped out of his bakkie that also had some stuff at the back. He and

Tamkhulu hit it off after the lobola negotiations.

Tamkhulu: "I need to get started on a new garden right away" he took out a box from the car. The moving guys also started to unload the furniture.

Bonolo: "You can change the colour of the outside when you've settled in" she looked at Ntombi "Too much is going on at the moment and renovations are stressful" she stood next to Ntombi and Makhulu.

Makhulu: "I agree with your mother in law. For now it's

perfect as is" they looked at the house as the men moved the boxes inside.

Ntombi: "We don't have a budget to renovate anyway" she smiled "I'm just glad we found a home suited for us all" she looked at the older women.

Bonolo: "I like how private your Grandparents room is. It's far from the lounge and the children's rooms. They can get so noisy... especially boys" they all laughed.

Makhulu: "We are actually used to it. Let us take some of the smaller boxes like Hlompho is

doing" she went to the boot to choose a box. She still had no speed but she wanted to be busy. Bonolo did the same and Ntombikayise followed.

Lefa: "And then?" he caught her with a box and took it from her hands.

Ntombi: "I'm helping" she tried taking it back but he backed away.

Lefa: "Take the box of tissues" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "I might as well just wait in the car until you're all finished"

Lefa: "The best idea I've heard all day" he kissed her. He walked inside the yard and Ntombikayise followed behind. She wore a yellow dress to compliment the beautiful day. Makhulu and Bonolo walked around the house again and Ntombi sat on the couch after the moving staff brought it in. Bukhosi: "Are you honestly falling asleep while we're slaving away?" Ntombi's sleepy eyes shot open and she laughed.

Ntombi: "It's old age" she joked and heard him laugh. When Hlompho tapped her shoulder she

opened her eyes.

Hlomphe: "I'm sorry to disturb, Mom but I had to tell you about a bad dream that I had" Ntombi blinked a few times to get rid of the sleepiness "You were chased by a huge monster cup"

Ntombikayise didn't want to laugh because he was serious as he told his dream "It just kept chasing you and you looked scared" he concluded.

Ntombi: "Did you watch a horror movie with your brothers again?"

Hlomphe looked down. Ntombi called the older kids "What did I

say about letting him watch horror movie?" she looked at her boys.

Banele: "Who? Us?" he looked confused and Ntombikayise raised a brow "It wasn't that bad" he confessed "was it?" he asked Hlompho and Hlompho shook his head quickly.

Lefa: "What's with the family meeting?" he asked in passing.

Ntombi: "They let Hlompho watch a horror and now he's having nightmares"

Lefa: "That's all?" Ntombikayise gave him a look "I mean yho" he

didn't know what she wanted to hear.

Ntombi: "Next time they have the TV on a horror you walk away okay?" Hlomphe nodded "Thanks for telling me your dream" she hugged him. Hlomphe just held on with his cheek against her belly.

Bubele: "Save that boy before he becomes a mama's boy" he shouted and everyone laughed.

They continued with their work and Ntombi sat feeling like a guest.

Lefa: "You're also giving the game away" he whispered to her

"Sitting here looking all goddess with your hand on your belly all the time" Ntombikayise laughed so much. She watched him point two fingers to his eyes before pointing them to get to show her he's watching.

Ntombi: "Whatever" she took her hand off her tummy "Baby" he stopped looking inside the box he'd just brought in and looked at her.

"I really like how things are unfolding" he smiled before standing to kneel in front of her.

"I love our love story. The fact that no one forced either of us to

meet each other like with my previous relationships" she added.

Lefa: "I love everything too. I can't wait to tell our baby how we met" he held her hands "It all started when daddy was in a taxi that was literally a moving coffin due to its bad state"

Ntombikayise laughed out "Then I saw these two very dangerous looking mafia men" he added.

Ntombi: "That's exaggerating a bit" she laughed more.

Lefa: "I must make it seem like I fought off big guys to boost my daddy superhero credit" they both

laughed "But I love us too, sthandwa sam. When your elders accepted my cows, I was like there's no way I'm looking back now" he added.

Ntombi: "You better not" she warned playfully "I think we should tell our parents the news. Makhulu is becoming more suspicious. We'll send the kids to go buy food while we tell them. What do you think?" he smiled.

Lefa: "Boys!" he shouted wasting no time at all. The boys all made an appearance "Please go and grab us all a bite" he took his

wallet out.

Bukhosi: "Finally we thought you wouldn't feed us" the parents laughed. Bukhosi took the money for the pizza and juice. The movers had gone already as they did their bit. It was now up to the family to put things where the couple instructed. The boys took Lefa's car as they felt it's "cooler" than Ntombi's. The parents became a bit concerned when the couple called them to a meeting behind closed doors.

Bonolo: "Please don't tell me that you two have decided on

something that you know we won't like"

Lefa: "Why are you thinking the worst?"

Bonolo: "When kids are dismissed I know it's heavy news only grownups can handle"

Ntombi: "Well we dismissed them because we want to tell the grownups something that should not leave this room until the time is right"

Bonolo: "Oh my goodness" she looked like she just heard terrible news.

Makhula: "You know they've been

secretive about something since Lefa took Ntombi to the doctor weeks ago"

Tamkhulu: "Please don't tell me that you are terminally ill or something, Nto-Nto" he sat forward on his chair.

Vakele: "Let us hear what they have to say"

Lefa: "Ready?" Ntombikayise nodded. He held up three fingers, then two while looking at her.

Them: "We're pregnant" they said simultaneously when the last finger went down. Bonolo let out a scream before jumping up with

her hand held against her mouth. They knew about Ntombi's issue after Hazel made it public so their news was a shock.

Makhulu: "Wait...did you two get another woman to carry your baby?" she was confused.

Ntombi: "I'm carrying our baby, Ma" another scream escaped

Bonolo's lips this time tears flew down her cheek over her hand.

Lefa stood to go hold his mother until the shock faded. Ntombi explained in detail what she meant and Makhulu also started to cry.

Vakele: "I can't remember the last time my heart felt so full" he laughed softly. Tamkhulu went to his little girl and helped Ntombi up before hugging her.

Tamkhulu: "Congratulations, ntombam" he kissed her cheek

Bonolo: "Glory be to God" she hugged Lefa and Makhulu went to hug Ntombikayise.

Makhulu: "Amen" when Bonolo came to hug Ntombikayise,

Makhulu went to Lefa. Vakele went to hug Ntombikayise too.

Vakele: "My mother will be so happy to hear this"

Lefa: "We prefer that it only be you guys who know for now, Tata"

Vakele: "You know that you can trust me with your secrets. The family will hear from you and no one else. Kgethang doesn't know either?"

Bonolo: "After the Nolu thing they maybe didn't want to risk it" the couple nodded "I'm so happy I want to sing the news while going from street to street but I'll keep quiet" she promised "Oh my goodness, another grandbaby" she screamed again and held Ntombi close "Did you eat?" she

started to fuss.

Ntombi: "I have. It's all I seem to be doing"

Bonolo: "That's good. So how many weeks are you?" she looked at Ntombi's belly.

Ntombi: "12 tomorrow" she said with a smile "End of the first trimester" she said proudly.

Makhulu: "It seems God just keeps blessing you two. He's just showing off and I love it"

Tamkhulu: "So that's why you no longer stock your wine at home"

he raised a brow and

Ntombikayise laughed "Oh

blessings upon blessings" he shook Lefa's hand.

Bonolo: "I think I speak for us all when I say that we pray for a daughter for you two. Five sons are enough" they all laughed

"What can we help with money wise?" since Vakele business took off the Gwala kids were told by their parents to stop sending them money.

Lefa: "We're okay for now, Mme. We sold what we no longer needed and saved to buy the house so we're in no debt. Baby clothes and nappies are welcome though once

baby is here"

Makhulu: "Without a doubt"

Bonolo: "We must get you children married. Now that I know I can actually see Ntombi with child.

You guys can even announce it at the wedding. Oh I'm so excited"

Ntombi: "We were thinking about going to home affairs and then having a small lunch to celebrate"

Bonolo: "Ma Mlandu are you hearing your daughter?" Makhulu laughed "We'll put together a proper wedding. Reasonable budget and we'll help. We know that you two don't have much at

the moment but that's what family is for"

Lefa: "Thanks, Mme". The children returned with large boxes of pizza and behind them Babini's structure filled the front door.

Babini: "We thought we'd come help you guys make this house a home by the end of the day" he walked in holding bags with food too. Ntombikayise and Lefa greeted their friends.

Craig: "Ntombikayise tell us where what should go" he looked at Ntombi "You don't even open your mouth unless you have a man

cave" he joked and pointed at Lefa.

Lefa: "I thought I'd have one when we first saw the house but plenty has changed since"

Mahlubandile knew his man cave room would be a baby nursery.

Mzu: "Let's get busy" he looked around.

Lefa: "Thank you so much for being here...all of you" he looked around.

Ntombi: "Can we first eat please"

Banele: "Yes please"

Othu: "We ran into the boys while they got food so we got enough

for all of us"

Poppy: "I can't believe you're so close to me" she said in excitement.

Zuko: "Well let's help the couple sleep in their new home tonight" everyone cheered. Yandi got out the paper plates and everyone had food in no time. Bonolo making sure Ntombikayise had an extra serving. The new beds that they purchased arrived and the couple left their guests busy opening boxes to go sign for them.

Bonolo: "Ladies, we must move the date for amabhaso up"

Hlubi: "I agree with you, Mama. We actually came to help unpack because we wanted to see what she doesn't have"

Makhulu: "Clever, girls" she smiled.

Bonolo: "Ntombi's also dragging her feet as far as the wedding. As her friends make sure that she starts planning"

Mandla: "I don't know why I'm suddenly just so excited"

Bonolo: "Low budget though"

Othu: "Ma, what if instead if amabhaso since she really does have everything already. We plan a surprise wedding for them. I

mean the lobola is done so the elders are happy. They are moving in together so these people are practically Mr and Mrs already"

Makhulu: "So they just walk in and surprise, it's your own wedding?" she asked nervously.

Poppy: "Let's get Lefa in on it"

Zuko: "No, he won't agree to their friends carrying all the costs"

Bonolo: "So so true, my girl. We hit them both with a surprise then"

Mandla: "This is just so exciting" she let out a silent scream of excitement.

Hlubi: "She's one person who deserves everything good coming to her. I'm in. Count me in. What we can do is to come with bridal books and make a little collage with her so we'll know what she wants"

Yandi: "I offer my house. The garden is huge and beautiful. Let's respect the fact that she wants something simple. My yard can fit a large group of people. Spring is around the corner and my flowers look beautiful around that time"

Mandla: "Guys, can the day come

already?"

Lucia: "I'm picturing it already. It's a beautiful image"

Hlubi: "I'm glad Alu's not here. She'd have told Lungi and he'd have told Liyema and that one might just burst our bubble"

Bonolo: "So it's a surprise wedding?" she whispered smiling.

Othu: "It's a surprise wedding, Ma" they all looked at each other feeling like they'd burst carrying such a big secret.

Babini: "Ladies, we need orders as to where to put what" they all quickly looked at him "what are

you all planning?" he gave them a suspicious look.

Yandi: "Nothing, Zweni" she stood to tell him where he can put the lamp he was holding.

Ntombikayise told them she liked her old house's decor as it was a project she took on so they made sure things are as the old house a bit. The furniture guys carried the bed inside.

Lefa: "I can't wait to test our new bed" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "Me neither" she gave a naughty smile "we're blessed, baby. Amazing parents, wonderful

kids and such awesome friends.
May we never forget to give
thanks for them" he hugged her.

Lefa: "We won't. Now we gotta
let our parents know that we
really can't afford a wedding so
soon after buying this house"

Ntombi nodded

Ntombi: "We can call a pastor and
get married at home in our
pyjamas" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Sounds like a plan" he
kissed her. Ntombikayise felt a
new bed was necessary for a new
marriage and she couldn't wait to
sleep in it with him. They

thanked the delivery guys and the boys carried their beds in the rooms they'd be occupying. Two bedrooms had en-suite bathrooms and those were for the elders. All kids would share a bathroom. The couple found their family and friends in a group but as soon as they took notice of their presence the meeting ended as all went to suddenly pick up something. They left the couple feeling like they were missing out on something. Same way Makhulu felt after Ntombi returned from the doctor that day. They had no clue of the

magnitude of the surprise which awaited them. If they thought a baby was the only big surprise they'd get that year, they thought wrong. It was indeed as though God was showing off with that couple.

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Liyema and Portia walked inside what used to be his old house with Abongile. Alu wanted to join her friends at Ntombi's but Lungile asked her to support Liyema and Portia instead. Liyema realized just how much life Ntombikayise brought to the

house when he found it almost completely empty. She took up a DIY home decor project years ago to turn their house into that fitting of a young couple. The furniture was her idea and the paint colour. As he stood with his hands on his hip looking around the house suddenly felt and looked lifeless.

Alu: "Wow, it's so different" she also looked around.

Portia: "It'll be better when we've put in furniture" she smiled "That was Ntombi's style but now there's a new madam in the

house" she walked around.

Lungile: "I hear the uncles are going to your home for the lobola" he looked at Portia.

Portia: "I can't wait. I want a huge wedding. Baby, you said I could have one, right?"

Liyema: "Go crazy, sthandwa sam. Just talk to Ntombi first. This moving at the same day and all my kids being over there proves should our wedding dates be the same they'd go there. Hear what her date is. Invite her too. I heard they'll get married in a courthouse. This Lefa is pathetic"

he ran up the stairs. He was glad to see the boys took nothing from their rooms. He was glad Bukhosi would be living with them. He went to their old bedroom which he had not been in since that night Ntombikayise found out about Elaine. Portia walked in behind him.

Liyema: "Who does she think she left the bed for?"

Portia: "It's not bad" she sat on it.

Liyema: "I'm not sleeping on that" he went to open the wardrobes "It feels good to be

back" he went to the bathroom.
Portia: "Amahle's old room should be a Girly room again for Abo. The boys can occupy one room as the one downstairs will be a guestroom" she walked out the room. She couldn't believe she had such a big house. When Liyema walked around to the window he kicked something. It was one of Ntombi's pregnancy tests that fell out of her vanity bag during the chaos of packing. He picked it up and saw its positive. He knew it was not old because Ntombi never tested her pregnancy with

the boys at home, not that home. He quickly put it in his pocket when he heard Portia speak. He dialled Hazel's number and asked to meet. Hazel didn't want to go help Lefa and Ntombikayise move into their home as it nauseated her to see them so happy together when she didn't like Ntombi for Lefa. Liyema made a lame excuse to why he had to leave. Portia and the others unpacked their boxes. Jester and Mrs E also went to help. Mrs E hated how Mahlubandile went to Ntombi's instead of her own

brother's. Hazel found Liyema waiting already and sat after greeting him. Liyema took the test out and put it on the table.

Liyema: "I think that Ntombikayise is pregnant, Makhulu" Hazel's eyes shot open "If so then she's definitely going to have a miscarriage with no womb, the baby won't survive" Hazel found herself smiling.

Hazel: "I knew fate didn't want them together. This might be Lefa's deal breaker"

Liyema: "Have you heard anything? When last did you see

her? Did she look depressed?

Ntombikayise can't hide emotions. So since she knows she's pregnant with a child that won't survive she'll show"

Hazel: "They were at my son's house last week and they looked more happy actually. She pretended to love you so she's a good actress clearly"

Liyema: "Nha something doesn't add up. I've been married to this woman and she's mostly predictable especially with emotions. She'd have locked herself in her house dealing with

the loss. It can't belong to my one of my sons either because it was in her bedroom. She'd have told me had one impregnated a girl".

They were both in deep thought.

Hazel: "Nooo" she put her hand over her mouth.

Liyema: "What?"

Hazel: "What if she lied to you about not having a womb. Think about it. This woman only married you to gain access to your children. Maybe it was a plot all along.

She's got history of conning people" Liyema's jaw dropped "So she told you she can't give you

more kids because she didn't want you to begin with but your children. Maybe she paid a nurse to lie to you. Everything is possible with money" she explained her conspiracy more.

Liyema: "Well I'll be damned. You make perfect sense, Makhulu" he sat back "So now that she no longer has to keep up act, she got herself pregnant" he added fuel to an already out of control fire.

Hazel: "Oh my poor, Lefa. She heard me say she will basically be nothing if she doesn't give him kids so she decided to break cover

to dig those claws deeper"

Liyema: "Trust a rock than a person indeed" he looked shocked "If I tell this to someone they'll say I'm jealous" he added.

Hazel: "Because we are the only ones not blinded by her tricks. I wonder what her plans with this trap baby is?"

Liyema: "I don't even want to know. I'm just glad that I got out of there. Good luck to your grandson"

Hazel: "Help me make him see things as we do"

Liyema: "And end up in hospital

again? No thanks, Makhulu.

Ntombi's out of my house and life and I see now I am lucky. Once a con artist, always a con artist. I can't believe that she let me think that she can't give me more kids. Making me remind her to get contraceptives so she won't have an ectopic pregnancy yet she knew she would have given me a healthy baby. Wow, I can't believe this" he rubbed his eyes looking shocked to the core "But why am I shocked when she could keep an entire pregnancy from me until she gave birth. I

know I'd have never known my boys had they not needed good medical care. Them being sick after birth was a blessing in disguise so she'd get desperate and tell me."

Hazel: "Then help me help my grandson" she said desperately.

Liyema: "I'm cutting all ties with this woman finally, Makhulu. To think that I got jealous when I heard she's getting married. He can have her. May he find out the hard way just like me as revenge for landing me in hospital"

Hazel: "She can't have this baby"

Liyema: "My fiancée is waiting for me, Makhulu. A woman who won't lie to me like this. Maybe I can even become a father again too. I'm sorry, Makhulu but Lefa is not my favourite person so I don't want to save him. Try to open his eyes" he stood leaving the test on the table. He felt betrayed and angry. He wanted another baby with Ntombi but he didn't want to be insensitive by advising a surrogate. He felt robbed and he didn't think he'd forgive her. He decided to wash his hands off everything related

to Ntombi. Hazel was busy doing a little research on Google as Hlomphe showed her how. She decided to call Ntombi's number. Bonolo and Makhulu were in the kitchen with Ntombi packing her dishes and cutlery. When she told them it's Hazel they were both shocked.

Ntombi: "Makhulu Hazel" she said softly.

Hazel: "Hi, Ntombi" she said cheerfully "I'm sorry I couldn't come today. My knees acted upon" she lied.

Ntombi: "It's okay, Makhulu. We

have enough hands. The house is looking like a home already" Hazel felt like throwing up.

Hazel: "Oh wonderful which means that you can meet me tomorrow for tea" she said ever so kindly.

Ntombi: "Meet you for tea?" she looked at her mother in law and grandmother and both women shook their heads "I'm sorry, Makhulu but I've got something with my grandmother already" she lied.

Hazel: "I wanted to apologize for my behaviour. What better way than over a nice cup of tea"

Ntombi: "Apologize over a cup of tea?" she looked at her council again and the older women shook their heads again.

Hazel: "Why are you repeating everything I'm saying?"

Ntombikayise heart started to beat faster.

Ntombi: "Uhm...too much noise around me" she lied "I can't do tea, Makhulu. I'm sorry" she said quickly.

Hazel: "Okay I'll come to see your house tomorrow then" she said.

Ntombi: "Okay" she said doubtfully. Hazel said her

goodbyes. "I feel so bad" she looked at her grandmother.

Makhulu: "Hlomphe dreams about a monster tea cup chasing you and then Hazel calls for tea to apologize? Even tomorrow when she comes I'll make sure she finds Lefa here alone"

Bonolo: "I don't say this out of respect for my husband but my mother in law is just cut from a cloth of her own. So I agree with your mother. The last thing we want is her to know you're pregnant. I'll try to get rid of her since the lobola is over. Honestly

I'm as tired of her presence. So no tea with her please. Dreams are sometimes messages and since Hlompho could remember it and felt it's important to tell you, let's listen. I don't want anything to happen to my grandchild"

Ntombi: "Now you're scaring me"

Bonolo: "No, no she's no serial killer and she'll definitely not risk harming Lefa's baby on purpose because she knows it'll mean him hating her forever. But stress is not good and she might trigger that"

Ntombi: "Okay, Ma" she said

softly. The ladies continued with their duty and Ntombi still felt bad for lying to Hazel. She didn't want to stress either and Hazel had made her feel bad about herself every time they met so Ntombikayise knew Bonolo had a point. Hazel might trigger stress. Ntombikayise was glad Hazel was not there to hear the baby news. She hoped Vakele will keep quiet too. Bonolo wanted nothing off to even come near Ntombi and everyone with eyes could see Hazel didn't like Ntombi. Lefa and Vakele were the only ones blind to

that as they loved Hazel too much but Bonolo was awake and she'd try to come up with an emergency that would force Hazel to go home. 

S2-INSERT 69 (NOT EDITED)

Hazel stood in front of Ntombi and Lefa's door with a pot plant in hand. Her knuckles tapped on the wooden frame and she put her ear against it trying to listen to footsteps. She called Lefa to ask what he was up to but in a casual manner as to not make

Lefa suspicious. He revealed that he took Hlompho out to a one on one daddy and son outing as they had not had that in a while. He further told her that Banele and Bubele are with their father too helping him move the last of his stuff while the elders are visiting Makhulu's family in Khayelitsha. Hazel went to the house knowing that Ntombikayise was going to be alone at home. Ntombi ran out of her room with a towel wrapped around her body as she'd just come out of the shower. She peaked through the hole in the

door and was shocked to see Hazel's face. She was not sure if she should even open but after giving Hazel the run around whenever she wanted to meet Ntombikayise decided to give Hazel a break. She opened the door and was greeted by Hazel's bright smile.

Hazel: "This house looks beautiful. Hello, makoti" she said politely. .

Ntombi: "Hello, Makhulu and thank you" she stood aside "Please come in" she watched Hazel walk pass her and her eyes went around the house.

Hazel: "It must feel like a downgrade to you though since you are used to a double story house" she looked at Ntombi and watched Ntombi's face change "Don't get me wrong, Ntombikayise. It's just that I'd have felt that way. Going from a husband who can give you all to one who first has to budget" she added.

Ntombi: "I love our life. Unlike with Liyema where I found everything there already. I get to build with Lefa. Our house is my dream house. The double story

was Liyema's dream, not mine"

Hazel: "I'm so glad you don't compare the two" she smiled "A pot plant for the house. I thought I'd invite myself since no one seems to bother" she laughed.

Ntombi: "Everyone who has been here came without invite. I thought that you didn't want to come because of me" Hazel faked a sad face.

Hazel: "And that's why I'm here. To apologize for making you feel unwelcome. I'm over protective of Kgethang and Lefa more than all my grandchildren because their

father is my favourite child" she whispered and laughed softly "I'm sure you know what I mean" Ntombi wasn't sure she did "You can't love them all equally.

There's always that one who steals your heart as a mother" she laughed again "But I see I was immature and I did the same with Nolu so the problem is clearly me. I'm so sorry. Please forgive me. I feel so left out in the wedding preparations and I hate it. Please forgive me and include me" she pleaded with a sad tone of voice.

Ntombi: "There are no preparations, Makhulu. Lefa and I have decided to go to Home affairs. We will have a big event in a few years to come. There are just things that take first priority right now. I honestly don't want to join the family with bad blood between myself and its elders so I forgive you. I've judged people without knowing them at some point too so apology accepted" she was shocked to feel Hazel's hug "Thank you for the gift" she looked at the pot plant.

Hazel: "To show how thankful I

am, I'm going to make us tea. I know you should make me one since it's your house but I want to show through actions that I'm sorry. Go and get dressed. You don't want Lefa returning with a friend and finding you naked. Men don't like that much"

Ntombi: "Let me quickly get dressed and I'll make the tea myself rather. There's cake in the fridge if you want. I'm cutting down on sugar so I don't want any"

Hazel: "I'll make everything. Go and get dressed. Even being like

this in front of me is disrespect but because we are starting on a new slate I'll let it go" she gently pushed Ntombikayise down the passage where she assumed the main bedroom was. Ntombikayise planned on "accidentally" spilling the tea because she didn't want anything from Hazel after Makhulu's warning. Hazel opened and closed cupboards looking for tea ingredients. She looked around before taking a substance from her bag and poured into the cup on the right intended for Ntombikayise. She rotated the

cup until the substance coated the inside. She then blew into it to dry the cup's inside. The substance was clear and odourless and one could not even tell that Hazel put something in the cup. She felt a burn in her bladder and due to old age she could no longer hold urine in so she quickly walked down the passage opening doors looking for the bathroom while Ntombikayise was trying by all means to finish getting dressed quickly. She felt frustrated by the creased clothes because they hadn't done ironing yet so choosing

something appropriate to wear in the presence of her family in law proved to take longer than expected. Ntombikayise got out before Hazel and was shocked to find Makhulu in front of the fridge taking out half a cake that was in the fridge. Makhulu was not in Khayelitsha with Tamkhulu, she went to meet Bonolo and the girls at Poppy's place which was just around the corner but she was able to spin Ntombi a story about why she returned from "Khayelitsha".

Makhulu: "Hazel, you're here too?"

she said when Hazel walked in looking rather shocked.

Hazel: "I have come to apologize to Ntombikayise" she smiled.

Makhulu: "That's very good, Sisi. So that explains the two cups and tea pot with teabags.

Ntombikayise you can't have more sugar, baby girl. Please have herbal tea instead"

Hazel: "why?" she asked quickly.

Ntombi: "Sugar overload makes me sick, Makhulu" she lied.

Hazel: "Then I'll make it. I saw the herbal tea when I was looking for the normal one" she

quickly reached for the cup that she knew was tainted and went with it to the cupboard. She put the kettle on again though it had just finished boiling before putting a teabag in the cup. Steam raised to her face as she poured water into Ntombi's cup. To see Hazel make the tea right in front of her was great for Ntombikayise. She knew that the herbal tea suggestion was Makhulu trying to protect her from Hazel's tea "There you go" she gave Ntombikayise the cup "I guess you and I are going to have

to finish the pot then, Sisi" she smiled looking at Makhulu.

Makhulu: "If tea was alcohol I'd have been an alcoholic, Sisi but my cousin pumped me with too much so I'll rather just have cake" she said while cutting two slices for her and Hazel.

Hazel: "Let me make a cup then because I won't be able to finish the pot alone...never could" she poured water into her cup "I love sugar so I'll put some though I'll have cake too" they all laughed "How's the herbal tea, Ntombikayise?" she looked at

Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "Very good actually, Makhulu thank you" she smiled.

Makhulu: "Let us go to the lounge, ladies. There is a programme I'd like to watch while the men are all out" she led the way with two side plates with cake and the ladies followed with their tea.

Hazel: "I'd like to apologize to you too, Sisi for the way I offended Ntombikayise in your presence. I'm lucky to not have gotten slapped"

Makhulu: "Uniting two families is

not always easy. As long as you stopped and won't do it again. If Ntombikayise forgave you then I have too" she sat down when she finally found the channel she was looking for "When are you going back home? Or will you be living with your son from now on?" she looked at Hazel. Ntombi was glad that Makhulu was there to make conversation with Hazel because it would have been awkward had it just been her and Hazel. She was also glad that Makhulu declined Hazel's tea because she'd seen Hazel with a far larger tea

pot in front of her and drinking alone so Ntombi knew that entire story of not finishing a pot filled with tea alone was a lie. She became more suspicious when Hazel took out the tea bags from the teapot and rinsed it before putting it away.

Hazel: "With Noxolo trying to get rid of me, I doubt she'll ever agree. Maybe I can move in here". Ntombikayise nearly choked. "I'm kidding" she laughed "I'm going home tomorrow. I feel like I'd have dealt with all my business here in Cape Town by then" she

said with certainty.

Makhulu: "You must come with me to church. Maybe we'll get you a widow there" she joked and Hazel laughed out.

Hazel: "No, love is no longer for me but next time I'll definitely join you. I'm sure Mr Mlandu holds a big title at church. He has leadership energy" she smiled.

Makhulu: "He must have, to have had courage to marry a stubborn woman like me" the elders laughed. Ntombikayise's eyes were glued to the TV screen because she felt the conversation was not

related to her in any way. She finished her tea and became bored with the company and the programme on TV until she ended falling asleep on the couch. Hazel could clearly see the pregnancy signs when she looked at Ntombi's body. She didn't know what the substance was or what it did but the person who sold it to her said it'll be affective in someone's health. It wasn't deadly but dangerous especially to a pregnant woman. She didn't know the signs of it working were but Ntombi asleep made her certain it

was making her drowsy

Hazel: "Ntombikayise" she shook Ntombikayise gently "I'm going now. I came to visit you yet you fell asleep" she laughed.

Ntombi: "It happens lately, Makhulu" she straightened her posture. She spent about two hours at the house.

Hazel: "How are you feeling?"

Ntombi: "Just a bit lazy but I'll be fine after getting a proper nap. Let me walk you out. Lefa will be so sad that he missed you"

Hazel: "I have a feeling we'll see each other again by the end of

the day" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Predictions"

Hazel: "More like speaking what I want into existence. I'm going to see my grandchild later" she said with certainty before they both laughed "Sisi, thank you for the company. I'm glad that it happened" she looked at Makhulu.

Makhulu: "When you come with a heart filled with love instead of judgement, you find friends"

Hazel: "Lesson learned" she said stepping out the door.

Ntombi: "Let me drive you home, Makhulu. Luckily I didn't agree

when my boys wanted to use my car"

Hazel: "Would you?" Ntombikayise nodded. Makhulu said goodbye to Hazel and handed Ntombikayise her car keys. She watched the car drive out of the yard before heading up the road.

Makhulu: "We will know if the intention of this visit were pure soon enough, ma Hayza" she shut the door. When she came back from Poppy's she wanted to go cut a piece of cake because chocolate cake was her favourite. Ntombikayise was home alone so

Makhulu went to inspect the contents within the tea set on the kitchen table and when she saw Hazel's bag she knew who was visiting. She doesn't normally snoop in other women's bags but she opened Hazel's and found an empty bottle with no label inside. The tea set that Hazel used was one Ntombi never drank out of because the tea lover in her felt they were too small. Even when making tea for guests in it Ntombikayise had her own cup that was the size of a JoJo tank as the boys would usually say. So

Makhulu knew that it was Hazel making the tea. She quickly took out the tea bags that were in the tea pot and threw them away before taking a soapy sponge to wash the tea pot. She worked so quickly the pot nearly fell but she managed to prevent that from happening. After wiping the round tea pot she put other tea bags in it and placed it on the tray. She was about to do the same with the cups when she heard a door open and shut so she had no time to do that nor did she have time to take out other cups so she just

switched. She thought that if Hazel put anything in the cups then there'd be one that she chose for Ntombikayise already whether the one on the left or right. When Hazel jumped for the cup on the right to make tea for Ntombi Makhulu became certain of her theory but only time would prove if it was right or not. .

Ntombikayise dropped Hazel off feeling glad that they made peace. When Hazel was busy making her the herbal tea she took a video of the moment and sent it to Lefa. He was so happy

to see his grandmother reaching out after distancing herself.

Hazel told Bonolo and Vakele about her visit.

Vakele: "See? She doesn't hate Lefa's future wife" he said when Hazel left them in the lounge.

Bonolo: "That's so great. If I do not have a problem with Ntombi, I failed to see why your mother did. Ntombi's fragile right now so I'm glad Ma behaved". Bonolo went to get started on dinner while Vakele listened to classic music. It was a nice Sunday afternoon chill but it later got

disturbed by Hazel's scream all the way from her room. Vakele jumped up first and Bonolo followed behind him. When they opened the door they found Hazel's bed cover covered in her own vomit while she groaned in pain holding her tummy. She was curled up indicating to the intensity of her pain.

Vakele: "Call an ambulance, Bonolo" he instructed Bonolo and she nodded.

Hazel: "No... I don't like hospitals" she shook her head "Just make me some lemon water" she added.

Sweat had started to run down her forehead. Vakele lifted her off the bed and walked to his car with her. She was mumbling something but he didn't care. His aim was getting her medical care. She threw up on him but he had no time to overthink the moment but Bonolo wore a disgusted look. They were all on their way to hospital and Bonolo called Lefa to tell him what was going on. Lefa was forced to cut his father son time short and rush home to drop Hlomphe off. When Makhulu heard what happened she knew that

Hazel had a taste of her own medicine, literally. She offered to accompany Lefa and Ntombi stayed home with Hlompho. When they arrived they found Vakele and Bonolo waiting for word from the doctor.

Doc: "We suspect that it's food poisoning. The symptoms are very similar to that but we'll know for sure once we've done tests"

Vakele: "Is she okay though?"

Doc: "We managed to control the vomiting and diarrhoea somewhat. She lost a lot of fluids so we've put her on a drip to

hydrate her body. She's weak but she'll be fine" they all breathed.

The family went to see Hazel and to see her so weak was not nice at all but they were glad that she'd be fine. She could speak so they made small talk with her.

She had never been so sick so the moment was scary. Visiting hours were over so the family left the room but Makhulu first went to Hazel's side.

Makhulu: "My granddaughter would have been lying here had you gotten your way not so? she whispered to Hazel "I know

snakes, Hazel. I know the real ones and those in human form. You can't fool someone who has been around for about the same years as you. You can fool kids like Ntombi but not me. My back to sender requests are strong. You dare ever put anything in my child's drink or food again I'll send lightning your way so strong you'll regret ever trying to kill my child" she didn't even know if sending lightning to someone was possible but she heard people say it so she thought it would be a big enough scare for Hazel. She didn't care if

Hazel believed she's a witch as long as she's warned.

Hazel: "I didn't do anything" she said in a whisper. She was scared because the one thing she had always been afraid of was being bewitched. That's why she took years before moving to the rural area. She thought the rural area had a lot of witches compared to the city. She backed away from Makhulu to not get anything of Makhulu on herself.

Makhulu: "Come near my child again and you'll know me" she warned.

Nurse: "Ma, I'm sorry but the patient needs rest and visiting hours are over". Makhulu fixed her jacket and walked out the door. She didn't feel any regret because had Ntombi had that tea she'd most probably have miscarried. The doctor finally told Hazel that they found traces of poison in her bloodstream and she lied saying she wanted to commit suicide. She asked the doctor to not tell her family because she felt ashamed. She believed in witchcraft because she'd seen things growing up that many

wouldn't believe so she took Makhulu's threat serious about lightning strikes being sent to her. She didn't know how Makhulu turned the tables around and that made her certain that Makhulu was indeed capable of sending lightning to her. She still felt terribly ill but grateful to be alive. The poison was not to kill Ntombikayise but to weaken the pregnancy which would have led to a miscarriage in the long run but she put a stop to that mission when she found out Ntombi's grandmother possessed powers

that she could never match. She decided to go back home as soon as she got discharged.

Driving from the same house to the same office with Lefa was still an adjustment to Ntombi. Lefa has had to change his morning playlist to make space for her music as it was no longer about him but them. Their first stop was always Hlomphe's school. Ntombi: "I'm so glad that your grandmother is okay. When elders and kids are sick it's a concern" she looked at Lefa who was

focusing on the road.

Lefa: "Me too but her situation has got me more worried about you" he briefly looked at her.

Ntombi: "Why?"

Lefa: "Because I now fear that you might get food poisoning somehow by eating something which is contaminated"

Ntombi: "I've got a killer immune system, don't worry" she assured him.

Lefa: "So many changes going on in your body right now. I'm just glad that you don't have severe morning sickness"

Ntombi: "Me too. Are you excited about knowing the gender in our next appointment? Well that's if your baby isn't shy" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Then they'd take that personality trait from you, not me" he looked at her shaking her head in denial "I think six kids are enough. What do you think?" he asked.

Ntombi: "More than enough, sthandwa sam. I was meaning to talk to you about that"

Lefa: "But if another surprise comes in a few years I won't complain" he laughed.

Ntombi: "I knew you'd say something like that. No more surprises, baby. We need to have these kids out of the house so we can rest and travel" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "So it seems no one is supportive of our courthouse wedding plan and I don't want to do things behind our families back"

Ntombi: "The more they give us lip service, the more my belly is growing" Lefa reached his hand out to hold it.

Lefa: "Watched you get ready this morning, I see the differences. I

can't wait for our 18 weeks ultrasound so we can know if we're having a boy or girl"

Ntombi: "I do not even want to have expectations" Lefa nodded in agreement. They finally arrived at their office space ready to tackle the Monday. Ntombikayise was doing everything in her power to train her junior so that when time to go to maternity leave comes, her junior would be able to handle their existing clients.

Having their own business was not easy at all but they woke up determined to make it work on a

daily basis. Ntombikayise sometimes had to be reminded to take a break and the knock on the door reminded her that it was lunch time.

Hlubi: "I decided to come feed mommy" she walked inside holding food and magazines.

Ntombi: "Is it lunchtime already?"

Hlubi: "Oh my word, we're going to welcome a skinny baby at the rate you're going". Ntombi stood to hug her. The food smelled so good.

Ntombi: "Did you perhaps bring enough for three? My hubby has

to eat too" she asked softly and Hlubi laughed.

Hlubi: "Take him his portion. I actually thought he'd be here"

Ntombi: "Lefa is more of a workaholic than me" she sorted the food and when she had Lefa's aside she excused herself to go to his office. It didn't look like he had any intention of leaving the office for lunch but welcomed the lunch Ntombi brought with open arms. He thanked her and she told him where the lunch came from and he asked her to thank Mahlubandile. He didn't want to

sit through "girl talk" so he stayed in his office having lunch while working. They needed more staff than they had but they didn't have the money for extra salaries yet so they decided to wait and not force things.

Ntombi: "Are you going to donate the magazines to the doctor's office?" she took a bite of her food.

Hlubi: "Actually came to you. I wanted us to plan your wedding" Ntombikayise raised a brow.

Ntombi: "Best, we really don't want a big wedding mainly

because we don't have the money and because baby will need stuff too. It just doesn't make financial sense to spend on a lavish wedding. Lefa and I want to remain debt free". Hlubi gave a sad face "I'm sorry. I know you guys looked forward to being bridesmaids and such but we really can't this year" she said honestly.

Hlubi: "Let us plan hypothetically anyway just to mend my broken heart. I really looked forward to planning a big wedding with you"

Ntombi: "I know" they held hands

"But dreaming won't hurt right?
So, let's check those magazines"
she moved her chair closer to
Hlubi.

Hlubi: "I brought a book so we
can paste the pictures of what
you would have liked. I'll keep it
so that when the budget is there
no matter when, we'll work from
it"

Ntombi: "You really looked forward
to helping me plan shame" she
laughed and watched
Mahlubandile wiped invisible tears.
Hlubi: "What do you think about a
garden wedding?" Ntombikayise

smiled "Look at these" she paged the magazine to give Ntombi an idea of what she imagined.

Ntombi: "Wow it's breath-taking. Can you imagine this in spring?" she smiled.

Hlubi: "Which garden decor would you have gone for? Page 29 or 31?" Ntombikayise took a good look.

Ntombi: "Definitely 31". She watched Hlubi take scissors out of her bag and cut the picture out. Ntombikayise didn't admit it but it was quite a fun project. Once they had a wedding budget

she would definitely reference from what they just chose. Mahlubandile was glad that Ntombi didn't get suspicious. She opened the door to leave and was greeted by a man holding a clipboard. She stood aside so Ntombi would talk to the man. Ntombi got served and as she signed off she wondered by who and why. She hoped it wasn't a client. She thanked the delivery guy and closed the door again. Hlubi: "I'll stick around just in case you'll need legal advice" she walked behind Ntombi to her desk.

When Ntombi opened the envelope and read what's inside her heart raced.

Ntombi: "Liyema's suing me" she said while reading through the summon. Mahlubandile had to grab the letter and check for herself. Liyema was suing Ntombi for allegedly lying about not having a womb and marrying him with a hidden agenda. Ntombi picked up her phone and dialled Lefa's office.

Ntombi: "Baby, can you please come to my office?"

Lefa: "Is Babini there for our

meeting already?" he checked his clock.

Ntombi: "It's something else... something urgent"

Lefa: "On my way" he ended the call and was there within seconds. They showed him the letter and he couldn't believe it "what does this man want from you?" he looked at Ntombi. His eyes that of an angry man "who told him about the pregnancy?" they looked at Mahlubandile.

Hlubi: "I swear I didn't"

Ntombi: "So he might be stalking me? The boys don't know yet" she

looked at them both.

Lefa: "I'm going to teach this son of a..." Ntombikayise ran to block his way as he went to the door.

Ntombi: "Last time he provoked you that's why he couldn't lay charges, baby. If you go there and best him he'll press charged. Please I can't stress about you being arrested too... please" she pleaded and watched his jaw tighten.

Hlubi: "She's right" Lefa looked down and at Ntombi again.

Lefa: "Okay" he said and Ntombi hugged him. He was angry. The

last thing that he wanted was for her to stress and being sued will definitely do that.

Hlubi: "I'll represent you" she offered and Ntombikayise shook her head.

Ntombi: "After the rift between you and Lungi, I don't want you to have to go through that with another sibling. You can't side with me"

Hlubi: "I side with the law" she took her bags "I'm going to respond on your behalf. I'm tired of Elephant men thinking that they can just ruin lives. Privilege

has them thinking they are semi gods. You'll hear from me soon, best" she hurried out. Lefa felt so helpless and all he wanted to do was go break Liyema's jaw but that would add to Ntombi's stress. Mahlubandile had a great lunch but it got ruined by Liyema. She drove to his office furious and swearing between gritted teeth until she arrived. She found him busy working.

Hlubi: "You're suing her? Really, Liyema?" she said after barging in.

Liyema: "I knew that she'll come

crying to you that's why I didn't make you my lawyer. You are forcing me to take my business elsewhere when I could support a family business. I hope that you're doing it pro bono because I'm coming for everything that's mine. I'm coming for my company shares, for the settlement money, for the money I gave her when she sold me my house" he stood. Hlubi: "She's pregnant!" he reminded her.

Liyema: "Why do you think I'm suing? After years of lies she gets knocked up by another man.

Years of making me a damn fool"
he shouted.

Hlubi: "Did you ever love this
woman?"

Liyema: "Why do you think I'm
hurting? You damn well believe
that I loved her. I wanted her
to love me back by fighting for
our marriage when I was trying
to do it. I'm the victim here"

Hlubi felt like punching him.

Hlubi: "Ntombikayise is pregnant,
Liyema!" she shouted.

Banele: "Mom, is what?" he held
files in his hands as he started
with his internship.

Liyema: "Nothing. It's grown up business. Close the door behind you"

Hlubi: "No stay, Anele. You guys are no longer little children. Your mother is pregnant" Banele's eyes shot open "And your father is suing her for allegedly lying to him about not being able to conceive again" Banele looked at his father.

Liyema: "You've taken it way to far, Mahlubandile. You had no business telling my child that." he pointed at her.

Hlubi: "Why?" You don't want

them to know that you are a pathetic man who wants their mother to suffer for not fighting for you" she walked up to him.

Banele: "Mom is pregnant and you're suing her?" he was still shocked.

Liyema: "Boy, I'm hurt. Your mother lied to me all these years" he said softly.

Banele: "But why sue her? Why not just ask her to apologize if it's true?"

Hlubi: "Because it's not" she looked at her nephew.

Liyema: "Don't you dare tell him

what's truth and what's not when you're talking from a biased point. You're a disgrace to family, Mahlubandile. You should be fighting for me"

Hlubi: "Oh please don't tell me about being a disgrace. We're going to come at you and we're coming at you hard" she promised before leaving.

Banele: "Dad, please don't stress mom now. Sue after she's given birth please" he pleaded.

Liyema: "I'm hurt too, Banele. Do you know how much I wanted another child with your mother?"

Banele: "It was clearly not meant to be"

Bukhosi: "Woah, Dabs didn't even see me walk pass her. Why is she so angry?" he came to bring Banele lunch.

Banele: "Mom is pregnant and dad is suing her for it" Bukhosi laughed in disbelief.

Bukhosi: "Wait, he's serious?" he looked at Liyema "On what grounds?" he asked.

Liyema: "Lying to me about not having a womb"

Bukhosi: "Is that a fact?"

Liyema didn't answer "Yho" he

gave Banele his food and walked out. Banele followed behind.

Liyema threw papers on the floor in anger.

Liyema: "Why can't you four for once just be on my side?" he shouted but they were gone already. He started to cry and his PA closed his door to give her boss privacy.

Babini arrived for his meeting with his partners but found them both absent minded during the meeting.

Lefa: "I'm sorry, man but can we please postpone? We're having a

terrible day" he looked at Ntombi. Babini: "So I notice. What's going on? Is the business in trouble?" Ntombikayise shook her head quickly.

Lefa: "We're being sued" Babini sits up straight "Not the business... Ntombi's being sued by her ex husband". Ntombikayise didn't care who Lefa told because Liyema's lawsuit ruined their plans to reveal the pregnancy to the family at the right time. She didn't want her kids finding out from anyone else so she planned on telling them after work. She

believed Mahlubandile when she said she didn't tell Liyema.

Babini: "That's hectic. We can have this meeting again soon"

Lefa: "Wait... Could you by any chance get your hands on Ntombi's medical records at the hospital she gave birth at?"

Ntombikayise looked at him attentively.

Babini: "Yeah shouldn't take more than a couple of days. With your permission of course" Ntombi nodded quickly.

Lefa: "Surely her file must say that they supposedly performed a

hysterectomy"

Babini: "I'm sure it does. I'll see what I can do" Lefa held Ntombi's hands "And if it's in writing you can even counter sue for emotional distress or something. You are pregnant and this is causing you stress" he stood.

Ntombi: "Thank you so much" they stood too "Have them call me if they give you trouble" she added.

Babini: "I'm trouble myself"

Ntombi laughed softly.

Lefa: "Thanks, man" they shook hands.

Babini: "Don't mention it. It'll be with your legal representative in no time" he said goodbye and left.

Lefa: "For a qualified lawyer he sure is dumb to not do a fact check to his allegations. As an accountant I know better than to be so careless so we'll win this. Just please don't stress" he pulled her close.

Ntombi: "I'm starting to hate him" she confessed "I'm not going to stress because I know my truth. I'm glad I didn't have more kids with him" she hugged him. After Lefa suggested her

records be taken she felt at ease. She just hoped that the hospital didn't "lose" her file because Liyema was not dumb. Had she not been pregnant she'd have gone to give him a piece of her mind but she knew that it might turn out ugly. If possible she'd counter sue and take more than what the divorce settlement gave her. She didn't want his money but she wanted to show him that two can play the game. ❤️

S2 S2-INSERT 70 (NOT EDITED)

Ntombikayise has once again had to deal with how Liyema's choices affected their children. They weren't babies but they were human with feelings and they once again felt torn between two people that they love. They were out of the house most times as they preferred to spend time with friends or girlfriends.

Ntombikayise and Lefa also made the decision to not make use of Mahlubandile's legal services not because they had no confidence in

her but because they didn't want to cause rift in the Elephant family so soon after the Lungile saga. That also meant they had to take from Hlompho's implant savings to cover legal costs which Ntombikayise felt terrible about. Babini managed to get Ntombi's records and as Ntombi expected it stated that she indeed had a hysterectomy when in reality she didn't.

Bongi: "I spoke to Miss Poti's attorney. They are giving us a chance to withdraw our motion" said Liyema's attorney.

Liyema: "I wouldn't have handed in a motion if I wanted to settle out of court. This woman cost me a lot of money and I didn't even see her plan all these years. I want everything back"

Bongi: "Mr Elephant, I advise that you do withdraw. Her attorney was more than willing to send me copies of her medical records during the time she gave birth to your children" she fiddled with some papers "There" she shifted the papers forward "It's in black and white. They told her that they performed a

hysterectomy" Liyema fixed his glasses to get a proper look "You'll also find a letter from the doctor who delivered her babies apologizing for the misdiagnosis and availed himself to become a witness. There's also a nurse who is willing to be witness. Her best friend at the time remembered how shattered she was when she thought that she had no womb. Her grandparents were present when the medical staff told her she had no womb. These people have solid proof and you've given me nothing but your assumption.

I do not like going to court based on belief. I trust facts and nothing else" she added.

Liyema: "So you're agreeing with them?"

Bongi: "I think Miss Poti is showing you leniency. She's aware of the costs this will come with for both of you. I'm sorry to say this but I advised that we try to not involve the court until we have all our facts but you didn't listen. She has reached out a hand to you so take it before you make a public fool of yourself. This is a losing battle. You won't

get your assets back because by law she's entitled to them"

Liyema: "Get out" he said with anger.

Bongi: "Do I have your consent to withdraw?"

Liyema: "I said get out"

Bongi: "If you won't withdraw the motion then I'll withdraw myself from it. I'm not going to make a fool of myself by presenting hearsay while the other party had hardcore proof" she stood and out her things together "I hope to hear you say you've decided to withdraw by end

of today" she walked out in her red power suit and Liyema watched her hips away from side to side in confidence. He hit his desk after she closed the door. He's noticed one trait about himself that he never saw before and that's the fact that he hated losing. Banele walked in holding some forms that needed Liyema's sign off.

Banele: "Vanessa, asked that you please sign these" he put the papers on his father's desk.

Liyema: "So are we going to be like this from now on?" Banele

shrugged.

Banele: "I don't think neither of you understand just how difficult this is on us. We've decided to stay neutral because Mama is talking about suing you right back" Liyema stood.

Liyema: "She said that?"

Banele: "For emotion distress. The doctor booked her off work for two days already. You are suing a pregnant woman, what did you expect would happen?"

Liyema: "I just wanted justice for myself"

Banele: "Well her unborn baby

might not be yours but he/she is our sibling and if any of this causes Mom stress that leads to a miscarriage you'll have four very angry sons" he walked out.

Mrs E and Lungi supported Liyema because they believed what he was saying. Mahlubandile might not be representing Ntombi but she was clear on where her loyalties were.

Ntombikayise laid on the doctor's consultation bed waiting to find out the health process of their

little one. Lefa sat besides her excited to find out what the baby's gender was.

Dr: "I'm sorry for making you wait" he looked at the couple.

Ntombi: "Apology accepted" she smiled. The doctor asked that she lift her top up before he placed a paper over the waist of her pants to not get any gel on it. It was always music to both Lefa and Ntombi's ears to hear their baby's little heartbeat. They both smiled when they saw the baby's growth development.

Hlomphe was excited to have

another sibling and so were the quads but they couldn't take in all that excitement while their parents were fighting yet again. They understood where their father's pain was coming from, but they knew their mother wouldn't lie about such. They wished that the parents sat and spoke before involving outsiders. The doctor said that he was still happy with the results of the ultrasound and Ntombikayise had not gotten any illness from the pregnancy. With the quads she had high blood pressure problems

so she hoped the second time would be smooth sailing all the way.

Lefa: "Can you tell if it's a boy or a girl?" he asked with excitement.

Doc: "Does mommy want to know?" Ntombikayise looked at Lefa.

Ntombi: "If he knows and I don't he'll make sure that I die of curiosity, doctor. He'll go for pink things and blue just so I'd shake the secret out of him so yes I'd like to know" Lefa laughed out.

Lefa: "Why do you think the worst of me? I would respect your

choice to wait, baby"

Ntombikayise raised a brow and he laughed "Okay maybe I would throw confusing hints here and there" he confessed.

Ntombi: "See what I'm married to, doctor?" they all laughed "So tell us both now please" the doctor nodded.

Doc: "I know from our previous appointments that you wanted to hear this news. I'm glad to announce that you are having a little girl" Ntombikayise smiled.

Lefa: "This is both great and scary news. Great because well

I've always wanted to have both sons and daughters but scary because of the way the world treats women"

Ntombi: "You'll teach her self defence when the time comes" he kissed her before nodding.

Lefa: "She'll be daddy's little girl and be the last born. I have a feeling that she'll wrap me around her little finger" they all laughed.

Doc: "It's where it's heading. I speak from experience. Mom will just have to be the no parent and take one for the team so there

can be balance" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Now I'm scared too"

Lefa: "We'll be fine" they kissed.

Lefa always felt like driving her home after an appointment because he thought she'd need rest but Ntombi reminded him that it was not a sick person appointment.

Ntombi: "Since Liyema ruined the surprise we had for our friends and extended family by suing me, I think we should do a gender reveal. I know it's cheesy and Makhulu will most probably tell

me it's not African but I feel like doing it. Just something as simple as inviting our loved ones over for lunch after we've come from home affairs and then have one odd pink balloon in the room. I want to see who of them are observant" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I love that idea very much. We're having a girl!" he shouted and Ntombikayise raised her hands up while cheering. They had a little crazy moment of excitement in the car before walking back to their office. Their employees were able to keep

things running without them constantly looking after them and Ntombi knew by the time of her maternity leave, her duties would be taken care of. They were shocked to find Nadine who was Ntombi's lawyer waiting at the café on the ground floor. They went up with her to Ntombi's office because Ntombi didn't want to discuss her case in public.

Nadine: "I got contacted by Mr Elephant's attorney and they've decided to withdraw the lawsuit" she said with a smile.

Lefa: "Is that possible?"

Nadine: "Yes but we'll hear what the judge says first. If the reasons have valid enough then the judge will agree"

Ntombi: "Thank you so much, Nadine"

Nadine: "The witnesses and proof in writing must have proved how strong our case is. Can we discuss you counter suing right now?"

Let's make him pay for what he's done to you. I'll need your recent medical records when you were admitted after getting the summon" she said.

Lefa: "She wasn't admitted. She

just didn't feel well"

Nadine: "Which would never have happened had he not created a stressful environment for her"

Ntombi: "I'm really tired and even too happy to discuss this right now. Can we please reschedule?"

Nadine nodded.

Nadine: "Call me" she tapped Ntombi's hand before nodding and they watched her go out the office.

Ntombi: "He's going to regret ever provoking me. You'll see how he plays victim when I decide to fight back. The only reason why

he decided to withdraw is because he knew he'd lose" she went to sit down. Lefa just stared at her for a long while "What, baby?" she looked at him. He sat on her desk. Lefa: "The great news about our baby being healthy and us getting a little girl just took a backseat because of this guy" Ntombikayise rose to stand between his legs.

Ntombi: "I can't help it. He makes me angry, baby" she looked at his shirt's buttons.

Lefa: "Baby, all of this is affecting your children. If you fight back then it'll make things

even worse for the children, our baby included because your emotions affect your body"

Ntombi: "I'm just tired of being walked over by Liyema. Why should I always be the bigger person?"

Lefa: "Because you're emotionally more intelligent than him.

Dragging this is only going to cost you money, peace of mind and potentially your children. Born and unborn" Ntombi put her forehead against his and he kissed hers before putting his back against hers "One thing that I've learned

from martial arts training is to choose my battles. I was taught that I feed whatever that I give my energy to. Maybe to Liyema this is not about money because he's got plenty. Maybe it's about him proving to himself and the world that he can still get your attention which feeds his ego. Going into a legal battle which might drag on for years will be giving him your energy" he kissed her lips after speaking.

Ntombi: "But I want him to pay" he said with frustration.

Lefa: "Sometimes walking away is

payment enough because you are claiming back your power. He's expecting you to counter sue and has his lawyer on standby. He knows that even though you're the one suing this times you'll still be the one suffering because you don't have the kind of money that he does and you stressing will cost you a lot" he heard her breath out loudly.

Ntombi: "So I stop giving him my attention?" Lefa nodded "But it's not easy. He had absolutely no reason to sue me without facts" she looked at him "I have the

facts to take more of his money" she added.

Lefa: "He has enough to bribe judges"

Ntombi: "Between you and Tamkhulu I don't know who is worse with the insights" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I want us to direct our energy to loving each other, our children and family not to entertaining bitter exes. I value you, our boys and our daughter enough to make you realise that sitting this one out is best. Please consider it" he held her hands.

Ntombi: "Plus I've taken enough of Hlompho's money and I'm sorry for that. I'll pay it all back"

Lefa: "That's not important right now"

Ntombi: "You'll have to bribe me to let go of this Liyema thing though. I am angry" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Process your anger, sthandwa sam and don't let it control you". There was a brief knock on the door and after given permission a staff member told Lefa someone had come to see him "Let me go maybe it's a

potential client" he stood from her desk "I'll bring the bribe later on" they both laughed "I love you" Ntombikayise felt a soft kiss on her lips before he ran out the door. She sunk back in her chair again not knowing what to do with the anger that now had nowhere to go. She knew Lefa had a point, the case could take years and Liyema would make sure it milked them dry. She was tired of Liyema getting away with everything one way or another, just simply tired.

Mahlubandile was the one who referred Nadine to Ntombi because she knew how good Nadine was. What concerned her were the legal costs such a great attorney came with. That was the reason why she offered Ntombi representation to begin with because she'd have done it pro bono. When Ntombi called her to tell her what Liyema did Mahlubandile felt relieved. She'd handled similar cases before so she knew the kind of money that could involve such and she knew Liyema had an endless supply

unlike Ntombi. She told the ladies the good news and all were happy to hear that Liyema decided to drop the lawsuit.

Poppy: "Now we can go back to our plans. This man is hell of a dramatic" she shook her head.

Makhulu: "I knew he didn't have a leg to stand on. He made the decision out of emotion and not logic"

Zuko: "Ntombi should sue him right back"

Hlubi: "She just said that she decided not to. I think she doesn't have money for Nadine"

Poppy: "Haibo she's got a winning case here. Can't she pay this Nadine with the money she'll get from the case?"

Hlubi: "Some attorneys don't take those chances"

Bonolo: "Let us get back to planning the wedding. They already gave us the date that they'll get married at Home affairs. Is it possible to have the wedding on that day?" she looked at the ladies and they smiled and nodded.

Makhulu: "Now this I want to see" she clapped once "A surprise

wedding" she laughed softly while shaking her head.

Othu: "Craig says getting an idea of what Lefa might like is like trying to milk a rock" they all laughed.

Yandi: "They're all men. I'm sure they aren't asking the right questions. I'm surprised they haven't given it away. Come ladies, let's go check out the garden. The flowers are blooming in some trees already" she smiled.

Bonolo: "Yandi, I've only seen such houses in magazines. Your house is simply breath-taking, my girl. It's

a little paradise"

Yandi: "Thank you so much, Ma" she smiled. They followed her out to the garden. "We must prepare for rain though. Rather safe than sorry" they all nodded.

Othu: "Why not do this" she folded the glass doors that led to the garden making it look as if there was no wall at all "The inside will fit the number of guests we have and we can keep it open like this so that there will still be that garden wedding feel" she suggested.

Bonolo: "Wow. I just want to pick

up this home and put it in my yard" they all laughed.

Poppy: "Inside is plan B" the others nodded.

Hlubi: "This is the decor that she chose from the many garden wedding ideas that I showed her. She's really in love with it" she showed the others.

Makhulu: "Her dress must not be tight fitting please, my girls"

Othu: "We are hypothetically planning the wedding, Makhulu so we'll coincidentally find ourselves at a bridal shop soon" they all laughed.

Yandi: "The catering is also sorted on my side. Indeed a wedding is cheaper when making use of our own skills and resources"

Zuko: "I'll keep that in mind. How will we get them to the venue?"

Bonolo: "We'll think about that. I suggest we put their children to the task of making sure of that. They have the craziest idea" she laughed. "Are all the people who should be on the guest list on it?" she asked.

Hlubi: "I don't know if we should put Prince Reth on. He invited her to his so..."

Othu: "Do you have his contact number?"

Hlubi: "Do I look like I keep numbers of royalty on my phone?" they all laughed "I'll get it from Ntombi somehow" she wrote down a reminder.

Poppy: "Ask him to contribute something to the wedding too"

Yandi: "Poppy" she called Poppy to order.

Poppy: "I'm just trying to get Ntombi the best and he has pockets that are deep enough I assume" Yandi shook her head disapproving.

Othu: "Tell him our plan, Hlubi and if he offers to contribute accept but don't tell him it's a must because it's not"

Poppy: "Let me call him. I bet I can get a honeymoon gift out of him"

Hlubi: "I'll give you the number when I have it"

Yandi: "No, calm yourself". Poppy and Hlubi winked at each other without the others noticing. The plans were coming together.

Bonolo was sure to give them a list of family members to invite. Family she knew would rejoice

with Lefa. Hazel left and part of Bonolo didn't want to invite her in case she overstayed her visit again but she had no choice. She just hoped Hazel would behave.

When Liyema's PA told him that there was a gentleman that requested to see him late in the afternoon Liyema wondered who would want to see him at the end of business day. He had no other commitments so he told his PA to show the person in quickly before he could go home. He thought about Ntombi counter suing and

not once did he feel frightened. He knew her accounts would surely run dry because he planned to drag the lawsuit for years by any means possible. He saw the proof that she was not faking but he was still angry. The last person that he expected to see walk through his office door was Sita August. Seeing Sita took him right back to the gut-wrenching moment when he found his first wife naked in bed with two men. Seeing Sita brought back the rage and disgust that he felt that day. Liyema stood and

punched Sita without warning and Sita held his lips while wearing a smirk.

Sita: "Still as hostile as I remember. Your punches are still those of a ten year old boy though" he laughed and Liyema held him by the collar in no time.

Liyema: "What the hell are you doing here?" he shouted.

Pam: "Sir, should I call the cops?"

Liyema's PA asked.

Liyema: "Go home" he ordered.

She was doubtful at first but

left to go home as ordered "Why

the hell are you on my premises?"

he shook Siya.

Sita: "To check if you have another wife that I can screw"

Liyema punched him but Siya didn't take it lying down. The two fought until a security guard came to break it up.

Liyema: "Take this thing off my premises" he nursed his throbbing eye. The security was about to grab hold of Sita but Sita put his hand out to stop him.

Sita: "You do that, you'll be fired by end of the week" he said to the guard.

Liyema: "Don't just look at me like

that, get him out before you are witness to a murder" he shouted at the guard but the guard was doubtful "Who is your boss?" he asked. The guard walked towards Sita again.

Sita: "Well as per my knowledge, you actually have two bosses because half of this company belongs to Miss Poti"

Liyema: "Ntombi's just a silent partner"

Sita: "Now she's not a partner at all because as of today I officially became co-owner of Ndlovu Communications. Your wife strikes

a hard bargain making me pay
hot money for these but I was
more than willing" the guard
stood down.

Liyema: "What?" his heart
started to beat faster.

Sita: "I actually loved Zingisa. You
never understood her free spirit
hence she ended up with me. When
I heard your father killed her it
pissed me off making me hate you
even more. So I purchased the
shares when she offered to piss
you the fuck off and I'm glad to
see that it worked. It's just the
beginning" he promised "I'm going

to see you tomorrow partner" he said with a smirk "You dare touch me again, you'll regret it" he warned the guard.

Security: "I'm sorry, boss"

Liyema: "He's not your boss dammit" he shouted.

Guard: "I'm sorry, boss" he said to Liyema. The green-eyed guard walked out to avoid any confusion and Sita followed behind. Liyema threw everything that was on his desk on the floor. He felt his rage flow through him like hot lava. He had to calm himself to breathe as he felt his chest feel tighter. He

didn't want another heart attack not before he's spoken to Ntombi. He took his keys and drove to Ntombi's office because it was not the end of business yet. He was lucky to have found her in her office after budging in like a madman.

Liyema: "You are so cunning, Ntombikayise" he pointed at her. She stood quickly to put up defence if needed "I don't know what I ever saw in you. I curse the day that I ever met you" he added.

Ntombi: "At least we feel the

same about something" she nodded.

Liyema: "Of all people, Ntombi? Of all people you had to sell a huge part of my business to him knowing that I hate the man?"

Ntombi: "I had to pay my legal fees somehow" she shrugged casually.

Liyema: "You hurt me"

Ntombi: "As you did me but my fiancé advised that I let everything that makes me give you the little attention you seem to be so desperate for, so I listened"

Liyema: "You might as well have stuck a damn knife in my chest. Giving you shares was hard enough but at least you didn't care about the day to day operations. He's going to make sure that I feel his presence on a daily basis. He's going to do everything to sink my business"

Ntombi: "As you did everything to try sink Lefa's business. Don't think that we forgot about that. So something is fine when you do it but when others serve you the same dish you suddenly notice how poisonous it is? I could have

chosen to take so much more from you after you accused me but instead I gave you what you wanted. I made sure that you no longer deal with me. That's what you said right? So what the hell do you want from me?"

Liyema: "Just something that will prove to me that you didn't pretend to love me all these years dammit! I'm angry because you are giving some bastard the child that you should have given me. I'm mad because you have our kids believing that you are a victim when you are not. I just

want you to admit that you never loved me"

Ntombi: "I can't and won't because I'm not a liar" Liyema looked at her breathing like he had ran a five hour marathon.

Liyema: "You are cruel. Selling him my shares proved as much. Maybe it's time that I get the hell away from your toxicity. I won't enjoy my business anyway because you killed it. You killed everything even the man that I was because I don't recognize myself today. I'm now starting to wonder if Bonga even did all those

things to you. Maybe that day when I found him dragging you was because he reached the edge because you drove him there. You have the power to drive men insane" he walked closer and she backed away.

Lefa: "Hey" Liyema looked back "You touch you die" he promised and Liyema stopped in his tracks. Liyema: "I don't like you but I will warn you. She's not who you think she is. She has an agenda for all men. No man part with this woman on a good note so get the hell out while you haven't

invested much. Fight so she won't raise your child"

Lefa: "Go" he ordered and Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "You got me good" he looked at Ntombikayise "I guess it's checkmate for you. You are a master in conning people. I..."

Liyema felt Lefa grab him by his clothes and pushed him out of the door. He didn't try to fight

because he didn't want to end in hospital again. He let Lefa push him to the lift and the two men stood in front of each other with anger in both their eyes until the

lift door closed. Liyema felt like he was losing his mind as he did after finding Zingisa in bed with Siya. The image just kept playing in his mind all over again and he knew that he wouldn't be able to work with Sita. He was willing to sell his shares of his own company rather than work with Sita. He didn't expect Ntombi to make such a move. Ntombi explained to Lefa what just happened.

Ntombi: "You said I must stop giving him my energy and the other ways he used to get it was through business meetings"

Lefa: "What happened to leaving the shares for your children, baby?"

Ntombi: "I'm going to pay back Hlompho's money and then save the rest for my children until they reach a certain age. They still benefit. I'm not planning on splashing the money on an exotic wedding and vacations. I hear you guys saying that I should just let go but I am tired of being walked over. So yes, baby I revenged in my own way and I don't feel bad. Why is it when good people stand up for themselves society

suddenly sees them as the villains?" a tear rolled before more came "I don't like such either. You think that I love that the quads are witnessing their parents fight like this? I don't but I'm so exhausted. I clearly don't have this peace thing you and Tamkhulu have going on. I'm just tired, I'm tired. I gave this man everything he wanted. I gave him four children when he was expecting only one. I gave this man love and loyalty when he was cheating behind my back. I gave him a divorce when he was in a

rush to marry his side chick. I begged my boys to forgive him when they wanted nothing to do with him. Now when I have found my little happiness, he thinks he can take it away? No, Lefa" she wiped her tears "So I'm glad he knows what it feels like to have things you treasure be taken away. I've never taken things away from Liyema as he did and now when I make him feel how much it hurts I'm being preached peace? No, baby" she blew her nose. Lefa walked closer to her "No, I don't want to hear it" she

took her bag and left him in the office. They used one car so she had no choice but to wait for him. He found her standing against his car and he unlocked it from a distance and watched her get inside. Lefa got inside the car and they drove off in silence. He didn't even play the radio as he usually did. Instead of driving straight home he drove to the beach. He didn't want the children to see her like that. When Ntombi is not okay the entire house gets affected not because she made them suffer but because her

silence was too loud. They just sat in the car looking at the ocean.

Lefa: "I'm sorry that I asked you to sweep your feelings under the carpet" he said after a long while "If letting go of those shares has brought you some emotional relief than I'm glad that you did it. You most probably didn't tell me because you knew I'd remind you that you said it's for your boys. I'm sorry, sthandwa sam" he held her hands.

Ntombi: "Many kids are successful without share inheritance. I wanted to make him pay. He

must know he's not above everyone. Sita is going to remind him of that, trust me"

Lefa: "I don't care what Sita and Liyema do. Please just tell me this is the last of it. I want us to look forward to our bright future"

Ntombi: "I'm not planning on doing anything else to Liyema but I can't say the same for him". Lefa nodded. They got out the car to go take a short stroll on the beach. The fresh air was exactly what she needed. She loved how he knew what she needed

without her having to tell him.

Portia listened to Liyema go on and on about what Ntombi did.

Portia: "What did you expect?"

Don't you know that there's no furry like that of a scone women?"

Liyema: "Whose side are you on?"

Portia: "You want the sugar-coated truth or the raw truth?"

Liyema: "Whatever"

Portia: "I'll give you the raw truth. I don't support you trying to bring Ntombikayise down,

Liyema. Why do you think I never go fight her on your behalf as some women do? I'm a part of the woman who broke her heart by sleeping with you and I'm worse because I came with a lifelong proof of an affair.

Whenever we go to something that involves your kids, she's forced to watch me and Abo with you. I don't know how she does it but I'd have lost it looking at my ex husband's mistress and child.

The poor woman found joy and you want to piss on it and by so doing you piss on my joy too because it

affects our relationship"

Liyema: "Then go find yourself a better man too like she claims she has.

Portia: "The best thing you've said all day. Let me go and find him" she went to the lounge where Abo was, took her daughter and walked to the door.

Liyema: "Where are you going with my daughter?"

Portia: "Somewhere where her mother won't be second best" she took her house keys and walked out. Liyema's pride let them leave but it hit him that he'd be left

alone in the house once again. He ran out.

Liyema: "Portia!" he shouted but her car had taken the corner already. He went inside the empty house and remembered why he wanted a surrogate to carry his child to begin with. It was because he hated how empty and big the house felt. He felt like he was back to square one once again. All alone again and ironically in the same house 

S2-INSERT 71 (UNEDITED)

After endless planning the friends finally had all their ducks in a row just a few days before the surprise wedding they've been planning for Ntombi and Lefa. Ntombi apologized to her children for everything that had gone on. They knew that she sold her portion of Ndlovu Communications and instead of taking sides they decided that it was best they sit out all arguments involving their parents to avoid taking sides. There was a knock on the door and Ntombi went to open. The

last person that she expected to see so soon was Bandile but she none the less jumped at him with a tight hug. Having them all at home was always such a pleasure. Ntombi: "wait..." she looked at him suspiciously "why are you home? I hope nothing happened at school, Bandile" Bandile laughed.

Bandile: "I just missed my mother that's all" he walked inside. Lefa was in the garden with Tamkhulu and the other men.

Ntombi: "who paid for your ticket then?" she closed the door behind them and followed behind him.

Bandile: "Makhulu" he said in greeting when he saw Makhulu peeling fruit in the kitchen. He went to give her a long warm hug. Makhulu was in on the secret so she knew why he was there "Ask Makhulu how I managed to get here" he put his bag down and went out to the garden where the men were. His brothers were delighted to see him and so was Lefa and Tamkhulu.

Makhulu: "He called me and said that he missed you and wanted to see if you really are pregnant so I

sent him money to come. We kept quiet because we knew you'd say it's a waste since he'll be on holiday soon" she lied.

Ntombi: "I'm too happy to even say that right now. Let me quickly make a nice lunch for us. He's actually never really spent time in the house" she looked out the window and watched Bandile take his leather jacket off to get his hands dirty too. The smile on her face was unimaginable and she quickly got out ingredients to feed the men. She still felt no

regret not remorse for getting rid of her shares.

Liyema had not started any trouble since and Ntombi hoped that he got the message. A lot still needed to be done to make the house feel like a home but they were all working together to achieve that goal.

Bukhosi: "The man's smiles differently now too. It must be nice to be in a new relationship" he said to Bandile when they stood at a distance from Lefa and Tamkhulu. Bandile laughed out

thinking about his girlfriend.

Bandile: "Whatever" he threw a pile of dirt at Bukhosi and they all laughed.

Banele: "Tell us about her. You don't even post pictures of her. She's ugly?" the others laughed.

Bandile: "Honestly we are keeping it quiet because we don't want her older brother to know" his brothers laughed.

Bubele: "Screw him. He screws other people's sisters too"

Bandile: "Bru, I've been trying to tell my girl that but she is not ready yet so gotta respect her"

Banele: "Have you at least tapped that?"

Bandile: "I respect this one too much to discuss"

Bubele: "That means no. He's as dry as the day that he left here" the others laughed.

Bukhosi: "I like this girl. I never understood why you all bragged about sleeping with girls" the others mumbled.

Bubele: "Of course you won't. You've only been with one" he shook his head disapproving.

Bandile: "What's going on with your love lives?" he looked at

Bubele and Banele.

Banele: "Free spirits go where the soul leads" Bubele agreed.

Bandile: "So how has it been here?" he looked around.

Banele: "Just ups and down, bra. Dad is bitter because mom didn't give him another child after us. Mom retaliated by selling her shares to a man dad doesn't like. I don't see these two ever getting along again"

Bandile: "And we're in the middle?"

Bukhosi: "Only if you choose sides. I still live with dad and these two, visit as often as they can.

We decided to sit this one out"

Bandile: "Good call. I'll go see the old man to avoid him saying we choose mom"

Bubele: "Keep it neutral, brother. Keep it neutral"

Bandile: "So you guys told her that you'll be moving out?" the others shook their heads.

Bukhosi: "She's just too happy right now because of the little princess on the way" he smiled.

Bandile: "I actually look forward to meeting her. I know mom has been wanting to add to her bunch biologically so I know she's happy"

Banele: "So we'll tell her after the wedding that we've decided to move out"

Bandile: "Did dad agree to let you live in the flat?"

Banele: "He's just going to be happy that we are moving out where mom won't "influence" us but really we don't want to live with him either. Bukhosi is also moving out" Bandile nodded.

Bandile: "Have a bed for me there" they all laughed "So you're all keeping it neutral indeed?"

Bubele: "It's a peaceful life and it's nice that Bhut Lefa isn't

trying to replace our father. I like that he's not spoke ill of dad ever. It shows he really meant when he said that he doesn't want to replace dad but rather be part of the group of men who we can look up to. His actions have been speaking, man" they all looked at Lefa.

Bukhosi: "I just hope mom doesn't think you guys wanting to move out is because of her. I really don't want her stressing"

Banele: "That's why we'll sit down and have a mature, open talk with her. We're grown now so she

must let go. I know Hlompho will be sad too but he must understand the age gap between us. We are at the age of independence" they all nodded "Plus I'm getting a stipend at work so we'll afford groceries too" they laughed.

Lefa: "I'm glad that you are all here. Don't look now but your mom keeps looking out from the kitchen window just to make sure she's not dreaming. Thanks for making her day" the quads nodded.

Hlompho: "They've been speaking so fast" he said to his dad "I

couldn't make out anything except for the part that Bhut Bandile has a girlfriend" the adults laughed "Ask them what they were talking about" he said to his dad.

Lefa: "Some conversations won't include you, my boy. Remember they are far older"

Bukhosi: "We were actually just talking about the fact that we're planning to ask our dad to borrow us his flat" Lefa looked shocked.

Lefa: "Why, if I may ask?"

Bubele: "Nothing personal, Bhut Lefa. We just feel it's time. I

think as someone who has gained independence young, you'll understand" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Then please tell your mother"

Banele: "We will after the we....we will" he stopped himself from saying too much "Go ask mom if the food is ready" he said to Hlomphe.

Hlomphe: "Why me?"

Banele: "Because you're the youngest" Hlomphe frowned.

Hlomphe: "When is our little sister coming?" he asked his father.

Lefa: "She's in no rush so you'll be

in for a long wait and you'll have to wait for her to grow up too" he laughed.

Bukhosi: "If lunch is not ready yet, ask mom for some biscuits"

Hlomphe: "She won't give it to me"

Bukhosi: "Say you're dying of starvation" they all laughed but Hlomphe went inside the house not looking pleased at all. He came out holding bananas and gave each brother one.

Hlomphe: "She said this is much healthier"

Bandile: "Let's not corrupt poor

Hlompho. In our days we used to be so sneaky, we'd hide stolen biscuits in our pants" they laughed. They ate the fruit and continued working to pass by time. Lunch was finally served and they enjoyed it with great conversation. The men came to take Lefa for a bachelor's party since he and Ntombikayise planned on tying the knot the following week they didn't have to do much explaining. Ntombi's friends also came to the house with some snacks and drinks to celebrate her tying the knot soon. They also had

a nail technician come to the house to spoil Ntombi with a manicure and pedicure. Neither of them expected it but it was a welcomed surprise.

Liyema had been trying to beg Portia to talk to him but she gave him no chance to. He missed them more than he imagined he would. She was living with a friend she made when she moved to Cape Town and when Liyema saw the friend drive away in the car that he bought Portia he felt himself get angry. He knocked on

the door and waited for a long while. Portia opened the door and tried to close it when she saw its him again but he blocked it.

Liyema: "Portia, please hear me out" he pleaded.

Portia: "What do you want from me, Liyema?" she opened the door wide and Abongile ran to him when she saw its him at the door.

Abo: "Daddy" she got picked up and given a hug.

Liyema: "I've missed you" he smiled "Have you missed me?"

Abongile smiled and nodded before

giving him another hug.

Abo: "I miss you and home" Portia looked down.

Liyema: "Go play with your toys so that I'll talk to mommy" he put her down and watched her return to what she was busy with.

Portia: "What promises have you come to make this time?"

Liyema: "Can I come in please?"

Portia: "My friend doesn't want you here"

Liyema: "That's why I don't want her at my house. I'm sure she's been encouraging you to dumb me so she'd continue making herself

look relevant with your car"

Portia: "Is that why you're here?" .

Liyema: "I'm here to beg you to come back home. Please let me come in so we can talk" Portia stood aside so he'd come in.

"Thank you" he walked inside. The two of them went where they can talk without Abo hearing them.

Portia: "I'm listening" she folded her arms.

Liyema: "Firstly, I'm sorry for everything"

Portia: "What's everything exactly, Liyema?"

Liyema: "For making you feel like you are second to Ntombikayise and for the way that I spoke to you last time. I admit at first I did try to mould you into the wife Ntombi was by telling you how she did things and expecting you to do the same. I don't think you're second to her because I now know more than anything that you are the woman for me. I know I've hurt you by constantly bringing my ex in our business but I promise it'll never happen again. I love you so much and it's true sometimes it takes losing someone

to realise it"

Portia: "Have you stopped trying to make Ntombikayise pay? You won't try another stunt?"

Liyema: "I'm done with her. Our boys are old enough so really nothing compels me to contact her. I still believe she's cold hearted and manipulative but I choose not to play her game anymore. She proved how low she can sink by selling her shares to Sita"

Portia: "I'm still hearing bitterness which will again lead you to go after her somehow"

Liyema: "What if I tell you that I want us to move back to the Eastern Cape. I'll buy a farm and we'll both be closer to family"

Portia: "What about the life you've built here? Your children? The company?"

Liyema: "Ndlovu Communications is no longer what it used to be. I can't work with Sita and I'm not going to pretend like I can" he said honestly "The kids are old enough to travel wherever they please so if they want to see me they'll visit. I'm just tired of city life. I met so many ruthless

people here and I'm just tired. I need peace of mind"

Portia: "What about my big dream wedding and the house?"

Liyema: "Those are just materialistic things that we can accumulate anywhere. We can build an exact replica of the house on our plot. Your dream wedding is best in the Eastern Cape where all your friends are" he held her hands.

Portia: "You mean this, Liyema?" he shook his head.

Liyema: "I sold the flat and my shares. I don't want to sell the

house because my sons still regard it as home since they grew up in it. So I'll let Bukhosi stay there and maybe he'll convince his brothers to join him"

Portia: "No more bringing up the past and wanting Ntombikayise to pay?"

Liyema: "Baby, this last move she made was enough to make me realize that the woman knows how to play the game. I want to forget about her. I don't want to see her ugly ass baby someday soon either. I want to focus on us and we can make our own babies"

Portia cleared her throat.

Portia: "You want more?"

Liyema: "Of course I do. Maybe two more" Portia's eyes shot open "Did I say something wrong?" she shook her head.

Portia: "I just thought we are done"

Liyema: "Nope, and I advise that you stop preventing pregnancy now so we'll try" he smiled.

Portia: "I don't know, Liyema"

Liyema: "It won't be the same as with Abongile. This time I'll be there from day one. Please,

Portia. Fill that void that Ntombi

left by not giving me another baby"

Portia: "Doesn't Abo do that?"

Liyema: "She does but I wasn't there. I want to go through every step with you. Please stop using the pill" he pleaded "So am I forgiven?" he smiled.

Portia: "I will only stop the pill once we've moved, Liyema. Your actions will determine if you'll get another child. I learned the hard way with Abongile. We'll have to be officially married" Liyema nodded.

Liyema: "I better tell the uncles

to hurry up with the lobola process then"

Portia: "And yes, you're forgiven. Let's wait until my friend comes home then we'll go home together. Our new house must be bigger than the current one" they both laughed.

Liyema: "Your wish is my command" he kissed her. Owning a farm had always been a part of Liyema's bucket list and after what happened, he decided it was time to look into it. The short moment at the office with Sita were hell and he had to sell his

shares too. He didn't think that he'd ever forgive Ntombi for what she did. To him, it felt as though she had ripped his heart out and that's why he had no fight left in him. He wanted to be far away from her. He went home with his family and was glad that Bandile came to see him as he was in the city for the weekend. He sat down and told them about his move. The boys knew that they could visit him any time. What they were excited about was being left to look after the house. Liyema gave a few

conditions for living on their own and they agreed to them all. He told them he trusted them and they promised not to disappoint him.

Late that night the Gwala and Mokoena family members who were able to come to the surprise wedding arrived. Kgethang checked in at Cape Town on social media forgetting that his arrival was supposed to be secret. When Lefa called to enquire about it Kgethang lied and said that his children had his phone. Bonolo was

glad that Lefa bought the lie because she didn't want Lefa coming to her house and finding her house filled with family. Hazel said she wouldn't be able to make it because she wasn't well. She was no longer sick but she just didn't want to bump into Makhulu. Lwazi arrived with a few of the Poti members just so that Ntombi's side won't be empty. They were accommodated in Khayelitsha at Makhulu's family's home because Ntombi would have gotten suspicious had she seen them. Mahlubandile

decided not to tell her family.

Even Alu would find out on wedding day and they hoped she'd understand why they had to keep her in the dark.

Othu: "So we are having a bachelor's with a twist" she ran to the door when the bell rang.

Ntombi: "Oh my goodness, guys my grandparents are in the other room. Please tell me those aren't strippers" she covered her eyes laughing.

Poppy: "They would not allow me to have those"

Ntombi: "Good" they all laughed.

Othu came in pushing a clothing line that had wheels. Dresses hung on the hangers and Ntombi wondered what on earth was going on.

Hlubi: "We know that you'll just go sign but no one said you can't do it in a wedding dress right?" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombi: "You want me to go to home affairs in that?" she pointed.

Hlubi: "They are similar to those you chose in that magazine. So we thought we'd surprise you with one just to make the day a little

extra special"

Ntombi: "I'm not wearing that to a government department.

Imagine how people will state. A pretty summer dress is enough"

Yandi: "Stop being such a party popper. At least try them on so we can feel like those bridesmaids who go with the bride to choose a dress" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Guys, I'll talk to Lefa. We'll have to have a wedding for our friends and family because wow you guys are hurt by this. My mother in law is no better" she laughed "But to put those

minds at ease let me try them on. I hope they aren't size zero's"

Mandla: "Girl, please which of us is size zero?" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Let's all go to my bedroom then so we can try on these beauties" she smiled. The ladies took their drinks and followed her to her room "You guys now make me want to tell Lefa that I want a big wedding" they all laughed. She tried on the first dress but didn't like it's cut so it was not the chosen one. When the forth dress was on Ntombi wanted to try no other because

that one she felt was the perfect one.

Zuko: "That was just made for you. Funny how I actually see a little bump already because it fits you like a glove" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "Wow guys" she looked on the mirror "It's amazing and so comfortable" she smiled.

Hlubi: "So that's the dress that you choose?"

Ntombi: "I'm still not wearing this to home affairs, Mahlubandile"

Hlubi: "Okay then get the poor dress off then. We'll take them

back where we found them. We'll just watch you get married on a poorly air-conditioned office in a maxi dress" Ntombi laughed out. Ntombi: "I love this though. I love and appreciate you guys so much" she looked at them all "I swear my divorce gave me the best friendships which was the only positive thing that came from such a painful process.

Othu's sympathy and support at the time led to this" she looked at them all.

Poppy: "We love you too. We can't wait to meet the princess either"

Ntombi: "Her father is so excited. I found a little pink outfit in his drawer, but he doesn't want me to see it because I said no baby clothes until the third trimester" they all laughed "Do you ladies think that this is it? That this is my happily ever after?" she sat down.

Othu: "Ntombikayise, just focus on what's happening at present. Don't let fear of the future get in the way of your happiness. Life is short so take in today, tomorrow will sort itself out"
Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "And I am happy" she smiled "He loves me right" she let out a soft laugh.

Poppy: "I hope that the sex makes you as excited as it did the first time you told us about it" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Well I can't discuss my hubby because back then I thought he'd be a fling and nothing else. Just know that I'm happy" she laughed "Do you guys think it's possible for me to have a natural home birth?" she asked.

Mandla: "What does your doctor say?"

Ntombi: "That I'll most probably have a c-section once again because of my medical history. Well even if it's not a home birth but we'd really like a natural delivery. We saw pictures of a home natural birth and we both fell in love with it" she smiled.

Hlubi: "No reason to not pray on it, bestie. I read it's possible for a woman who had a c-section to have a natural birth. So the chances are there" Ntombi nodded. The doorbell rang and Zuko jumped up to go open. It was Daluxolo. He'd just flown in

for the wedding. Zuko briefed him once again that Ntombi had no idea and he promised to keep his lips sealed. When Ntombi heard who it was she stood to go to where he was.

Ntombi: "Daluxolo" he turned to get a look at her from head to toe. She looked beautiful and for a moment it looked like a scene from his imagination when he still dreamt of marrying her. Her walking towards him in a wedding dress was as a bride walking down the aisle to her husband to be.

Dali: "Kayise" they hugged briefly

"I'm here on family business so I thought I'd pop in to check on you. I heard you're getting married yet no invite" he joked and laughed.

Ntombi: "It won't be anything big. Just our parents and children and then lunch afterwards with friends and other family. I didn't want you to waste your time"

Dali: "I hear you. So how have you been?"

Ntombi: "Amazing. I've just moved into my new home, I'm marrying the man that I love and my baby is growing strong"

she held her belly. Dali looked at it for a long while.

Dali: "You're pregnant?" he was shocked to hear her story. Even his ears had a buzzing sound.

Ntombi: "How have you been? How's the family?" they sat down.

Dali: "You're pregnant?" he asked again and she smiled and nodded "I'm sorry but I'm just shocked" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Not as shocked as we were"

Dali: "Lefa is a blessed man. I hope that he knows just how much"

Ntombi: "He does" she smiled
"So...your family?" she asked.
Dali: "They are great thanks.
Khaya growing up way too fast
but we enjoy every minute of it"
he laughed. The two of them had
a nice chat catching up until the
ladies reminded Ntombi that they
were in the middle of a little
party. Dali understood and excused
himself promising to see Ntombi
around.

He drove to Yanda's studio where
he found his brother creating as
usual.

Dali: "Why didn't you tell me that Ntombikayise is pregnant?"

Yanda: "To avoid what's happening right now. You going back in memory lane filled with what ifs" he looked at Dali.

Dali: "You were the one who convinced me to let her go because she couldn't give me children, Yanda"

Yanda: "You had to let her go because another woman gave you a child. If it were meant to be Ntombikayise would have found out while having that thing with you that she still had a womb. It

wasn't meant to be. You can be angry at me all you like but it's truth"

Dali: "Why couldn't it have happened when I was with her"
Yanda shook Dali.

Yanda: "Don't you dare do this. That ship has sailed"

Dali: "Thanks to people like you"

Yanda: "Thanks to forces beyond my control. Now go and pick what you'll wear and like a good friend, go support her as she supported you" he let go of Dali. Dali and Indi were already having problems, but it had nothing to do

with Ntombi but everything to do with them not coping with being married. That's why Indi decided to not go with him. She didn't want his family noticing. Dali walked to the door "Daluxolo Mbuzo" Yanda called out and Dali turned around to look at him.

Yanda: "Don't you dare go express your feelings at Ntombi's wedding tomorrow. If you can't be happy for her then don't go. I'm sorry for everything I said about her because I was wrong but she is not yours. Just because you are not happy it doesn't mean burst

her bubble. Keep whatever feelings that you have to yourself.

Dali: "I'm not that pathetic. I'm not going to ruin her day. I just wanted to hear you admit you were wrong. You think I don't see that she's happy? Some of us have no choice but to love someone though we'll never be with them. So be grateful that you're with the woman who stole your heart. Some of us aren't lucky. Our soulmates are other people's soulmates too. Nothing is as heart-breaking as that"

Yanda: "Fix your marriage. You're far too new at it to let it fail"

Dali: "I love Indi but I'm struggling to like her. We don't agree on anything and Khaya didn't make our bond stronger as I thought. His arrival made us realize just how little we have in common. We can't find common ground when it comes to parenting and it leads to agreements"

Yanda: "That's normal. You're individuals with different backgrounds"

Dali: "You don't understand. She

thinks she knows better than me because she was raised by two parents and well you know my story" he sat down.

Yanda: "You've got every right to raise Khaya as she does. Her background doesn't make her a better parent. So this is why you're like this. It's got nothing to do with Ntombi but everything to do with you feeling that Ntombi wouldn't have done the same to you but truth is you don't know that"

Dali: "Teach me how to be a father. Tell me what to do so she

can stop undermining my parenting" Yanda took a deep breath.

Yanda: "The best recipe I found to work with both Nandi and Mivuyo was attention and understanding. Just be there for your son and try to understand the individual that he is. Don't allow Indi to push you into a corner in your own child's life. You don't want Khaya growing up and saying his mother is both his mother and father. Call a family meeting with the elders if you must"

Dali: "I'll do so. Let me go buy a shirt before all the stores close"

Yanda: "I got you one already. Let's just go and witness this new thing called a surprise wedding and have fun" Dali laughed.

Dali: "God knows that I need to unwind. How would you react if you walked into your own wedding?"

Yanda laughed.

Yanda: "I've got no idea. When Lisakhanya told me I couldn't believe they're planning such. Let's wait until tomorrow"

Dali: "I really do love Indiphile,

Yanda but the lack of respect she's been showing me" he shook his head "It really does bring a lot of what ifs" he added.

Yanda: "Call a family meeting with the elders if talking to her didn't help. A man cannot stay where he's not respected. Forget the what ifs because they'll drive you to do things that you aren't supposed to" Dali nodded. He wanted to make their marriage work so much but he would do that only when Indi met him halfway.

The Gala had been continuing

with life. Amahle was more dedicated to schoolwork and it showed in her grades. She wanted nothing to do with boys for the time being. She was also invited to the wedding with her parents and she couldn't wait to have some fun. There was a soft knock on the door and Asakhe went to open. An elderly lady stood by the door and behind her was Lulupho. Vusi: "Asakhe, did you ask who it is before opening?" he came from the bedroom. When Nozi's mother walked inside they all just stood and looked at each other. The

moment of silence made Amahle turn to look at them all.

Amahle: "Is everyone okay?" she asked softly.

Nozamile: "She is a spitting image of her mother" the elderly woman said with a smile. Amahle stood "Even the shortness" Nozamile laughed softly.

Lulupho: "Please let my mother meet Amahle, Vusimuzi. I can go wait in the car but please she's come all this way. We're sorry to come without announcing but you've been avoiding my calls"

Asakhe: "Please sit down,

Makhulu" she looked at Nozamide's swollen legs and imagined they were sore too. Nozamide thanked Asakhe before Lulupho helped her to the couch "Would you like a cup of tea?" she smiled.

Nozamide: "I would love a cup thank you" she smiled "Vusimuzi, I'm sorry for everything that Solomzi did. Please after losing two children, the only thing that keeps this old heart still going is meeting Amahle. We are not here to take her just to see her please" she pleaded.

Asakhe: "Tata ka Amahle" she

pleaded too. Vusi looked at Amahle who was also looking to hear his response.

Vusi: "Before I give you my answer, Mama. I'd like to apologize for being a bad influence to your daughter. I apologize for not supporting her through her pregnancy and for never having showed respect to your family. I have no problem with you seeing Amahle that's if she's comfortable with it but I'd also like to ask that you allow me to pay damages"

Nozamide: "You taking her from

strangers and bringing her home was enough. I do not care about all of that now. I forgive you as I've forgiven my daughter. I just want to meet her daughter"

Vusi: "Amahle" he looked at his daughter.

Amahle: "I don't have a problem, Tata" she stood closer.

Nozamide: "Come sit next to your grandmother" she tapped the spot next to herself.

Lulupho: "I'll go wait in the car"

Vusi: "Stay, Lulupho. Asakhe was about to dish up. You can join us"

Asakhe: "I'll go and do that now.

I hope no one is allergic to anything"

Lulupho: "Allergic to nothing and eat almost everything" he laughed.

Vusi: "Sit down" both men sat.

Nozamide: "I have brought you all pictures of your mother. Nozi was an ugly baby but grew into a beautiful girl as she got older" Amahle laughed.

Amahle: "I don't like my baby pictures either because I look like boy but now I think I'm beautiful" she looked at the pictures "Thank you for them,

Makhulu. I'll have my dad make copies for me" she added.

Nozamide: "These are all yours" she took a plastic bag on the floor "This used to belong to your mother" she took out a school jersey.

Amahle: "She went to my school?" she looked at Vusi and he nodded.

Nozamide: "She made me buy her a bigger size because this jersey actually used to hide you" she joked and they laughed.

Amahle: "She wore it while pregnant with me?" she looked at it "Can I please have it,

Makhulu?" she asked with enthusiasm.

Nozamide: "It is all yours. She also left a lot of necklaces, rings and earring. Yho Nozi loved to be pretty" she gave Amahle the bag filled with beauty accessories

"They are all fake but still in great shape" she added. She took a pair of gold earrings and put them on Amahle's ears. Nozamide also sprayed Nozi's perfume and even Vusi closed his eyes as it took him back down memory lane.

Amahle: "Thank you so much for everything, Makhulu" she hugged

her gran "I love them and I'll treasure them always. I feel close to her touching things that I know she touched. Ma can you please resize the jersey so I can wear it to school?" she looked at Asakhe.

Asakhe: "I hope that machine still works but if not we'll get someone to do it. The food is ready so if you all can come to the kitchen where the table is please"

Amahle: "Makhulu and I will eat here. I still have a lot of stories to hear about my mother. I know everything in this plastic has a

story" Nozamide nodded.

Nozamide: "Let me start with this" she took out a sash "Your mother won this at some beauty pageant. She was the shortest but my girl didn't let that get her down"

Amahle: "I once wanted to be a model too. Oh my word so I take after my mom" she said with such excitement.

Asakhe worked hard to not feel jealous of the ghost of Nozi because she knew that it was important for Amahle to know

Nozi even if it is through other people. She placed Nozamide's food on a tray and had Amahle take it to her. They did more talking than eating and those around the table just ate in silence listening at the crazy stories that Nozamide told Amahle about Nozi. Life changed for Nozamide after her husband died because she had to raise the children alone. When he was alive there was an income at home because he used to work at a post office which made them financially better off than most families during their time. When

her husband died she fell into deep mourning but had to continue for her children. Sitting next to Amahle finally brought her out of mourning because her heart felt content. It was as though she was sitting next to her daughter once again. Nothing mattered to her in that moment. 

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Lefa's eyes were the first to open and he looked to Ntombi's side. He moved himself closer to her before holding her tight. When Ntombi

felt kisses behind her neck she smiled before opening her eyes.

Ntombi: "Stop" she laughed softly before pulling the duvet to cover herself.

Lefa: "I can't" he covered his head with the duvet too and watched her turn her head to look at him.

Ntombi: "Baby, I'm not getting up early with you today. I'm really tired" she kissed him.

Lefa: "We can stay in bed all day. I'm sure two smart people will be able to keep each other entertained". When Ntombi

refused to turn her entire body to face him he went over her and laid on the small space on her side. Ntombi: "You're going to fall. I need you in one piece on Monday when we officially tie the knot" she held him close to prevent him from falling. They shared a long kiss that had Ntombi out of her sleepwear in no time. After the lazy morning love making, they both took another short nap before going to shower. Ntombi opened the blinds when they stepped out of the shower and was greeted by a beautiful day of

clear skies and sunshine. She took with closed eyes just soaking up the warmth of nature's heater.

Lefa: "Perfect day to just sit outside and get some work done. I don't think either of us will want to go to the office after we've been to home affairs" he stood beside her.

Ntombi: "And I do have a lot of work to do. Aren't you going to the gym today?" Lefa shook his head.

Lefa: "I'll just do a few workout routines at home today. Worried that I'm going to let my husband

potbelly grow?" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Only one of us is allowed to have a few extra of them to love. I like you like this" she stood in front of him and wrapped her arms around his naked top.

Lefa: "I love you like this too" he leaned forward for a kiss.

Ntombi: "I'm yet to get bigger you now?" she felt the need to prepare him.

Lefa: "I know and I don't care. As long as you and baby are healthy" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Can I join you for gym

once I've given birth?"

Lefa: "As long as it's on your terms. I don't want you feeling like you've got to rush to look a certain way again"

Ntombi: "It's as if you read my mind" she looked down "I kinda have this fear that you'll go look for "sexier" women. I think my main concern about being pregnant is the weight I'll put on and the fact that I know that I'll struggle to get it off" she said softly.

Lefa: "You're beautiful and you're sexy in my eyes. I love seeing your

body change. It's like a little wonder to me to see your belly grow a different size each week. You are damn sexy. I don't know what imagine comes to your mind when you think about the word sexy but when I do it's yours and that's the honest truth. Thank you for telling me how you feel though" he kissed her again.

Ntombi: "I love you so much, baby" she stood on her toes to give him a hug.

Lefa: "I love you more. Now let's go greet our housemates before they presume us dead" Ntombi

laughed. They made up their bed and got dressed to go out. What they didn't expect to find was everyone having breakfast already. They greeted and were offered breakfast which they gladly accepted with a thank you. Makhulu: "Finish up so that we can go" everyone around the table nodded except the couple.

Lefa: "Are you all going somewhere?" he looked around.

Hlomphe: "We are going out on a family outing" he was telling the truth well at least the truth fed to him. Hlomphe was known to

give away surprises when excited so they'd tell him the real truth only when they were away.

Bukhosi: "Mom please borrow us your car"

Ntombi: "So we're not invited?" everyone shook their heads.

Hlomphe: "It's a grandparent and grandchildren outing, ma" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Well they aren't my parents but my grandparents so I should be counted in too" she said in a nearly sulky tone.

Tamkhulu and Makhulu were not good at sign language yet but

they knew a few signs. It had become a norm to speak and sign in Hlompho's presence unless the discussion didn't concern his young ears.

Tamkhulu: "I'm sorry, Nto-Nto but we only had enough money to pay for the boys where we are taking them"

Ntombi: "Oh" she looked down.

Banele: "Are you really sulking right now, Mom?" the boys couldn't help but laugh.

Lefa: "Hey, this is my wife you're laughing at" he warned "You and I can do something of our own

today, baby" he kissed her hand

"Or better yet, we can pay for our own things at this outing" he suggested with a smile.

Bubele: "It's a place we'll get in with tickets and they're sold out"

Ntombi: "Haibo Tata so why did you not tell us sooner so we can take tickets too? These five have their own grandparents"

Bandile: "I'm not sure if it's the pregnancy making you like this but mom it's just an outing.

There'll be plenty more of you with Tamkhulu and Makhulu"

Hlomphe: "I don't want to go if it

makes her sad" the other all just shook their heads.

Ntombi: "No, go and enjoy. We'll join you next time" she smiled.

Hlomphe: "You sure?" Ntombi nodded.

Lefa: "We'll have the house to ourselves. That means peace and quiet while working and then remote power since those who hog the remote will be gone" Ntombikayise smiled.

Tamkhulu: "We should get going" he stood.

Lefa: "What starts so early,

Tamkhulu?" he asked when they

were on their feet.

Bukhosi: "You two will see on the pictures when we are back. You're going to love viewing them" he tilted his glass to get the lady sip of his juice.

Banele: "It's going to be such an exciting day"

Bandile: "I look forward to actually seeing what will happen. I've never done such before"

Bubele: "Bru, what a time to be alive"

Ntombi: "Just go" she dismissed them sounding annoyed "Tata, I'd get why everyone else would leave

me but you..." she shook her head and Makhulu laughed.

Makhulu: "So I'm prone to leaving you out of things?" she laughed more.

Ntombi: "I didn't say so"

Banele: "If we look at mom's sulking face we'll never get out of here. She's already throwing Tamkhulu emotional blackmail and he's falling for it"

Lefa: "Have some heart guys. In fact go and have your fun. I'll make my wife's day"

Tamkhulu: "I love you" he kissed Ntombi's cheek and laughed when

she just looked down. They were all heading for the door and Hlomphe just had to go because he had fear of missing out though he felt bad for Ntombi. Ntombi started to cry and Lefa didn't realize that being left behind hurt her so much.

Lefa: "Baby" he held her in his arms.

Ntombi: "I don't know why I'm crying" they both laughed softly.

Lefa: "Do you want us to go out for some air?"

Ntombi: "Too much work to catch up on. We'll have that garden

sunbath while working that you suggested". The door opened again and Bukhosi appeared.

Bukhosi: "Oh mom, the car keys please"

Ntombi: "Quick to go out to the car while leaving its owner but slow to remember that you'll need a key to operate it. Go check on the kitchen counter"

Bukhosi: "Thanks, mommy" he kissed her cheek before running to the kitchen.

Ntombi: "Mxm" she was not over being left out yet.

Bukhosi: "There's one person we

regret leaving behind and we regret to not have in the pictures we'll take"

Ntombi: "Go with your regrets. I don't want to go anymore"

Bukhosi: "I was talking about our little sibling" he held Ntombi's belly.

Lefa: "Boy, get out of here"

Bukhosi laughed while running to the door "You guys woke up on a mission to burst our bubble today" they could still hear Bukhosi laugh though he shut the door already.

Bukhosi unlocked the car and everyone was inside before they

knew it.

Hlomphe: "I still feel sad to leave mom just so sad" he looked at Banele.

Banele: "Team, if we don't let out youngest teammate in on the real reason why we left them he'll cry" he said to everyone.

Tamkhulu: "Tell him. Next time he'll see them is at the ceremony so he won't tell them prematurely"

Bukhosi: "I'm actually still shocked that you agreed" he looked at Tamkhulu briefly as they were in the front seats.

Tamkhulu: "They did everything right according to customs and I'm young at heart so I don't mind a little spontaneous activity every now and then" they all laughed.

Makhulu: "Plus we're not arranging marriage here. These two love each other. They were intending on getting married the day after tomorrow anyway"

Banele: "I asked mom why she didn't use the money of the shares to have a big wedding, she said it's not for luxury"

Tamkhulu: "My girl" he said

proudly "I'm sure she's going to invest in their business or buy more shares somewhere. The business bug has bitten her"

Hlomphe smiled wider and wider as Banele let him in on the secret.

Hlomphe: "There's no way I would have kept that secret. I just want to share happy news" he smiled.

Banele: "And that, buddy is why we kept you in the dark" Hlomphe laughed.

Hlomphe: "So where are we going?"

Banele: "To make sure that

things are in order where they'll get married. It'll be at aunt Yandi's house. Remember her?"

Hlompfo: "Yes the one that looks like mom"

Banele: "She does?" Hlompfo nodded.

Hlompfo: "Very much". So much still needed to be done and since the ladies were doing most things DIY they needed as many hands as possible.

Reth and Abbo woke up to the same beautiful day. Since the wedding won't start until a few

hours they decided to take a short tour of the city while they still had time. They first went for a nice breakfast before going to the beach. Abbo was six months pregnant and when she heard it was a boy, she was over the moon.

Abbo: "It is good that we are giving the couple the gift of a honeymoon" she said with a smile.

Reth: "Well the friend threw so many hints about the type of gift to get them, had no choice" they both laughed.

Abbo: "Are you sad about her

getting married?" she watched Reth take a deep breath.

Reth: "Too much too be grateful for in my life to be sad" he looked at her "How can I be sad when she is happy?" Abbo smiled.

Abbo: "You have a good point there. I cannot wait to see her reaction when she walks into her own wedding"

Reth: "Our elders would never have allowed such" they both laughed out.

Abbo: "The last time that I spoke to Ntombi they had all traditions processes done. So I

guess their elders are happy. I actually want to go to the venue and lend a hand"

Reth: "I do not want you doing too much. Had they needed more help they'd have said so. The heavens have also agreed.

Perfect weather to have a celebration" they both looked up.

Abbo: "We should come here more often" Reth nodded. They had a great morning and looking forward to the afternoon celebrations.

Tamkhulu had Lwazi picked up from Khayelitsha so that he

wouldn't miss a thing. Nolwazi still wanted nothing to do with Ntombi because in her mind Ntombikayise was enemy number one. Lwazi was just glad that Nolwazi was too far to ruin Ntombi's life. Bonolo also woke up very early to make her way to Yandi's to help with the decor. They all stood from a distance of the garden to take in the finished product.

Hlubi: "I'd say this was well worth the hours we spent creating it" they all nodded.

Bonolo: "The idea to get extra

flowers to compliment those growing in the garden was a great one" the ladies heard sniffs and when they looked her way found her crying "I'm just so happy for my son. When it came to love Lefa was really the most unfortunate" she laughed softly "He wears his heart on his sleeve and all ladies took advantage of a man that loved so much so I'm glad he found one who gives him as much as she does her and the news about the baby.. I'm sorry, ladies. I'm just so happy" she wiped her tears of joy.

Craig: "I'm on my way to get the groom" he walked to the ladies.

Othu: "Baby, remember to put up your best acting"

Babini: "You should have sent me because I've been undercover many times before"

Craig: "And I haven't?"

Yandi: "Oh my word you can both go if you want. Just do don't give anything away until he's dressed and ready to come here please".

Babini: "I'm doing the talking" he walked away and Craig shook his head following. Mzu was not going to be good at the task so he was

happy to sit that part out.

Makhulu: "You ladies better go get Ntombikayise ready also".

Nomandla had been excited throughout the entire process and to see implementation was even more exciting.

Mandla: "Let's go"

Zuko: "We must wait for the men to get Lefa out of the house the house first" the ladies nodded.

Poppy: "Is catering ready?" Othu and Yandi nodded. "Then let's get these two love birds a day they'll never forget" they all cheered.

Makhulu made sure that her

outfits together with that of Tamkhulu and the boys were safe at Yandi's house where they'd change. Bonolo went home to go and get dressed. The house was filled with their closest family members. Neither she nor Vakele had a large family.

Nolu: "Yho, Makhulu I don't even know what is going on. It's like Ntombikayise is now the new product and I'm cast aside"

Bonolo overheard her talking over the phone. Bonolo waited for Nolu to finish her conversation with Hazel. She turned after ending

the call "Ma" she looked around.

Bonolo: "If there's one thing I'm certain of is the fact that I was as excited to see you marry Kgethang, Noluthando"

Nolu: "Ma...it's not what it sounded like" she stuttered.

Bonolo: "It sounded to me like you are adding fuel to Ma Gwala's dislike of Ntombi" she walked closer to Nolu "You forget that I was once a young makoti too, Noluthando. So I know all too well about the competition to be favourite makoti in certain homes and take it from a person who

has run that race before...it's never worth it. You'll realise that the other makotis especially those your age, should be your friends. There will be things that happen at the in laws that you won't be able to discuss with your husband and the other makotis should be your shoulder. I know that you do not hate Ntombikayise but you just feel like we'll love her more which is not true. I don't have favourites between my kids so I won't have favourites between their wives either but if you continue like this

you'll lose my respect and definitely think that I don't like you. You weren't made part of the planning together with your friend, Ma Gwala because of what you two did. If you are going to give, Ma Gwala all the negatives about anything concerning Ntombikayise you had better do it on the other side of my yard. I don't want to hate daughter in law's but respect is earned, my girl" her brown eyes bore into Nolu's. It was the first time Nolu heard Bonolo speak that way.

Nolu: "I'm sorry, Ma" she said because she got the message loud and clear.

Bonolo: "Apology accepted. Now go take off those clothes and dress for a wedding" she said with a smile and Nolu smiled too.

Nolu: "Can I please flaunt the new hair that I bought?"

Bonolo: "You may now excuse me because I can't wait to wear my mother of the groom outfit especially my hat" Nolu laughed out and watched Bonolo walk away "Nolu" she called out "Your husbands aren't competing for our

love and attention because they know we love them equally for the individuals that they are. It's the same with you and Ntombikayise. Don't let Ma Hazel cost you a close friend. You know how much a friend is needed during certain family gatherings. Ntombi is nervous but as she took you to explore the city with her friends, I ask that you take her through the Gwala family customs as a thank you" Nolu nodded before Bonolo disappeared from her sight. Hazel called again but Nolu let it go to voicemail

before switching her phone off. She went inside excited to get out of the brown skirt and black doek and into her new outfit.

When Lefa heard a frantic knock on the front door he stood from the outside chair he sat on and went to open. He found Ntombikayise on her way to the door to go open.

Lefa: "I'll get it, sthandwa sam. I hope whoever it is has a damn good reason for knocking on my door like that" Ntombikayise stood behind him.

Babini: "Oh shit thank god you're here" he pretended to be in panic
"You must come with us. It's Mzu...it's Mzu" he stuttered.
Ntombikayise walked closer to the door.

Lefa: "What's going on?"

Craig: "No time to explain, man.
Just come with us"

Ntombi: "Mzu? Is Poppy okay?"
she stood next to Lefa.

Craig: "It's too embarrassing to share with you. It's best that Lefa be the one to help us"

Lefa: "Baby, let me go with them.
I'll come right back once I've

helped them"

Ntombi: "But it's safe right?" she looked at Babini and Craig.

Babini: "Yes but Mzu asked that we keep his dignity intact by not telling a lady about this"

Ntombi: "Oh my goodness he cheated" she assumed.

Them: "No, no, no" they almost sang the answer.

Ntombi: "Oh"

Craig: "He'll explain once we've sorted everything out"

Lefa: "I love you and I'll be back. Lock the front door if you're going back out to the garden again" he

kissed her. Lefa's mind already thought of the worst-case scenarios as to what Mzu did that would have even Babini panicking. He didn't want to worry Ntombi. He promised his phone would be on should she need him. Ntombi gave Mzu well wishes for whatever problem and the men promised to tell Mzu. She locked the door after they left and the dog came in running from the open front door.

Ntombi: "I guess it's you and me then, Brownie. We can watch TV, and eat junk" the dog barked "I

knew you'd agree" she brushed it's head. She went to wash her hands before taking out a container in the fridge. She gave the dog a piece of meat which they didn't usually do but no one was there to tell her not to.

Lefa started to panic in the car once he was out of Ntombi's sight. Craig and Babini drove to Yanda's studio where their suits were waiting for them.

Craig: "Okay, don't be mad but there's no emergency. Yanda asked us to model some suits for him"

Lefa: "What the...?" he sat back in the car again "So why must that be kept secret from the ladies?" he shifted forward again.

Babini: "Well because... because they would have wanted to come see us do it and you know how they can get"

Lefa: "So you guys nearly raised my pregnant wife's blood pressure because of a photoshoot? Plus, I'm no damn model"

Craig: "The suffering of one, is the suffering of all. It's how friendship goes. We're not models either"

Babini: "Let's go inside and get the torture over with" he opened his door. Lefa still couldn't believe they made such a small issue a huge mountain. Indeed they found Yanda waiting with a photographer.

Yanda: "Thanks for helping at such short notice, men" they shook hands.

Lefa: "One would swear you asked these two to go on a top secret mission"

Babini: "It is because our wives don't know". Mzu walked in.

Lefa: "Not you too, Mzu"

Mzu: "Poppy would have asked how much Yanda is paying me for this and I am not in the mood to hear what she'll say when I say nothing"

Yanda: "I'll repay you all with drinks and a braai soon"

Mzu: "Hear that?" he looked at Lefa "How would I explain that to Poppy. Let's do this" he said.

Yanda: "I have the suits over there. Each with a name. Please take yours and get dressed for the shoot. This photographer charges by hour" he watched the men waste no time. Each took

their suit and went to change. Lefa was not a fan of suits but he always looked dashing in one. Once they were done they all looked like a gun was pointed at them instead of a camera so the photographer had to work his magic in making them relax.

Nathan: "It's not working, Yanda"

Lefa: "Dude, we told you we're not models. That's the best you'll get out of us" the others nodded to keep up the act.

Nathan: "It's not you, guys. I need another scenery. Maybe outside with some natural light"

he suggested.

Yanda: "Babini, I think your garden will do. I'll pay for using it"

Babini: "Let me call Yandi to check if she's home"

Lefa: "I can't stay. I've got work to catch up on. Sorry, Yanda man"

Babini: "My wife says she'll be out for grocery shopping. That's our gap. Let's go" he said after pretending to call Yandi.

Craig: "Let's do this favour for Yanda, Lefa"

Mzu: "God blesses those who help others"

Lefa: "Are you really going to use God to make me change my mind?"
Mzu shrugged while laughing
"Let's make this quick." he walked ahead of them. He was annoyed because it was not what he imagined he'd do for the day. The other men exchanged handshakes behind him while trying to contain their laughter.

The ladies also decided to swing the same lie to Ntombi. When her doorbell rang, she opened and all her friends were there. Alu understood why she was let in late because she wouldn't have

been able to keep the news from Lungi and Lungi would have told Liyema and everyone dreaded what he would have done.

Zaza: "Oh my gosh" he said in the most dramatic way "You dolls were right, she's exactly what I have been looking for. Darling you're so beautiful"

Ntombikayise's eyes shot open when he kissed both her cheeks before she watched him parade inside pushing the same clothing rail the ladies had days ago.

Ntombi gave her friends a look so they'd explain.

Othu: "Friend, this is Zaza and he's the designer of those dresses that we made you try on. We took a picture of you in them as you know and he went crazy with how perfect you wore his garments and now he is here to ask that you model for him" Ntombikayise looked at them all before pointing a finger at herself and they all nodded.

Ntombi: "Pleased to meet you, Zaza and I'm flattered that you consider me fitting to model your beautiful gowns but I'm not your woman"

Zaza: "Ah nonsense. You're the woman. Please I'll of course pay for your time. Please Ntozizo"
Ntombikayise laughed softly.

Ntombi: "Uhm okay but I can't promise you good pictures"

Zaza: "Oh please if Othu's phone could capture you so perfectly a professional lense will love" he smiled "Bring in the party. I've got a model" he swayed his hand in the air. Lucia opened and Ntombi was shocked by the number of people who walked in. "As you see, this is a natural bride. So please don't paste her

face with too much make up. No weave either. I like her natural" he ordered. Ntombikayise was asked to go sit down and a makeup artist did her business on her face "Also do the ladies. They might as well model my bridesmaids dresses. And Zuko, I have a suit option for you" he said. Zaza was friends with Zuko's girlfriend hence he knew her preference so well.

Ntombi: "Oh my word I feel like I'm getting ready for a real wedding" she laughed.

Alu: "Good then, you'll look like a

natural in front of the camera". Once the makeup was on Ntombi wore the first dress. She posed as the camera lady suggested but once her ladies joined in they had so much fun. Zaza had her on the second dress and they changed settings to get a different background.

Ntombi: "Why aren't my friends changing?" the ladies all looked nervous.

Zaza: "They were not even a part of today's plan. I just thought I'd kill two birds with one stone since they're available"

Hlubi: "Well damn, you don't bite your tongue" they all laughed.

Mandla: "I don't mind. I'm having fun"

Lucia: "I need some wine though. Ntombi just because you're pregnant it doesn't mean don't stock up, girl"

Yandi: "It's best because I'd hate to see what'll happen to us when we get wine stains on these dresses"

Hlubi: "Girl" she could already imagine and they all laughed "I think Yanda should also use us as models from now on" laughter

again. More photos were taken and the makeup artist dappered Ntombi's shine spots after a few minutes. When Ntombi wore the dress that she loved the other day she had to go to her room to take a good look at herself. With all the makeup and dress she really felt like a bride.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry but I had to get a full view" she said while walking back "I really love this dress. I love how beautifully it hugs my body" she smiled.

Zaza: "And for that reason, we can't capture it indoors. I need to

see it in the sunlight. I'd say garden but yours seems under construction"

Yandi: "Mine is not and it's spacious too" she suggested.

Ntombi: "I have nothing to do for the rest of the day. Well I've got work but with my partner gone I have a few hours to kill. Let's go get Zaza his perfect garden picture" she said with excitement.

Hlubi: "You're enjoying this way too much" she raised a brow.

Ntombi: "Of course I do" she laughed.

Lucia: "Should we take ours off

since we're just afterthoughts?" she had to make it seem real.

Zaza: "No, keep it on. I think those outfits will actually go perfectly with this dress rather than the others"

Mandla: "My thoughts exactly. Let's go before Cape Town's weather change. I'm just glad there's no wind" she walked to the door and they held Ntombi's dress at the back as she walked to the car. Poppy locked all doors and put the keys in her bag.

Ntombi: "Please close the gate so that Brown won't get out" she

shouted and it was done "I'll never fit into the car with this puffy dress" she laughed.

Zaza: "You will just sit back and let us handle it" he did exactly that.

Lucia: "The trust that our friend had in us. I'd have questioned you all so much" she said as they went to the other car.

Hlubi: "Ntombi has a sense of innocence about her. She's playful too and this is a perfect opportunity to play because she's just like that"

Othu: "You guys know how we'd

play pretend growing up? I don't think that she got to experience that with her being a slave to her stepmother growing up.

Maybe this brings back stolen childhoods" they all smiled.

Hlubi: "And I know very well what missing out on a childhood feels like. So I'm glad we are doing this. Sure it might not be her dream wedding but I think she'll appreciate it" the others nodded. All were in the car going to Yandi's but Yandi had to make sure the men arrived before them.

When Lefa saw the many cars

parked by Babini's house he became suspicious. Babini said that it was next door where there was an event so they asked permission to park in front of their neighbours houses. Lefa didn't buy the story even more when he noticed the decor leading to the backyard as they all walked inside the house. When Kgethang stood in his suit with the widest smile ever next to Bonolo and Vakele who were also dressed to impress Lefa looked back at his friends.

Lefa: "What's going on?"

Kgethang: "You can't get married without your best man" Lefa smiled while still looking around.

Even the inside was beautiful.

"It's your damn wedding" he went to shake his brother's hand before giving him a hug.

Lefa: "What...Mme?" he looked at her hoping to get answers.

Bonolo: "You heard your brother. It's your wedding day"

Lefa: "How? Did Ntombi know?"

Babini: "She thinks that she's on her way to a photoshoot as a favour for some young designer"

Lefa laughed out not believing. He

put his hands behind his head and laughed again.

Kgethang: "Surprise" he joked and laughed before tapping his brother on the shoulder to help with the shock.

Vakele: "It's unusual but it is a gift from your family and friends. We weren't in the mood to witness an office wedding when it's your first time". Lefa could only laugh. He went to the sliding door leading to the garden where their guests were sitting in long tables. It hit him that it's indeed his wedding when the boys came

to him dressed up too.

Lefa: "What the hell are you all doing to us?" they all laughed.

Bandile: "If you're like this. I can't imagine how mom will be" he laughed.

Bukhosi: "Tears, tears and tears" laughter again.

Hlomphe: "I bet you didn't see this one coming?" he laughed.

Lefa: "You kept it? You of all people?" he shook his head smiling

"Wait... Tamkhulu and Makhulu.

Do you have their blessings for this" he added. Banele called the elders.

Tamkhulu: "Welcome to your wedding, son" he shook Lefa's hand.

Makhulu: "Tata, you're supposed to say surprise" they laughed.

Lefa: "So this is why you all left us because you knew that you had this up your sleeve. You all got us good but in a great way"

Craig: "The ladies are on their way so we must get organised because once the bride arrives it's all systems go" he checked his phone.

Bubele: "Please have enough tissues on standby. She's overly

sensitive lately"

Bonolo: "Come let us all go take our positions. I hope that the first you see her is when she walked down the aisle to you not a minute sooner. The Gwala family and their son walked out to where the guests were. Lefa thought that he was not shy but as he walked to the front he felt some shyness creep in. He'd wave and shake hands on the way. His cousins and aunts were there too and he couldn't believe that his parents hid them from him.

Kgethang and Mahlubandile would

be the only ones standing in front with the couple during the ceremony but they were best man and maid of honour.

Lefa: "You're so fucking sneaky" he hit Kgethang's arm with a fist.

Kgethang: "They called and said hey wanna see Lefa's reaction to his surprise wedding and I was like hell yeah" they both laughed

"Makhulu sends her regards she said her knees don't allow her to travel" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Who paid for this?"

Kgethang: "It was a wedding stokvel so everyone who could do

something did something and no one expects anything in return" they hugged "Never thought this day would come" he added "I'm happy for you" they both smiled. Craig: "The bride is here" he stood to whisper to Lefa. Lefa took a deep breath and stood straight. His stomach was in knots but he was excited too. Amongst the many things that their friends did he felt more grateful for the sign language interpreter who they got so that Hlompho would know what is being said during the entire process. He couldn't

wait to see Ntombi walk down the aisle.

Like Lefa Ntombi's attention first got grabbed by the cars parked out but they spinned her a story too. When she also saw her brother with her other family members when she walked in she knew something was up.

Ntombi: "There's no way my brother is here for a photoshoot" she watched Lwazi walk towards her smiling before hugging her.

Lwazi: "Hi, Sisi" he smiled "I'm not here for a photoshoot but for your wedding" he said. Ntombi

looked at everyone around.

Ntombi: "What on earth?" she put her hand on her chest.

Makhulu: "We didn't exclude you from our outing because without you nothing is going to happen today". They watched

Ntombikayise sit down.

Ntombi: "Where's Lefa?"

Banele: "Waiting for you looking like a nervous kid" they all walked in.

Ntombi: "No, guys. You guys aren't joking? I feel like Leon Schuster is going to come out and tell me where the cameras are" everyone

laughed.

Othu: "No Schucks, just family and friends waiting to witness a beautiful love story reach one of its milestones". Ntombikayise's eyes started to shine "Lefa didn't know either. He found out a few minutes ago. So he's as shocked as you" she added.

Ntombi: "Guys" she said softly while shaking her head. She smiled as she processed the news.

Bubele: "Here's a tissue. We made sure that you are well stocked".

Ntombi laughed between the tears. She stood to go have a

peek of the outside and she didn't recognize Yandi's garden. There was a huge gazebo which provided shade from the guests in the hot sun. It was also their plan B should it rain instead of the origin indoors wedding. When she saw Lefa she smiled. She could see that he was nervous by his body language.

Ntombi: "I still have so many questions that need answers but first I want to get married to my man" her friends all cheered.

Zaza: "Touch up on her make up. All those tears of joy made it fade

a bit. Once that is done then we may go" he ordered.

Ntombi: "I'm sure you can stay"

Zaza: "We've got another bride to go make pretty" he smiled "But I wish you well. I look forward to see my dress next to a suit designed by the Yanda Mbuzo" he said with excitement.

Ntombikayise's makeup looked perfect again. She watched the ladies walk ahead. Zaza and his team left to go to their next wedding.

Ntombi: "Makhulu and Tamkhulu, I'd like for you both to please

give me to Lefa" the elders smiled.

Makhulu: "I'd love to"

Bandile: "Let us go and take our seats. We are so happy that you're happy, Ma"

Ntombi: "All the dots are now coming together. I can't believe that I didn't see this coming" she shook her head smiling. The boys hugged her before they too went to take their seats.

Lwazi: "When one door closes..."

Ntombi: "Another one opens" they hugged "This is my second wedding though and you don't

even have a first. Pull up those socks, bhutiza" Lwazi laughed. "love you, mntana ka Tata" she added.

Lwazi: "I love you too, sis wam" he kissed her cheek. He went out to take his seat too.

Ntombikayise looped her arms in her grandparent's and Mahlubandile walked ahead of them. When Lefa saw Ntombi his heart started to beat at a rate he was certain would end in his heart stopping. She was breathtaking with her off shoulder dress which complimented her skin

tone perfectly. He saw nothing but her and same went for her. When she caught sight of his eyes her mouth curved up even more showing her perfect teeth. It was a rather long walk or so it felt to her but they finally made it to the front where Lefa was waiting. She waved at Reth and Abbo as they were the first people amongst her guests that caught her attention. She was glad that her friends invited them to witness her wedding. Lefa thanked Tamkhulu and Makhulu before taking Ntombi's

hands into his. He leaned forward to kiss her which left their guests cheering.

Pastor: "Because this is an unusual situation I'll allow you to kiss her because I take it that you are still in shock" everyone laughed "Please be seated so we can proceed with this beautiful celebration" he added with a smile.

Ntombi: "They got an interpreter for Hlompho" she looked at the young lady standing in front and Lefa nodded with a smile "Wow they thought about everything".

she whispered. The ceremony begun and there was a lot of laughter and tears. The pastor asked if the couple had their own vows and Lefa nodded quickly.

Lefa: "Baby, I wanted to make you my wife weeks after we met. I realize this is the right time for so many reasons. I know that you had no plans to take our union this far after we'd just met but thank you for giving me a chance to love you. My life has changed so much since I've met you and all for the good. It has been new beginnings and new experiences

since. You were the first to spray pepper spray in my eyes" everyone laughed as they knew their story "You were the first woman I introduced to Hlompho and my family. You were the first I've ever wanted to buy a home with and start a business with. I could go on and on but that would take us all day long. I guess I'm saying that I look forward to many other first time experiences with you. I know not all will be smooth sailing but with you by my side I'm ready for anything" he smiled and wiped Ntombi's tears.

Ntombi: "I thought what would make me cry today is the sappy movie I planned to watch instead it's all of what's happening right now. It's all happy tears though. You've been a first for me in many things too, sthandwa sam. You are honestly my biggest motivator because you see potential in me that I can't seem to see. Thank you for allowing me to build with you and I look forward to building a solid home with you together with our children. There's not a day that goes by without you telling me

how much you love me. I love how you care about our children" she looked at their boys "I really never imagined that I'd be this happy again. I love you so much, I really do" she wiped her tears. Bonolo was crying as though she was the one who was getting married. Hlompho was called forward he was given the duty of keeping the rings safe.

Hlompho: "I love you both" the parents smiled. They slipped the rings that they chose days ago into each other's fingers before being pronounced husband and

wife. When the part about kissing the bride came Lefa didn't even wait for the pastor to finish talking as he went in to kiss his wife. The family stood to sing a joyous wedding song while others ululated. The couple held each other tight while watching their guests sing in celebration big them. It was the best gift that they'd ever received from family and friends. Their boys went to go give them hugs. Ntombikayise told Mahlubandile what they planned for the gender reveal so she gave Lefa the string that

had a single pink balloon tied to it. When Lefa went on one knee to kiss his wife's belly with the balloon in hand everyone got the message and the cheering was more intense. Dali sat thinking about his own wedding day and he hoped that he and Indi would be able to work things out. So many pictures were taken in and around the house. Reth and Abbo finally got a chance to congratulate the couple. The first thing the ladies did was rub their bellies together before each let out a laugh and hugging.

Abbo: "Congratulations on both the wedding and baby. Many blessings" she held Lefa's hand.

Lefa: "Thank you" he smiled "I hear you are the man who wanted to make my wife a second wife. Thanks for not being greedy, man. You already have a beautiful lady by your side" they laughed.

Reth: "Just take care of her.

Don't be like that first fool"

Abbo: "Reth" she looked at him and he didn't take anything back.

Lefa: "I'll take care of her. As you know we weren't in charge of today but we really hope that you

two have fun"

Reth: "So much fun but when are you serving the food" Abbo looked embarrassed.

Ntombi: "Let me go find out. Abbo come let me introduce you to my friends" she took Abbo's hand and left the men. The ladies were accommodative as Ntombi expected.

Ntombi: "I can't believe that you guys pulled this off without me suspecting. I now realize just how many clues there were" she put her hand over her face laughing.

Poppy: "Sorry to say this but that lawsuit was the perfect distraction. Had it not occupied your mind, I know you'd have known what's going on" they laughed. The guests were given opportunity to go fill their plates with the delicacies prepared. There was a vegan option for non meat eaters. Kgethang said his best man speech and so did Mahlubandile.

Craig: "When my wife told me what their planning I knew there's no way we'd pull it off. Luckily all we had to do is what

we did today, lie to the groom to get him here" everyone laughed "I call them topdeck for obvious reasons but we once actually called Ntombikayise Pepper" the couple laughed "As someone who knows how hard he worked to get her to give him a chance, I'm glad to be here today. May you two have a long and prosperous marriage. To Topdeck" everyone laughed before toasting once again.

Bonolo: "I'm not going to be long. I'm just here to thank my new daughter in law for adding so much joy to my son's life. I can't

wait for my granddaughter to come. I'm literally counting the weeks until her arrival that's how excited I am. It is a beautiful day indeed and it went better than I expected it to. To Mr and Mrs Gwala, we love you" she blew a kiss. Tamkhulu stood. Tamkhulu: "I'm not one to follow these modern customs but today I decided to put my old-fashioned ways aside. After all the tears that my daughter shed it's great to witness today. These two are a match made in heaven. You even feel their love when in their

presence. Take care of each other and honour each other. I usually make long speeches because I have a lot of advice but I have a feeling there'll be plenty of time to share those. For now let us just enjoy this beautiful day. Many blessings indeed" Ntombikayise smiled. When everyone was full it was finally time to get the party started. Hlompho got out moves that no one ever saw before and was the centre of attention for a long while. People usually thought that he can't enjoy himself as he didn't hear the beat of the music

but he could sense it's vibrations making him able to dance along. Ntombikayise craved the beautiful dirty cocktails served but she had to be content with her virgin ones. Everyone had such a great time that the celebration went on until after sunset. Reth and Abbo gave the couple a voucher to go on honeymoon to Zambia anytime they were able to get away. There was still plenty to do at the office to get away but they were certain that they'd go before it became impossible for Ntombikayise to

travel.

Lefa: "I'm honestly still at a loss for words after what happened today. All I know is that my wife and I are grateful to all who were involved in planning this. You all deserve an award for secrecy" the people laughed "we'll never forget what you've done for us today. We've been talking and none of us were aware but once we were, we realized just how blessed we are. So thank you" he said sincerely.

Ntombi: "I also just want to say thank you. We are seriously

blessed with a supportive circle. I don't think I'll ever trust any of you fully though. I'm sure if possible you'd have arranged a surprise labour for me too"

laughter once again "It's been a wonderful day indeed. I've met members of my new family whom I only heard of from my husband and all of you are just amazing. I'm still waiting for the cameras to come out because I've never heard about a surprise wedding in my life" Thank you, thank you, thank you". Just when the couple thought the guest would want to

go home after their thanks the dancing started all over again.

Luckily Babini asked for his neighbours' approval as it was a very quiet area and they said as long as it'll be over by midnight.

The boys had not told Ntombi what Liyema said about them all moving back to his house as he'll be relocating because they wanted to get the wedding over with before telling her.

Hlubi: "There's a car waiting for you two outside ready to take you to your next surprise. Just tell them who you are on arrival and

they'll lead you to where we planned " she smiled.

Lefa: "I swear you guys will kill us with all these surprises"

Craig: "At least you'll die a happy man. Now go so we can party" the couple laughed. They told their children they'd be gone for the night but the boys knew already. They thanked their parents and friends for the hundredth time before having their guests escort them to the car. When the driver hooted as he slowly drove the guests clapped hands and waved until they were out of sight. It

was a great day for everyone.

The newly weds kissed all the way to the hotel and only took a break to smile at each other. When they were taken to their suite they found the setting romantic already. The moon was full and beautiful.

Lefa: "I can't believe that we're officially husband and wife" he drew her closer for a kiss.

Ntombi: "I can" she smiled before their lips collided softly again.

There was a bath surrounded with rose petals and Lefa helped Ntombi get out of her dress

before he undressed himself. He helped her inside one of the widest tubs they'd seen before getting in behind her. So much foreplay was done in the soapy water. From words of affection to touching each other to kissing "You do know there's no turning back right? If I'm psycho then you're stuck with me" she tilted her head to look at him smiling. He held her neck gently before kissing her.

Lefa: "It's said each man should take his psycho and be happy" he joked and they both laughed

"Let's get out of here" he kissed her again before standing to get out the water. He didn't try to hide the fact that his body was hungry for hers as his erection stood bodily. He had to be patient with helping her out the tub though as it was slippery. They both walked with wet feet from the tiled floor of the bathroom to the soft mat of the bedroom.

They couldn't keep their lips apart even as they were towel drying their bodies. Ntombi pushed him to the bed after throwing her towel aside and

eased herself on top of him before kissing him. She felt his hands seductively knead her breasts and his thumbs would occasionally rub over her erect nipples. She was not shy to explore his body either and his proud erection was in her soft hands and the way she moved her hand made him even more hungry for her. She let out a moan when she felt his one hand make its way between her thigh. Her hips moving at a rhythm that intensified her arousal. When she reached for his hand with her head tilted back

while letting out the most seductive moan he'd ever heard escape her he knew she'd had her first orgasm. It lasted a while but he didn't mind her losing control of her body as he lived the view. He held her tight and stood to put her on the edge of the bed before he stood between her warm legs. His thrusts were slow and gentle at first but they intensified after each stroke, each moan and each groan until he felt his pleasure build up. He picked her up as though she were a feather and he sat on the bed

once again with her on top. He supported her by holding her hips as he took in the sight of her move in such a way that he failed to keep his eyes on her due to the pleasure. When Ntombi felt his body against her breast and his arms around her she held him. Out of breath and with sweaty bodies they both released. She didn't imagine she'd ever get tired of having intimate moments with him especially as he was before husband. She felt his lips between her breasts as he tried to catch his breath. He kissed his

way up to her chin and then her mouth.

Lefa: "I think there's a difference between dating sex and marriage sex" they both laughed before he took a deep breath.

Ntombi: "Oh?" she asked softly and wiped his brows before planting a kiss on his lips.

Lefa: "I'll feel less guilty when I face your grandparents" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombi: "I like it when you're like this. Just relaxed"

Lefa: "I like this feeling too, Mrs Gwala. You rode me until I got

dizzy" he listened to her let out a blushing laugh "I don't ever want us to lose this, Ntombi. I want to be your husband and boyfriend, sthandwa sam. Even after baby comes, I don't want to lose this" he kissed her "I don't want you to feel I don't want your body. Why are you crying?" he smiled and she shrugged "I love you" he added.

Ntombi: "I love you too" she smiled. She got off from on top of him and they laid in each other's arms. The night felt a bit chilly so Lefa pulled a blanket over their

bodies. They imagined making love until the sun came up but their bodies demanded rest so they both fell asleep. They had a lifetime ahead of them to show each other in various ways just how much they loved one another so they allowed their bodies the rest they needed after a wonderful day filled with surprises, love, unity, dancing, food and great family and friends. It was a day they'd surely tell their daughter about that's if her

brothers don't beat them to it,
especially Hlompho. 

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When Ntombi opened her eyes the first thing she saw was her wedding ring which left a wide smile on her face. She took a good look at it but turned her head to look at the most important wedding jewel she received yesterday, her husband. He was usually the first one to get up but he was fast asleep clearly tired from the wedding activities

and the romantic activities they did afterwards. She put her leg over his body and held him from behind and leaned over to check if he was really still sleeping. When she saw that he was she kissed the side of his face that she had access to. When Lefa felt the affection he first placed his hand on her knee and smiled. He tilted his head back to look at her and laughed when she planted the kisses on the other side of his face too before kissing his lips. Ntombi: "Baby, wake up" she said when he closed his eyes again.

Lefa: "What for, Mrs? We only have to check out of here tomorrow" he reminded her.

Ntombi: "To do husband duties" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Yikes" he opened his eyes 'I forgot I'm now a husband"

Ntombikayise laughed "What do husbands do?" he acted confused.

Ntombi: "I don't know. I've never been married to you and husbands aren't the same. Just follow your instincts" she shrugged.

Lefa: "Let me Google" he reached for his phone.

Ntombi: "Really?" he laughed.

Lefa: "You're beautiful" he watched her smile as she was blushing. Ntombi heard the sound of a camera so her brows drew closer "Decided to capture my wife's authentic self the day after our wedding" he showed her the picture.

Ntombi: "You've got a beautiful wife though" she joked.

Lefa: "I really do" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Oh my goodness but the second picture, baby no. I look like a camel" Lefa laughed out before taking the phone from her hand and gave her a passionate kiss

which had Ntombi moaning already.

Lefa: "Today we really lock ourselves in"

Ntombi: "We have work to catch up on"

Lefa: "It's not up for debate, Mrs Gwala" he smiled and she nodded in agreement "So when are we going on that honeymoon?" he asked.

Ntombi: "Let's get all the heavy work done and reach deadlines before going" Lefa nodded "I'm sure by that time I'll be really showing because we still have

plenty of stuff to do" she added. Lefa: "I can't wait until you really start showing" he kissed her again. He just couldn't seem to resist it and Ntombi put up no resistance either. They got up to brush their teeth before taking a shower. When housekeeping came knocking they asked for a few more minutes of privacy and the lady had no problem with it. Lefa slid the glass door leading to the balcony open to take in the fresh air and view. When Ntombi came to join him he put down his glass of water to hold her before

picking her up to lay her on the long soft chair on the spacious balcony. The sun was the perfect temperature making them both enjoy the warmth it gave their skins. The balcony was private so no neighbours could peak over and there were no tall buildings close to them either which made them take advantage of the excitement of making love there.

Lefa: "Are you sure you'll be comfortable with this?" he looked at her and she nodded quickly.

Ntombi: "Are you?"

Lefa: "Anywhere as long as it's

with you and you're at ease" he said before kissing her again. He took her towel off slowly to check if she'll show signs of being uncomfortable but she didn't so he saw it as a green card. Her moans would get so loud in some moments of heat that Lefa was certain their neighbours could hear her. It was always give and take with them which they both loved as it left them both satisfied instead of just one of them. He still feared any position that looked too adventurous since he found out she was pregnant

though she assured him she'll be fine. She looked more sexy to him as her smooth skin was kissed by the sun. Bottom lip between her teeth like one trying not to alarm the entire hotel with the pleasure sounds. He loved it even more when he'd force her to let her lip free by kissing her and hear her moan into his mouth. As deeply hypothesized as he was by the pleasure himself, he could catch moments between to appreciate the woman who welcomes him inside of her. Neither of them could hold off

longer and a few seconds after Lefa's release Ntombi also reached her edge. Ntombi loving how he always gripped at her as he waited for his orgasm to subside so he'd be able to think clearly again. When he lifted his head to look at her that's all they did for a few seconds, just looked at each other while both tried to catch their breath. A cool breeze hit them just when they needed it. Lefa covered their bottoms with a towel as they laid side by side facing each other. Ntombi: "You make me feel sexy,

like the most irresistible woman ever" she said softly while looking at the tattoo on his chest.

Lefa: "To me you are" he saw her lips curve up in a smile.

Ntombi: "A part of me still think this is a dream, baby. That I'll wake up after a night of crying myself to sleep" he wondered why she never shared those thoughts with him before.

Lefa: "I'm not a character in your dreams, Ngqangqa" he laughed softly before kissing her forehead "Plus who has such a long dream?" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Maybe I had an accident and I'm in a coma" she laughed softly.

Lefa: "Don't say such please. Take it back"

Ntombi: "I take it back"

Lefa: "I'm real and you're stuck with me. I am a person who shows love. This time I just got blessed with a woman who doesn't take advantage of that so I show her more" he kissed her
"And more" he kissed her again
"And more" Ntombi laughed when he kissed her again "See? You don't tell me I'm annoying by

showing you affection. You instead take it all in" he smiled.

Ntombi: "You've been told it's annoying before?" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "I've also been told it's gay actually" he laughed and

Ntombikayise wondered who those women who let go of him just because he loved too much were so she'd thank them. She loved it. Her day felt empty on days he'd be having meetings out of the office all day.

Ntombikayise: "I love it so don't stop"

Lefa: "I promise I won't. Let's us

go freshen up so we can go eat. I feel like being out with you for a little while"

Ntombi: "To show me off" they both laughed. Their plan got delayed a bit by another round of passion. They went to freshen up and thankfully someone took liberty to pack them some clothes to change into. Ntombi called home to hear how they were all doing.

Bukhosi: "Mom, we last saw you a few hours ago. What could possibly have happened between then and now?"

Ntombi: "You five burning my kitchen down" Bukhosi laughed.

Banele: "Is that dad? Tell him that we must still speak to mom about moving back in at the house" he shouted. Ntombi could hear Bukhosi saying "shhh"

Ntombi: "Too late. Explain please" he explained to her "So you three all alone without supervision?"

Lefa looked at her while putting his watch on.

Bukhosi: "Let's talk about it tomorrow when you return.

Otherwise we are all still good. Still enjoying some wedding

leftovers so we aren't cooking meaning no burning down your kitchen. You just enjoy. Holla at Bhut Lefa for us. Hlompho says he loves you" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "I love you guys too. We'll talk about this" she hung up.

"They say they want to move out. Apparently Liyema and Portia are moving to another province" she looked at her husband.

Lefa: "How do you feel about it?" he walked over to her side.

Ntombi: "They are within legal right to"

Lefa: "I asked how you feel not

what the law says"

Ntombi: "I can't help but feel like they fear they won't get my love and attention when the baby comes"

Lefa: "Come on, baby" he held her hands "Hlomphe is a new addition to them and they saw with him that nothing has changed. These are just young men coming of age and they want to explore independence. It's not like they are moving with their father. We will be 15 minutes from them. We can go there everyday to check up on them. Also don't think I'm

saying this to get rid of your kids so we can only stay with mine. If Hlompho was their age I know he'd have wanted to go with and I would have allowed it"

Ntombi: "I wish they were still Hlompho's age" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I think our parents wished for that too at some point.

Liyema wouldn't have trusted them with his house had he not trusted the type of people the quads are. Yes, there'll be girls over and occasional parties as with any young men but overall they are responsible. Please keep

an open mind when they talk to you and listen to their reasons. They'll always have place at our house because it's their home too but every bird has to leave the nest at some point. They feel they are ready to fly out. Just look at Bandile. All alone in PE yet has proven to be responsible with money and everything else"

Ntombi: "You've got a point there" she took a deep breath "we'll talk to them about it tomorrow. If I'm certain it's not because of the baby then I'll okay it" Lefa smiled.

Lefa: "It's got absolutely nothing to do with their sister, trust me. In fact she'll be the reason they visit us a lot after she's born"
Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Do you even have money to feed me?" Lefa couldn't help but laugh "Let's get room service. I'm sure it's included in the package" she added.

Lefa: "I took all that money given to us yesterday and my wallet is with me. So I can feed you, Mrs Gwala"

Ntombi: "Thank you for the starter earlier on, Mr Gwala" she

said in a flirty tone.

Lefa: "No, Ntombikayise. If you go on like that then we'll never make it out of here" he shook his head like one trying to get to his senses and Ntombi laughed. They were out looking for a place that had the type of breakfast that they craved. They didn't even notice how people would look at them and smile as their happiness seemed to rub off on complete strangers. After eating too much junk at the wedding they both opted for a healthier breakfast

Ntombi: "It already feels like we

are on honeymoon. Like we aren't in Cape Town" she smiled.

Lefa: "Because we don't have kids asking us for this and that" they both laughed "we really must make use of the gift before it becomes difficult for you to travel" Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "I really wish that Reth could change his mind about having more wives. They look so happy and Abbo's bump is just the most adorable I've ever seen. Pity they had to leave right after, we'd have invited them over to our house"

Lefa: "Polygamy is not a bad thing" Ntombi raised a brow looking at him and he laughed "I'm not going to take a second wife don't worry. I'm just saying that some people find harmony in such a family structure" he added.

Ntombi: "I guess" she shrugged "Now I'm waiting to be accepted into your family officially" she smiled "Good thing my mother in law likes me" she added.

Lefa: "Mme, doesn't hate for no reason. When given reason she is quick to take back the respect she had for someone. She goes

with what her intuition tells her"
Ntombi: "I spoke to Nolu briefly yesterday and I'm glad she came. I don't want any bad blood between us"

Lefa: "She is a good person, just a gossip"

Ntombi: "Lefa" she said quietly.

Lefa: "It's true. It's one thing that works on Kgethang's nerve. I'm just glad they'll leave during the week. I really hope Kgethang can get a transfer this side someday"

Ntombi: "And what about Nolu's career?"

Lefa: "Nomandla and her husband eventually both got a transfer so they both can. Thought I'd say her place is in the kitchen and raising babies huh?" Ntombi laughed "If that was my mindset, I'd have never proposed to my queen that we start an empire together" he leaned forward to kiss her.

Ntombi: "We are such a typical newly wed couple" she said shyly "We can't even go a minute without a touch or kiss" she added.

Lefa: "Why should we?" he kissed

her and Ntombi broke the kiss and looked around blushing "You know whenever I imagine how our baby will look I see your face" Ntombi laughed out "I'm serious" he added.

Ntombi: "I got teased a lot for my complexion growing up, baby. I don't know why I hope she has yours"

Lefa: "Any will be perfect because she'll see how comfortable her mother is in her own skin so no one will tease her because she'll tell them how much she loves herself"

Ntombi: "Or tell her five older

brothers and dad" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Well if she feels like she needs back up, yes. Don't act as though you won't be part of the backup squad"

Ntombi: "Someone has to make sure her story is truth. For all we know she'll be the naughty one. So I'll be the objective one because the men in her life will be too overprotective to see her faults"

Lefa laughed "I'm just sad that Amahle couldn't come" her smile faded.

Lefa: "Makhulu said they invited her and her family but apparently

she chose to spend the day with her biological mother's mother"
Ntombi: "I sometimes feel like I'm deserting her" she looked down "It's not easy to raise someone and just hand them over to other people. So I still feel like it's a must that I see her almost everyday or talk to her over the phone" she added.

Lefa: "Understandably so, but how when Asakhe keep reminding you that you are no longer her primary caretaker? So continue with the role of aunt because you can't just break away from her"

Ntombi: "It's the reason why I'm more excited about having my own biological daughter. No one will come claim her" she smiled "Not looking forward to teen years though" she laughed.

Lefa: "Luckily, we still have years before that storm comes. Are you finished?" he looked at her empty plate and she nodded.

Ntombi: "Yeah let's go before people complain about our public display of affection". Lefa settled the bill and they were out of the restaurant. They both looked left and right trying to decide where

to next. Ntombi craved jelly beans so they were on a jelly bean hunt for a couple of minutes before going to a bookshop cafe that sold old books. They both loved reading though their reading style was different. Lefa preferred nonfiction while Ntombi loved fiction. They got their books and decided to head to the hotel and be alone after buying some snacks. Lefa extended their stay with an extra stay because the alone time suddenly became addictive. The short naps, snack attacks and playing without

anyone interrupting was heaven on earth. They laid on the bed each with their new read in hand. The lace covering the open balcony area was blown by the wind which felt perfect after a hot few hours in the hot sun. Lefa had Ntombi's left hand in his and fiddled with her wedding ring. His eyes went to the words written in her book as she was sitting between his legs he had a clear view of it.

Lefa: "He eased her back on the bed, then spread kisses over her skin, paying slow, masterful

attention to the two buds on her breasts and the tempting little one between her thighs. When he sensed her to be on the edge of her second release he coaxed open her thighs and partially eased his way into her warmth. She was tight, so tight he..." Ntombi laughed all through his reading but closed her book to look at him "Is that what's written in your novel?" Ntombi let out the most blushing laugh he's ever heard come from her.

Ntombi: "Just leave me alone. Focus on your sad book about a

man who lost his entire family crossing the sea to go to America on a refugee boat. The things you read. The fact that it's non fiction makes it more sad" she shook her head.

Lefa: "Let me see what the rest says. Maybe your sexual fantasies are in these things so I might get some clues" Ntombi laughed at playfully elbowed him.

Ntombi: "No, leave my book" she held it tightly against her chest.

"You already meet all my fantasies" Lefa smiled proudly.

Lefa: "No wonder you somehow

just linger around me after reading a chapter of these books. They arouse you" Ntombi didn't respond. She instead just held her book trying to contain her laughter

Ntombu: "Don't act like you are complaining" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Most watch porn, my wife reads it" they both laughed "My weird person" she gave him a look.

Ntombi: "Oh my word, Lefa Gwala please just leave me and my book alone haibo" she looked at him "Leave me alone" she added with a smile.

Lefa: "No, because now I also want to spread kisses over your skin and masterfully pay attention to your nipples and clit" he kissed her neck playful.

Ntombi: "It didn't say that. It was not that explicit. Why are you like this?" he lowered his lips to hers when she looked at him.

Lefa: "Because I love seeing you blush" he said after breaking the kiss "My porn reader" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Porn can never be this classy. This leaves room for imagination"

Lefa: "What were you imagining when I read it because you took a long while to stop me so clearly you wanted me to read the good bits" he said quietly and watched her cover her face with the book.

Ntombi: "I imagine you doing it to me again" she confessed shyly .

Lefa: "Yeah?" he kissed her and his hand indeed went to the little bud between her thigh which made her ease them apart a bit to give him access. She eased her own under garment off. She wondered if that feeling of excitement would ever fade but

she didn't want it too, not ever. She was certain that had she not been pregnant already they'd have conceived during that mini honeymoon. When he held her against the velvet headboard and eased her way into her he began to lustfully thrust. His strong hands holding her in position as they kissed, moaned and stroked their way to yet another intense pleasure.

Ntombi: "That's was a hundred time better than in the book" she kissed him and bit his bottom lip softly before releasing it.

Lefa: "I should get you more of those" his thumbs glided over her nipples before he kissed her. Her skin got covered with goosebumps from what he was doing and the cool wind blowing in.

Ntombi: "I don't want this to end, baby" her arms wrapped around his neck in a tight hug.

Lefa: "Let's have this once a month. No kids or anything else, just us. Even after this little girl comes" he still held her firmly against the headboard while her legs and arms gripped around him.

Ntombi: "She'll take all our time

so let's wait and see" she laughed softly.

Lefa: "That's why she has grandparents. They will fight to look after her" they both laughed "we're blessed though. Makhulu will be there to look after her when you get back to work after maternity leave" Ntombi broke the hug to look at him.

Ntombi: "With the rate your mom is going on she'll also come everyday during the day to help Makhulu. They've become quite the best of friends. Don't ask me how judging from the age gap"

Lefa: "It's possible and yes Mme will have Tata drop her off at the house almost daily like one whom we hired to be a nanny for our baby" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Thank you for agreeing to keep sis V on. I know that our house is not as big as my previous one so we don't really need her but I'm glad that she stayed on"

Lefa: "I'm the son of a retired domestic worker remember? So I know she has children she must feed"

Ntombi: "Yandi said that she needs help with her business and

sis V is brilliant at cooking. I gave Yandi her CV. It'll be better pay. Then she can come to our place on a part time basis" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Want to return to your classy reading?" he teased "Tell me when you need practical demonstration" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Honestly I just want to take a nap right now. My body is literally just so relaxed it's not even funny"

Lefa: "I'm glad to be of service" he kissed her before easing her on her back to the soft mattress. Ntombi stood to go to the

bathroom and returned with a warm towel for him before they both took a nap. Lefa woke up first and continued to read his book that Ntombikayise said was too dad for her to read. He knew that she wouldn't give him much time to read it because even as they both had a book in hand earlier on, she'd tilt her head to look at him inviting him to kiss her. After reading that short passage from her book, he knew why she'd do that. Ntombikayise slept for a long while to catch up on rest she missed out on.

Ntombi: "I think we must have a thank you party for our parents, kids and friends" she said the second her eyes opened "I'm cold" she looked back.

Lefa: "Let me close the sliding door" he stood to do that "Did you dream about this thank you party?" he pulled the cover over her as she just had a sheet like cover over herself. Her skin was cool so he hoped to warm her up with his body heat by holding her.

Ntombi: "I actually did" she smiled "Plus we haven't officially had a housewarming yet and this can be

it too" she added "we should cancel our date tomorrow with home affairs" they laughed.

Lefa: "Our poor plans down the drain. Good thing we planned on taking Monday off to celebrate after we came from the department. That way we have an excuse to do what we did today"

Ntombi: "Tomorrow we should go find little spots that we didn't know about. Like that little coffee shop selling old books we found. I want to go buy more actually. Imagine a book costing

R20"

Lefa: "Can't we hide for a week?"

Ntombi: "No, we unfortunately can't, sthandwa sam" she laughed "Let's wait for the real honeymoon" she added.

Lefa: "This is the real one to me. Its unplanned and authentic. Are you still cold?" Ntombi shook her head "Good" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "I think we really like each other. I mean we've been in each other's face all day yet we want to do more of it"

Lefa: "I like being a married man. I keep holding your belly hoping to

feel a kick"

Ntombi: "Soon, sthandwa sam...soon. I hope they aren't planning a baby shower for me after everything they already did"

Lefa: "Both my mother and your grandmother don't agree with baby showers so I doubt it"

Ntombi: "True. I actually hoped that Nolwazi would be amongst the guest yesterday"

Lefa: "Baby, stop trying to persuade people to like you. The way Lwazi describes your sister, I'm glad she's not here to cause havoc in your life. She sounds like

her mother's daughter indeed and honestly not a topic I want to discuss when we're this happy. Anything outside of this room should stay there. For now we are cut off from reality. We are in our little world and the only inhabitants...well kinda" he looked at her belly and she laughed.

Ntombi: "When we first met, did you ever think we'll be here?"

Lefa: "I hoped that we would" he smiled "Even with eyes burning I wanted to know who the woman who sprayed poison in my eyes was. I'm your last, baby because

I don't want anything else"

Ntombi: "I love you, Mr Gwala"

Lefa: "I love you, Mrs Gwala"

they kissed "Now read your book because I want to know what happened to those two" she laughed.

Ntombi: "You don't even know their names"

Lefa: "What are they?" he raised a brow.

Ntombi: "Nate and Vivid" she smiled.

Lefa: "I want to know where Nate and Vivid ended then" she liked how he showed interest.

Ntombi: "Usually these couples have a little obstacle but the story always ends in them living happily ever after"

Lefa: "Then why do you have so many if you know the storyline?"

Ntombikayise shrugged.

Ntombi: "They became an escape from life I guess, especially after the divorce. There's something about reading someone's happy story that just resonates with me even if they aren't real"

Lefa: "What if our love story was fiction and people read it. Do you think they'd have found the same

thing in it that you do in your books?"

Ntombi: "I don't know" she laughed softly "I guess so but I'm glad we're not fiction" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Do you still need an escape?" Ntombi shook her head.

Ntombi: "Now I'm reading for enjoyment and should a chapter have an erotic moment, my husband will take care of my needs as he's always done" she flirted.

Lefa: "That's why I want to get you more of them" Ntombikayise

laughed out. The sun was setting already and they both wore their gowns to take it all in. Even had there been no gift of a formal honeymoon those few hours alone just enjoying each other's company in various ways was enough.

Ntombikayise also tried teaching Lefa how to dance after they had supper but he was a lost cause but she loved that he was her lost cause. If their unborn baby could hear and feel the joy and remembered it. She'd have narrated to everyone just how happy her parents were as soon

as she could utter her first full sentence but she was sure to witness the love between them for many more years to come. 

S2-INSERT 74 (NOT EDITED)
When Hazel called Zanomoya to tell her which name to give Ntombi to officially welcome her into the family Bonolo was listening to that phonecall too. She didn't know which name Hazel suggested but Bonolo remembered Hazel making joking about giving Ntombikayise the name

Nomnyamazane which was an insult not just to Ntombi but to Lefa too. When Zano stood to give the name Bonolo stood too and it forced Zano to sit so the elder could talk. Bonolo gave Ntombi the name Sibabalwe because she felt blessed to have yet another daughter in law. The welcoming was great and Nolu didn't have to hold Ntombi's hand all through the process because Ntombi had walked that path before. Lefa appeared at Ntombi's office door and for a while his presence went unnoticed by the seriously busy

Ntombi. He folded his arms and just smiled as he took in the sight of her in her makoti attire.

Lefa: "Did you know that there's a certain level of respect a man earns when he has a wife?" he grabbed her attention "Like it seems clients are now more confident to recommend my services to their friends now" he walked inside.

Ntombi: "That's the magic of women, sthandwa sam" she smiled and he laughed.

Lefa: "Are you still feeling nauseous?" Ntombi shook her

head "Does that mean that you can finally have something to eat because I don't like that you only had an apple" he sat opposite her.

Ntombi: "This pregnancy is a breeze compared to my first one, baby. With the quads I had already visited the hospital five times and not for a routine check up. If it was not my blood pressure, it was just a random cramp somewhere"

Lefa: "I'm glad that you don't have to go through that then because it would have stressed the hell out of me. Let me go feed

you" he stood and held his hand out.

Ntombi: "Do you think I visit your parents' house enough since they welcomed me in the family?"

Lefa: "You have been going there almost everyday after work, Siba. So yes, baby you are" he watched her walk around her desk. His phone rang so he took the call before they could go to lunch.

Ntombi could tell that it was Vakale but Lefa's body language suddenly changed making

Ntombikayise curious as to what her father in law was sharing

with her husband "Was he that sick?" Ntombikayise got more concerned "Okay, Tata and thanks for letting me know. We'll come by later on" he said before ending the call.

Ntombi: "Please don't tell me it's bad news. Not so soon after we've been so happy"

Lefa: "It unfortunately is, sthandwa sam. Makhulu's older brother passed away. Apparently he had cancer all this time but was hiding it from the family"

Ntombi went to give him a hug.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry to hear that.

You can go to your parents now if you want. You can pick me up later or I'll take a taxi" she suggested. Lefa: "Are you sure that you'll be fine?"

Ntombi: "Yes, I'll go through the auditing feedback with Mrs Fay."

Lefa: "And eat" Ntombi smiled and nodded "I love you. I'll pick you up later on" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "I love you too" she watched him walked to the door.

Lefa: "Siba" he turned to look back at her "This could mean that we must go to Cofimvaba.

Do you think you'll be up to travel

that distance by car?" he asked. Ntombi: "I don't think it should be a problem" she nodded and so did he before he went to his office to get his keys. He told her he's off and she asked him to give her condolences to the family.

Mrs Fay arrived a few minutes after Lefa left and Ntombi went through the auditing feedback with her as Lefa had taught her. Their skill sets were also rubbing off on each other because they brainstormed a lot together.

Ntombikayise was not really

looking forward to going to Cofimvaba because Hazel was there and she still had a feeling that Hazel didn't like her much. She also was not looking forward to all the work that would surely await them at the rural areas but she wanted to go support her husband. When Makhulu called to ask Ntombikayise if she was at work and free Ntombi knew that she was close. Indeed Makhulu was knocking on Ntombi's door soon after the call holding food. Makhulu: "I brought food for you and Lefa. I decided to cook lunch

today and it would be a shame to not bring you two some" Ntombi smiled.

Ntombi: "Thank you, Ma but Lefa is not here and he won't come back. His grandmother's brother passed away about two hours ago" she opened the two plastic containers. One was hers and the other Lefa's. "Let me go warm it up quickly" Makhulu nodded.

Ntombi returned to the office with a cup of tea for Makhulu.

Makhulu: "Thank you" she reached for the cup handed to her. Ntombi went back out to go get her food

and returned quickly again "I'm going to go with you later on to the Gwala house to show our support. I called your grandfather and told him. He is on the way there now" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "It's good that he decided to get his own phone. I always wondered how you two got hold of each other when you're not together" Makhulu laughed.

Makhulu: "I do not like this technology but it does make life a bit easier" she sipped her tea and Ntombi started to eat "I take it

that you'll be going to Hazel's" she was concerned. Ntombi nodded because her mouth was filled with food "Be careful when you are there, Ntombi" she waited for Ntombikayise to swallow.

Ntombi: "I won't overdo things, Ma. I think pregnancy gives me some kind of privilege" she joked "I won't have to be on my feet all day. Don't worry" she smiled.

Makhulu: "I'm not talking about that" Ntombi looked at her grandmother. Makhulu told Ntombi about the poison issue and Ntombi had to drink water after

she choked on her food.

Ntombi: "I have to fill Lefa in"

Makhulu shook her head.

Makhulu: "There is no proof. It'll be your word against his. Chances are the doctor who treated her knows she had poison in her system but she asked him to keep quiet. Some people are manipulators. If you tell Lefa, he'll confront her and she'll then say that you twisted what really happened. What's stopping her from saying that you poisoned her and she'll have them see her records of that hospital visit

where it might state she indeed had poison in her body. She'll tell the family that you poisoned her but she decided to put Lefa's happiness first hence she didn't tell him"

Ntombi: "I can't deal with this, Ma. I could have lost my child" she became emotional "I could have lost my child" she repeated with year filled eyes "I'm not going to go there" she lost her appetite.

Makhulu: "Go just be aware. Make sure that you know what goes into what you drink and eat. Buy

bottled water and keep it in your car. Tell them tea and other beverages make you sick that way they can't put anything in your drinks. Only drink your water that you go with"

Ntombi: "No, Ma" she shook her head "I'm not going" she said stubbornly.

Makhulu: "What will you say your reasons for not going with your grieving husband to bury his grandfather are?"

Ntombi: "I'll say I'm not feeling well"

Makhulu: "Don't speak negative

unto yourself. Next thing you really get sick. We'll follow for the funeral to support you and Lefa"
Ntombi: "I hate the timing of this death"

Makhulu: "Unfortunately death is unexpected. You need to support your husband. Your pregnancy is the perfect excuse to decline things offered to you. Pretend that your morning sickness gets triggered by almost everything. Don't go confront Hazel on her territory either. She'll make your life hell. Just do what you must and move on"

Ntombi: "I'll think about it. I even lost my appetite"

Makhulu: "It'll be back. I didn't want to tell you all of this but since you'll be going there I'd rather you be aware"

Ntombi: "I won't accept anything from Nolu either. Nothing is going to happen me and my child. Hell would first have to freeze over before I allow that to happen"

Makhulu: "That's my girl. I'll make sure that we follow right after so that you won't feel like you're alone. Use the business as an excuse to come back early. Be

smart, baby girl. If you act out on revenge then you'll cause trouble on your marriage. They'll make Lefa choose between you and them and I know you wouldn't want such a burden on his shoulders"

Ntombi: "So I never tell him?"

Makhulu: "The truth will come out someday, just don't let it be from a place of anger. Now please eat. I had to take two taxis to bring this food" Ntombi laughed softly. The day went on as usual after Makhulu left until Lefa came to pick Ntombi up to go to the

Gwala family. There were already people at the house to give condolences so Ntombi helped to make tea for those individuals.

Bonolo: "What is wrong, Siba?" she brushed Ntombi's back "Don't tell me it's nothing. Is this sadness getting to you?" she added. They were alone in the kitchen at the time.

Ntombi: "Ma" she looked around "Please don't take offence to this question" she whispered and Bonolo nodded "To what lengths do Makhulu Hazel go to get what she wants?" she asked quietly.

Bonolo: "I first need to know the entire story before I can give an answer, Siba"

Ntombi: "Nevermind, Ma" she went back to washing the cups in the sink. Bonolo went to close the kitchen door.

Bonolo: "I don't want you to be sad in my house, Sibabalwe. It breaks my heart really so tell me. I promise what you tell me won't leave this room"

Ntombi: "Remember when Makhulu was in hospital? Bonolo nodded "She visited me that day" she added.

Bonolo: "I remember" Ntombi told her what Hazel did and Bonolo put her hands over her mouth "She wanted to kill my grandbaby? My grandbaby?" she raised her voice.

Ntombi: "Please keep it down, Ma" she looked at the closed door.

Bonolo: "You haven't told Lefa?"

Ntombi shook her head and watched Bonolo sip water. Ntombi told her what Makhulu said "Your grandmother has a point. It's tough to be a woman sometimes. She really could really pin this on you but to kill my grandbaby" she

started to cry. There was a knock on the door and Lefa appeared.

Lefa: "What are you two plotting?"

Bonolo: "Giving her the recipe for the love potion that I fed your father" she joked and they all laughed.

Lefa: "Don't corrupt my wife, Mme" he held Ntombi close.

Bonolo: "We were just talking pregnancy stuff" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Tata says that the funeral is going to be next week. Makhulu just called. Kgethang and Nolu will meet us there. The

people have also left so I think we must get going now" he looked at Ntombi.

Bonolo: "Yes, go and rest. We'll see you guys tomorrow. Siba, we'll continue our conversation tomorrow"

Ntombi: "Do you believe me?"

Bonolo: "Of course I do" she said "I believe that you are going to give birth on the due date the doctor told you about" she laughed softly. to not make Lefa ask a lot of questions. Ntombi and Lefa had dinner at the Gwala house before going home. They found Hlompho

up way past his bedtime because he didn't start on his homework on his usual time. The older boys were still at the house because Liyema and Portia have not yet moved out. Ntombi was more at ease knowing that Bonolo believed her because it meant that she'd have someone in her corner at the funeral.

Bandile waited for Kwanele at the taxi rank as her taxi was close by. Because she was coming without her family knowing they had to be careful about who

spotted them. His phone rang and he answered it quickly.

Kwanele: "Baby, are you at the rank yet?"

Bandile: "I'm here waiting"

Kwanele: "Oh yes, I see you" he could hear she was smiling "Look to your left" Bandile did and a red taxi pulled in. She smiled and waved and he just smiled. He missed her terribly and it would be the first time she'd spend the night with him. He hugged her as soon as she stepped out of the taxi.

Driver: "Hey young love. Just

condomize, Bru. I have five kids I didn't want" he shouted but the couple ignored him.

Bandile: "Since when do you wear a cap?" He took her little sports bag and held her hand.

Kwanele: "Since I'm undercover" they both laughed "Many people know Daniel, babe" she added.

Bandile: "I think telling him ourselves is best, Kwanele. I feel guilty when with him. One would swear that I'm seeing his girlfriend"

Kwanele: "Stop exaggerating. I've missed you so much. I hope I

won't find any lipstick in your room" Bandile laughed.

Bandile: "If you do then I got framed"

Kwanele: "So how was my mother in law's wedding?" she asked with excitement "I want to see all the pictures" she added "I hope you captured the moment when she realized that it's a surprise. Gosh some women have great friends. Mine won't even surprise me with a lollipop let alone a wedding" she added.

Bandile: "I hope you're not hoping to get married soon. We still have

a lot to look forward to in life"

Kwanele: "I know, silly. I crave a pie. Let me go buy us each one before we go into hiding" they crossed the street to go and buy what they'd need which was a big mistake because Daniel was there too and he spotted them. The speed that he walked in was proof of how angry he was.

Bandile: "Daniel, calm down so we can explain" he said to his best friend but Daniel punched Bandile on the mouth. Seeing his young sister kiss his best friend made him see red. Bandile stood and

fought back which led to the security guards being called to control the two. They were threatened with the police when they refused to stop before being thrown out of the store.

Daniel: "You are coming home with me. We'll see what Mama and Tata have to say about you skipping classes to come and sleep with boys here" he pulled at Kwanele.

Kwanele: "Let go of me" she tried to fight but he was too strong.

Bandile: "You heard her" he forced Daniel to let go "What's your

fucking problem?" he shouted. His lips had a cut on the inside so he was bleeding.

Daniel: "You don't tell me what I can and can't do. This is my sister. Do you know that he is sleeping with two girls from our class?" he looked at Kwanele.

Bandile: "Don't lie, Daniel" he pointed at Daniel "Baby, he's lying. He just wants you to doubt me" he turned to look at Kwanele who seemed to be confused.

Daniel: "Tell her about Bathandiwe who keeps sending you nude pictures. I saw them

myself. He had a girlfriend back on Cape Town"

Bandile: "You're lying"

Daniel: "Dude, there aren't any nude pictures from Bathandiwe on your phone huh? Unlock it so that she can check herself"

Kwanele: "You lock your phone now?" she asked softly.

Bandile: "Because my little brother likes downloading useless things with our data, baby so yes I do have one"

Daniel: "He's not going to tell you the truth. Kwanele, I'm a man so I know what we are capable of"

doing. He has a password because he has pictures of his naked ex on his phone. I saw them myself but I wasn't bothered but now that he is seeing you I'm fuckin bothered" he shouted "Unlock it and give it to her" he demanded. Bandile: "I don't owe you a damn thing and I don't take orders from. you"

Kwanele: "I'd like to see myself"

Daniel smiled.

Bandile: "Baby, Bathandiwe wants me back so she sends me these things to tempt me" Daniel laughed out.

Daniel: "Yet you don't delete them, Bru. Clearly the temptation had got to you"

Bandile: "Just shut up" he pointed to Daniel "Yes, they are still on my phone but not because I want her back" he promised.

Kwanele: "Then why?"

Bandile: "I don't know, Kwanele. Deleting them never crossed my mind, I guess. Please don't listen to him. Look I'm deleting them now" he unlocked his phone and went to his gallery.

Daniel: "I'd be so embarrassed to call you my sister if you fall for his

lies. He can't even give you an explanation and the only reason he's deleting them is because he's caught out. I know how we operate. I hope you didn't sleep with this loser"

Bandile: "Oh so now I'm a loser? Me who helps you with food when your parents are low on cash? Wow" he shook his head "I deleted the two pictures" he looked at Kwanele "I'm sorry for keeping them instead of deleting them right away. I'm not cheating on you with an ex" he promised. He didn't know why he

didn't delete the pictures.

Kwanele: "Maybe I should go home rather" she picked her bag up.

Daniel: "I'll tell Mama and Tata that I asked you to come.

Tomorrow you'll be back on a taxi"

Kwanele: "Okay" she gave him her bag.

Bandile: "Baby, please don't do this. I've missed you so much" he felt heart broken.

Kwanele: "Clearly you missed your exes' body too. Texting and sending pictures is a form of cheating too. I need to clear my

head"

Bandile: "Kwanele, please"

Daniel: "Back the hell off" he pushed Bandile.

Kwanele: "Don't fight. I'm going to go with you" she looked at her brother "Don't call me today please. I need time to think" she added before following her brother. Bandile threw his cap on the ground in anger. He immediately blocked Bathandiwe so she'd stop sending him texts and pictures. He didn't imagine that his day would turn out that way. He imagined a movie day and

perhaps even taking their relationship to the next level. He wished that he told Kwanele that a pie was a waste of money when they could cook themselves but it was too late for that. He could feel that his lip was getting swollen and it just made him more angry. He could think of many ways to solve the issue without Daniel involving violence. He didn't want Kwanele to ever have an image of him fighting but it has happened. He decided to go home and cool off before he thought of a way to fix things with Kwanele.

He loved her too much to let things just end.

Portia has told all of her friends that she is going to have a mansion close to home. Her lobola negotiations were completed so they were planning their dream wedding. Liyema gave her a huge budget to work from and she was the happiest girl alive. She sat with one of the two friends that she had in Cape Town.

Vuvu: "So are you off the pill yet since your man wants you to try for another baby?" Portia lifted a

brow.

Portia: "I'm not getting off anything"

Vuvu: "Now or forever?"

Portia: "Forever" she mumbled and Vuvu's eyes shot open "This man has five children. Sons and a daughter so I don't understand what all the greed is about"

Vuvu: "I'll tell you what it's all about. He can afford them babies, honey" she snapped a finger.

Portia: "After all that I had to go through with Abo. I do not want a repeat"

Vuvu: "How will it be a repeat"

when he will marry you?" Portia shrugged "I'd have popped those babies like no other for such a rich man" she smiled.

Portia: "His ex-wife popped the babies too but look where she ended up?"

Vuvu: "Rich" she reminded Portia.

Portia: "I don't know how I can make him marry me in community of property"

Vuvu: "Tell him if you can't be sure you'll be secure should you guys end then no babies"

Portia: "I don't want to say it in so many words"

Vuvu: "So how will you hide the fact that you're using contraceptives from him for the rest of your life?"

Portia: "Nothing an exchange of containers won't fix. If he thinks I'm drinking vitamins everyday, he'll think I'm doing it to be healthy for pregnancy"

Vuvu: "Meanwhile you're killing his sperm" she raised a brow.

Portia: "He doesn't have to know that. Liyema has enough children"

Vuvu: "Are you still keeping to the story of not having known that he was married"

Portia: "I didn't know that he was" she said with a smile before sipping her coffee.

Vuvu: "You knew a Mrs was there" she raised a brow "You know they say the way you got him might be the way you lose him" she added..

Portia: "I got him fair and square. I didn't know that he was married and when I did I stayed away from him"

Vuvu: "Honey, you were threatened to stay away by his evil mother because she didn't want her son's name tarnished. Otherwise you know you'd have

caused havoc in that marriage. You know what I think happened?" Portia just looked at her "I think that your mother heard that Liyema was a skirt chaser from the village gossips. She then encouraged you to flaunt what she gave you to charm him into sleeping with him. For all we know she's been giving you fertility herbs since she has access to love potions too" Portia laughed out.

Portia: "Don't be crazy. You watch too many movies"

Vuvu: "If you say so, chomee" she

said with a naughty smirk "No, babe whatever you did I don't judge at all. A girl had got to do what a girl had got to do" she added.

Portia: "Let me go pee before you talk more nonsense" she stood.

Abo was at Lungi's with her father to go play with Cwenga and Zoë. There was a knock on the door and Vuvu went to open.

When she saw its Liyema she put on a charming smile.

Liyema: "I'm here to pick Portia up. She said that I must pass by here before going home. Is she

still here?" he looked over her.

Vuvu: "Come in" she held his hand and led him inside. Abo didn't want to go home so Lungile said she can sleep over. Vuvu didn't let go of Liyema's hand and they shared a brief moment there before he cleared his throat.

Liyema: "So is Portia here?" he looked around.

Vuvu: "She's in the bathroom" she smiled "Do you trust her?" she asked him.

Liyema: "I did pay lobola for her didn't I?"

Vuvu: "I heard that you are a

man who wants a big family.

What will happen if Portia can't give you your heart's desires?"

she asked in a flirty tone while her finger glided over his chest.

Liyema: "Why wouldn't she be able to?" Vuvu shrugged.

Vuvu: "Things happen" she stood so close he could feel her breasts pressing against him "If she can't then you could always take a second wife. A little bird told me that you considered it once upon a time" she smiled and he did too.

Liyema: "I have a feeling you have someone in mind to be that

second wife" he flirted back.

Vuvu: "No, I don't but I would give the right man the number of children that he wants" she leaned forward and Liyema had to do everything in his power to not meet her face halfway.

Liyema: "Would you mind sharing him?" Vuvu shook her head slowly.

Vuvu: "As long as he knows that I deserve his time too" she went in for a kiss when she saw that he was still doubting. Liyema always thought she was an attractive woman but he never thought about approaching her

because he didn't want to cheat again and lose another woman nor did he want to be known as a serial cheater. Yet there he was kissing his fiancée's friend while she was just next door in the other room. He got tired of her leading so he gripped her behind tight making her moan softly.

The moment felt perfect for both until they heard the toilet flush.

Liyema moved back quickly and wiped his lips of any proof.

Liyema: "What the hell did you do that for?"

Vuvu: "You weren't complaining".

Portia walked out of the bathroom and Liyema couldn't even look at her but Vuvu acted like nothing happened.

Portia: "Oh hi, baby" she kissed him. Vuvu had no lip gloss on so he had no traces of the kiss on his lips "She decided to sleep over?" she smiled.

Liyema: "You know her too well" he shook his head "Let's go" he opened the door.

Vuvu: "Your man is great company, chomee. The things that come out of that mouth" she smiled.

Portia: "He's funny when he likes.

I'll see you some other time,
chomee" she took her bag "Let's
go, babe" she said after hugging
Vuvu.

Vuvu: "Bye guys. You guys should
come over for dinner. If I knew
Liyema was not as boring as he
looks, I'd have invited him long
ago to come with you" Portia
laughed.

Portia: "Invite Dave, we'll make
it a double date"

Vuvu: "We broke up"

Portia: "Oh no why didn't you say
so?"

Vuvu: "I didn't want to dampen

your mood. I'll tell you on
WhatsApp later on"

Liyema: "I'm tired, Portia. You
guys can talk some other time.
Let's go please" he pulled her to
the door.

Portia: "I love you" she hugged
Vuvu briefly.

Vuvu: "I love you more" she
winked at Liyema while hugging
Portia. Vuvu watched them close
the door behind them. She didn't
mind being Liyema's second wife.
All she wanted was the security
that he would surely provide.
Should Liyema fall for her, she'd

do anything to make him realize that he needed a woman like her in his life. She sent her boyfriend Dave a text saying that it was over. She didn't feel that he could give her what she needed. She didn't care whether Liyema married her out of community of property or not because should he agree to be hers and they reach marriage she'd never divorce him. 

S2-INSERT 75 (NOT EDITED)

Bandile had been trying to call

Kwanele but she didn't take his calls and the death stares he got from Daniel around campus was not helping in any way. Their friends were also torn between the two but most agreed that Bandile broke a code by dating his friend's sister. He knew that Kwanele was back to school so if he wanted to talk to her, he'd have to go to Grahamstown. Bandile felt he needed some advice before going to see Kwanele so he dialed Tamkhulu's number.

Tamkhulu: "Hlubi" he said with a

smile after seeing it was Bandile.

Bandile: "Hello, Tamkhulu" he brushed his knee "How are you all that side?" he asked.

Tamkhulu: "We are good, mzukulu. How are you?"

Bandile: "Eish" he continued to rub his knee "I am not okay at all, Tamkhulu" Tamkhulu put his book down and shifted forward in his chair.

Tamkhulu: "What seems to be the matter?"

Bandile: "Eish, Tamkhulu I messed up and I do not know how to fix things" he stood and walked

from one side of the room to the other telling Tamkhulu what happened. Tamkhulu excused himself because he didn't want anyone knowing what Bandile was sharing with him in confidence "So I don't know what to do now and you're the first person I felt would help me" he concluded his story.

Tamkhulu: "It's good that you realize that you messed up. Let us first talk about your relationship with Bathandiwe"

Bandile: "It's non-existent
Tamkhulu and Kwanele just

doesn't want to get that through her stubborn mind" he sounded frustrated.

Tamkhulu: "Would you have gotten it through yours had the tables been turned?" Bandile shut his eyes.

Bandile: "No, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "So why do you expect her to?" Bandile didn't have the answer to the question "I do not know why you children feel so comfortable with sending each other images of your bodies. Just look where it landed Amahle.

Everything needs to be sexualized

in your generation for it to find validity. This young girl did good by dumping you"

Bandile: "Hawu, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "Don't hawu me. You have images of another woman on your phone that were only meant for your eyes and instead of telling her you are in a relationship you allowed her to send more"

Bandile: "But I blocked her and deleted the images"

Tamkhulu: "Only because you were caught"

Bandile: "Okay you're right. Please tell me how to fix things then. I

really like this one, Tamkhulu"
Tamkhulu: "Prove to her in action that you are sorry and never repeat what you did again. You are a young man so it's normal for you to not know where your priorities lie but if you like someone you make sure that they are at the top of those. I wouldn't want my sister with someone who lusts after another girl either. Go show this young lady you are sorry but if you know that your apology is meaningless then let the poor young soul focus on her studies rather than a boy

who doesn't know where to put her in his life. You are either with Bathandiwe, with Kwanele, without neither of them or you can be a cheat and be with them all"

Bandile: "I don't want to be with Bathandiwe. I don't want to cheat on Kwanele and I don't want to lose her either"

Tamkhulu: "Good now go tell her that and mean it"

Bandile: "I was actually hoping you'll say what I did was normal for a man my age"

Tamkhulu: "Different generations

have different norms. I don't find you having such images on your person as normal because it is disrespectful to the girl"

Bandile: "But she sent it"

Tamkhulu: "Because she believed that it is the only way to lure you back in and you made her believe it's that way by not telling her to stop. Maybe she would have done that with another boy too but you had power to not involve yourself. If you'll entertain other girls tell Kwanele so she'll know what she's getting herself into. Now you went and gave the

brother leverage to break you up". Bandile listened to Tamkhulu speak until they ended the call. He sat for a long while battling with what popped into mind after his call with Tamkhulu but he stood and went out to do it anyway. He was not sure how he'd be received but he had to go try. He got on a taxi to Kwanele's home to see her parents. He decided that the only way Kwanele wouldn't worry about Daniel was to tell their parents about their relationship and ask for blessings from the parents. He knew it was not

what Tamkhulu meant by proving to Kwanele he wanted to be with her but he felt it was the right thing to do. He indeed found Mr and Mrs Desha at home watching TV and Mrs Desha was baking.

Mrs Desha: "Bandile, hi" she smiled and went to hug him "We don't know you anymore, ndoda the way you're so scarce" she added.

Mr Desha: "She asked Daniel about you last night. So good thing you came so she'd see that you're still alive" Bandile laughed "Daniel is not here, my boy and he didn't say if he'll even be back" he

added.

Bandile: "I'm actually here to talk to the two of you, Tat'Desha" he rubbed his palms together nervously. Mr Desha gestured that he sit down and Bandile went to sit. The TV volume was lowered and Mrs Desha also sat besides her husband.

Mr Desha: "We are all ears" he looked at Bandile making the young man more nervous than ever.

Bandile: "Uhm..." he cleared his throat "Uhm... I first want to tell you two that what I'm about

to ask is not from a place of disrespect but respect for all involved. Tat'Desha and Ma Desha, I have come to ask you for your blessings to date your daughter Kwanele" he said in a shaky voice before taking a deep breath. Mr Desha straightened in his chair more and looked at his wife who didn't look shocked at all. Mr Desha: "This is unusual" he switched the TV off "we hear you, Bandile but what does Kwanele say? We can't give blessing to you when the one person who should want to be

with you isn't even aware of your liking to her" he added.

Mrs Desha: "She is aware, Taka Kwanele. They have been seeing each other for a little while now" she said softly while looking at the glass table in front of them. Her husband's eyes shot open as it was news to him.

Mr Desha: "You already went ahead and courted her without our blessing. So why do you suddenly feel you need them when you've been doing perfectly fine without?"

Bandile: "Because Daniel found out

about us and he didn't like it. So I feel had I told him before approaching Kwanele things would have been much better"

Mr Desha: "Kwanele is a young adult. Yes, as her father I don't want her near boys while at school but I know that I can't keep her from dating. I'm going to ask you this and I'll ask you once. What's the reason why Daniel doesn't want you to be with his sister? As your friend I imagine he knows things about you that neither we nor Kwanele know" Bandile's heart skipped a

beat.

Bandile: "I have recently made a mistake. An ex-girlfriend contacted me and I didn't block her means to communicate with me. Daniel found that out and told Kwanele. Now she thinks that I am cheating"

Mr Desha: "It sounds to me like they are right"

Mrs Desha: "You can't just assume that without knowing the full story, Taka Kwanele. He's a decent boy so it's understandable that girls will regret letting him go. It doesn't

mean that he is a cheat. He is far better for Kwanele than her last boyfriend who nearly led my daughter into a cult"

Mr Desha: "I'm not going to involve myself in children's matters. I don't have a problem with Kwanele dating you but the only blessings you'll get from me is if you someday send your uncles here. There is nothing to bless because you children's relationship end soon after starting. If Kwanele wants to get to know you then it's her choice to make. But don't you dare hurt my child,

Bandile" he pointed a finger at Bandile "Don't you dare do anything that is going to distract her from her studies. If I feel like you are not an encouragement to her then I'll cut this thing you two have short very fast. Don't you dare impregnate my daughter either because her future is too bright to be derailed by some big no matter how decent you are. I'm not going to get involved in the matter of an ex and Daniel not approving. But if I find you are causing my daughter pain, you'll know what real pain is" he

warned.

Bandile: "I hear you, Tat'Desha"
he nodded.

Mrs Desha: "Well I give you two blessings for all I know you are my future son in law" she smiled "Kwanele tells me everything so I know about what has been going on. It was brave of you to come and face her father" she laughed softly before brushing her husband's shoulder.

Mr Desha: "Blessings go with lobola not dating" he switched the TV back on.

Mrs Desha: "Would you like to stay

for juice and freshly baked muffins?" she smiled. Bandile looked at Mr Desha nervously. Mr Desha: "I hope you are not waiting on my blessing to accept my wife's offer, Bandile" he said with his eyes still glued to the TV screen.

Bandile: "I'd like that very much, Ma" he accepted the invite.

Mr Desha: "Do you know anything about baseball?"

Bandile: "No, Ta" he looked at the screen. Mr Desha shared the basics of the game with Bandile as they waited for their muffins.

Meanwhile Zintle who is Kwanele's young cousin sent Kwanele a video she took from a secret spot about the conversation Bandile had with the Deshas. Kwanele watched with a hand over her hand and widened eyes as her boyfriend asked her parents for blessings to date her. She was not shocked by their response because it was typical of her parents to be a little open minded as it helped them have a better relationship with their children. Kwanele called Zintle.

Kwanele: "Zee, where is he now?"

Zee: "In the lounge with Malume watching baseball while eating your mom's muffins" the teen let out a soft laugh.

Kwanele: "What on earth was he thinking? He didn't even tell them the real reason why Daniel flipped out. He should have said it's because he has nude pictures of other girls" Zee rolled her eyes.

Zee: "Kwanele it's not like he's cheating. I have never heard of a boy ask permission to date a girl from her parents. It all happens in movies yet I just witnessed it live and from real people. He really

loves you this guy" she said with certainty.

Kwanele: "Well he has stopped calling" she said softly in a bear disappointed tone.

Zee: "Cuz, if you don't want him and show just how much you don't want him he's obviously going to get tired. And guess what? Girls like his ex will snatch him up".

Kwanele closed her eyes.

Kwanele: "Yho mntase and I miss him so much" she laid on her back.

Zee: "Tell him" she said with excitement.

Kwanele: "You're too young. You

won't understand"

Zee: "I'm almost eighteen" she rolled her eyes again "what I understand is that you are letting Daniel who is the player of all players dictate to you how you handle this. My Kwanele is not so easily controlled because she makes up her own mind" Kwanele laughed.

Kwanele: "So you think I should call him?"

Zee: "Yeah but obviously don't tell him you know. Let him be the one to tell you"

Kwanele: "Okay let me call him"

Zee screamed in excitement and Kwanele laughed before ending the call. Bandile excused himself when he saw that it's Kwanele calling.

Bandile: "Baby" said with a smile.

Kwanele: "Hi" she didn't know what to say.

Bandile: "I miss you, Anele" he walked further away from the door.

Kwanele: "You hurt me, Andile" she said softly.

Bandile: "And I'm sorry. So sorry I'm at your parents' house asking for their blessing to continue

dating you"

Kwanele: "Who says I'll give you another chance?"

Bandile: "I ask that you give me another chance please. I know that I hurt you but I really didn't keep those pictures because I want her back. I don't know why I kept them but I now know how wrong it was"

Kwanele: "I've got a confession to make. My ex also contacted me a few days after we started dating. He sent me old pictures of us to remind me of how "perfect" we were for each other. But I

blocked him right away, Andile because I had you in my life. To learn you didn't think about me as I did about you is what hurt me most. I can't be in a relationship with an inconsiderate person...not again"

Bandile: "I hear you, baby and I'm sorry. Can I come visit you so we can talk face to face?"

Kwanele: "How will you get here?"

Bandile: "I'll take a taxi"

Kwanele: "Where will you sleep because you might only get a taxi back the following day"

Bandile: "I'll hike"

Kwanele: "No" she didn't like hiking whether it was a man or woman doing it because she lost a cousin who went hiking never to return again and he was male.

Bandile: "I'm sure there are cheap places to stay in. So can I come please? I don't think this is something to talk over the phone"

Kwanele: "Okay let me know when you can come" Bandile smiled.

Bandile: "Will do"

Kwanele: "Andile"

Bandile: "Anele"

Kwanele: "I miss you too, babe"

she said softly.

Bandile: "I'll see you soon then we'll talk properly. I love you"

Kwanele: "I love you too but it doesn't mean that I've forgiven you"

Bandile: "I know". They spoke briefly before ending the call.

Kwanele got a call from her mother to tell her what had happened. She knew her mother adored Bandile because she claimed he was different from all of Daniels friends. So when Kwanele told her mother about Bandile, she could see that her

mother was happy about the pair. Kwanele also knew that with the parents knowing there was nothing Daniel could do to stand in their way. She just hoped that Bandile wouldn't make her feel like a fool again. She looked forward to seeing him because the past few days of not talking to him were foreign and hell as they've spoken every day since they met. Bandile didn't have money because he borrowed his to Bukhosi who wanted to take Ivi out for the weekend. He didn't know how he'd get to Grahamstown town but he

knew that he had to make a plan if he wanted to solve things with Kwanele.

One thing that Ntombi didn't miss about being married was being a makoti. Especially when the entire family gathered because it meant waking up early in the morning. She got up slowly to not wake Lefa up next to her. Lefa: "Baby" he was not deeply asleep as she thought he was. Ntombi: "Hi, sthandwa sam" she whispered before switching the light on. Lefa sat up on the bed.

Lefa: "Where are you going?" he looked at his watch "It's 4am, Nana" he looked at her after rubbing his eyes.

Ntombi: "There are a few things I've got to get started on"

Lefa: "Baby, if you go make breakfast now it's going to get cold and no one will want to eat it. We both came to bed late at night so I know you're still tired. Let's get one more hour of sleep at least. We'll both get up in an hour"

Ntombi: "Lefa, I don't want to embarrass myself in front of your

family"

Lefa: "It's not going to happen. Please come back to bed. We'll wake up in an hour. It's practically still night. I don't remember you waking up so early when we slept at my parents"

Ntombi: "That's different"

Lefa: "It shouldn't be. Come back to bed, you're tired" he watched her switch the light off and walk back to the bed. Ntombi didn't want to give Hazel and her friends something to look down on where she's concerned but she really needed the extra sleep

after they both went to bed past midnight due to family meetings not ending. The second she felt her husband's arm around her she dozed off and was woken up by the sound of people moving about on the other side of the door. The sun was out and everyone was clearly up already and even Lefa was not next to her. There was a bucket of water in the room and also a full kettle with a medium sized plastic wash basin. Ntombi quickly put the kettle on and made up the bed while waiting for it to finish booking. She switched

it off before it could automatically do so and poured the steamy water in the basin before mixing it with cold water. She washed like one who was late for a very important meeting when in fact she didn't want Lefa's family thinking that she was lazy.

There was a knock on the door.

Nolu: "Siba, it's me Noluthando"

Ntombi: "Come in" she covered herself with a blanket and

watched the door open and close

quickly "I know that we agreed on

me making breakfast and I'm

sorry that I overslept" she said

to Nolu while continuing to get ready.

Nolu: "It's okay. I sorted everything out. When asked, you tell them that you had morning sickness all night hence you overslept. I told them that. You know how those old woman are when a makoti wakes up late"

Ntombi: "Thank you so much"

Nolu: "Ma asked me to come check if you are okay"

Ntombi: "Aside from wanting to strangle your brother in law for not waking me up I'm good thanks" Nolu laughed.

Nolu: "Men see us as sick when we're pregnant, well some anyway so he didn't want to disturb your rest. Let me help you with that" she helped Ntombikayise with the towel that had to go over her upper body.

Ntombi: "Thanks, Nolu" she smiled.

Nolu: "You just go to the kitchen and blend in with the many women there. No one will know that you've only just gotten up".

Ntombi went to the toilet to throw her water out and quickly brushed her teeth. There were a

lot of people in the house. From family down to neighbours and mourners from far.

Xoliswa: "Finally Lefa's makoti decided to stop being sleeping beauty and join the hard workers" Hazel's sister said as soon as Ntombi walked inside the kitchen. When the other women laughed Ntombi felt like hiding. She greeted and found something to do "I'm sure in your previous marriage your in laws had servants who did everything hence you are such a spoiled makoti" she said sarcastically "It

seems Sisi was right about you"
she added.

Nolu: "But Makhulu, I did say
that Sibabalwe has been sick all
night" she tried to defend
Ntombi.

Xoliswa: "Nonsense, she's not the
first nor last woman to be
pregnant. She's just spoiled
that's all there is to it. Here ke,
my girl we don't have money to
pay servants so you as a makoti
must do your bit. You really
embarrassed your husband shame
that much I can tell you". Ntombi
was biting her tongue to not say

what was on her mind. Xoliswa seemed worse than Hazel and because they were in their territory, they felt they could get away with bullying. Ntombi decided to choose her battles and because the women around were neighbours of the Gwala women she decided to keep quiet to not have her words twisted.

Ntombi: "Did you serve the mageu that I started on yesterday, Nolu?"

Nolu: "It was here. I didn't want to disturb your process fearing it'll ruin your hard work so I left

it here" she went to check.

Simanye: "They had me throw it out because they said that it was too sour due to the yeast that you added" said Lefa's cousin's wife. .

Ntombi: "But I didn't add any yeast in it. Did you guys even taste it or did you just throw it out because it's made by me?" she started to feel very frustrated because she went to bed late because she was preparing it since her father in law said he craved mageu.

Xoliswa: "Don't raise your voice at

us, Sibabalwe. We are not your peers. We didn't have to taste it because the second I opened those buckets my nostrils started to burn. I was not about to poison my brother because of you. You added yeast"

Ntombi: "I didn't add any yeast in there. I don't even bake bread with yeast" her eyebrows drew together. Bonolo walked in.

Bonolo: "Siba, please come and help me carry one of the pots outside" she could see that Ntombi was furious and anyone whose hours of work was just thrown down the

drain literally would have been. Ntombi went out following behind her mother in law "I could hear your voice all the way from here. What's going on?" she asked Ntombi when they reached the outside. Ntombi told her what happened "And that, my girl is the reason why I decided to be a better mother in law. Pity you guys occasionally have to come here to receive such treatment. Rather help me out here. Please stir that meat pot for me. It's meat that will be eaten for lunch. This family loves their meat" she

laughed softly but Ntombi didn't. Ntombi took the stirring stick and did as asked. The force that she used showed how angry she was. "I've come to learn that it's best to be outside than in. The inside squad only know how to gossip and maybe that's why Nolu fits in so well with them. So tomorrow, you rather come straight here. Here we just sing and taste meat all day"

Ntombikayise laughed. "Have you had breakfast?" Ntombikayise shook her head.

Ntombi: "I lost my appetite, Ma"

she closed the pot and blinked a few times as the smoke started to burn her eyes.

Bonolo: "No, no, Sibabalwe. You must remember that you are now sharing that body with someone else. Take a few roasted buns but be careful they are still hot. Let me go get some cheese for you" she added.

Ntombi: "I'll eat them dry, Ma it's okay and thank you" she took two of the fresh buns and ate. The Elephants gave her hassles in the beginning but when Makhulu Elephant put everyone in

their place Ntombikayise got the respect she deserved. Hazel was the matriarch in the Gwala family so Ntombi knew that she was not going to do the same so she knew that she wouldn't be liked by most of Lefa's family but at least she had her mother in law by her side and Nolu too, in a way. Lefa and the other men were out helping with the funeral arrangements so Ntombi didn't see him for the entire morning but he did call to say where he was. Ntombi helped the older women with whatever as to

prevent that she goes inside where the bitter people were. One hardly gets to see their spouse during big family gatherings and Ntombi was not surprised that she only saw Lefa dressed in a blue overall in passing. Makhulu and Tamkhulu would come with Hlompho and the boys with Ntombi's car the day before the funeral and Ntombi wished she'd done the same. She was careful about what she ate and drank as advised by Makhulu and it was exhausting. She shouldn't have had to protect a

Gwala baby from the Gwalas but Hazel's attempt at making her miscarriage made her see just how much she was disliked.

Ntombikayise feared her daughter would be an outcast too in the family someday. Finally the day and its work had come to an end so Ntombi could go take a proper bath before going to bed.

Lefa: "Baby" he called out in the dark as they laid in bed.

Ntombi: "Mmm?"

Lefa: "Why are you so restless?"

Ntombi: "Hmmm?"

Lefa: "The tossing and turning,

Siba. What's going on?" turned to hold her.

Ntombi: "It's nothing. I'm just craving something so I can't sleep" Lefa laughed softly.

Lefa: "Do we have whatever that is in the house?"

Ntombi: "We do but I'm afraid to go to the kitchen and bump into someone who will say I finish food"

Lefa: "You and your husband bought a huge portion of that food so I think it's only right you eat it" he kissed her "I've missed you. You've been scarce lately"

Ntombi smiled before giving him a passionate kiss.

Ntombi: "So will you go get me a vetkoek with jam from the kitchen?"

Lefa: "If it'll make you sleep better, yes. I do not know who you're afraid of but I'm certain there's no one there. Come let's go"

Ntombi: "No, I'm already not in their good books by sleeping until late. I swear had your mom not rescued me I'd have gotten reminded of that all day" she said softly.

Lefa: "By who so I'll go deal with them"

Ntombi: "No one" she shook her head. She didn't want to stir up trouble.

Lefa: "So Tata waited to taste your mageu after I bragged like a very proud husband that no one makes mageu like my wife does"

Ntombi: "I'll make it for him when we are back home. There are too many people here and it's a lot of work to do it"

Lefa: "I understand" he kissed her cheek "Let me go be a good daddy to be and get you your

vetkoek with jam" he got up.

Ntombi: "Baby, leave it" he switched the light on.

Lefa: "I'm up already" he opened the door and closed it again after existing. Lefa opened few containers before he found what he was looking for. He grabbed two of the biggest vetkoek the could find and put them on a plate before taking the jam out of the fridge.

Hazel: "Lefa, I thought it's the children stealing biscuits again." she walked into the kitchen "why are you taking food so late at

night? Didn't you eat?" she looked at the contents in his hands.

Lefa: "I did but I clearly can never have enough" he lied. He didn't want to listen to Hazel tell him that it's not a man's place to carry food around for a woman.

Hazel: "I didn't like what happened this morning, Lefa.

When people asked to see the new Makoti we had to tell them that she can't come out yet because she was sleeping. It reflects badly on you. Even your mother who is another generation of makoti knows to not get up after

sunrise"

Lefa: "Sibabalwe actually got up at 4 this morning, Makhulu. Had I not been the one to convince her to sleep a bit longer she'd had been up long before the roosters too"

Hazel: "Of course you will take her side. Even that food I know it's for her because you don't eat jam. It seems this woman has slapped you with a dirty panty across the face so you are weak"

Lefa: "Goodnight, Makhulu" he walked pass her to head back to the bedroom.

Ntombi: "Did you run into anyone?"

Lefa: "Nope everyone is on bed just as I said" he kissed her before giving her her food. It was just bread with jam but to Ntombi it tasted like something out of the world. She thanked her husband again after eating and could finally sleep. She was counting the days until they could return back home.

Liyema has been trying to not think about what happened between him and Portia's friend. The guilt was familiar as he felt

it when he cheated on Ntombi but the excitement once again overpowered the guilt making him fight hard to not act on it. When Vuvu opened her door after he knocked on it for a while he knew that he failed. Her real name was Nomvula and she was a beauty. He was sure to do a background check on her because he learned his lesson with the Elaine saga. He was happy to find that she has always been Nomvula, a young girl who grew up in Humansdorp. Vuvu: "Hi" she smiled before holding his hand to lead him inside.

Liyema: "Hi" he turned to look at her "I've come here to get Portia's charger" he lied.

Vuvu: "I don't recall she ever bringing her own charger when visiting and I imagine her man would be able to buy her a thousand more rather than run after one old charger" she closed the door "Unless it's not the charger he's running after" she met him where he stood.

Liyema: "Why are you doing this to your friend?"

Vuvu: "Who owes her more loyalty between the two of us?" she

raised a brow.

Liyema: "I've got to go" he headed for the door but she held his arm. He was stronger than her so he could easily take his arm back and continue to walk but instead he turned around as though she had much more power over him. They kissed once again and Liyema knew that it was no longer a mistake but a choice that he made. He wanted to kiss her and he did. There was a small table that had a plastic plant on it and the plant was pushed by Liyema to the floor so he'd put

Vuvu on the table. The thin straps of her top were soon parted with her arms revealing her firm breasts. Liyema just took a moment to hold them both in his hands loving the feel of them. They were full and drove him crazy. Vuvu was not a shy girl so she too explored his body as he did hers by unbuckling his belt to get a feel of what was beneath the jeans that he wore. When she got up from the table and lowered in front of him Liyema waited in anticipation to see what she'll do. She freed his proud

manhood from its restraints and he shut his eyes when he felt her warm tongue over the tip. Portia was one to overshare with friends so she'd sometimes share intimate details too. Vuvu knew that she didn't like to orally pleasure a man and that Liyema had pleaded with her but Portia was just not into it. Vuvu decided to give Liyema what she knew he doesn't get at home and the grunting and occasional swearing between gritted teeth told her that he was in his little pleasure paradise as his hand brushed the

back of her head while the other was against the wall to hold his balance. The moment lasted only a short while before Liyema reached his edge not remembering the last time a woman gave his body so much attention. He recovered quickly and soon had her against the wall as the two of them went to a level of betrayal against Portia they could never undo. At least he remembered to use protection in all the lustful rounds they shared.

Vuvu: "Will I see you again?" she asked as she watched him get up

to get dressed.

Liyema: "Do you want to?" he turned to face her. She got up and stood on the couch before reaching for him. He instinctively held her firm as her legs clung around him.

Vuvu: "I want to have more of what happened today. It's exciting and thinking about it makes me horny all over again" they kissed.

Liyema: "We can't do this to Portia, Vuvu" the first sensible thing he said since arriving at her place but it was too late.

Vuvu: "I won't tell if you don't" she promised "Please I can't remember the day a man knew what to do with my body without me giving him instructions" they both laughed.

Liyema: "So I'm your sex doll?"

Vuvu: "You can be whatever you want to be just don't stop giving me all of this" her finger glided over his chest.

Liyema: "I've got to get going. Portia and I have a date night"

Vuvu: "Okay have fun" she lowered her legs to stand.

Liyema: "What's the catch?"

Usually women are all emotional when a man says that though they know they are a side"

Vuvu: "I'm not insecure. Go have fun with Portia" she smiled before he watched her pick her clothes up.

Liyema: "Do you have a boyfriend?"

Vuvu: "I hope you're not going to tell me to dump him and be loyal to a man who is taken" they both laughed.

Liyema: "I'm just wondering if there's a lucky man who gets to get spoiled with such fire

often" Vuvu laughed.

Vuvu: "Come back soon and I'll give you more" Liyema started to get dressed "I have a boyfriend" she lied "I've got to be secure too as you are. This is just hot fun" she licked his lower lip before sucking at it.

Liyema: "Are you trying to keep me here?" he bit his bottom lip after she released it.

Vuvu: "Not me, but him" she pointed to his pants and they both laughed "Tell Portia that I can't find her charger" Liyema gave her a look that she couldn't

even interpret.

Liyema: "I don't like sharing you know" he raised a brow.

Vuvu: "Well tough luck. Nothing you have to offer me is enough to make me dump my boyfriend" she went to open the door. She waited for him to finish getting dressed and watched him walk towards her. His hand held her lower back as he drew her closer for a kiss.

Liyema: "Can I come help you look for that charger?" vuvu laughed.

Vuvu: "With those extra set of eyes of yours, I'm sure that we'll

find it next time. I'm glad my G-spot was what you found today though" she said seductively.

Liyema: "Do you always speak your mind like that?" she nodded "I like it" he added.

Vuvu: "You'll be late for date night"

Liyema: "Bye" he said in a charming voice.

Vuvu: "See you" she blushed. When Liyema got to his car he realised that his cheating on Ntombi had nothing to do with what she did or didn't do but everything to do with something that was deep

within him. He had a lust that he didn't know how to control and though he knew what the consequences of it coming out would be, he felt he had to see her again. He went home to get ready for his date night. He found his mother there already as she'd watch Abo for the night.

Portia: "Did he say he'll buy your shares?" she asked as they went out the door.

Liyema: "What?"

Portia: "Mr Lambatha. You said he was interested in your shares and that the only thing keeping

us here was the sales of your shares" she reminded him.

Liyema: "He offered little money, baby. I have a feeling we'll have to be here for a while" Portia nodded "You're beautiful" he watched her smile. He remembered Dali saying a garden should be watered so he planned to love Portia the same way unlike with Ntombi where he slacks off "I don't think you must hang out with Vuvu anymore, Portia" he warned.

Portia: "Why does it seem you hate all my friends?"

Liyema: "You just can't choose them, babe. Had Ntombi not been in Alu's circle, I'd have advised you join that friendship"

Portia: "My friends back home are much better. I know the ones here are not my close friends but I've got to have a life outside of you"

Liyema: "True but good company builds a person. Do you know anyone who is in a polygamy marriage?"

Portia: "Nope and I don't think that I want to"

Liyema: "Okay let's talk about us

and only us tonight. How are the wedding arrangements coming along?" he smiled.

Portia: "Great. Your mom is also coming on board now so I'm really excited. I really look forward to our fairy-tale, baby" he leaned closer when the robot were still red and she met him halfway with a kiss.

Liyema: "I do too" the car started to move again. "So what would you have chosen had you had the option to share your fairy-tale with another woman and not having one at all" Portia

looked at him.

Portia: "I don't like either of those options so let's rather not even talk about it. What's with the weird questions?"

Liyema: "Things I discussed during small talk with Lambatha"

Portia: "It doesn't sound like small talk to me. It's a very sensitive and deep conversation to have. I hope you didn't go to the man telling him how bad polygamy is and that's why he didn't want to buy your shares. I know how judgmental you can get sometimes" Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "I know how to separate business from personal issues. I don't care if the man wants another woman"

Portia: "Good because it's his life and he can do with it whatever he pleases. I guess the wife is in for the shock of her life" she shook her head. They finally arrived at their destination.

Their plans to move would not happen overnight as there were still too many things to get over with. Liyema's body was there but his mind was elsewhere, and Portia didn't question him as she

assumed it's the stress of the shares that had him so absent minded. Vuvu decided that she is not going to bombard him with "I wish you were here" texts because she wanted him to be the one to return and her trick worked like a charm because he sent her a text asking her what she was doing. When she replied that she was with her boyfriend he didn't like the idea too much and it spoiled his entire night. He was having difficulty being monogamous and he wondered how Portia would react when she

found out. Portia on the other hand was soon to learn that not everyone who offers you a shoulder to cry on is your friend. Some use your tears to advance their own agenda. ❤️

S2-INSERT 76 (NOT EDITED)

It was the day of the burial and the day that Ntombi has been waiting for since arriving because it meant they'd soon be going back home. Everyone in the house got up early to get ready but the makotis woke up before anyone else. Ntombi decided she'd be part

of the team of women who would make breakfast so she got up super early not even Lefa heard her get up. Usually the elderly liked to have tea served with freshly baked scones so Ntombi went to put on the urn. It was still dark but the daughter in laws of tge family were up besides the older generation of makotis such as Bonolo.

Hazel: "Hey, leave that...leave it" all the ladies turned to see who she was talking to and it was clear by how she pushed Ntombi away from the treys that had

cups "Noluthando and Lilitha, come and make the tea please" she looked at the other makotis who froze on the spot.

Lilitha: "Makhulu, we have delegated amongst each other as to who does what last night.

Ntombi is on tea duty this morning" said another new addition to the family who had married Lefa's cousin a few months ago.

Hazel: "I said come and make this tea" she ordered "Do you think I'll drink tea made by a witch's granddaughter?" she wore a look

of disgust. Ntombi was so shocked her mind was blank.

Nolu: "Makhulu you can't say that" she said softly nearly fearful.

Hazel: "This is my father's house and it's my brother's burial or do you want me to also have a burial next week?"

Xoliswa: "We'll have our breakfast tomorrow with everyone standing and doing nothing" she went to stand next to her older sister.

Lefa's grandfather was a known lady's man so Xoliswa was one of the children that came from his

extra marital activities. She was much younger than Hazel but as mean. Ntombi heard people say they both took after their grandmother with the rudeness. Hazel: "I was telling them to not let this one...what's her name? she pointed at Ntombi

"Nomnyamazane or whatever make us tea. Remember I told you about what her grandmother said to me?" Xoliswa nodded

"Imagine what her grandmother gave her when they saw each other yesterday. Yho I don't want to follow my brother so

soon" she shook her head.

Ntombi: "What's your problem with me?" she looked at Hazel after the shock of the accusations faded.

Xokiswa: "Hey have you not heard what my sister said what her problem with you is? she clapped a few times in front of Ntombi's face and Ntombi pushed her hands away "Yho where's Lefa so he can see that his wife is trying to hit me?" she clapped once before putting her hands on her hip.

Hazel: "Get out of my mother's

kitchen" she waved her hand about to dismiss Ntombi "Lilitha rinse all these cups before putting in water. Last time I had tea in this one's cups I ended up on hospital" she added.

Ntombi: "Tell them why you ended up in hospital. Tell them that it's because the witch between us is you. You wanted to poison me but God made sure you taste your own medicine. You have absolutely no shame for such an old wrinkled person"

Nolu: "Sibabalwe, please don't make things worse, Sisi" she

pleaded.

Xoliswa: "No, let her show her true colours. Let her husband wake up and see her true colours. You don't talk to my big sister like that. Pregnant or not I'll slap you across that ugly face"

Ntombi: "You define the world ugly, Sisi not me"

Hazel: "I do not want her anywhere near the pots. I'm tired of pretending that I like this woman"

Ntombi: "Then show just how much you hate me in my husband's presence too. You seem to be able

to pretend well when he's around. Afraid he'll stop sending that money monthly?" Xoliswa clapped a few times once again.

Xoliswa: "Someone get this woman out of my face before I explode" she walked a distance. Ntombi put the sugar basin she had in hand on one of the tables and went out the main house to the bedroom she and Lefa were accommodated in. Makhulu, Tamkhulu and the kids were at a house not so far from Lefa's home.

Nolu: "That was very cold,

Makhulu. She is a good person"

Xoliswa: "You can follow, my early"
she pointed out. Xoliswa and Hazel
went to get ready.

Lilitha: "If they can do that to
her then they can do it to us.

Let's all as makotis not do
anything today in support of
Sibabalwe" the others looked
down.

Usakhe: "That is going to make
the family the laughingstock of
the village. Sibabalwe shouldn't
have talked back like that. A
makoti must be submissive to get
family in law"

Lilitha: "All I hear is "I'm a coward". Had some of you were as strong as you pretend to be then we'd have stood in solidarity with another daughter in law. This entire funeral would have been halted until they hear us and get the women in this family to treat us with respect"

Nolu: "They've treated us with respect"

Lilitha: "Oh please, miss favourite. Miss "if this family were witches you'd be one too to impress them". Nolu took offence.
Simthandile: "This feminism of

yours makes you respect culture. Women like you and Sibabalwe make it difficult for the in laws to like you because you talk back when elders talk to you"

Lilitha: "Women like us refuse to be oppressed in the name of culture. I have no problem with doing makoti duties so don't say that I hate culture. I hate the people who lack respect and then call it culture. Let me go help my husband get ready. He is after all my number one priority in this family" she walked out to the dark. The others were not brave

for many reasons. Some didn't want to embarrass their husbands. Some didn't want to turn a day of mourning into drama. Some didn't want to humiliate their parents and others were just plain afraid that Hazel would make their lives in the family a living hell. But Lilitha didn't care one bit about that. Ntombi woke Lefa up and could see just how tired he still was. He stretched his arms out before sitting up.

Ntombi: "Baby, get ready now before the house gets filled with

people. I ironed your shirt last night so just go and brush your teeth and bath. Makhulu will make sure Hlompho is ready" she looked at him.

Lefa: "Good morning to you too, sthandwa sam" he smiled and Ntombi did too. She went to kiss him in greeting "I really hope that everything will go smoothly today because the man whom we'll lay to rest deserves it" he got up from the bed.

Ntombi: "Lefa" she said softly "I don't feel welcome here, baby" she added more quietly.

Lefa: "I doubt it, baby. It's just that your first visit is during a time of mourning. Had it been during happier circumstances you'd have felt differently" he kissed her cheek.

Ntombi: "It has nothing to do with that. Your grandmother banned me from the kitchen just now" she hated that he laughed "You're laughing so you don't care clearly" she said while making up the bed.

Lefa: "I'm sorry for laughing" he held her tight "I'm sure that she has a reason. There's quite a big

number of daughters in law in this family. Maybe she just wanted to have some of you doing other things and not overcrowd the kitchen" he added sincerely. Ntombi didn't tell him the entire story because she didn't want to taint Tamkhulu Vumile's memory by filling his burial day with drama but she planned on telling Lefa after the funeral. She helped him get ready with a heavy heart. When Xoliswa brought Lefa breakfast she gave Ntombi a death stare.

Xoliswa: "Your wife is going to

starve you" she pretended it were a joke.

Lefa: "Never" he took the food

"Thank you, Makhulu. My wife just made sure that I don't face the people in stained clothes. You guys banned her from the kitchen so she came here" he smiled.

Xoliswa looked a bit nervous.

Xoliswa: "Oh, Sibabalwe don't you know that you don't tell a man the business of a kitchen" she fake laughed "I thought your first marriage would have made you wiser than the others" she added with a fake smile.

Ntombi: "I was never told to not touch things because I..."

Xoliswa: "Oh, my girl let us not do this now. We are sorry that our joke offended you. We just wanted you to be busy with other things since there were enough hands in the kitchen" Lefa gave Ntombi an I told you so look. "Lefa you'll have to eat while working. We need more men to carry the tables. Come" she pulled him "Hopefully we won't make that suit dirty" she added.

Lefa: "Let these young boys do it. We did all the work already. Stop

spoiling the kids. Our boys would have moved those tables without even being told to" he said confidently.

Kgethang: "Morning, family. Bro, come help me that side" he said after a brief knock.

Lefa: "Here, baby" he gave her the food "You can have it because I know you haven't eaten" he added.

Kgethang: "Lefa the people are arriving" he said anxiously.

Ntombi: "Thank you" she didn't want to part with him but she had no choice.

Lefa: "I love you" he kissed her lips.

Xoliswa: "Hey" she warned and Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "This is my wife Makhulu not girlfriend so I did nothing wrong". Ntombikayise watched the men leave.

Xoliswa: "You better stop telling a man everything. Where is your womanly backbone? Don't force us to go to Lefa and tell him about the poison you fed my sister.

She's got papers proving it and if he heard tha..."

Ntombi: "Please get out, I want

to lock the door. The last thing I want is for your drug addict son to steal stuff to feed his addiction" she stopped Xoli mid sentence.

Xoliswa: "Sies" she walked out.

Ntombi walked out and locked the door. There was singing in the house already and the fire to cook for the large number of people had already been started. Ntombi crosses the road to go check if her family had slept well. They met her at the door already dressed. Banele and Bubele helped each other drive but Bukhosi had

to stay to finish work but really he took Ivi on a weekend thing.

Banele: "Makhulu, we're not viewing the body" he said to the elders.

Hlomphe: "Mom, Bhut Bubele burnt my shirt" he said before showing her the mark.

Ntombi: "Good thing you have two extra white shirts. I can't tell with the jacket on so don't take the jacket off" Hlomphe nodded "Ma, did you all eat?" she looked at Makhulu.

Makhulu: "Yes, we ate the food we packed for the road"

Tamkhulu: "I'm leaving you all. I hate being late to such dignified ceremonies" he took his hymn book from Makhulu and went ahead.

Bubele: "Let's go check what we can help with so they won't call us to view the body" Banele nodded "Hlomphe, you have to view it because it's your great grandfather" Hlomphe shook his head quickly and the others laughed.

Hlomphe: "My dad said I shouldn't because I'm young"

Ntombi: "Neo and the others said I should tell you they are waiting

for you"

Hlomphe: "I want to sit with my own brothers because they are all brother and sister"

Banele: "You just like hanging out with older people. Let's go"

Ntombi: "Make sure he doesn't tear his clothes doing whatever you guys will"

Bubele: "Sure, momzie" they all walked away. Ntombi told Makhulu what happened this morning.

Makhulu: "If there was a way to send lightning without being a witch, I'd have done it. Good

thing you didn't tell Lefa everything. He was close to the deceased, so he doesn't need stress on top of heartache"

Ntombi: "I don't think he'd have believed me anyway. You were right, they will spin the story..."

she held the side of her belly.

Makhulu: "What's wrong?" she also put her hand there.

Ntombi: "Nothing, Ma. Go or you'll stand. It's going to be a big funeral"

Makhulu: "What will you do?"

Ntombi: "Get in a car and go far from here"

Makhulu: "Don't give them more an ammunition. Don't let the devil win"

Lilitha: "Morning, Makhulu" she smiled.

Makhulu: "Lilitha what is this I hear of your family treating my daughter badly. Don't break my heart"

Lilitha: "I'm not associated to those people, Makhulu. I hated it too. I came to get Sibabalwe so she'd help me with making a fire. I'm failing"

Ntombi: "I saw smoke just now" she laughed softly.

Lilitha: "Where there's smoke it doesn't necessarily mean there's fire" they laughed "Come your mother in law is also there and she's been asking about you"

Makhulu: "There's something I want to give her. You go ahead"

Lilitha nodded before leaving

"Come have a sandwich. bought bread so I made fresh ones and there is a few left. That heat from the fire can make you light headed if you haven't eaten" they went inside the house. The owners had left to the funeral already so the key was with

Makhulu. The kids delayed them. Ntombi had something to eat and was soon with the other ladies helping.

Bonolo: "Sibabalwe, sit down. I don't know but you are looking a bit under the weather. Go sit there where the smoke doesn't reach please" she pointed at a spot "I'm sure it's morning sickness" Ntombi did feel a bit under the weather too. A bit dizzy so she went to sit. Lilitha came with a sealed water bottle as she noticed that's what Ntombi drank since arriving.

Bonolo didn't know about the encounter early morning and Ntombi didn't have energy to deal with her reaction. The cars soon started moving from the house behind the hearse going to church. When Ntombi saw Hazel crying loudly and nearly being carried in a car she just shook her head. Bonolo was like a head chef in a big hotel and the younger makotis her sous chefs. She ran a tight ship to ensure that the food is ready when the people came from the gravesite. Ntombi kept busy by peeling veggies.

Most they peeled last night but it was not enough so she was peeling to keep busy. Nolu looked as though she wanted to remind Ntombi about what Hazel said but because Bonolo was there she didn't dare. She felt being in Hazel's good side secured her in the family. Lilitha and Ntombi had grown close for people who just passed each other a few days ago. Ntombikayise even invited Lilitha to her house when they have time to travel to Cape Town. Lilitha was ten years younger than Ntombi with no kids

but age was nothing compared to the connection between them.

Ntombi felt she found a friend in the Gwala family finally. So much food was cooked Ntombi was certain some would take a second plate home. Hours went by and the funeral ended. Once the people washed their hands in the three buckets filled with Aloe Vera blocks, they lined up for food. Ntombi helped serve and she was certain to give extra scoops that left many thanking her repeatedly. Zanomoya was Xoliswa's granddaughter and

became more and more like her grandmother.

Zanomoya: "Here she comes" she whispered to her sisters. They heard how Ntombi spoke to their grandmother and it made them angry. At least they heard Xoliswa's version of it "If she didn't disrespect elders like that she'd have known that Bhut Lefa slept with Noluthando" she said deliberately knowing Ntombi was at the door.

Ntombi: "If you didn't listen to filtered stories so much you'd have finished that degree" she

walked pass Zano and her sisters
"Maybe it's good you didn't
because you'd clearly have been a
lousy journalist who published fake
news. Make sure that your source
knows the truth before
broadcasting things" she took the
buckets she came for and walked
out. She was not going to lower
to the level of kids. If Xoliswa did
it then that's her problem
Ntombikayise thought. When Nolu
didn't get pregnant a year after
being married Hazel and Xoliswa's
suggested she sleeps with Lefa
to give Kgethang kids. They were

convinced that Kgethang was the problem because he had to have a testicle removed in his teen years. Lefa told Ntombi everything and also how he and Nolu were so against it that they told Kgethang. Hence the relationship between Kgethang and his grandmother isn't as strong as Lefa's with Hazel. All of Kgethang's kids were biologically his because Lefa didn't agree to impregnate his sister in law on behalf of his brother. Even Kgethang verified the story to Ntombi when Lefa asked him to.

Ntombi knew that Zano thought she was in the dark and would cry or cause a scene but she didn't because her husband let her in on what happened while they still dated, so she was not bothered. Ntombi was sure to keep out of Hazel's kitchen by enjoying the company of the women outside as always. She and Lilitha took many snaps that Lilitha have many captions

too #MakotiThings #LiSiba #GwalaGlow amongst others. Ntombi made sure her three kids ate and got cooldrinks and biscuits too. It

was a mother's duty to make sure her babies were sorted at such a huge gathering. It was a tiring day but it came to an end. Early tomorrow morning she and Lefa would be driving behind Banele and the rest of the family back to Cape Town. They'd give lifts to those who asked who they'd drop off on the way. She filled the plastic bath with warm water and washed off the sweat of the day. Lefa was outside with his brother and cousins enjoying some catching up and telling stories about their deceased

grandfather. Ntombi tried to wait up but she was just too tired. Many family went home after the funeral so there was not much to do. Lilitha and her husband also left for Mthatha where they reside as they had to go to work Monday. They didn't want to go to work still tired. Lefa quietly got undressed after he and the other men decided to call it a night. He had a long drive ahead the next day so he needed the rest. He gently lowered himself to the bed.

Ntombi: "Baby, you are cold" she

said quietly.

Lefa: "It's not winter, Sibabalwe"
he laughed "Plus with all this
hotness you'll burn a hole in the
bed so I'm helping you with my
cool body" he kissed her and she
laughed.

Ntombi: "Sleep because I'm not
driving tomorrow"

Lefa: "Oh come on, you must give
your husband a break. I've missed
you. Since we've been here I
haven't made love to you and it's
torture" Ntombi looked at him
and watched him lean closer
before their lips met. She missed

him too so she got lost in the kiss before him.

Ntombi: "I'm only doing this because an orgasm helps me sleep" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I don't mind as long it's with me and me alone. I'm tired but I don't want to rush. I haven't seen this beautiful body all week" he lifted her night dress over her head. She smelled soapy clearly her skin had just received some TLC and he wanted to add to it.

Ntombi: "Baby, skip all of this" she said when she felt his lips on

her breasts. She wanted to cut right to the chase but Lefa wanted to torture her with nothing but pure pleasure "Pray I don't fall asleep because I warned...hmmm" the exhaustion with the pleasure was oddly a mixture that she found to be pleasing. As he moved between her legs he looked up and had she not moaned and move about seductively he'd have thought she was sleeping because her eyes were shut. Both of them got startled by someone screaming at the door.

Hazel: "No wonder you can't think clearly" she wore her hands over her head while shaking it. Soon a group gathered as her scream startled the remaining members.

Lefa: "This is not right, Makhulu!" he said in anger before closing the door and locking it.

Hazel: "I knew this girl was no good but to make my grandson lick...oh I can't even say it" she let out a bitter cry. The same that Ntombi heard when her brothers coffin was taken from the house. Ntombi clung so tightly to the blanket she was shaking.

She'd been humiliated before but nothing compared to what she was feeling in that moment, absolutely nothing. Lefa was fuming but he went to the bedroom and calmed Ntombi who had started to cry.

Lefa: "I'm sorry, Ngqangqa" he kissed her forehead a couple of times "I'm your husband so whatever we do had got nothing to do with anyone" he added.

Ntombi: "I wanna go home, Lefa" she couldn't let go of the blanket. She saw Kgethang amongst the people and perhaps even her

father in law and because it all happened so fast she couldn't be sure how much they saw because unlike Lefa she was completely naked. The commotion outside was not helping either. A cramp hit like a power wave and she circled up.

Lefa: "Ntombikayise" he didn't need for her to tell him she was in pain, her face was enough communication "Try to get into this" he took the skirt she wore earlier on. She shifted to the edge of the bed and he lowered her legs inside the material

before taking his overall jacket over her and into her arms before zipping it. It was not an outside Ntombi would be seen out in public with because his jacket practically swallowed her but she had no choice.

Lefa: "Will you be able to walk?"
Ntombi shook her head quickly. He didn't even notice that his pants were worn inside out. He opened the door and scooped her up into his arms. Bonolo appeared from nowhere in panic asking repeatedly what the matter was. Ntombi's sweaty face was enough

to send her into a rage also.

Bonolo: "If anything happens to my daughter in law and my granddaughter, all hell will break loose" she swore.

Hazel: "She is pretending because she knows that we know how she hooks Lefa. Phuu". Lefa felt his heart break in a million pieces but he didn't turn to look at her.

Kgethang offered to drive fearing that Lefa's state of mind would cause an accident. Bonolo was crying and all Ntombi wanted was to get away from it all and for the pain to go away. The drive to

hospital felt long because it was
but they finally arrived and
Ntombi got help.

Kgethang: "She'll be fine" he
assured Lefa "They both will" be
added. Lefa didn't answer but
isolated himself instead. Their
parents arrived soon after and
Makhulu and Tamkhulu too. The
doctor assisting her finally showed
and Lefa rushed to him.

Doc: "We are doing more tests to
determine what the problem is,
but we managed to stop the
cramping. We're monitoring the
baby's heartbeat too but just as

precautionary measure. Are you the husband?" Lefa nodded

"Follow me" he added.

Makhulu: "Lefa, give her a kiss for me please" Lefa nodded and followed. The doctor explained that the baby's heartbeat was fine but Ntombi's blood pressure was raised a bit.

Lefa: "I'm sorry" he kissed her forehead. She was laying on her side looking at him.

Ntombi: "I don't want to go back there" she whispered.

Lefa: "I'm not taking you back" he promised "I'm not" he added

"Don't scare me like that again, baby" he wiped a tear "I thought you're having a misc... nevermind. How are you feeling?" he held her stomach.

Ntombi: "Sleepy"

Lefa: "Then sleep"

Ntombi: "I'm scared"

Lefa: "Nothing's going to happen. Get some rest" He watched her close her eyes but he sat looking at her before he tested his arms on the place beside her to take a short power nap. They both at least got an hour's nap before the doctor came around again.

When asked if Ntombi had recently been stressed the cause of the cramps were determined.

Doc: "Stay away from stress triggers. Your pressure has gone back to normal. I'll monitor you both for another hour and if everything looks good, we'll discharge you". An hour passed and Ntombi got discharged.

Kgethang knew of a B&B because Ntombi kept saying she didn't want to see Hazel so Lefa booked the two of them there for the night. Makhulu heard the entire

story and she was seeing red.

Tamkhulu had to calm her to risk her going to strangle Hazel. He was mad too but he didn't want to act childish like Hazel did.

Ntombi took off the clothes that smelled like smoke and got to bed.

She told Lefa everything that happened during the week and the poison issue. He felt like he failed her. The boys all sleep like the dead so no one heard the commotion when Ntombi was rushed to the hospital. Bonolo like Makhulu had to stay away from Hazel because she feared she'd be

convicted of murder should they meet. She also slept at the B&B. Lefa couldn't sleep that night because he kept opening his eyes to look at Ntombi but she seemed to have slept well through the night. He woke up early to go get their clothes and the boys so they'd drive back home. He left Ntombi at the B&B sleeping and when he arrived he found his family up already. He didn't greet, he just went to the room they stayed in to pack their stuff. He went to the lounge where his father and other members sat.

Hazel: "Whatever is between those legs must be intoxicating since you can just come here without greeting"

Vakele: "You've done enough damage, Mama" he warned "Lefa, we are sorry about what happened last night" he said sincerely.

Lefa: "Have you ever had to witness your wife feel so humiliated that she ends up in hospital, Tata?" he looked at his father "well I have and I never want a repeat of what happened here. I'm not going to bring my

wife where she's not wanted. I'm not going to bring my child to a great grandmother that wanted to kill her just because she hated her mother. I will never forgive you for what you've done, Makhulu. I will never, ever forgive you" he pointed at her. There was a knock on the door and the Mlandu family entered. Vakele knew that it was not a pleasant visit. Tamkhulu and Makhulu took their seats.

Tamkhulu: "Debeza family, to say that I'm heavy hearted would be an understatement. I'm glad

that we were here to see the little value our daughter is to this family because she would not have told us had we not been here. The fact that an elder went into the private space of a young married couple unannounced and humiliated them both in such a manner is dog behaviour"

Hazel: "You come to insult me in my own house? You didn't see what your daughter made my grandson do. That's do..."

Lefa: "Makhulu!" he shouted "How I choose to show intimacy to my wife behind a closed door is none of

your business. You crossed the line. You had absolutely no business just walking into that room like that" his anger rose again.

Xoliswa: "That's no way to talk to your grandmother"

Lefa: "Then she must act like one" he shouted.

Hazel: "I forgive you. It's whatever you consume there that's making you blind"

Kgethang: "I'm as appalled by what happened as Lefa. There is a generation between ours and yours, Makhulu. I do not know how sex worked in your generation

but in ours it's a lot more experimenting than what I assume the previous generation was"

Hazel: "Sies, I'm sure that Nolu doesn't make you put your mouth places where it shouldn't be"

Kgethang: "She does and I love it" Hazel got more disgusted.

Vakele: "Enough. You are not going to talk such private matters while your elders are still here"

Makhulu: "Do you blame them for not knowing any boundaries when an elder who should have known better is the reason we are here?"

I do not even know what I expected a woman who has never had a husband to know what goes on behind closed door of married people" Hazel stood and pointed a finger at Makhulu.

Hazel: "You are the last person to talk, mthakathi. Who knows how you got your husband?"

Tamkhulu: "I'm not going to stay here for childishness. Clearly, we are not going to get an apology from Ma Gwala. You have singlehandedly embarrassed the Gwala family and don't think that just because you paid lobola you

can treat my child anyhow. Ask the Elephants what I do with such people. You've shamed yourself, your children and grandchildren. My child is never setting foot here"

Hazel: "Good". Makhulu was close to Hazel and she gave Hazel a slap across the face so hard that Hazel's left eye teared up.

Xoliswa: "Haibo, Vakele will you just sit and do nothing?"

Vakele: "I'd just like to apologize, Mlandu family. We do not want our lobola back as my wife and I love Sibabalwe. We distance ourselves

from anything that my mother did to her because it's not how we feel. Please forgive us as Lefa's parents"

Lefa: "Let us go Tamkhulu and Makhulu. I don't want us to act more out of character than we already have. Let's just go home where we have respect for each other. Tata, Mme will be driving back with Sibabalwe and I"

Vakele knew him deciding to sleep at his mother's meant he was in trouble. "You're never going to meet my daughter, Makhulu. That's what you wanted right?"

For her to die so me saying you'll never see her doesn't affect you" he picked the bags up and walked out.

Kgethang: "I'm sorry"

Lefa: "Me too"

Kgethang: "This doesn't affect us right?" Lefa smiled. They bro hugged before shaking hands.

"You're taking this better than I would have"

Lefa: "You want me to hit an old woman and have bad luck follow me? She'll have her karma. I just want to take my wife far away from here and love her without

people saying she feeds me muthi to achieve that. I'll see you around"

Kgethang: "I'll drive behind you to go say bye to Mme. There's no way she'll return here. She will definitely strangle Makhulu"

Lefa: "Why do you think I left her?"

Tamkhulu: "Lefa, you'll find us at the B&B and from there we are going back home. Hlompho is inside with his cousins so you best go get him" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "I'm sorry for that's happened, Tamkhulu and

Makhulu. I'm ashamed to be her grandson"

Makhulu: "It's not your place to apologize. The one who should doesn't see the need to. Let us go.

Lefa watched them walk away.

He could see they were

disappointed to say the least.

Lefa has himself never been that heartbroken by a family member, especially not a member who was one of his favourites. He vowed to never let his daughter meet Hazel and to never let Ntombi set foot in Hazel's house. He still didn't know what elder in their

right mind did what Hazel did but he was utterly disgusted by her behaviour. 

S2-INSERT 77 (NOT EDITED)

The family made a stop at a garage for refreshments. Lefa is the type of driver who prefers to have as little stops as possible but Ntombi managed to convince him they needed one. Ntombi's car parked right next to Lefa's and she was proud of her sons for driving such a long distance though deep down she still feared

they weren't ready but them arriving safely proved they earned their stripes. Bonolo quickly opened her door as she needed to use the restroom.

Makhulu walked in with her.

Ntombi: "I'll take over from here" she said to Lefa after he yawned for what seemed like the millionth time.

Lefa: "I'll buy more energy drinks. I'll be fine" he said stubbornly.

Ntombi: "Clearly they stopped working, Lefa. You're tired. Your mother and I have been sleeping since we departed so I'm well

rested. Bubele knocked on the window and Ntombi opened.

Bubele: "Parents, why aren't you getting off?"

Lefa: "Your mom thinks that I'll let her drive after what happened last night" he looked at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "You're tired"

Bubele: "Let me take over. Banele is still good so I can drive"

Lefa: "That suggestion I like better" he took his wallet "Let's stretch those legs before they get swollen like the last time.

This is only a 15min break. We still

have a long way to go" he opened his door. Bubele opened for his mother and helped her out. Lefa's car was much higher since it's a big car so Ntombi appreciated the assistance.

Ntombi: "Baby, can we please make a stop in PE just to say hi to Bandile?" she watched Lefa come around the car to stand next to her.

Banele: "No, he's busy" he shook his head "He'll be home for the holidays soon soon" he added.

Bubele: "Plus seeing us for just 5min and have to watch us leave

again will just break his heart. Shame, man" he said in a low tone as one who felt sorry for Bandile in advance. Lefa laughed and shook his head because he knew that it had to do with a girl being entertained or a wild party that left Bandile looking like a zombie.

Lefa: "What should I get you?" he asked his wife and the boys appreciated that he changed the subject.

Ntombi: "Those little colourful jelly sweets and a magnum"

Tamkhulu: "So much sugar, Nto-

Nto"

Lefa: "If she's not eating spoons full of jam she's buying sweets, Tamkhulu"

Tamkhulu: "It's unlike you. You prefer savoury to sweet"

Ntombi: "It's not me, Tamkhulu. This tenant is now in control of my body and she's living in there rent free so I don't know where she thinks she gets the right to dictate my taste buds" they all laughed.

Hlomphe: "Mom, you said you wanted to visit Bhut Bandile. He is not in PE but in Grahamstown"

The other boys put their hands over their faces.

Ntombi: "Grahamstown?"

Hlomphe took his phone out and showed Bandile's reply to why they can't make a turn at his place "What's he doing in Grahamstown?" she asked Hlomphe and he looked at the older boys.

Banele: "Why are you secretless?" he looked at Hlomphe.

Hlomphe: "I didn't know it was supposed to be a secret"

Lefa: "Yeah...that's Hlomphe for you" he mumbled before walking

behind Tamkhulu to go to the store. Bubele explained Bandile was in Grahamstown to visit his girlfriend and Ntombi just nodded. Ntombi: "we'll go say hi to him there then" she walked away.

Banele: "Mom, don't embarrass the guy" he shouted behind her but she kept walking. He tapped Hlompho's shoulder "Little brother, there is a thing such as a bro code. Do you understand?" Hlompho shook his head "When one of us share a secret with you, it should not reach a woman's ears especially not if that woman is a

mother figure" he explained.

Hlomphe: "I didn't know it was a secret"

Banele: "Understood and that's why we'll let this one slide. But there are certain things that you'll have to cover up for on our behalf"

Hlomphe: "Bad things?"

Banele: "No, just men things" he tried to explain "There are just things that you can't tell

parents" Hlomphe nodded "But don't hide things that hurt you though okay" Hlomphe nodded

"Like bullying. If someone bullies

you and tells you that it's manly to take abuse you don't keep quiet" Hlompfo nodded.

Hlompfo: "But I have been keeping the code. I didn't tell the parents when you snuck a girl in the house and we had us sleep on the couches" Bubele coughed as he was not expecting that reply.

Bubele: "Yes, you've been keeping the code" he cleared his throat and Banele laughed.

Hlompfo: "It's because I knew it was a secret. Bhut Bandile didn't say I shouldn't tell anyone. He just said he's in Grahamstown"

Banele: "We apologize" they laughed.

Hlomphe: "I'm a man too. I know how to keep the code, but I must know what falls under the code" the others laughed and nodded before following behind the parents. Ntombi's phone rang, it was Lilitha. The news of what Hazel did reached her.

Lilitha: "That old hag knew you guys were sleeping there. I'm starting to think she's sex starved and wanted to see some action" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Don't say that. She's

very old and apparently she thought Lefa and I had moved inside the main house since most people left and that's why she entered without knocking"

Lilitha: "Sies, man the fact that an old woman enters bedrooms of married people unannounced is just creepy. Is the baby okay though?"

Ntombi: "She's fine but I really thought I'll lose her, Litha. The last time I felt that much pain was when I was in labour for my boys and so I feared she was coming and it is way too early for

that"

Lilitha: "Let's just focus on the now and right now she's still fine. I hope Lefa never asks you to go there again"

Ntombi: "He's more hurt than me because he adored his gran"

Lilitha: "They all do hence they can't see pass her faults most times. Enough about her though. So Thami and I have decided to visit you guys for the festive season" she said with excitement and Ntombi smiled "well, we will first go to his mother's. You know how they deem it necessary for a

makoti to go see her in laws during December holidays but after that we'll come. That's if you and Lefa are okay with it" she added.

Ntombi: "I'll talk to him but I don't think he'll mind. That's so exciting and fortunately for me my in laws are right next to me so no traveling to go see them" she laughed.

Lilitha: "I'm really hoping to get pregnant soon, Siba. I tried all home remedies you can think of"

Ntombi: "When you over think it, it adds pressure and pressure ads

to stress and stress when trying to get pregnant is not good. Just enjoy intimacy with your hubby without thinking about the goal to get pregnant"

Lilitha: "I'm just tired of being asked when a baby is coming"

Ntombi: "Lilitha you've been married for only six months. Stop pressurising yourself please. You said you stopped contraceptives only four months ago. Do you know they can stay in the system a year after you stopped?" Lilitha's eyes shot open.

Lilitha: "Don't say that,

Sibabalwe please"

Ntombi: "I have to so you'll know there are many factors that can stand in the way of you not getting pregnant right away. Most of which are beyond your control so just relax and enjoy your honeymoon phase. As someone who has been married before, I know it doesn't last long"

Lilitha: "I really feel like I've gained a big sister. Thank you so much. I'll be patient"

Ntombi: "Good" she smiled "Let me go. I've got an impatient husband looking at me like I have

committed a crime" Lefa laughed. They said their goodbyes and ended the call.

Lefa: "Your magnum" he gave her the ice cream. She thanked him and opened the pack.

Tamkhulu: "Everyone in the cars please. We don't want to be on the road late at night"

Lefa: "Finally someone who sees my point"

Ntombi: "We'll go to Bandile right?" they walked to the car.

Lefa: "Did he say he's available? This is an adult, baby. We know what it's like to have an elder

just barge in without announcing.

Rather ask if he's available"

Ntombi: "I hate it when you make sense" Lefa laughed "I'll call" she went inside the car "I can't believe you trust Bubele's driving more than mine" Bubele got into the driver's seat.

Lefa: "You actually drive like a maniac" Ntombi eyes shot open and Bonolo laughed.

Bonolo: "It's true. Ma Mlandu and I always hold on to something when in your car" she wiped her tears off still laughing and Ntombikayise laughed too.

Ntombi: "No, Ma" she looked at her mother in law "Is that why you guys always insist that we pray before we go somewhere even if it's just around the block?" Bonolo nodded still laughing "well I'm sorry that I have race driver blood in me" they all were still cracking up.

Makhulu: "No, it seems I'm in the wrong car. I want to laugh too" she stood by the door.

Bonolo: "I told you to come this side but you didn't listen"

Bubele: "Mom, come to the front. Bhut Lefa you'll have to go rest

in the other car. Mom's car has more seats so you'll have space"

Lefa: "Sure, boy. Nana, here is a bag full of sweet treats"

Bonolo: "Whooo my grandchild will come with endless drooling at the rate mommy is going with the sweet stuff" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Her father feeds the addiction, Ma"

Lefa: "Let me go before I stand trial. I'll miss you" he kissed her lips quickly.

Ntombi: "I'll miss you too"

Makhula: "Young love. I didn't even tell my husband I'm

switching cars, he'll just see by me not returning yet these two act like we're leaving one of them behind" Bonolo laughed.

Bonolo: "We were like that too"
Makhulu remember those days.

Lefa laughed and went to the other car. He sat way at the back of Ntombi's eight-seater and when the car started to move he slept right away clearly exhausted. Bubele had to endure the gospel music all the way because the older women preferred it. He listened to Ntombi talk to Bandile .

Ntombi: "He says we can come if we can" she said with a smile after ending the call "Does he have a girlfriend that side?" she looked at Bubele.

Bubele: "We said that a few minutes ago, Mom do Yeah but it's new so don't expect introductions"

Bonolo: "My family only got to know about Vakele when he was ready to lobola. It took many years though since my poor husband had no cows nor money back then" they laughed.

Makhulu: "This generation is just

so different. I wouldn't be surprised if this girl's family is aware of Bandile or have even met him. Times are changing.

Bubele when are we meeting your girlfriend?" Bubele laughed.

Bubele: "I'm still saving lobola, Makhulu. I want to do things like Makhulu Bonolo said her husband did" the elders laughed.

Ntombi: "With the little pocket money you get, that girl is in for a long wait" she passed on a pack of snacks to the back.

Bubele: "More reason to up my pocket money so you'll meet your

daughter in law"

Ntombi: "Mxm" she laughed.

Bonolo: "Have a heart, Siba"

Bubele: "Thank you, Makhulu"

Ntombi laughed again.

Ntombi: "I'll have one the day this one shows me what he intends to do with his life, Ma. Right now, he's just loafing around trying everything but never committing to anything"

Bubele: "Thing is, I hate structure. I want to be free"

Ntombi: "Many ways to make money and have freedom. I advised that you start a

business". Bubele nodded. The drive with the ladies was not as bad as Bubele anticipated it would be. They arrived in Grahamstown before noon after a 3-hour drive. Bandile was called and he told the family where he was. When he saw the family cars pull up the smile on his face explained how happy he was that they made a turn where he was. Hlomphe was the first to run out and hug Bandile.

Bandile: "It's the entire clan, I see" he greeted with hugs and handshakes.

Ntombi: "I've missed you so much" she gave him a long hug before kissing his cheek. Kwanele stood at a far distance laughing at how embarrassed her boyfriend was after getting a cheek kiss from his mommy.

Tamkhulu: "I take it that young lady over there who keeps looking away whenever I look at her is the reason why you are here" he said with a smile. Kwanele held her hoody cap over one side of her face like a fugitive wanted by the law.

Lefa: "You might as well go get

her because the ladies want to see if you are good at choosing" he joked and they all laughed.

Bandile: "She's shy" he looked at Kwanele and then at the family.

Ntombi: "What's her name?"

Bubele: "Kwanele" he said in a spiteful tone before laughing.

Ntombi: "Kwanele" she called out and the young lady turned to look at them "Please stand closer,

ntombi" she gestured with her hand for Kwanele to stand closer.

Bandile could see the nerves had gotten the better of her so he went to go get her halfway.

Kwanele: "Baby, why did you tell them about me?" she asked quietly.

Bandile: "I didn't" he promised "It'll be fine. They are nice people" he assured her. Her hand was shaking in his. They finally made it to the cars and Bandile introduced Kwanele.

Ntombi: "It's a pleasure to meet you, Nana" she smiled.

Kwanele: "Likewise, Ma" she couldn't even make eye contact.

Ntombi: "Are you studying this side or are you from here?"

Kwanele: "I'm doing my accounting

degree at Rhodes, Ma. I am originally from Port Elizabeth"

Lefa: "I hope you are studying towards chartered accountancy"

he smiled and Kwanele nodded.

Kwanele: "I am, Tata"

Lefa: "It's good to have more people join the industry. Who knows by the time you finish we'll be able to take on students to complete their articles"

Banele: "You're establishing connections already, dear sister in law" Kwanele laughed and looked at Bandile.

Bandile: "How long can you guys

stay?"

Ntombi: "We can't stay long. I just wanted to come check on you since we're in the province"

Bandile: "Thanks, mom" he smiled.

Lefa: "Here" he took his wallet out "Buy some snacks or something" he gave Bandile a few notes.

Bandile: "Where are the other donations?"

Bonolo: "The wallets are empty due to contributing where we came from, sana lwam but let me get some snacks so you'll use that money on something else" she

went to the car and returned with a plastic bag with snacks. Tamkhulu: "We really must get going. I think the young couple want to go back to their plans too"

Kwanele: "We didn't really have any, Tamkhulu"

Makhulu: "He just doesn't want to be on the road when dark" she smiled.

Ntombi: "I'll see you in a few weeks when you come home" she hugged him again "Take care of yourself" she added "Kwanele, please focus on school before

anything else. Glad he's not here to drink himself into a coma"

Kwanele laughed.

Bandile: "I actually don't drink as much anymore"

Bubele: "Oh please"

Kwanele: "It's actually true"

Banele: "Of course you'll say that" they laughed "See you soon, bra"

they hugged "I hope you get some for all this damn traveling effort" he whispered to Bandile.

It was not meant to be a social visit but Bandile was sad to see them go. The two of them waved at the two cars until they were

out of sight.

Bandile: "I didn't know my babe could get so shy" he teased and they both laughed.

Kwanele: "Your brothers look so much like you in person it's creepy"

Bandile: "But I'm more handsome right?" he kissed her.

Kwanele: "Of course you are" she wrapped her arms around him
"Your mom is really sweet" she smiled.

Bandile: "Just don't cross her. So what do you want to do?"

Kwanele: "For us to go back to my place and chill. I think you must

sleep over"

Bandile: "Does that mean that you are ready to take our relationship to the next level?"

Kwanele: "Yes but not all the way. Today I just want to know what it feels like to be cuddled all night" she giggled softly.

Bandile: "That I can definitely do" he kissed her again "As torturous as is it, I'll wait okay" Kwanele nodded. They walked the short distance to her place. It would be the first time that Bandile spend the night and he wondered if introducing her to his family had

anything to do with that. She wasn't ready for sex and he respected that. He knew that the Bathandiwe saga might have made her delay it but he was willing to wait on her to truly forgive him. For the time being he was just happy to have her back.

A few days had gone by and Liyema was continuing with his affair while Portia was busy planning their dream wedding. She didn't mind him being so little involved in the planning because

she figured he had enough to deal with as he was planning for their future. They decided it was best they move the next year.

Lungi: "So you want to marry two women on the same day?" Lungi looked at his brother trying to understand what Liyema had just told him.

Liyema: "Maybe not on the same day but you know..." Lungile looked confused.

Lungi: "I really don't know" he shook his head "You're saying that you want to marry your mistress too" he said loudly.

Mrs E: "What?" she walked in holding shopping bags. Portia and Liyema had gotten used to her visiting more often "Liyema, please don't tell me that I heard right. You have a mistress yet again? Did the first time not come with lessons?" she went to sit down.

Liyema: "Why don't you knock, Ma?"

Mrs E: "Hey, don't start" she pointed at him "Talk" she added.

Liyema: "I have met someone else but this time I don't want to make the same mistakes again. I

want Portia to be aware of this woman. I'm just torturing myself by trying to convince myself that I'm happy with having one woman"

Mrs E: "Hayi no Jesus come down and sort this child out yourself for I have failed" she clapped once "Just when I open up to Portia, you are risking losing her by wanting another woman?"

Lungi: "It gets worse" he sipped his water. Mrs E looked at Liyema to hear what the worst of it is
Liyema: "She's kind of Portia's friend"

Mrs E: "Amen" she clapped again
"So you think polygamy is a permit
for a man to go whoring around,
Liyema? Do you really love this
woman or are you addicted to
what she offers in the sheets?
I'm not saying don't have a
second wife, I'm asking whether
you want to take this one for the
right reasons? Will she add
anything to your family? Will she
respect that there is another
wife?"

Liyema: "She respects my
relationship with Portia and
doesn't get angry when I am

with Portia because she understands my time has to be divided"

Mrs E: "Okay maybe you're right but it still doesn't take away the fact that you still have to explain to Portia that you want two or more wives. I advise that you do it now before you marry her. Let her know since you are aware of it"

Lungile: "You might actually welcome two makotis on the same day. Prepare two names" he laughed.

Mrs E: "I've never heard of such

but I guess there is a first time for everything. If you get into a polygamous marriage just to try and satisfy your lust, there'll never be peace in your family. This practice is not about sex but mostly about legacy" she advised.

Liyema: "I can take care of a large family and I do have feelings for Vuvu, it's not just sex anymore but I want to get to know her more. If it's just after knowing more about her, then I'll walk away"

Mrs E: "Your track record with women went from rocky, to stable

and now back to rocky. What I like is that you're the captain of your own ship so if you sail towards a rock it's your business" she stood "Let me go. I don't know what to make of this.

Lungile, your father and I have decided to move in together" she said before walking out. They didn't comment.

Lungi: "She's right. You got to do this for the right reasons. Where will the wives live? Will each have their own houses or do you want them all under one roof? If Portia doesn't consent, will you drop it or

dump her to get your multiple brides?"

Liyema: "I'm going out for some air"

Lungile: "You mean you're going out to cheat" he joked and laughed. Liyema ignored him because Lungile was spot on. The more time he spent apart from Vuvu, the more he missed her. He didn't even notice that he'd become the clingy one instead of her. When he arrived at her place he jumped at her with a hungry passionate kiss all while trying to undress her but a loud bang from

the kitchen made him broke the kiss.

Portia: "Babes, I just broke one of your favourite..." she came out holding a broken piece of glass clearly shocked to see her fiancé there "Baby?" she looked confused.

Liyema: "Why didn't you tell me that she was here?" he looked at Vuvu.

Vuvu: "Isn't that a part of the fun? The secrecy" she smiled.

Portia: "What's going on here?" her heart started to race.

Vuvu: "Chom, your man and I..."

Liyema swallowed hard "We're planning a bridal party for you" she lied "As your closest friend this side, he came to ask if I got a venue and how much it'll cost" she added and wore a naughty smirk when she saw Liyema breathe in relief.

Portia: "Awww, baby" she went to kiss his freshly kissed lips and had she not been so overly grateful she'd have gotten the scent of Vuvu's lip balm on his lips. Vuvu looked down feeling a sense of jealousy for the first time since their fling started. "So I ruined

the surprise?" she looked at both.
Vuvu: "Well not really because you don't know when it'll be or where for that matter. It's still a surprise" they laughed.

Liyema: "Good thing you dropped that cup or you'd have known everything had I not learned you're here" he laughed nervously.

Portia: "I think it's cute that you're doing this for me. Uhm...let me go get my daughter at Alu's then so that you two can continue with my surprise"

Liyema: "No, let me leave with you, baby or you can stay and I'll

meet with Vuvu some other time"
Vuvu looked disappointed.

Portia: "Okay but don't cancel my surprise please" she pointed at them both.

Vuvu: "More reason why we have to discuss this venue because we're on a deadline"

Liyema: "Plenty of time for that"

Portia: "Let me go clean up the mess I made. You two use the few minutes to talk about this venue and I hope it's beautiful" she walked back to the kitchen.

Vuvu: "I miss you" she blurted out and shocking herself with her own

words.

Liyema: "Not the place nor time for this but I miss you too. Today I was actually hoping to just sit down and get to know each other on a nonphysical level"

Vuvu: "That sounds interesting" she smiled.

Liyema: "It will be and that's why it's best we book ourselves into a hotel to do this properly. I don't know why but I have a feeling there is more to you than that beautiful body" Vuvu blushed. It was the first time she'd shown such innocence and it

gave Liyema a glimpse of her essence or so he felt.

Vuvu: "I thought powerful men like you love their women sexed up. At least that's what I'm used to"

Liyema: "No reason why we can't have both depth and superficiality" she nodded.

Vuvu: "Ummm...okay I'll wait to hear from you, Mr Elephant. I happen to think there's more to you than what meets the eye too" she blushed more.

Liyema: "Tell me something that I don't know about you quick".

Vuvu: "I'm a Risk Analyst and I'm currently doing my Masters in Corporate Governance" she looked at him straight in the eyes and could see he was shocked.

Liyema: "I didn't know that"

Vuvu: "Because you've been more interested in the beauty than the brain" she smiled.

Liyema: "Well now I'm interested in both"

Vuvu: "You thought that I had a blesser paying for my rent and car didn't you?" she laughed.

Liyema: "Not really. If you were the type you'd have sure brought

up girlfriend allowance by now" they both laughed "Truthful I thought nothing beyond the sex until a couple of days after we started seeing each other" they were talking so quietly that Portia thought it was because they were planning her surprise that's why she gave them a few extra minutes to talk.

Portia: "All done. We can go" she appeared. Liyema suddenly wanted to know more about Nomvula the risk analyst as he felt he'd gotten to know Vuvu enough. He left with Portia but told her that he

wouldn't be able to go with her to Alu's place because he had a meeting with someone. Portia thought it was strange for him to have a meeting on a Sunday but accepted the excuse that the person was flying out first thing tomorrow. He could kick himself for not having noticed Portia's car parked not so far from where he parked. Each got into their car and drove the opposite direction but really Liyema just went around the block. He parked his car a street away from Vuvu's apartment and hurried to her

flat once again. She wasn't expecting him back but when she opened and saw him she smiled before hugging him.

Liyema: "I couldn't stay away for long after you told me something I didn't know about you" he closed the door behind him and locked it just in case Portia had plans to come back too.

Vuvu: "Would you like something to drink?"

Liyema: "It's the first time you actually offered me a drink" they both laughed "I'd like one thank you" he added. She took hold of his

hand and led him to the kitchen. He watched her move around her kitchen making some coffee for him.

Vuvu: "This is actually a blend from different countries" she showed him the pack of coffee "And you're in luck because I got my new coffee machine on Friday" she smiled.

Liyema: "I can't wait to taste it then" she looked so natural in the kitchen that he smiled while watching her. A side of her his mind never imagined existed. It has always been quick sex and lust

but that moment was more but he didn't know how to describe the "more". "So what would a risk advisor tell me about me selling my shares?" he leaned against a cupboard and looked at her with folded arms.

Vuvu: "I don't know if my expertise will help in that regard but I could give advice based on general knowledge. Why do you want to sell?" she looked at him. He told her the entire story. From his divorce and how Ntombi sold her shares to an enemy. There was a look of disappointment he

picked up in her eyes as he spoke but he didn't understand why she'd have it "So really you're making this decision based on emotions and not what's right for business? A business you put your blood, sweat and tears into?" she asked.

Liyema: "I just feel like strangling the man every time I see him"

Vuvu: "Liyema, I don't think you've become the success that you are because of emotions. Had that been the case Ndlovu Communications would have long crumbled. It's standing because

you used logic over emotions all these years when making business decisions. Am I wrong?" Liyema took a deep breath.

Liyema: "No you're not"

Vuvu: "Then why let a legacy go because of a man who is a non-factor in your life? He's out there right now probably bragging to his peers about how he screwed your wife and now screwing you out of your business by just being there"

Liyema: "I blame my spiteful ex for this"

Vuvu: "Babe, if you never learn to

take responsibility then you'll never grow as a person. You pushed the poor woman too far and she pushed back. Nothing turns me off like a man who has a victim mentality. If that's you then you might as well go now and never come back"

Liyema: "Ouch" he laughed.

Vuvu: "It is what it is. Clearly should this thing we have come out, you'll play victim and not take responsibility. I'll most probably be the ups and down that occurred in your relationship you'll be talking about in your testimony

in church" Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "So you like your man responsible?"

Vuvu: "Most women do. Go play victim at your mom's but not at your lover's. Women want a man who can say I was wrong and I take responsibility but instead of condemning myself I'll take a lesson from the situation" Liyema just smiled and looked at her.

Liyema: "Clearly I didn't learn anything from my first infidelity situation"

Vuvu: "Why are you repeating the same mistake? If you dare say

it's because I seduced you, I'll take my coffee offer back" they both laughed.

Liyema: "You did seduce me" he raised a brow "But I allowed it. Me being here is proof of that. I think this time I learned a lesson"

Vuvu: "Which is?"

Liyema: "I'm not a one woman man" Vuvu nodded "Does it get to you?" she shook her head.

Vuvu: "Sometimes two women are drawn to the same man and he is drawn to them both because they have unique qualities he finds

attractive. I'm in my mid-thirties. I really want to have children with a stable man. If that man comes with another wife, it's okay to me as long as he respects both parties. As long as he continues to cherish me and give me the same amount of attention. I think people in general try too hard to make certain people monogamous when they really aren't. You just said you aren't so I'm not about to encourage you to stop seeing Portia to be with me but if we're going to continue I ask for your

time and respect"

Liyema: "You sound too good to be true" Vuvu laughed and handed him his cup "Why would you do that? At first, I thought you need financial security but after today I think you're okay financially. So why would you be willing to share a husband?"

Vuvu: "You're the first man that I got attracted to knowing you're with someone. I know my sexual forwardness makes you doubt that but it's true. I saw you and I liked you. I'm not going to lie, Liyema. As okay as I am

financially, I'd like to be stable and not worry about money ever. Currently I'm basically looking after an entire clan on my salary. It leaves me in financial stress sometimes. So I'm not going to try pull a wool over your eyes. Yes, you being so stable financially encourages me to want to be with you. I also want to be secure in a relationship by knowing I'm one of my man's priorities"

Liyema: "You think I can provide you with that?" Vuvu shrugged.

Vuvu: "Can you?" she looked at him "Financially you definitely can

I know that. In a relationship I'm doubtful mainly because I have learned how victim minded you are. You've got to stand for your truths and take responsibility for your choices. I don't want a man who is going to make a decision with me in private and deny ever doing so in public"

Liyema: "Why do I suddenly feel the need to prove to you that I can let go of my victim mentality?" he put the cup down and held her waist "Though I don't know how" because I really

didn't realize that I'm like that. Or maybe I am in denial" he added.

Vuvu: "Who was responsible for your marriage ending, the second one that is?" she looked so deep into his eyes he felt she was reading his soul. Liyema broke eye contact to think more.

Liyema: "I was" his heart beating like no other as he admitted it.

Vuvu: "There's your start" she smiled.

Liyema: "Dammit, Nomvula. It was just easier blaming someone else and now you opened a whole

new other door" Vuvu laughed.
Vuvu: "It's always fun to blame others but it doesn't build character. It's actually the first time you've called me by my real name. It's like you fell in love with a stripper and have been calling her by her exotic stage name all this time until you learned she's actually a boring primary school teacher during the day" they both laughed.

Liyema: "I feel like I got a treasure box but when I opened it the first time, I only found stones not knowing there was a

secret compartment that held the real treasure. That's how it feels to me but the stripper to teacher is also accurate" more laughter "So the risk advisor advises that I not sell my shares?" he asked.

Vuvu: "She advises that you go think about whether you really want to let go of your business based on temporary emotional triggers. The choice is yours and you'll take responsibility for whatever consequence comes afterwards. If you hang out with me long enough, you'll be self-

responsible, self-aware, self-reliant. Just self, self, self just not selfish please" he laughed.

Liyema: "Maybe after being allowed by the women in my life to be reliant on them from my mom, to both my ex-wives and now Portia. I need a woman who is going to leave me to the wolves" Vuvu laughed.

Vuvu: "Not leave you to the wolves. More like inspire you to lead the pack. Be alpha" she kissed him.

Liyema: "This has been an interesting talk but there's the

issue of the boyfriend"

Vuvu: "I dumped him long ago because he didn't add anything to my life but it still doesn't mean I'll stop dating because I don't know your intentions with me"

Liyema: "Today has made my intention shift completely"

Vuvu: "What does that mean?"

Liyema: "So much but I can't say yet. I just ask that you not hide Nomvula the analyst from me again"

Vuvu: "You'll fall in love, Elephant"

Liyema: "Love has never been a bad thing. As long as it's

authentic so as long as you don't feed me anything to get fake love"

Vuvu: "I've been many things but desperate has never been one of them. I know what I bring to the table. Do you?"

Liyema: "It turns out I thought I did but now I need to go back to my personal inventory to check what I've got because I know where you stand. Today you made it crystal clear"

Vuvu: "Well until you know let's just get back to basics" she kissed him "I've never showed you

my room before" she giggled.

Liyema: "I think we should tell Portia about us"

Vuvu: "If that's what you feel is best for you. I'm not going to apologize for actually having feeling for you. I do. Unlike Portia I'm willing to admit to the world that I knew you were in a relationship when I got together with you"

Liyema: "What does that mean? Did she say anything?"

Vuvu: "She didn't forget about it. So wanna see my bedroom" she kissed him. He forgot about the

unique blend of coffee and got a tour of the bedroom. He felt like he had unlocked a new level in a game when he laid her down on her bed as they'd be sharing the space together for the first time. He was still stunned by their conversation. He compared her to an onion that had many layers and he couldn't wait to peel off more. She suddenly became so attractive to him when their pillow talk was not sex positions but important matters in life. He liked being around Portia too but the last time he felt his mind got

so stimulated by a woman was with Ntombi but he felt that Vuvu challenged him even more because she didn't want to baby a man and set clear boundaries. He knew where he stood with her. She didn't hide that being with him would mean financial stability she'd been wanting and it was refreshing to him. She was a woman who wanted a man to show her that he was a leader and for that reason, he felt he had to withhold talking about things such as a serious relationship with her because he

felt a bit insecure as to what he brought to the table that would satisfy her needs in other ways that didn't involve sex. The woman he was with was totally different to the one he'd been having sex with. He wondered if he had met her sooner, would he have been with Portia because what she brought to the table suddenly lacked as she mostly went with whatever he said. She never gave her advice on the share sales through he asked. She encouraged the flight option he initially thought was best

while Vuvu encouraged the fight option. To fight meant seeing Seta disappointed while flight meant Seta having the last laugh yet again. Up until his conversation with Vuvu, he never felt he had another option mainly because of the victim mentality she found unattractive. A mentality he wanted to change as in yesterday, but he knew it would be easier said than done. He realised that it had been what everyone told him to do but he couldn't understand why it had a

different effect coming from
Nomvula. 🤍

S2-INSERT 78 (NOT EDITED)

Liyema had missed the boys so he decided to rest his mind from the women in his life and his business and just spend time with his boys. He could hear them from upstairs as they were making lots of noise in the lounge and for a second it sounded like the good old times. Portia was not home but he'd gotten used to it.

Banele: "Dudes, answer this"

Liyema heard him say out loud as he walked downstairs. He decided to eavesdrop to get an idea of what they were into since it had been a while since spending time with them "If you have a daughter, would you be happy if your daughter dates a man like you?" he completed his question. Bukhosi: "Of course I'd be more than happy. I know she'd have a guy who is level headed, who knows what he wants...oh and who is loyal to her because I'd be loyal to her mother" he answered first and confidently so.

Bubele: "Ummm...", he was still thinking.

Bukhosi: "That's just a flat out no... I would never want my daughter to date a player like me" he answered on behalf of Bubele before they all laughed.

Bubele: "That's why I've got absolutely no business bringing kids when I'm still a kid myself. So you're right, bra" they laughed again "And you?" he looked at Banele.

Banele: "I'm not too shabby actually" he answered.

Bukhosi: "No, ndoda...the Quest is

would you be happy if your daughter dated someone like you? We didn't ask about shabbiness. We're all not too shabby. Would your kind of shabby be the kind you'd be happy to see next to your daughter someday, looks excluded"

Banele: "I'm actually not a player and I've got my shit together since working at Ndlovu Communications but nha...for my daughter it's still not good enough. She needs a man even better than Bukhosi" they all laughed again.

Bukhosi: "I wonder what

Bandile's answer would be. I think with this Kwanele girl, he's getting there". Is she pretty?"

Bubele: "She's alright. You know we can't compliment too much" the others nodded "Do you think Abongile would want a man like dad?" he whispered.

Banele: "Zip...no comment" he continued checking his newsfeeds. Liyema suddenly felt a bit low after that answer.

Bukhosi: "He's okay but I don't think he'll enjoy seeing his daughter being played as he did mom. So from me it's a no...no girl

wants to compete with another in a man's life so Abo won't want someone like dad" Liyema's heart sank.

Bubele: "I definitely think mom dreamt about being with a man like Tamkhulu. I think she kinda found him" the others nodded "Okay we're not relationship analysts so let's stop" the others nodded once again "Dad, come on. Are you still shaving your legs?" he shouted and the others laughed and Liyema couldn't help but laugh softly too.

Liyema: "Let's go" he appeared

"What do you guys want to do today?" he took his keys.

Banele: "Feed us first" he looked at his father before tapping Liyema's shoulder and walking to the door.

Liyema: "I've really actually missed you guys. Bukhosi is as good as not living here"

Bukhosi: "I'm here everyday actually just not in the main house. We're here now" Liyema nodded.

Bubele: "No talking about what I intend to do with my life please" he followed behind "I get that

enough from mom" he added.

Liyema: "Today is just catching up and having fun"

Bubele: "Hallelujah" he walked out.

Liyema: "You could come live here if you feel suffocated by your mom's questions"

Bubele: "Nha, the good food is at the other house" they all got in the car "She's actually not suffocating me. She just wants to be assured that I won't be some bum someday" they laughed.

Liyema: "How is your mom?" the boys looked at each other.

Bukhosi: "Why are you asking?"

the car started to move.

Liyema: "I don't know...for interest sake maybe" he put his seatbelt on when the car drove out of the gate.

Bukhosi: "She's good. The baby you wanted to sue her for having is growing well too"

Liyema: "How many times must I apologize for that?"

Bukhosi: "Maybe until you realize that it's not us you should be apologizing to"

Bubele: "Khosi, let's just give Dad a break today" he pleaded and Bukhosi just shrugged.

Liyema: "Would you guys please be my best men at the wedding?" .

Banele: "We'd be honoured to"

Liyema nodded and smiled "When is this wedding?" he asked.

Liyema: "I think early December.

You'll have to ask sis Portia

because I'm too busy with other things to focus on a wedding"

Bukhosi: "Women prefer it that way. You just go do what she says and disappear again" they

laughed. Liyema drove to a place where they could get some lunch because he was just as hungry.

Hlomphe and Lefa also had some

son and dad one on one and coincidentally they went to the same place that Liyema took the boys. They waved before choosing a table.

Hlomphe: "Shouldn't we go sit with them?" he asked his father.

Lefa: "I think their father wants to spend time with them alone just as we're doing right now" a waiter came and Lefa ordered what Hlomphe said he'll have. He wasn't hungry so he just got himself a drink.

Hlomphe: "Is that a part of the code too?" Lefa looked confused.

Lefa: "Code?" he raised a brow.

Hlomphe: "We've been back from the funeral for a few weeks now but I've been trying to determine everything that falls under the code"

Lefa: "Bru, you'll have to give me more details than that because I can think of a number of codes and I don't know which you are talking about"

Hlomphe: "The man code" it hit Lefa what he was on about and Lefa laughed "Don't laugh, dad. I feel like I'm missing out. What if I'm as big as my brothers and I

still don't know anything? That's why I asked for the implants so I could hear things" he looked down and Lefa took a deep breath. He tapped Hlompho's hand but the young boy didn't look up so Lefa raised his head himself.

Lefa: "First of all, you're not missing out on anything" Hlompho looked down again but back up because he wanted to know what Lefa had to say "A bro code is like a deal between men. There are just certain things that men do not do to each other as that

would be betrayal of the code"

Hlomphe: "What things?"

Lefa: "Things like deliberately hurting a friend" Hlomphe nodded "Things like giving a chocolate to the girl that your friend likes"

Hlomphe's eyes shot open.

Hlomphe: "So I broke the code? I gave Gail a sweet and my friend Samson likes her" he looked so disappointed in himself that Lefa had to contain his laughter.

Lefa: "Why did you give Gail this sweet?"

Hlomphe: "She kept looking at it so I decided to give it to her"

because mom keeps a packet of them so I knew I could just ask for another after school"

Lefa: "So you don't like Gail?"

Hlomphe: "I do but not like Samson does. I like Nadia but she does not even notice me"

Lefa: "How could Nadia not see that Gwala charm" Hlomphe just shrugged.

Hlomphe: "Nadia is Gail's sister. She is not at our school because she doesn't have hearing impairment but I see her when they pick up Gail"

Lefa: "If she is Gail's sister and

Gail is deaf that could mean Nadia signs too right?" Hlomphe nodded "Then go say hi to her. I hope she is not a teenager"

Hlomphe laughed.

Hlomphe: "They are twins. Banele said I should find out when Gail's birthday is so I can buy Nadia a chocolate slab since it'll also be her birthday. Is that good advice?"

Lefa: "Does it feel like good advice to you?" Hlomphe nodded "Then that's all that counts. Have mom help you pick the nicest chocolate, she's very clued up with them"

Hlomphe nodded. "And about the code the best way to keep it is by being yourself, respecting others, not keeping quiet when you're hurt, be happy, and have love for others"

Hlomphe: "I'm doing all of that"

Lefa: "Your mother has been asking when you'll visit"

Hlomphe: "The next school holidays" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "You're still happy in both homes right?" Hlomphe nodded.

Hlomphe: "I just like it here a little bit more. Is that bad?"

Lefa shook his head. Their orders

came and Lefa watched Hlompho stuff his face like one who would be asked to share his food.

Banele: "It seems he's asking his father about the bro code" he laughed.

Bukhosi: "Who brought that up in the first place? You guys are bombarding him with information too much guys. Remember Hlompho's perspective on life is not like ours. Him bringing it up so long after the funeral shows its bothering him"

Bubele: "He'll be alright. I think he got the right meaning from

his dad"

Liyema: "You guys are fluent in his language hey"

Bukhosi: "I don't think I'll say fluent. We just open to learning each day. Mom is fluent since she went to class for over a year"

Liyema: "I'm glad none of you came out with any problems"

Banele: "It's only a problem when you look at it that way. Hlompho is the happiest little guy that I know and filled with love I've never witnessed in anyone, not even a kid. He's just unique no wonder God made the entire world"

see just how unique"

Liyema: "Is it genetic? Is your mother's baby going to possibly be born deaf too" the boys looked at each other.

Banele: "We don't know and they never mentioned such. We'll love her no matter what" he smiled.

Liyema: "When last did you guys see Amahle?"

Bukhosi: "Last weekend actually. She's happy"

Liyema: "I've gathered that too whenever I see her. I miss her though"

Banele: "I've gotten used to it.

So when can we move into our house?" he asked with excitement.

Liyema: "Not anytime soon" he looked at all of them "I'm really proud of you four. I honestly thought one or more of you would have made me grandpa by now" the boys laughed.

Bukhosi: "Not anytime soon. When we gain full independence we just might"

Liyema: "Keep on being responsible"

Bubele: "With agent Ntombikayise we have no other choice" he joked

and they all laughed "Do you ever miss her?" he asked unexpectedly. Liyema: "Some moments I do. Like when I heard you guys laugh in the lounge she'd usually run where you are to get in on the joke" Banele: "She still does that" he laughed and Liyema nodded. They left first and Hlompho wished they could all just spend the day together because he didn't understand why they could not but Lefa said no. The two of them went to do their fun things for the day too.

Later that afternoon Liyema went to Vuvu's place. After weeks of enjoying her company he found it harder and harder to stay away from her. She was also always happy to see him but that day she had a feeling that something was off about him. She sat down next to him and looked at him.

Vuvu: "What's wrong? Didn't Portia take it well? Well I would also have taken it badly if I was her"

Liyema: "Nomvula" he turned to face her and held her hands "I

haven't told Portia about us and I have decided not to" Vuvu nodded continuously clearly disappointed. .

Vuvu: "So I'll be the side chick?"

Liyema: "I want you in my life and I know that being a side chick is not what you want forever.

Portia is never going to accept a sister wife if I go about it like this. I'll tell her that I don't want one wife but I'm not going to mention you"

Vuvu: "What are you saying?"

Liyema: "I'm saying that I'm putting an end to us for now until

such a time when Portia is ready to welcome another woman into my life"

Vuvu: "I'm not going to wait for you and her to decide that, Liyema"

Liyema: "I understand"

Vuvu: "What changed?"

Liyema: "My kids. I think I sometimes forget I have people looking up to me. I'm tired of being a disappointment of a father. I'm sorry"

Vuvu: "Well because it's for your kids, I understand" he felt warm lips against hers.

Liyema: "Let me talk to Portia. I think I owe her the truth and that's that I don't want one woman in my life"

Vuvu: "Okay, I guess this is goodbye then"

Liyema: "More like see you later. I owe it to Portia to do this the right way"

Vuvu: "I said I understand. I wish you the best of luck"

Liyema: "Please wait for me" Vuvu shook her head.

Vuvu: "I can't and I don't want to. I take my hat off to you for wanting to this right though. As

much as I'm not Portia's best friend, I've started to feel bad. So you're going to move?"

Liyema: "I'll give my brother proxy to my shares. That way I won't have to let go of my company and I won't have to look at that scum all day every day. I think the move will be good for me"

Vuvu: "Okay" she blinked get tears away. She'd fallen in love with him already so to hear that he was ending things and moving away hurt badly.

Liyema: "Please don't hate me" he

pleaded.

Vuvu: "I can't hate a man who is considerate of his children, Liyema. It's cute that you want to be hero in their eyes" she wiped her tears "And I don't know why I'm crying" she laughed.

Liyema: "Let me ease Portia into this decision. Once she processed it and should she accept we can try again if you're not taken. I know you'll most probably meet someone new tomorrow but I'm praying that you'll wait"

Vuvu: "I can't promise anything"

Liyema: "Today I just realized

that my boys are at the age to treat women like this. I can't act like a young man for the rest of my life. I know I want you in my life but if we do it the way that we are we might ruin any chance of it being for good" Vuvu nodded. Vuvu: "I think it's best that you go now"

Liyema: "I'm sorry"

Vuvu: "It's all my fault. It's good that you'll be moving too. The less I see you the better. Smart move on the shares. Who knows this Sita might actually get tired of being there and give up the

shares? I think he's there just to rub you off the wrong way" they both laughed.

Liyema: "I think so too. Hopefully me deciding not to play the game will make him lose interest" Vuvu nodded "I'll miss this. I feel like I can talk about anything with you" he added.

Vuvu: "I told you you'll fall in love" she laughed softly.

Liyema: "I have and you...do you love me?" Vuvu nodded "Then wait until I've fixed things that way I can introduce you to my family in a dignified manner" he added.

Vuvu: "Love is not enough, Liyema so I really can't make any promises. I think you should leave before we end up having emotional sex"

Liyema: "That won't be bad" he kissed her.

Vuvu: "No" she said after breaking the kiss "Rather go now while things are still okay between us" Liyema gave a heartbroken nod before standing to take his keys. It was one of the toughest choices that he ever had to make but as heartbreaking as it was it felt

right. He didn't want to leave her but he knew if he wanted to make her a permanent part of his life to make her a mistress might ruin that. Vuvu was crying and it felt strange because she couldn't remember the last time she cried over a man. His reason was why she didn't make a scene. She always thought a man who put his children first was attractive. As Liyema sat in his car looking at her door, she was leaning against the door already missing him too. Liyema drove home and found Portia busy holding different

coloured cloths. She was trying to check which colour she liked for her bridesmaid dresses but she stopped what she was doing when Liyema said he had something urgent to discuss with her. He didn't beat around the bush and told her straight out that he didn't want to be in a monogamous marriage. She was so in shock that she had to go get herself water.

Liyema: "I understand if you do not want to be a part of such, Portia"

Portia: "When did you realize

this?"

Liyema: "Recently actually. I met a woman and she has qualities that I love in a woman"

Portia: "And I don't?"

Liyema: "I wouldn't be with you if you didn't. You both have qualities that I find attractive"

Portia: "Who is this woman?"

Liyema: "It doesn't matter as of now but she is someone I'd like to have in my life someday. I am just hoping that you will agree to welcoming a sister wife"

Portia: "And if I don't?"

Liyema: "Would you rather I go

cheat?" Portia looked down.

Portia: "I'd rather you be faithful to me, Liyema"

Liyema: "Did you know that I was married when we met? Give me the truthful answer, I won't be mad" he looked at her for a long while.

Portia: "Maybe I heard about that somewhere but I didn't think it was true"

Liyema: "But you learned it was and that should have made you realize the type of man that I am. There are monogamous people out there but I'm just not one of

them. I thought I'd tell you now before you make vows to me only to learn that I want to make the same vows to the same woman. I'm not going to make you welcome another woman now I'm not going to make you marry me on the same time I'll be marrying another woman. But someday in future I'm going to come to you and tell you that I'm ready to take another wife and I want you to be prepared. I tried it with Ntombi too and she was not the type to be married to a man who has another wife. So if that's the

case with you, I'll understand too"

Portia: "Wow"

Liyema: "I'm sorry but I am tired of living a lie. I don't want force you to do anything. I'll be the father that I am to our daughter. I promise that even if you decide to break up with me, I won't let you suffer like you did with Abo"

Portia: "I need some air" he took her keys and left. She called Vuvu wanting to vent but Vuvu was nursing her own heartbreak so she told Portia it wasn't a good time. Liyema was left feeling like

a mountain had been removed from his shoulders. He knew he might get dumped but he didn't regret being open with her.

Ntombi was home alone and it afforded her time to get all of the work she was behind on finished. She loved being her own boss and was glad that Lefa convinced her to go on the business journey with him. None of the children would be back home because the quads were going to spend the weekend at Liyema's and Bonolo asked if Hlompho could

come over later because she hadn't spoiled him in a long while. When Lefa walked inside the house it smelled great because Ntombi was cooking. The dog came inside with Lefa because she greeted him at the gate already. The person who didn't like the fog inside the house was not home so Lefa allowed Brown some luxury. Ntombi heard the door close and Brown's excited bark so she knew that it was her husband. He was the only one who promised to return home after the day's activities. The best hug

from behind proved she was right. They were still deep in the honeymoon phase so they couldn't keep their hands off each other for long.

Ntombi: "I know that he loves me 'cause he told me so I know that he loves me 'cause his feelings show And when he stares at me, you see he cares for me You see how he is so deep in love. I know that he loves me 'cause it's obvious I know that he loves me 'cause it's me he trusts And he's missin' me if he's not kissin' me And when he looks at me, his

brown eyes tell his soul" she sang along to Beyoncé song that played in the background. It had started to be one of her favourites songs again since he had those intoxicating brown eyes. The dog barked again "No, not you Brown. I was talking about your dad's brown eyes" she barked again and they laughed. Busta rhymes "I know what you want" came on and Ntombi started to move those hips while Lefa just looked at her. She only had a sports bra and short tight on so he could see her entire frame as

she danced to old school music
"Where were you during that
time, chief?" she asked her
husband while dancing.

Lefa: "I hope you're not implying
that I was still too young when
this song came out"

Ntombi: "Then dance with me do
I know that you weren't in
nappies while I got down to it"

Lefa laughed as he watched her
continue to dance. She took his
hands in hers and kissed him
before placing his hands on her
hips which her swaying according
to the rhythm of the song

making him start to move also. He was certain he looked like a fool but who better to make himself a fool in front of than his wife. When Ntombi's arms went around his neck and his explored her hips, her behind and bare waist the moment became one of intoxicating fun. He would lead her out and then have her back in his arms again. In the last part of the song she danced with her back turned to him. To feel her full behind grind against his front made his manhood jump to full life. Lefa: "I don't remember my teen

years at those dances being this fun" Ntombi giggled when he kissed her neck.

Ntombi: "That's because I wasn't there" she closed her eyes when his hand rubbed between her thighs "You were busy promising some girl with a perm that you'll marry her" they both laughed.

Lefa: "When did you compile this playlist? It takes one back"

Ntombi: "The things I get done when I'm alone will shock you, baby" she turned her head to look at him "You're horny" she looked at his narrowed eyes and he just

laughed because he didn't want to deny it.

Lefa: "I've been trying to discipline myself since your hospital stay but I'm failing right now"

Ntombi: "The doctor said it was stress. I don't remember you stressing me" she turned to give him a full passionate kiss "And it's been three weeks now" she whispered while unbuckling his belt. He helped her do it because he couldn't wait anymore. He'd been afraid to touch her since that hospital episode. When the

dog barked in the lounge they forgot they weren't alone. Lefa closed the door of the kitchen and returned to his wife. The dancing proved to be the foreplay they needed because both of their bodies were ready to be one. The kitchen floor was not the most comfortable but they didn't feel just how uncomfortable it was until afterwards when they got back to reality.

Ntombi: "Did you feel that?" she tilted her head to look at him smiling.

Lefa: "I didn't want to get

excited for nothing" his hand was still on her belly "You finally kicked for daddy" he said with excitement. .

Ntombi: "That was just a little movement. Towards the due date, you'll feel the real kicks and perhaps even see her move"

Lefa: "Like see her, see her?" he laughed.

Ntombi: "With the boys I literally used to see the bumps when they were kicking. It was so creepy yet so amazing" she laughed.

Lefa: "We should definitely take videos of such then so she'll

someday see what she was doing"

Ntombi: "To see you this excited makes me happy"

Lefa: "I've just never been one to have everything all at once, baby. Life gave me one thing at a time but now everything is just happening and I am really happy. Since we have gotten work done, I think we should go on that honeymoon. We don't want Reth and Abbo to think we don't like their gift"

Ntombi: "That's true. Travelling already makes my feet swell up so let's do it soon. Do you think our

staff thinks we take advantage just because we're the bosses"

Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "They should just bare with us until after this getaway.

We've got a great team though.

I'd love for students to someday do their SAICA articles with us"

Ntombi: "Yeah and then have

Bandile beg us to give his

girlfriend a chance" they laughed

"What will we name our

daughter? Do you want to keep

the Sotho name tradition?" she

smiled.

Lefa: "Let's first get off this

hard floor please" he stretched and Ntombi laughed. She wore his shirt after they both stood "Do you want to continue with it?" he asked her.

Ntombi: "I don't mind as long as it has a beautiful meaning"

Lefa: "I think she should have two names. She is a Xhosa girl after all with a dash of Sotho blood"

Ntombi: "I think we'll know what to call her when we see her.

Imagine calling someone by name when you've never even met her"

Lefa: "Imagine indeed" they

laughed "Let's let her introduce herself" Ntombikayise nodded.

"You didn't feel any cramps right?" he looked at her body.

Ntombi: "With the slow thrusts you were giving me there's no way that would have happened. In fact I don't think you gave me all of you" she raised a brow.

Lefa: "Maybe half"

Ntombi: "I knew it" she threw a dishcloth at him and he laughed ", Don't do that, baby. I'll say should I be uncomfortable" she sulked. .

Lefa: "I'm sorry" he kissed her

"Mimi says she'll come surprise Hlompho with a visit tomorrow. That after she gave me an earful about how I've been keeping the child to myself since we've gotten married"

Ntombi: "No one is stopping her from seeing him"

Lefa: "Exactly what I told her. I told her I'm not going to force my boy if he doesn't want to go there. I did encourage him to go though"

Ntombi: "You did good, baby. Should I dish up for you now?"

Lefa: "I'll do it" she smiled at

him.

Ntombi: "I'll be right back then" she took her clothes and went to the bathroom. Lefa washed his hands before opening the pots to see what she made. He could also cook rice and veggies because Ntombi taught him but that was about all he could make "Can you believe that she ate the couch again?" Ntombi said. .

Lefa: "And that's why Tamkhulu doesn't want her inside. Did you take her out?" Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "Poppy wants us to go on

those couples retreats someday.
Not sure which movie she saw it
on"

Lefa: "Not possible for us yet,
sthandwa sam. We're only going to
the next trip because it was a
gift but we don't have the time
to keep on going away"

Ntombi: "I don't want to anyway.
You're right about not having
time. I think I should have three
months maternity leave instead
of four" Lefa looked at her.

Lefa: "Will that be enough for you
to heal?"

Ntombi: "That's why I'm hoping

to have a natural birth this time around and not an operation"

Lefa: "I read up on it. I think that's what I'd like too. It would have been even better if you could do it at home. Away from those bright hospital lights"

Ntombi: "I think that's pushing it a bit, Sthandwa Sam. You'll most probably faint" Lefa laughed.. .

Lefa: "That's a possibility but I'll recover soon after so I can hold your hand and take deep breaths with you" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "I'd like that very much.

In our next appointment we should really have an in depth talk with the doctor about our birth plans" Lefa nodded. They had dinner before cuddling on the couch naked while trying to watch movies which was difficult to do between all the kisses and love making.

Ntombi: "Maybe we should invite Mimi and her husband over for dinner" Lefa sighed "I know it's not how you want to spend your weekend but it's for Hlompho" she added.

Lefa: "Okay, baby. That's if the

man will even come"

Ntombi: "Only one way to find out by asking" Lefa nodded. They enjoyed the time by themselves so much they wished they could have more of it. Ntombi fell asleep in his arms leaving him to finish the movie by himself but at least he was not the only one awake because he felt more movement in her belly and even went as far as changing the gun shot filled movie to a more "kid friendly" movie that noted him to sleep too. ❤️

S2-INSERT 79

Lefa was on his way back to the office from a meeting and when he crossed the road, he saw a new tattoo shop had opened so he decided to go have it checked out since there was still time. He remembered when people told him that when you have your first tattoo you'd want another shortly after and they were right. He had two already and the urge to have another pulled at him until he was greeted by a tattoo artist who was decorated

almost from head to toe. He introduced himself as Emile. Emile asked questions about Lefa and his relationship with tattoos.

Emile: "So would you like to add another piece of art to your collection?" he asked Lefa when he learned Lefa already has them.

"We've got amazing new designs and colouring" he showed Lefa around.

Lefa: "I was actually just here to check out this joint" he looked around.

Emile: "We offer private services too but it's a bit more expensive

of course. We come to your house and do it in the comfort of your home but our place is not so bad either" Legs nodded.

Lefa: "You know what, I think that I'll add more"

Emile: "My man" they fist bumped
"So do you need time choosing or do you have your own design in mind?" he asked.

Lefa: "This will be the most simplest one I've gotten actually. I want to have my children's birth dates tattooed on my arm"

Emile smiled. He was a father too so he has his son's face tattooed

on his back so he understood why that tattoo was important to Lefa.

Emile: "Many parents have that request and because it's so special, I'm going to do it but first let me show you our shop and its hygiene standards"

Lefa: "Thanks, man". Emile showed Lefa the shop and Lefa was happy with its hygiene standards. He also looked at Emile's previous work to ensure that the artist knew what he was doing. When he was happy with everything it was time to

get the tattoo and fortunately the shop was not busy that day so he didn't need an appointment. Lefa chose how he wanted the tattoo to look and soon had his long sleeve shirt off to get the art on his arm. The stinging pain was didn't even make him flinch and Lefa was the type of client Emile liked working with. It was done in about an hour since it was not a complicated design. When Emile took a picture with Lefa's phone Lefa was very happy with the outcome. The tattoo was wrapped to prevent

contamination and Lefa didn't need instructions on how to care for it because he'd done it twice before. He returned to the office a very happy man. The business was picking up and Ntombi was so happy to welcome yet another member to their staff. Lefa knocked on her door and walked in when he saw she was alone.

Ntombi: "weren't they happy about something?" she stood to go to him.

Lefa: "You know we always deliver work that pleased out clients" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Then why did you take so long, baby?"

Lefa: "To get this done" he took his phone out to show her the tattoo. He went to close the door as he wanted to take his shirt off to show it to her.

Ntombi: "Without telling me?" she sulked.

Lefa: "Should I have told you?" he looked confused.

Ntombi: "I don't know, baby. I have taken some ownership of your body so I feel I should have been given a little heads up" when she laughed he felt himself relax

a bit.

Lefa: "I'm sorry that I didn't tell you about it. You don't tell me when you go colour your hair, so I thought it's the same thing" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "You got the quads day wrong. It's 29 not 30" Lefa's eyes shot open and Ntombi laughed out "I'm kidding, you got it right, sthandwa sam" she added still laughing.

Lefa: "Woman, you'll give me a heart attack" she laughed.

Ntombi: "I like how you had their day written once and put times

four next to it" she smiled looking at the screen.

Lefa: "Now all I'm waiting for is for the princess to make her grand entrance so I can add her date"

Ntombi: "You could just have waited until she's born"

Lefa: "The urge to have it done was there and I did. I don't like to over think things. That's more your thing" he kissed her. She glided her fingers gently over the wrap.

Ntombi: "Is it painful?" Lefa shook his head "So I don't have a

spot?" she pretended to be sad and felt him his her cheek.

Lefa: "You're engraved in my heart" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Whatever" she blushed ""Will you ever stop getting yourself inked?" she asked.

Lefa: "I want to look like that skeleton man" Ntombi frowned.

Ntombi: "Who do you think will walk next to you looking like that?" Lefa pointed at her and she shook her head quickly "Nope, I'm not getting involved. You clearly line pain, Mr Gwala but next time please tell me. This is

not like hair dye because this is permanent" she added and he nodded.

Lefa: "I hear you co-owner of my body"

Ntombi: "And I know your body is glad because I take far better care of it than you do" Lefa laughed out.

Lefa: "It's not complaining, Siba wam. Let me get back to work. I just wanted to show you the tat"

Ntombi'm: "I love it" she kissed him.

Lefa: "Next I'll add my beautiful ladies" he put his shirt back on

and she helped him button it up"
The phone rang and Ntombi
picked it up. It was a woman who
introduced herself as Cindy who
owned a local business magazine.

Cindy: "Mrs Gwala, I'd like to
make an appointment with you as
I prefer to discuss this
personally"

Ntombi: "I don't think that I
have time during the week
unfortunately. Could you please
tell me what this is about?"

Cindy: "We are looking to write an
article about you for our next
publication" Ntombi's eyes shot

open "I sent an email but I don't think I was given the correct one hence I decided to call instead.

When do you think you'll be free?"

Ntombi looked at Lefa.

Ntombi: "Tell you what, Cindy. Why don't I call you back when I have made up my mind?"

Cindy: "No problem but please don't keep me waiting for too long. I've heard your story from a reliable source but it's always good to hear it from the horse's mouth" she smiled.

Ntombi: "Now I'm interested in this source of yours" she looked at

Lefa "I'll let you know what I've decided soon. Thank you so much for considering me". Ntombi looked shocked but felt honoured "Did you approach a business magazine so they'd run an article on me?" she asked Lefa.

Lefa: "You give me way to much credit, baby" he laughed "So there's a magazine that wants to feature my beautiful wife" he walked closer feeling so proud.

Ntombi: "I'm sure that it's a misunderstanding. Surely there are far bigger businesswomen this editor can do a story on" she

said while pressing her phone
"Plus it's not a small publication so
why would they want to feature
someone who hasn't even done
this for a year and I have
partners so I hope..." Lefa kissed
her mainly because he was excited
on her behalf but also to just
shut her up.

Lefa: "I'm proud of you" he said
after breaking the kiss "I'm sure
one of your clients, if not all have
been giving great reviews and so
they should because you are
amazing at what you do. So
please instead of putting yourself

down just please accept this gift as a reward for your hard work. Who cares if there are women who have been in business longer than you? What matters is that you're in this thing and someone clearly recognises you as one of the women whose story should be heard" he kissed the tip of her nose.

Ntombi: "It's just so surreal" she smiled.

Lefa: "You deserve it. Just don't forget to mention me" he joked and they both laughed.

Ntombi: "Maybe I can get them

to interview us both since we're in this together"

Lefa: "This is to honour you"

Ntombi: "I'm going to be a feature in a magazine that had interviewed celebrity businesswomen" she started to get down to display her happiness and Lefa laughed "I'm sure they'll want to take pictures" she looked at herself.

Lefa: "Baby, you'll first have to call back and tell the woman that you're accepting her invite to a meeting" he looked at her "And you look breath-taking already" he

smiled.

Ntombi: "No, baby I need like a power suit. Look how the women who have been interviewed by this magazine look" she showed them pictures she found on Google. "Oh my goodness, I don't think a suit will be fitting with this baby bump" she held her tummy.

Lefa: "Siba, you're beautiful in those dresses. No one said you should wear a suit. Now call and tell her you'll meet up with her to hear what she has to say before planning clothes". There was a

knock on the door and when given permission to enter Zane opened the door.

Zane: "Sir, I need your help.

Things just aren't adding up with the account I'm busy with, so I need you to please check if I'm right. I'm sorry to disturb" he looked at Ntombi.

Lefa: "I'll be right there" Zane nodded before walking out "Call the Cindy woman. We'll talk about this on our way home. Stop overthinking the outfit you're going to wear. This is not a fashion magazine" he laughed

when Ntombikayise frowned. He quickly went to assist his junior with something before getting back to his own work. He was the one who made Cindy aware of the fact that there's a new woman in business but he didn't make Cindy contact Ntombikayise. Cindy must clearly have found something that interested her in Ntombi and Lefa couldn't wait to hold a copy of the publication that would feature his wife and show it to everyone even complete strangers at the grocery store. Ntombi

being featured also meant exposure for their business.

Mimi kept making empty excuses for not showing up to the plans they had with her and Lefa stopped bothering her when Mimi suddenly said Hlompho shouldn't visit for the school holiday either.

Seta had just come back from a long day at work and he went to take a shower to wash off the sweat and relief the stress. To hear that Liyema was not selling his shares had messed up with

his plans greatly. He heard a knock on the door and when he opened he quickly pulled the person inside before looking out of anyone had saw her.

Seta: "What are you doing here?" he turned to face his unexpected guest.

Portia: "I can't do it anymore" she looked at him. After living at a B&B for a couple of days, she decided to go see him.

Seta: "What do you mean, Portia? You remember how hard it was to get you on the inside?"

Portia: "This plan was not

supposed to go on this long, Seta. I'm tired of this man already" she shouted. They both took a deep breath before she went to pour herself a strong drink.

Seta: "You're forgetting who we are doing this for?" he walked towards her.

Portia: "Of course I haven't" a tear rolled down her cheek.

Seta: "I don't believe that the father killed Zingisa, Portia. That damn family is hiding who really did this. Don't you want to make them pay for what they did to your best friend?" Portia sat still

crying.

Portia: "I'm tired of dragging my baby into all of this"

Seta: "You getting pregnant was not part of the plan but it happened and guess what? It has so far been your ticket inside. After struggling to get you close to them, Abo came along"

Portia: "We've done absolutely nothing so far, Seta. There's no way this man will leave everything to me. He wants us to sign a prenup to secure his assets for goodness sake. I've been waiting for you to tell me that I

don't have to act anymore but the more I plan this wedding the more silent you've become. Now he wants to take a second wife"

Seta: "Why the hell do you care? You won't get married to him" he sat next to her.

Portia: "Remind me what the plan is again" she looked at him.

Seta: "We get them to trust you and then we take them down from the inside. I wouldn't have bought those shares had you not told me to approach the ex-wife, Portia. We both know how crazy he was when he realized that I

own half of his company. Now that I'm on the inside I can defraud him"

Portia: "No" she stood "I'm tired of all of this. You're not the one doing all the dirty work. This man is just so full of himself. Maybe Mlungisi Elephant really did kill Zingisa"

Seta: "He had no motive. His wife knew he had multiple mistresses so you can't tell me that he killed her because he feared she'd tell the wife about them"

Portia: "So far I've found absolutely nothing. Why do you

think I am getting tired?"

Seta: "Liyema might have shot her in cold blood and framed his father, Portia"

Portia: "Yet you are so comfortable with me living with the man. I can't do this. I'm taking my daughter and leaving the country"

Seta: "Zingisa did everything for you, Portia. She helped feed your family after your father died. At least do this for her so she'll get justice. Do you still remember the loud bang of the gun right before the phone died?" Portia started

to cry. She was younger than Zingisa but they had a close bond. When Seta approached her with his theory of how he suspected that Zingisa's killer was still roaming free, she became as determined as him to find out who it was and make them pay. She knew that Liyema was married when she met him and she used her seduction powers as a point of entry in his life. They figured should she be close to him even if it was by being a mistress, she'd get access to his private space soon after so she'd start digging

for the truth but Liyema didn't allow the their thing to go beyond a one night stand because he feared Ntombi finding out. The pregnancy was a game changer and Seta gave her a detailed plan on how to use that to get close to Liyema which also failed because Liyema was set on keeping it a secret from Ntombi. The issue with Elaine offered them the perfect opportunity to finally break Liyema and Ntombi up. They knew Ntombi wouldn't most likely want to reconcile with Liyema after learning he had a

love child and they were right. After that Portia made moves that landed her in the heart of the family because they are all welcoming her as compared to before.

Seta: "We are so close. Let's make this bastard bankrupt before we kill him. I know he killed her. I feel it in my gut. He hated her to the core"

Portia: "We should have bankrupted him long ago, but all your plans end up failing. I'm not going to pretend anymore. My child and I are leaving"

Seta: "You'll need money to survive in a new country. He has the money. Like I've said, I've got access to his business account now. We'll take all his money and then kill him. We'll skip the country after that but for now act like you don't mind welcoming a second wife. And on your wedding day, he'll find out that he has nothing and just as he is processing that we serve him his bullet. An eye for an eye. This man killed her. He was abusive to her all through their marriage" he lied.

Portia: "I didn't sign up for it to take so long, Seta. I'm tired. Why do you think I didn't take my mother's love potion? I don't want him clinging to me when he's already making me sick"

Seta: "Isn't Zingisa worth it?"

Portia: "She is but I'm sure she'll understand that I tried my best. I can't go on. Maybe they had nothing to do with her death.

What if we kill an innocent man?"

Seta: "Go then, Portia. I knew the day you found you're carrying his child that you won't go through with the plan"

Portia: "Easy for you to say.

Please don't ever call me again. I don't know why I let you talk me into this" she put the glass down.

Seta: "You've fallen in love with him" he held her hand

Portia: "Don't be crazy" she took her hand back.

Seta: "Think about the life we'll have once we get his money then. I found a hacker to hack all his personal accounts to clean him out. I'll clean out the business."

Portia: "The Elephants help each other financially. He'll take a dip but they'll have him bounce back"

Seta: "That's why we'll kill him. He won't bounce back from that" his eyes went cold.

Portia: "Why then did you make me part of all of this if it was so easy?"

Seta: "Because I thought you'd get proof that he did it by being with him and we'll take it to the cops but he'll just buy his freedom"

Portia: "I should have withdrawn from this when your plan made me a mother. Don't contact me again" she walked towards the door.

Seta: "Portia, I need you please"

Portia: "My daughter needs me more, bye" she shut the door behind her. She didn't want to tell Seta that she ended up actually falling for Liyema and that's why she didn't want to have anything to do with killing him. After over three years of trying to pin Zingisa's murder on Liyema they failed. She looked everywhere for a piece of evidence that would link Liyema to the murder but there was nothing. There was a time she also believed that Liyema killed Zingisa but as time went by

she doubted it very much. She also had not seen the abusive side that Seta spoke about in Liyema but she remembered Zingisa telling her that Liyema was short tempered. The only good thing that came from their plan was Abo and she decided to take her daughter and leave for good. She planned to pick Abo up from crèche and disappear without a trace. She felt that she was prostituting herself when they first implemented their plan but she told herself that it was for the greater good. Her phone rang

and she shook her head when she saw it was Seta.

Portia: "Leave me the hell alone"

Seta: "You've fallen for him. I can see it in your eyes. I sent you a picture. Look at it and tell me if you still want to let this bastard get away with playing lord over women's lives. If you're back on the plan, you know where to find me and you best believe this time I'm not failing. So decide if you wanna protect a man who doesn't respect you or if you want to finally see the rewards of our work" he hung up. She viewed the

picture that he sent and it was Liyema at Vuvu's flat. It was a moment when the two shared a kiss before going inside. Portia felt her blood boil and the urge to make Liyema pay returned once again. She still didn't know if she'd continue working with Seta or if she'll make him pay her own way.

Portia: "If you cried like a bitch when Ntombi sold your shares you'll shit yourself after I'm done with you" she said still looking at the picture before she drove off. She went to the B&B once again

to collect her thoughts. She has been playing an uninformed woman so long but Liyema might soon learn that she is not as empty headed as he thought she was. ❤️

S2-INSERT 80 (NOT EDITED)

Mimi heard a loud knock and quickly peeked out the window to see who it was. Charles, her husband saw the curtain move. Charles: "Mimi, open up. I know you're in there" he banged the door with his fist.

Mimi: "Leave me alone! she shouted "I need time to think, Charles damn" she added.

Charles: "Baby, please we need to talk about this. This has been going on for weeks now". Mimi stood behind the door and took a deep breath before twisting the ledge to unlock the door. She opened the door and he looked more terrible than he did the last time she saw him.

Mimi: "What?"

Charles: "I miss you" he said softly.

Mimi: "I need time that's why

I'm here"

Charles: "Lefa called to ask why you suddenly told Hlompho not to come visit us". Mimi walked to the lounge but left the door open so he followed.

Mimi: "I don't want my son to be caught up between this"

Charles: "You believe them?" he looked into her eyes "You think that I'd hurt your son?" he added. Mimi didn't deny it, she just folded her arms and looked down.

Mimi: "Why would children lie?"

Charles: "What children? To this

day they haven't given the names of the children I supposedly touched inappropriately" he raised his voice "Mimi, I was up for the principal position and you know that many didn't want me to because they felt I'm incompetent. The department says I'm on the shortlisted candidates and suddenly children come out and say that I sexually harassed them" he walked closer to her but she backed away. Mimi: "I just don't know" she started to cry "And yes, I'm keeping my son away from it all

because I don't know what the truth is" she wiped her tears.

Charles: "I've never touched any child inappropriately, especially not ours. Yes, Hlompho and I got off on the wrong foot at first but only because I didn't give myself time to understand his way of communicating but I'm improving. I'd never touch our children like that nor anyone's" his eyes started to shine.

Mimi: "I want to believe that as your wife but the mother in me says to keep the kids away from you, is best just until this blows

over"

Charles: "Wow" he put his hands on his head "I get attacked at work and my spouse believes the lies" he sunk to the sofa.

Mimi: "Kids don't lie"

Charles: "Exactly, Mimi" he stood quickly "Did you ask our kids if I ever made them uncomfortable?" he asked.

Mimi: "They said you didn't" she whispered "But I can't speak on behalf of the other kids" she added.

Charles: "Urg dammit!" he shouted "What kids, Mimi? They

are probably still buying parents whose kids will lie and say I'm guilty. You are hurting me way more than they are. You're keeping Hlompho away because you think I'm guilty, admit it. You think that I touch young boys inappropriately" he shouted.

Lefa: "What did you say?" he stood at the door and Ntombi was right behind him "What the fuck did you just say?" he walked inside. Mimi stood between the two men. Mimi: "Calm down please" she pleaded. Ntombi stood at a distance and as Mimi explained

the situation, she could see Lefa lose his cool after each sentence. The shield Mimi tried to be for Charles didn't work because Lefa had Charles choked up against a cupboard in no time.

Lefa: "I swear if you did anything to my boy I will fucking kill you" Ntombi was pleading with Mimi for Lefa to back down because he was really choking Charles "Is this why you made so excuses whenever we said you should come see your child?" he asked Mimi after leaving Charles choking "You are hiding a paedophile, Mimi" he

pointed at her. It's not the first time that Ntombi had seen Lefa angry but his anger was times ten when his children are involved and it was to be expected.

Charles: "I swear, I never touched any child!" he shouted "I'm being framed" he added.

Charles was telling the truth, but it seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. He was as shocked to read his suspension letter and more so when he learned what the reasons were. He knew some parents and colleagues didn't want him appointed but he didn't

know just how against him they were but the allegations proved to him how much.

Mimi: "I asked Hlompho and you know Hlompho can't keep secrets. If he had been violated we'd have noticed" she looked at Lefa.

Ntombi: "I think she has a point, baby" she uttered her first words since they arrived.

Lefa: "You're never going to see him again" he threatened Mimi.

"Let's go, Sibabalwe" he looked at Ntombi before walking out.

Mimi: "Ntombi, please don't allow him to keep my child away from

me. Me not wanting Hlompho this side is because I don't want him mixed up in this drama. You know he's a sensitive soul" she looked at Ntombi. Lefa hooted multiple times.

Ntombi: "We just came to check if you are okay. I hope that you can sort this out but I agree it's best he does not come here until it's all over"

Mimi: "Yes I agree 100%"

Charles: "I didn't hurt the boy nor any other child. I swear on my mother's grave"

Lefa: "Sibabalwe!" he called out

and Ntombikayise held Mimi's hand before walking to the door. .

Mimi: "Thank you so much for being a mother to my...our son.

You honestly don't know how much I appreciate your presence in his life. He loves you, his texts tell it all. Thank you" she said.

Ntombi: "He is easy to love. All the best and Charles I really hope the accusations are not true because I have respect for you and people who hurt kids don't deserve it"

Charles: "I swear I didn't"

Mimi: "Thank you for checking in"

Ntombi nodded before walking out and going to the car.

Charles: "I'm sorry"

Mimi: "Please leave. I think it's best that I see you once you've cleared your mess"

Charles: "Will our marriage be the same after this, Mimi? I mean you not believing me. Will I ever see you as a partner once my innocence is proven?" he asked and watched her shrug. He decided it was best he leave before he adds more fuel to the fire.

Ntombi and Lefa drove in silence and Lefa was so absent minded that he nearly drove into the car in front of them.

Ntombi: "Let's switch. I don't want to die today". They were in the middle of traffic so the motorist behind them hooted asking them what the hell they were doing. Ntombi didn't mind the insults from complete strangers but instead apologized. When the woman saw her bump she calmed down until their car started to move again.

Lefa: "You can't even be at ease

when your kid is at his own mother's because you don't know the type of monster she's married to. That's why I fought tooth and nail not for him to adopt my son. Where have you seen a man adopts a child whose father is present?" Ntombi didn't answer because she knew that he was venting "The shit other people marry" he added.

Ntombi: "He'd have told us had Charles made him uncomfortable. One of the great things about having a child like Hlompho is that he can't keep secrets"

Lefa: "But I'll never be at ease with him going there after this even if Charles is found to be innocent. I don't want to constantly worry if he's being treated alright"

Ntombi: "I'm sure that Mimi feels the same about me, Lefa. Had the quads been young I'd have felt the same with Portia. I worry if Amahle is being treated well where she is. It's not easy for someone else to be a parent figure to your kids but truth is biological parents can be as toxic. You know Zuko's story.

Her mother failed to protect her. Let's wait until they sort everything out. Even you should give credit to Mimi for the steps she took to keep Hlompho from it all. You've been insulting her calling her an untrustworthy mother who makes empty promises when in fact she kept away because she didn't want her son involved in all they are dealing with. I can't imagine what she's going through. Bad people exist but there are also good people who get falsely accused and right now we don't know where Charles

fits in. I trust that should he be guilty, Mimi will keep her babies from him. I know you're used to the immature Mimi but people change. Please, baby cut the woman some slack. We at least know she's not trying to abandon Hlompho as you assumed" she looked at him briefly before looking ahead again.

Lefa: "It's just scary to imagine such, Ngqangqa" Ntombi held his hand.

Ntombi: "Our boy would have been so vocal about abuse, the abuser would have been in jail as of

yesterday" Lefa wore a faint smile.

Lefa: "Yeah true" he looked at her "But asking him to make sure won't hurt right?" she shook her head "Plus he's not good at lying so I'll know" he added "Thank you for making sense when all I see is red" Ntombi felt his lips against her cheek "Maybe I don't give Mimi as much credit as I should, you're right" he added "Are you ready for the interview tomorrow?" he decided to change the subject.

Ntombi: "I'm so nervous but yeah

I'm ready. They gave me the questions, so I'll know what to expect". They spoke about other things all the way back to Cape Town. Lefa was glad when they drove into the yard because he wanted to talk to Hlompho. It was not a pleasant conversation, but it was one that was a must. Hlompho: "No one ever touched me in a way that I do not like. Mom Ntombi only helped me wash my back once because she saw that I had a dirt build up patch and I was not uncomfortable because she was helping. The pool at

school is about to open so imagine if I had a huge dirt build up patch. Other kids would have told my crush" his eyes widened and Ntombi laughed "Banele said a girl I like is my crush" he added with a smile. Lefa got all his answers in Hlompho's eyes and he smiled while nodding.

Lefa: "So were you able to give her the chocolate?"

Hlompho: "I get too scared" he shook his head.

Lefa: "When you're ready you give it to her. When you're ready not even fear will stop you" Hlompho

nodded. "You'd tell me if anything hurt you ever right?" Hlompheo nodded.

Hlompheo: "You forget that I'm a junior black belt holder" Lefa and Ntombi laughed "So if anyone tries they will cry" more laughter.

Lefa: "You won't be able to go to Mimi's this coming holidays" he saw a hint of disappointment.

Ntombi: "But I'm sure she can come see you" Hlompheo smiled and nodded.

Hlompheo: "Let me go do my homework" he went to his room.

Ntombi: "I know... I shouldn't

have promised she'd come but I have a feeling she will" Lefa didn't argue about it "What do you want for dinner?" she stood. The front door opened and the elders walked in.

Makhulu: "I brought us some clean and fresh tripe" Lefa stood with an excited smile "Ntombi please knead some dough for me, my baby" she added.

Ntombi: "Ma, we'll eat at midnight if we make that. Why not keep it for tomorrow?"

Tamkhulu: "I don't mind staying up until midnight" he took his hat

off.

Lefa: "I don't either" Ntombi raised a brow.

Ntombi: "But I don't have energy to knead dough, Ma. Let me quickly go buy readymade"

Makhulu: "No, no, no, Ntombi. I don't know how long those things stand there. Please stop being so lazy. You have a husband to feed" Ntombi looked at Lefa who was wearing a puppy face.

Banele: "What smells like uncooked tripe" he sniffed in the air and Makhulu raised the plastic in her hand "Mmmm that and dumpling

for tonight please, Makhulu" he rubbed his hands together.

Ntombi: "Then go knead dough for the dumplings"

Makhulu: "You know they can't, Ntombi please do it for me. Lefa will give you a nice massage later"

Lefa: "And that I can do" he said confidently.

Ntombi: "But I'm lazy" she sulked.

Them: "Please" they pleaded like choir holding a perfect note.

Ntombi: "I don't think I'll stay up for a midnight dinner" she dragged her feet to the kitchen.

Tamkhulu: "But had it been at your in laws you wouldn't have dragged those feet" Ntombi laughed out.

Ntombi: "That's because I don't see them often. Tamkhulu and bringing up things that no one even thought of" she shook her head, still laughing.

Lefa: "The match is about to start, Tamkhulu. I lost faith in our team though"

Tamkhulu: "They'll win today. Let me go put the things I got in the room then I'll join you" Lefa nodded.

Ntombi: "It must be nice to be a man nhe?" she raised a brow looking at her grandfather and husband.

Lefa: "Baby, yesterday we were in the hot sun all day finishing the garden. Last week we were painting the roof. We do our bit" he laughed.

Makhulu: "Oh Ntombi but they do" she smiled "And he cooked you that rice the other day" she reminded Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Okay maybe I'm letting my exhaustion cloud my memory" she held Lefa's hand and he

kissed hers.

Bubele: "Match is on". Hlomphe clearly knew what time the match started because he was the first to run and jump on his favourite sofa. His father tapped his shoulder.

Lefa: "Homework?"

Hlomphe: "I was told we'll eat at midnight so I'm going to do it much later" the older boys laughed.

Lefa: "You're taking chances.

After this match you come with your books here and do homework"
Hlomphe just smiled and nodded

before focussing on the screen.

His father explained all the rules of the sports since he was aware of what sport is, so he knew what the game was about.

Ntombi went to knead the dough while Makhulu rinsed the tripe once again.

Makhulu: "We'll eat faster if this gets cooked outside"

Ntombi: "Haaa, ma who is going to burn their eyes with smoke?"

Makhulu laughed out.

Makhulu: "I'm pulling your leg. You remind me of your mother. Always used to complain when we told her

to do something" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I miss them so much.

Tomorrow is her birthday and I also will be doing that interview and photoshoot for the magazine" she smiled.

Makhulu: "It's her way of telling you that she'll be there. If the camera could catch spirits of our loved ones, you'd have spotted your mother in them tomorrow. I miss her too, but you are her daughter indeed. You look like her and when you say Ma, oh it feels like my child calling me again because you sound like her too.

Tomorrow we should buy a cake and celebrate" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "It would be lovely"

Makhulu: "How did it go with Lefa's mother?... I mean Hlompho's?"

Ntombi: "Mimi is going through a difficult time, Ma. I think she and I actually had a little moment today"

Makhulu: "Careful, Ntombi. We don't know how much she still is attached to Lefa. You don't have to be best friends. You only have to be civil and kind to each other for Hlompho's sake"

Ntombi: "I know, Ma but she loves her husband and that's why this situation has hit so hard". She told Makhulu what happened and Makhulu was glad that Hlompho was not caught in it all. Makhulu said she'd keep Mimi and her family in her prayers. When Ntombi finished what she was doing she went to take a nap to get away from the noisy soccer watchers.

Abongile ran into her mother's arms the moment Portia walked through the door. She clung on for

dear life and Portia felt bad for leaving her child for so many days. Liyema followed behind Abo and just stood giving mother and daughter time to bond.

Liyema: "She's missed you but I knew you'd come back because of her" he said softly.

Portia: "Go and play with your toys. Mama will come play with you now"

Abo: "You're leaving again?" Portia shook her head.

Portia: "Never again, Nana" she kissed Abo's forehead before putting her down. The child ran

to her toys.

Liyema: "I was worried and it took everything in me to not call the tracking company to know where your car was"

Portia: "I'm here now" she put her bag down "Surprised you didn't freeze my account" she walked to the kitchen.

Liyema: "That would have made me one lousy fiancé. Are you ready to talk or do you need time?"

Portia: "There must have been a woman whom you met that made you want a polygamous marriage, Liyema. Are you cheating on me?"

she sat down.

Liyema: "I admit that there was someone who sparked this but no, I'm not cheating on you" Portia nodded multiple times.

Portia: "After days of thinking...that's all I've been doing actually, thinking" she looked at him "I would rather share you in a dignified manner than have you make a fool of me by cheating" Liyema sat.

Liyema: "I'm glad that you see it that way"

Portia: "I've got conditions"

Liyema nodded "No sleeping with

any woman until such a time I'm ready to give you blessing to take another wife. Give us at least two years to enjoy married life before introducing other people"

Liyema: "Sounds fair enough"

Portia: "Each wife their own house. I don't want another woman mothering my daughter while I'm here. Each wife raises their children in her own house" she added.

Liyema: "I can definitely do that"

Portia: "That's it. If you want me and our daughter to stay, you'll do as I ask. It's not too

much to ask"

Liyema: "Not at all. For now, it'll be just you and I until you're ready to welcome another. I want my daughter growing up knowing I respect her mother"

Portia: "Hmmm" she stood "I've missed you both" she kissed him.

Liyema: "We've missed you too. I'll get started on dinner while you go catch up on the latest crèche news" Portia faked a laugh "Then later you and I can catch up" he kissed her passionately. She broke the kiss and rolled her eyes walking to where Abo was.

Portia: "You and Mama will soon go far away. No more Makhulu to control Mama and no more Tata to make Mama a fool. We'll be so happy" she said while helping Abi build a tower with her toys. They went to bed after dinner and Portia used exhaustion as an excuse to avoid "catching up" with Liyema.

The following day was a Monday and as usual it was a busy one for Liyema as he always had a meeting somewhere. That day was no better. Portia called the insurance company that Liyema's

properties were under.

Portia: "I'd like to cancel my fiancé's insurance please. Mrs Liyema Elephant. He has several properties insured with you"

Agent: "I'm sorry mam but Mr Elephant should confirm that he wants that". Liyema ran down the stairs.

Portia: "Please hold on" she put her hand on the speaker "Baby, there's this wedding vendor who just refuses to let me cancel the services I requested for the flowers. They say they want to talk to the groom to confirm"

Liyema: "Portia, I don't have time, baby" he wore his jacket.

Portia: "Just tell them it's you Liyema Elephant my fiancé and you confirm the cancellation. If they hear a man talk, they'll get scared and back off. You know how people take advantage when it's women" she watched his frustration he was "Hi...please hold on for Mr Elephant" she put the phone against her ear again before giving it to him.

Liyema: "Good morning, this is Liyema Elephant talking. Please cancel everything that my fiancée

just stated because we no longer need your services"

Agent: "Are you sure, Mr Elephant?"

Liyema: "100%. Now stop giving my fiancée hassles. I confirm the cancellation of your services" he said in a hurry.

Agent: "I'll need your details please then, sir"

Liyema: "My fiancée will give you everything" he gave the phone to Portia "I'm off and I doubt they'll bother you" he kissed her before running out the door.

Portia wore a naughty smirk

before talking to the agent again. She gave Liyema's insurance number and ID number and just like that his buildings were no longer covered without him even knowing it. She took a deep breath because it was a gamble, but she'd studied him since they've lived together. She went to finish getting Abo ready for crèche. She wanted to spend more time with Abo but that had to wait until they were out of the country. She had to organize some passports for the two of them under fake names. She also had to

learn how to defraud Liyema out of his shares without him noticing. She dropped her daughter off at day-care and went about her planning. She went to Mrs E's place that she shared with Jester, so she'd go talk wedding stuff. She didn't want to do anything out of the ordinary and raise alarms. She knocked and knocked but no one answered so she opened the door and was surprised to find it unlocked.

Portia: "Ma" she called out softly "Makhulu ka Abongile" she walked deeper into the apartment.

Mrs E: "How do you expect me to trust you and live with you when you haven't destroyed what can destroy me?" Portia heard Mrs E say on the other side of a closed door.

Jester: "I'm still scared that you'll double cross me"

Mrs E: "Why would I when I love you? You're willing to let all of this go down the drain all because of some gold digger who was known as Zingisa" Portia's eyes shot open. She heard footsteps so she backed away from the door. It opened and Mrs E was shocked to

see Portia in her house.

Portia: "Hi, Ma. I came so we can continue with my wedding plans"

Mrs E: "After days of not hearing from you. I thought that you decided to do it without me"

Portia shook her head.

Portia: "You've become like a second mother to me. We can stay here and do everything here"

Mrs E: "No, I need to get away before I go crazy. Let's go"

Portia was hoping to sneak into their study to snoop around and find what about Zingisa they were on about. She loved how life

just seemed to be working in her favour. She nodded and she and Mrs E walked out. She'd have to come back some other time to investigate and she planned to break in when no one was home. She wanted more leverage than Sita because she no longer trusted any man. She and Zola had a nice lunch and talked about the wedding which was not going to happen. Portia planned to pay all the service providers just to waste Liyema's money.

Ntombi sat down after the photoshoot to answer the

questions that Cindy had for her. Cindy knew how to make Ntombikayise feel at ease and it felt like she was talking to an old friend.

Cindy: "Now that I've heard all that you do I have to ask where you get the time to do it.

Especially since you'll be welcoming a baby soon" Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Great support system. I've got a husband who is just set on seeing me win all the time" she laughed softly "Our parents help us so much with our children

and my friends are the type of circle I pray every woman get" she smiled.

Cindy: "Would you say that who you are married to impacts on your success?. I mean you were married to a prominent businessman for years yet you never got inspired to start a business until after you met your current husband"

Ntombi: "My first marriage might have ended but a lot of good things happened there so I do not regret it. I will however say that my current husband doesn't

want me to use the word "impossible" because he believes that if you imagine it then you can do it. I never imagined I'd be a businesswoman until he planted the seed. So yeah, I guess it's important to be with someone who is your best friend and biggest supporter"

Cindy: "Thank you so much for meeting up with me, Mrs Gwala. I have a feeling that many publications will take notice of you and the power couple you and your husband are. I look forward to seeing your growth. God knows we

need more women in business"

Ntombi: "Thank you so much for the opportunity to talk about my journey with you. I can't wait to hold a copy with me in it in my hands" they both laughed.

Cindy: "Next I'd like to hear about your journey as a mother to a newborn while being co-owner of a growing business"

Ntombi: "Don't be shocked if I come in my pyjamas with baby puke stains on it" Cindy laughed.

Cindy: "Womandla" she held

Ntombi's hands "Thank you once again "I'm inspired and many

others will be too" she added and Ntombikayise smiled and nodded. Ntombi said goodbye to the people she met that day before getting on the car and going back to the office. Lefa was waiting for her with what seemed like a canvas. When Ntombi unwrapped it, it was a picture of her mother. Lefa: "Makhulu gave me an old black and white picture of your mother a while ago. I found a guy who can turn a black and white into color so Makhulu and I sat together with the guy and she remembered what the colour of

your mother's dress was on the picture too. That's the end product" he gave her a bear hug as she was wiping her tears off "I didn't realize how much you look like her until we got some colour on the picture" he kissed her neck.

Ntombi: "It's perfect. I didn't know people can turn black and white pictures to colour" she smiled "It's so her, baby" she added.

Lefa: "We decided it's the perfect birthday gift for her. We can find a spot in the house to hang it.

Maybe we should start on that collage wall with pictures of our family we have spoken about" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "Happy birthday, Mama" she glided her fingers over the glass on the frame "Goodness but my mother was beautiful" she smiled.

Lefa: "Why do you think I got attracted to you. You are basically looking at yourself. That beauty you see there is what I see when I look at you just ten times more" he buried his face in her neck and she laughed.

Ntombi: "First the tattoo and now this. Your grandmother would have said it's the korobela" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Some men actually really just love their wives. If Makhulu was not loved right then I feel sorry for her but her grandson knows how to love" he turned her around to kiss her "How was the interview?" he asked. She told him everything.

Ntombi: "The guy said he'll photoshop my swollen ankles" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I don't remember being

this happy. My son is under my care, I got four more through the woman I love. I'm married to an amazing woman and I can literally feel my daughter move as we speak. I don't think wealth is money and materialistic things. Even had we had nothing I'd have felt like one of the wealthiest men in the world but I'm glad I can put food on the table though" he kissed her. Ntombi: "I love you too" she smiled "I'd really like a maternity shoot with this pregnancy" she added.

Lefa: "Once we come from the honeymoon. Reth already called asking when we'll go"

Ntombi: "I would have too had I given someone such a big gift.

They should get the first selfie we take. We are ahead with our work so we can go next week"

Lefa: "Yeah" he kissed her again "I love being in isolation with you" he said before kissing her again.

Work called so they both went back to their stations with promise to continue what they started later on.

Ntombi was busy with dinner with Lefa tasting and calling it helping when the doorbell rung. Lefa went to open. Ntombi was shocked to see Portia walked ahead of Lefa. They greeted each other and Lefa went to watch the news to give the ladies privacy.

Portia: "I actually came to check up on Banele and Bubele. I feel like I've been slacking as a stepmother"

Ntombi: "If I don't see those two often yet they live with me then good luck to you. Banele

boxes after work and Bubele plays rugby for the local team in Gugulethu"

Portia: "See? I didn't even know that"

Ntombi: "You can hear all about it at dinner when they are home.

That's if you're not in a rush"

Portia: "No, I actually need time away from wedding talk. Can I please use your bathroom first before I sit?"

Ntombi: "Sure" she smiled "Follow me" she walked ahead and showed Portia which door it was. Ntombi went back to the kitchen and

Portia looked around before fiddling with the bathroom handle before going inside. When she got out she pulled hard at the handle she loosened and it broke.

Portia: "Lefa, I'm sorry but I broke your handle" she said softly. Ntombikayise assured her that it was fine. Lefa went to inspect it. Lefa: "I'll fix it when I get back from picking Hlompho up from karate"

Ntombi: "Thank you, baby"

Portia: "I'm sorry once again"

Ntombi: "No problem. The users of that bathroom aren't home yet".

Lefa went to go pick Hlompho up. Portia helped Ntombi peel and the conversation was not too bad.

Ntombi was glad Portia wanted to know the boys better.

Portia: "I really need to use the bathroom again. I'm sorry" she looked at Ntombi "I've got UTI" she whispered.

Ntombi: "Then you best use the one in my bedroom since you can't access the other one. I'd rather not use my grandparent's because I don't like going into their room while they are out" Portia follows Ntombi. Ntombi waited for Portia

because Makhulu told her to be there when friends enter their bedroom. Portia turned the tap on the side of the toilet to avoid having water fill the tank after she flushed.

Portia: "Ntombi, I'm really sorry" she came out.

Ntombi: "Girl, UTI is not nice so just tell me when you want to use the bathroom and we'll come"

Portia: "I'm glad you don't trust any stranger alone into the room you share with your husband.

These days even friends are snakes". They walked back to the

kitchen.

Ntombi: "Did something happen?"

Portia shook her head "Oh my goodness it seems I'm now the one who needs the toilet" she held her abdomen.

Portia: "Go keeping it in caused me to have a bladder infection".

Ntombi quickly went to relieve herself but the toilet wouldn't flush. She didn't know anything about plumbing so she waited for Lefa to fix that too.

Ntombi: "I think Lefa and I need to upgrade a few things here" she joined Portia again.

Portia: "Your house is beautiful. It's a pity that because Liyema has this grudge against you, I have to be dragged into it" she rolled her eyes.

Ntombi: "Doesn't he mind you being here?" she sounded concerned "But you're not here for me. You're here to see his sons. Had he not hated me then he'd have come too" she ate a carrot.

Portia: "I want you to know that I do not hate you though" she assured Ntombi "Anything I did to hurt you and Abo being one of those, I'm sorry"

Ntombi: "The night we actually met was the night I considered giving Liyema another chance.

Who knows if I would have been happy. Things happened as they should. I'm so happy and I hope you two are too"

Portia: "Over the moon" she lied.

Ntombi: "Then why should I hate. You got your man and I got mine."

Portia: "I'll send you two an invite to the wedding whether he likes it or not" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry I didn't send you one but my guest list was not my choice"

Portia: "I understand. You've got great friends Ntombi, not some bitch ass backstabbers pretending to be friends" she said with anger.

Ntombi: "Portia, are you okay?"

Portia: "Just a so called friend spreading lies about me in the village"

Ntombi: "Oh please, don't mind jealous friends"

Portia: "No, not again" she pressed her abdomen "Worse part is that it's a little drop when I pee but it burns like hell" she looked like she wanted to cry.

Ntombi: "Let me pour water in the toilet to dilute my urine. I didn't think you'd want to go before Lefa is back"

Portia: "If I wait for you to do that then I'll pee myself. My bladder is on fire"

Ntombi: "Let's go. I think I have something that'll help you" The two of them walked to the room once again. Portia went into the bathroom while Ntombikayise looked at her medicine to check if she had something to help Portia. She was shocked to hear the toilet flush. "How did you get it

right?" she asked Portia when she came out.

Portia: "I just flush as I normally do"

Ntombi: "Lefa should check it out nonetheless though. Strange that it does that tonight"

Portia: "Let me go before I bring more bad luck to your house"

Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Nonsense. Come I found something to help" they walked back to the kitchen. Ntombi poured some water in a glass and added a powder which fizzed when it hit the water. Portia

drank up though nothing was wrong with her. Hlompho came in first with his black belt over his white karate attire. He made Portia laugh before going to take a shower to change into his pyjamas. Lefa fixed the door handle while Hlompho showered in their room. They didn't want the boys making use of their bathroom because of the mess they usually leave but they had no choice. The big boys arrived and greeted their soon-to-be stepmother before they also went to shower. Bukhosi was

mostly at Liyema's. They found it strange that Portia came to check up on them but appreciated it. Dinner got served when the elderly arrived home. They had their own little activities and Ntombi loved it.

Makhulu: "We bought this cake for Nobandla. Would it be strange if we sing for her?" she laughed softly.

Tamkhulu: "Not at all. This is our children we're talking about here" he took the enlarged picture and first just looked at it for a long while before a tear fell while he

smiled "Can you see yourself?" he looked at Ntombi and she nodded "I remember this day so well. I think that's why I compliment you so much when you are wearing that yellow dress of yours" he smiled and Makhulu held him and they both looked at their daughter.

Makhulu: "Everything from her came out good. Her child included" she whispered to her husband and he nodded.

Portia: "I think I should leave the family alone since this is a special moment"

Banele: "You'll be family soon"

Ntombi: "Ma, sent me the most beautiful message earlier on. She apologized for sending it so late because she didn't know it would have been my mother's birthday" she whispered to her husband and Lefa smiled.

Bubele: "Happy birthday to you" he started the song and everyone followed "Happy birthday in heaven, Makhulu. Much love" he held his heart. The cake was cut and enjoyed to the fullest. Portia went home after getting a feel of what she called family bonding and

found Liyema waiting.

Liyema: "I even put the child to bed, Portia. Where have you been?" he was worried.

Portia: "I just needed to process some things"

Liyema: "Such as? Is it the polygamy again?" he drew her closer but she withdrew.

Portia: "Just stuff"

Liyema: "Portia there's never been a more important time to communicate like now please"

Portia: "I'm still processing it because it came at such an incorrect time"

Liyema: "Allow me to help you process it" he kissed her. She took out three pregnancy tests and they were all positive. The smile on Liyema's face was priceless. He took them from her hands and laughed to himself "It's not the wrong timing at all. It's perfect. I love you so much" he hugged her "I'm going to be a father again" he twirled her "I'm sorry for all the stress, baby" he put her down. "From now on I'll behave. I promise you I'm not going to add to your stress. Unlike with Abo I'll be here every step

of the way. With the boys I missed the little moments and with Abo too due to circumstance but now I'm going to be present. I'm going to be so present" he promised "What can I do for you right now?" he asked "Dinner?" he added.

Portia: "I ate and had desert and I realized just how much I want in a family"

Liyema: "I will give all that to you. I'm going to be a dad again" he lifted her up from the ground in a hug. She wore a smirk on her face as she hugged him and

allowed him to treat her like a glass object he feared would break should he be neglected for the night. 

S2-INSERT 81 (NOT EDITED)

Two weeks have gone by and like all the other weeks it had been hell on Charlie. Instead of dealing with things alone, he decided it was best to move in with his late mother's sister.

Rachel: "I'm so glad that you decided to come home, Charlie" his aunt said when he joined her at

the breakfast table "When you arrived here a week ago, you were so thin" she poured him tea from the tea pot between them.

Charles: "I'm glad that I came too, tanie Rae" he said while stirring his tea "I missed your home baked bread. It reminds me of Mommy"

Rachel: "That's mos Ouma's recipe. Your mother and I both used to follow it to the tee. Oh how I miss her" she shook her head before sitting down "You now even have your natural colour back. You looked like a ghost when

you arrived" Charles laughed at the exaggeration.

Charles: "Thank you, tanie Rae for everything"

Rachel: "I can't believe that Mimi just upped and left you to deal with this alone. You are many things but a rapist is not one of them. What a waste of lobola it was" she sipped her tea.

Charles: "She's scared"

Rachel: "And what about you? And to keep your children away like that?"

Charles: "I've been thinking about her doing that and as a parent I

can now finally see why she did it. It reminds me of why I wanted to build a family with her in the first place"

Rachel: "But I...", Charles's phone rang. He looked at the screen.

Charles: "It's Victor from the Department of Education" he said to his aunt.

Rachel: "Then why are you looking at me for? Answer" she said quickly. He glided his finger to the right before placing the phone against his ear. Rachel was listening to him trying to make out what the call was about until

very ended the call "And?" she asked when he placed his phone on the table.

Charles: "They want to see me at noon. Apparently they have concluded their investigation"

Rachel: "Oh Jesus, please let these fools see that my nephew is innocent"

Charles: "I know that I am innocent but I'm so nervous" he looked at his aunt.

Rachel: "Do you want me to go with you?" Charles laughed softly.

Charles: "I'm not ten, tanie Rae" " he reminded her "Let me finish

eating and then go and get dressed" he bit his warm bread. Usually he'd indulge in the moment of sinking his teeth in freshly baked bread with melted butter but that day he didn't enjoy it. He wished that Victor could just have told her over the phone what their findings were, but he said it was too sensitive of a matter to do it over the phone. Rachel played her gospel out loud and sang to send Charles off with good vibes. He called Mimi to tell her that they concluded their investigation. She was in Cape

Town spending time with Hlompho but she was as eager to hear what the outcome was. He played his jazz music to calm his nerves as he drove to the Department offices. All involved in the case were already waiting for Charles. He gave them all a brief handshake before sitting down on the seat offered. Victor began the meeting by going over why they all gathered and Charles wished he could tell him to just say why they were there.

Victor: "After weeks of stressful investigations we are finally able

to put this matter to rest. Mr Van Rensburg, had a learner not valued you enough as his educator then I believe that the outcome of the day would have been completely different. The learner who initially accused you came forward and told us that you did nothing to him and that his family pushed him to lie"

Charles: "I knew it" he shifted in his chair "who is this learner?" he asked. Victor told him. The learner was the poorest of the class and Charles was not surprised by the fact that his family could be

bought to lie. He was also not shocked to hear that one of the runner ups for the principal position was responsible for it. When he got a confirmation letter of the completion of investigation stating that he was innocent, he read the words over and over again to make sure. He decided to press charges against the adults involved in tarnishing his name but asked that the learner not be expelled from the school. He called his aunt and Rachel was over the moon that his name got cleared. The department issued a

statement to clear Charles's name. He found himself on the road to Cape Town because he wanted to show Mimi the proof of his innocence in person. Mimi has booked herself a room at a B&B and had been in Cape Town for days. Ntombi asked her to come spend time with Hlompho while during the week's school holidays. She and Lefa were on honeymoon but were scheduled to return later that day. As usual Mimi went to pick Hlompho up from his home as they'd spend the day together. She didn't realize just

how much she missed spending alone time with him.

Mimi: "December is around the corner. Where would you like to spend the holiday?"

Hlomphe: "Like I always did. I will come visit you and come back to spend it with Dad" Mimi nodded.

Mimi: "Are you still happy?" she smiled when he nodded.

Hlomphe: "I have a girl that I like" Mimi was taken aback "I gave her the chocolate and after that she had been greeting me" Mimi nodded.

Mimi: "I hope she is nice"

Hlomphe: "She smiles a lot, I think she is" Mimi laughed softly.

Mimi: "I'm glad that I came to spend this week with you. It was exactly what I needed"

Hlomphe: "You should Skype call. Bandile Skype calls me so that I can see him" he suggested.

Mimi: "Skype calling it is". The two of them had lunch while Hlomphe tried to convince his mother that he needed a much smarter phone. Mimi said she'd talk to his father first but Mimi knew Lefa wouldn't agree to that at all. They went to the park and spend hours

there just laughing and playing. Charles called to ask Mimi where she was as he was in Cape Town. He arrived hours ago but was too afraid to ruin Mimi's mood but he made the drive so he decided to get on with it. Mimi was reluctant to tell him but she gave in after he pleaded with her. When she saw his car from a distance she knew that he had been in Cape Town for a while. Charles gave Hlompho a handshake before brushing the top of his head. Charles: "You've grown" he kept

his sentences short because he was still learning to sign.

Hlompfo: "It's all the food my mother had been buying me" they all laughed. Hlompfo went to the swing when Mimi asked to have privacy with Charles. Hlompfo was good at reading lips and Mimi didn't want him asking endless questions. Charles didn't speak but gave her the letter with the department's letterhead to let it do the talking. Mimi looked at him after reading and back at the letter. He explained to her what happened.

Mimi: "I'm sorry" she said quietly
"I'm sorry for not believing you"
she looked at him.

Charles: "You hurt me so much"
Mimi looked at the grass feeling
regretful "But I love how you
tried to protect our children" she
raised her head again "I don't
know if normal will ever be a word
we can use in our marriage but we
can try to find our balance again
right?" Mimi nodded a few times
before tears rolled down her
cheeks.

Mimi: "I'm sorry" she repeated.
He pulled her into a hug and

allowed her to just sniff against his chest. Hlompfo tapped Mimi's hip and she turned to look at him. Hlompfo: "Why are you crying?" he asked.

Mimi: "I'm just happy. I got news that I was hoping to get"

Hlompfo gave a nod before giving them privacy again "So are you going to pull out of being principal?" she asked.

Charles: "And make my enemies happy? I promised my learners that I'll try to get them a proper science lab. If being principles gets me closer to that

then I'm going to take my chances"

Mimi: "Parents won't just forget and you know people...even with proof they believe what they want. We know majority wanted Lottering to be principle"

Charles: "True but majority learners want me and since they are the people I'll be leading and not their parents that's all that matters. Should I be chosen then the parents will see through my actions that I'm competent. She had got nothing to do with competency"

Mimi: "I missed you" she smiled
"Maybe we won't be normal again
but maybe we're not supposed to.
I have certainly learned a lot
from this and one is that I don't
ever want to be a single mother
again".

Charles: "Plenty of lessons learned
indeed. Tanie Rae was ready to go
get our lobola from your mother"
Mimi laughed.

Mimi: "I can already here her "you
shouldn't have married that
darkie, girl. I'm not racist but it's
best your own kind, Charlie" they
both laughed.

Charles: "Love doesn't have a kind. Plus I identify as San, I don't know this coloured identity because it makes me feel like I don't have an ancestry. Xhosa people and San people have a long history. So tanie Rae must get in on history a bit" Mimi laughed.

Mimi: "Let's go get that guy ice cream before taking him home."

Charles: "I don't think Lefa will ever allow me near his son.

Rather not tell him I was here. I don't want to be the reason why you lose Hlompho. When courts are involved it gets daunting"

Mimi: "He'll lose because the court always sides with the mother especially since your innocence is proven. I don't want Hlompho with me full-time mainly because I know he's happy here" Charles nodded. Hlompho has been sitting on the swing watching them. .

Charles: "Is caramel and sprinkles still your favourite on ice cream?"

Hlompho smiled when they finally said something he liked. He stood from the swing and ran to where they stood.

Hlompho: "They have a new flavour at my favourite place. I

will direct you"

Mimi: "We've been using a taxi all this time since we only have one car and it was with you. So can we catch a ride?" Charles nodded. He loved her and though he was still hurt by her actions he didn't want that to mean the end of their marriage. He'd have appreciated her support but he knew that he had it after that ordeal or so he hoped. Hlompho got his ice cream and the three of them had a pleasant afternoon. They took Hlompho home because Mimi had to return to work the

following day. She was glad that Charles came because she wasn't looking forward to another taxi ride to Vredenburg early the next morning. Instead of being welcomed by Makhulu or Tamkhulu as it were all week, Lefa opened the door. He didn't look pleased at all. Mimi quickly explained to him what happened. Charles: "One of the reasons why I chose teaching was because I love children. Not in a sick way but in a parental way. I know that I started off very badly with Hlompho by not being patient

with his form of communication, but I am wiser now" he spoke like someone who had memorized a speech. Lefa just took a long moment to look into Charlie's eyes before standing aside to let the couple in.

Ntombi: "Hi, guys" she smiled "I hear you guys had a lovely day" she smiled "I heard what Mimi said at the door. I'm glad that you're not guilty, Charles" she looked at him.

Hlomphe: "I asked, uncle Charlie to talk to the other people so that they make the September

holiday longer" she said to Ntombi and she laughed.

Ntombi: "Good luck with that. Were you good while we were away?" Hlomphe smiled and nodded.

Hlomphe: "My mother and I had fun. I also spent the night where she sleeps watching cartoons all night" Ntombikayise smiled and nodded.

Mimi: "How was the honeymoon?"

Ntombi: "Wanna see the pictures?" Mimi smiled and nodded. The ladies excused themselves.

Charles: "Lovely home" he looked

around trying to make conversation.

Lefa: "It's getting there. Want a beer?"

Charles: "We'll be driving back home in a few"

Lefa: "Last time I checked, Mimi had a license" Charles nodded.

Charles: "I'd like one then" Lefa nodded before going to the kitchen and returned with two ice cold bottles "Thanks" he opened and sipped "Thanks for allowing my wife to spend the week with Hlompho" he added.

Lefa: "Thank my wife. I still

stand, Charles if my son is harmed while in your house, I will kill you"

Charles: "Good thing I have no intention of hurting any child"

Lefa nodded. Ntombi went to whip up a quick snack for her guests. She and Lefa were well rested after the massages that they got almost all week and taking walks on the beach at night. They couldn't thank Reth and Abbo enough for the experience. Once they were financially able they planned to take their children on a similar trip with them.

Hlomphe: "I am happy" the adults were all looking at him "It is a first that I sit and eat with all of you. I'm glad that it's happening" he smiled.

Mimi: "We're happy when you are happy" they all smiled and nodded. Hlomphe knew that they only gathered because he was there, but he didn't mind being the glue.

Portia called Sita and asked if he could meet up. He agreed thinking that she was back on board their mission again. They met at a private place away from the

public eye.

Seta: "Did you confront him?"

Portia shook her head "So does that mean that you're back on board?" he asked.

Portia: "No, I still want no part of this. I just wanted to let you know that there is a possibility that Liyema really didn't kill Zingisa"

Sita: "It seems he took that korobela of your mother's and fed it to you" he clenched his fist.

Portia: "I honestly don't care what you think. Stop looking at Liyema alone. Try to check his

mother too. I have a feeling that she might know something. Her boyfriend might too. If you want revenge for Zingisa then make sure that your target is right. You are just making assumptions and it's dangerous"

Sita: "Why are you telling me all of this if you don't want to be part of it? Are you setting me up with that fiancé of yours, Portia?"

Portia: "I owe you no explanation. Do what you want with the information. I've decided to distance myself" she stood up.

Sita: "Okay...give me the mother's

address at least" he held her hand.

Portia: "I'll text it to you and after that you never contact me again. I don't want anything that has to do with murdering someone. I'm tired of being taken for rides. For all I know you'll frame me and take all the money. So bye"

Sita: "I actually thought there was a spark between us"

Portia: "Oh please" she scanned him from head to toe "I'd rather devote my life to Liyema than be with you" she watched Sets fine

but could not make a scene. She left him there and he was filled with unanswered questions as to what happened. There was a different energy to her, and it sent a cold chill down his spine. His phone beeped and Zola's address was in the contents of the message. Portia drove over to Vuvu's for the first time since finding out about the affair. It was a Monday afternoon so she knew that Vuvu had come home from work unless she had other commitments. She could see the look of horror on Vuvu's face when

she opened the door.

Portia: "Hi chomee" she smiled before giving Vuvu a hug.

Vuvu: "I was not expecting you"

Portia: "You've been making excuses whenever I suggest a meet up so I thought I'd check up on you" she entered.

Vuvu: "Are you alone?" she looked at the parking lot.

Portia: "Did you think I'll come with Liyema?" Vuvu closed the door and looked at Portia.

Vuvu: "Why would I?" she folded her arms.

Portia: "Because of that secret of

yours that I found out about" Vuvu swallowed hard "Oh please don't act dumb. You couldn't have forgotten that I know about the bridal party. I was here when he came to talk to you about it remember?" Vuvu faked a laugh "Let me call him and ask him to meet me here. The man does everything for me now that I'm carrying his second baby" she rubbed her belly. Vuvu felt her heart sting a bit. Portia made the call and all Vuvu did was focus on her belly which she was rubbing too much when nothing

was even showing "See?" she said to Vuvu after ending the call

"He's on his way here" she added.

Vuvu: "I thought you won't give him a baby" she said in a whisper.

Portia: "I figured if I can't then he'll get someone else to. Look at Ntombi" she sat down.

Vuvu: "Congratulations then, Chomee" she also sat.

Portia: "He has become the sweetest, chomee. I snap my finger and he's at my feet. If I knew it would be like this then I'd have stopped the pill long ago" she laughed.

Vuvu: "Oh okay...so how far along are you?"

Portia: "Four weeks. We'll be seeing a doctor tomorrow so that he'll check if everything is fine. I have a feeling that it's a boy" she faked a brag.

Vuvu: "Oh okay"

Portia: "You won't even hug me?" she asked with a wide smile. Vuvu stood to give her a fake congratulations hug.

Vuvu: "Lucky man" she sat back down. Portia asked for a glass of water. She'd been on quite a mission lately and working on her

own meant less risk of getting caught. She was sure to delete any email from the insurance company and unsubscribed to getting any information from them. Liyema called to say that he was outside waiting for her. He didn't want to see Vuvu and be lured back into her life by his feelings for her. Portia asked him to come in because she wanted to talk about their plans for the bridal party. She felt stupid for believing their excuse because men didn't care about bridal parties. Liyema didn't care to involve

himself in the wedding arrangements so she felt like a fool for believing he'd care about a bridal party.

Portia: "Are you sleeping with my man?" she asked Vuvu when she came from the kitchen "I asked you a question, Vuvu. Are you sleeping with my man?" she shouted.

Vuvu: "What the...?" she wondered what changed between the seconds they've parted.

Portia: "Isn't this you and my man, Nomvula?" she showed Vuvu the picture and Vuvu's eyes shot

open.

Vuvu: "Yes, it's us" she never planned on denying the affair. Should she get confronted with it. She felt a slap across her face before Portia went into full attack mode. Vuvu was not one to fight but she was not going to allow Portia to beat get to a pulp in her own house, so she fought back. Liyema was building up courage to go inside not knowing that there was an ugly physical fight inside the flat. Portia felt she was finally letting out all the anger she felt when she learned

they were sleeping together. When Liyema barged in the last thing that he expected was a vase to break against a wall. He went to stop the fight and both women were standing beside him breathing heavily.

Portia: "Is this the second wife that you wanted, Liyema? My best friend?" she started to cry "My best friend?" she repeated.

Liyema: "I can explain" he said calmly.

Portia: "Keep your damn explanation" she took her bag and went to the door but she let out

a grunt when she reached the frame.

Liyema: "Portia" he rushed to her but she hit him while still pretending to be in pain.

Vuvu: "How convenient. You come here to tell me you're pregnant, you make sure that he gets here, you have an ancient picture of us together and now you're having cramps" she pointed out "Wow Portia not even Hollywood's finest actress is a match for you" she clapped hands.

Liyema: "Hold on to me" he whispered to Portia. She wrapped

an arm around him and he lifted her up.

Portia: "My baby" she cried.

Vuvu: "Don't tell me that you're buying this" she said to Liyema.

Liyema: "Just shu...you fought with her knowing that she's pregnant. You better pray that my baby is fine" he said before rushing with Portia to the car. She was sure to tell him which hospital she preferred to go to and he drove there as quickly as possible. She was taken in immediately while he stayed to take care of her admission form.

He waited in the waiting room for them to finish examining her. He said a short prayer for both Portia and the baby and regretted everything that he had with Vuvu.

Liyema: "You never learn, Liyema" he rubbed his head "You just never learn" he repeated before looking up at the bright light above him. Dr Tom was sure to be the one to welcome Portia as per their agreement. He had a gambling problem, so the extra money Portia gave afforded him the opportunity to go spend at

the gambling tables since his wife took control of his finances. He hated who he has become but the addiction was too strong.

Dr: "This is the last time I'm helping you. First, I had to lie about your child being ill and now this"

Portia: "Oh please stop acting like you're doing it from the goodness of your heart. I had to have her admitted that day to try and get her father's attention"

Dr: "I feel sorry for this man. Now he'll be mourning a baby that never existed"

Portia: "Serves him right. I want the guilt to eat at him. I want him to think that he is responsible for killing his child" she said in a cold tone.

Dr: "I haven't heard from Sita in a while"

Portia: "And you're not going to tell him about this. The money I have you was from my pocket not his. Your dealings with him ended when Abo had to be admitted but this is my thing"

Dr: "I don't care. Just make sure you keep my name out of this should you get caught. I just

want to gamble in peace. I don't want my medical license to be taken from me. My wife would leave me"

Portia: "None of this will get out. Just make sure that you keep to the script and I will be out of your hair in no time" she looked at his bald head.

Dr: "Very funny" she laughed. A nurse entered "There's unfortunately nothing that I can do, mam. You have lost the baby" Portia let out a bitter cry which left the nurse heartbroken.

Nurse: "I'm truly sorry" she said

to Portia. She listened to what Dr Tom wanted her to do and did so. One of those was to call Liyema in. When Liyema saw and heard Portia cry and looked at the Doctor's face he just knew that it was bad news.

Dr: "She miscarried" Liyema sunk to the floor "I'm sorry" he added "I'll give you folks time alone" he said before walking out. He felt sorry for Liyema but he needed the money.

Liyema: "Baby" he stood to go to the side of her bed.

Portia: "Leave me the hell alone"

she moved to get herself free of his grip "You killed our baby, Liyema" she added. His heart skipped a beat. He took his glasses off to blink the tears away. "Go be with her. Go sleep with her. I am releasing you. That's what you want right? For me to give you permission to go openly sleep with her" she wiped her tears.

Liyema: "I don't want her or any other woman. Please forgive me for what I've done" he held her tight.

Portia: "I can't even look at you

right now. I got pregnant because you wanted a baby yet you triggered my miscarriage. I don't even know if I can ever forgive you. How can I?"

Liyema: "Portia I'll do anything ... anything to make this up to you...to us. Please don't shut me out. I'm hurting so badly right now. I was already picturing us at the ultrasound appointment. I looked forward to hearing a heartbeat. I just... I just..." he started to cry.

Portia: "Get out" she whispered.

Liyema: "Portia please" he

pleaded.

Portia: "Get out" she repeated. He straightened before wiping his tears off and putting his glasses back on. The walk to the door was felt daunting because he didn't want to leave. Portia wiped her tears and laughed softly when he closed the door behind him. When Liyema got into his car, he took out the baby grow he'd bought that day. He held it against his face and just wept. He felt himself hate Vuvu. He knew that he was responsible, but he felt Vuvu could have backed down from

fighting Portia. He dialled her number after a long session of tears. She picked up immediately almost as though she was waiting for the call.

Vuvu: "Liyema, just a few weeks ago she was telling me she'd fool you into believing you're trying for a baby knowing she was not going to go off the pill" she spoke quickly.

Liyema: "Why would the doctor lie, Vuvu? I just wanted to let you know that she lost the baby. I never want to see you again"
Vuvu's heart sank at the sad

tone of his voice.

Vuvu: "I'm sorry to hear that" she whispered "Clearly someone was following us and took a picture of us together" she added.

Liyema: "I don't care. You can move on. Forget that I asked you to wait on me"

Vuvu: "Liyema"

Liyema: "You could just have walked away. All this would have been prevented. But hey, Vuvu doesn't make herself the victim, right?" he shook his head "Bye" he said before ending the call.

Vuvu felt bad for saying Portia

was faking it. She thought they'd go home but to hear Portia was in hospital broke her heart. She still loved Liyema and decided to wait on him until he could introduce her to his family properly, but she knew the chances of that happening were zero after that day. She wondered who sent Portia that picture. She looked out as she was feeling unsafe because that picture was taken at her place. Her intuition was telling her something was not right, but she decided to ignore it as she felt

she'd done enough harm to Liyema and Portia by fighting Portia. 

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Vuvu could not concentrate at work since the ordeal with Portia. She got started by the file being dropped carelessly on her desk and she looked up at the ill-mannered person to give them a piece of her mind but refrained when she realized it was a senior.

Beth: "I don't know what you call this" she pointed at the file "But it is not the calibre of work that

I'm used to getting from you, Vuvu" she sat down.

Vuvu: "I'm sorry" she drew the file towards her before opening it "I'll fix it, Beth" she promised.

Bath: "Okay what's wrong" she stood to go close Vuvu's office door "Please don't tell me it's the married man again" she sat back down and studied Vuvu's face "God dammit, Nomvula. You can't let this guy get to you like this. I'm sure that he is in bed with another side while you're risking a job that we both know you desperately need" she reminded

Vuvu. Their relationship was beyond that of colleagues as Beth was the only person Vuvu felt she could trust.

Vuvu: "Or he's in hospital crying by his fiancée's child" Beth's facial expression softened.

Beth: "Meaning?"

Vuvu: "The fiancée was pregnant, Beth. She found out about the affair and confronted me. We fought and she lost the baby"

Beth's lower lip almost landed on the floor.

Beth: "No" she closed her mouth and put a hand over it.

Vuvu: "I'm a monster I know" she held her hands up in surrender "I didn't want to be friends with this girl but we met through a mutual friend and she just stuck like bubble gum. I wish I had told her I'm not her friend because really I never was" she confessed.

Beth: "Poor woman. You find out your scum is cheating and then lose your unborn child too. She must be going through hell"

Vuvu: "All thanks to me" she laughed but not from a place of gloating but rather regret "You may say it" she blinked a few

times before her tears rolled down. Beth stood to go comfort her.

Beth: "He was the one expected to be loyal to her. He's more responsible. Take a few days off. You actually never take off" she brushed Vuvu's back.

Vuvu: "No... I'd lose my mind" she stuttered while wiping her tears.

Beth: "Vuvu, if I didn't care about you I'd have encouraged you to stay on and give your half asses work to the big bosses and watch you get in trouble. I care so I will put you on leave. You are

the best in my department and I can't afford to lose you. Please take off"

Vuvu: "I want to go see my younger brother so much. You know that he's in and out of hospital"

Beth: "Go then" Vuvu shook her head.

Vuvu: "My family will just see a walking ATM as always so no, I'd rather be here. I have to reach Liyema and apologize"

Beth: "He'll find closure without your apology. Stay away" she warned.

Vuvu: "I can't believe this man had gotten to me this much. I actually love this man, Beth" she let out a laugh of disbelief "I just want to see how he's coping" she added.

Beth: "Vuvu, you're a part of the reason why they are in trouble. I'm sorry but having you there will not be pleasant on either of them. Give them space" Vuvu nodded a few times "How did she find out about you two?" she had to know.

Vuvu: "Someone sent her a picture of Liyema and I kissing at my

place"

Beth: "So she suspected that he was cheating and had him followed?"

Vuvu: "Could be" she shrugged "Or maybe she has another acquaintance at my apartment block and that person saw Liyema with me and decided to take a picture to show Portia" she added.

Beth: "But you broke it off a while ago meaning that picture is old. Why did they keep it?" Vuvu shrugged.

Vuvu: "Doesn't really matter. I

was creeped out about it through because I can't be sure if this person won't come after me especially now that Portia had lost so much because of me"

Beth: "All I can say is be careful and vigilant. This situation turned out so badly. I was hoping it would end in you getting your man since you don't mind polygamy"

Vuvu: "Life" she stood "Is it okay if that leave starts today?"

Beth nodded quickly "I'll rework these at home and email them to you" Beth nodded once again "Let

me quickly go to HR" she left Beth in her office to go apply for leave. Beth signed it off without hesitation because she'd much rather have Vuvu for fix her life then stay and give bad work.

Beth: "Call me anytime you need me" Vuvu smiled.

Vuvu: "It might be more times than you think" they both laughed.

Beth: "Stay away from the man, Nomvula" Vuvu didn't promise but she nodded before thanking Beth with a hug for being a listening ear. She packed the work she was

already busy with to work from home. She was not going to go to her family because she didn't want to feel more drained than she already was. She'd look at Liyema's number several times each day since the ordeal and it took everything in her to not call him. She froze when she found him standing in front of her door. Her feet started to move forward slowly until she stood in front of him. The pain in his eyes could not be avoided. She didn't want to add fuel to fire so she waited for him to say why he was

there. He looked at her for a while before looking at the floor. Liyema: "I shouldn't be here" he walked away but she held him. Once again acting as though he couldn't just rip his arm from her grip. He turned to look at her with shiny eyes that broke her heart to pieces "I shouldn't be h..." she hugged him before he could finish his sentence. The moment overwhelmed her because she'd never seen a man cry especially while in her arms but she held on until she felt his arms wrap around her waist tightly.

He was pulling and tugging and her blazer as he didn't know what to do with the pain he'd been bottling inside. Vuvu's neighbour's door opened and the lady just stood looking at them.

Vuvu: "Let's go inside" she whispered to Liyema. She picked her bags up and unlocked the door before walking inside with him behind her "Would you like some of that famous coffee of mine?"

Liyema shook her head so she nodded.

Liyema: "I shouldn't be here"

Vuvu: "I know but you're here"

now so you might as well just sit until you're ready to face the world again" she took her blazer off and threw her bag on the sofa "Sit down" she offered him a seat. She walked to the kitchen and made the two of them sandwiches though he didn't ask for any. She gave him his plate of bread and he didn't decline instead he ate.

Liyema: "Thanks didn't know I needed that" he said after swallowing the last bite.

Vuvu: "Want more?" he shook his head. They just say in silence so

she decided to switch the TV on to the shows he liked watching when he'd visit. Mostly it was anything that showed animals in the wild. He sat looking at the screen but shut his eyes after a while. Vuvu tried by all means to make him comfortable on the sofa before she went to take a shower. She knew as much as he did that he wasn't supposed to be there but for some odd reason him offloading there felt natural. She knew she was most probably lowering her standards but she felt he needed someone and if

that person was her, she was not going to chase him away. She found him still snoring after taking a shower. She even got some work done. He stretched his legs and vuvu knew the body was starting to feel the discomfort of sleeping on a couch. He opened his eyes and looked around seeming like he woke up on another planet. When his eyes met hers, he returned to reality. She gave him a faint smile and watched him sit up.

Liyema: "How long have I been out?"

Vuvu: "Over three hours" Liyema looked shocked "I'm sorry for bothering you in your space, Nomvula. I just needed to let out things to someone. My family doesn't say it, but I know that they blame me for it all. She has not even allowed me to see her. I feel like it's the entire situation with my divorce all over again. My family taking sides instead of seeing how much this is hurting me. I know it is all my fault. I take responsibility for it all but does that mean that I'm not worthy of being comforted?" he

looked at her.

Vuvu: "Ever heard the saying
"hate the sin not the sinner?" she
went to sit next to him.

Liyema: "I can't remember the
last time I was in touch with
something spiritual. The church
people ended up giving up on me
long ago so no I've never heard
it"

Vuvu: "Well maybe it's time you
get in touch with it" she rubbed
his ear with her thumb. A
familiar sensation to Liyema as
she liked doing it.

Liyema: "Why do you like doing

that?" he turned to look at her.

Vuvu: "I used to suck my thumb in primary school" Liyema let out a little laugh "So whenever I did, I used to either play with my ear or that of my friends" he smiled.

Liyema: "Interesting...it's actually a bit calming" he looked at the mat on the floor.

Vuvu: "I know you're hurting but I can't help but notice how far you've actually come. I think the old you would have somehow found a way to blame your ex-wife" they both laughed.

Liyema: "Poor Ntombi" he shook

his head "I need to make right with her. This is the mother of my children. I'll see her at graduation, at their weddings, when they have babies. So much karma I've got to clear. Maybe that's why all this is happening. Ntombi's gran is a prayer warrior so she mentioned her daughter's pain and life delivered me my karma"

Vuvu: "Sometimes just asking for forgiveness is enough. I don't know the woman, but she doesn't sound half bad"

Liyema: "She's strong yet so soft.

She has a trusting childlike trait about her that always wants to see the good in others. She was perfect for the old Liyema but I've changed. I just wish I introduced her to the new Liyema properly"

Vuvu: "It's not late. We outgrow people, Liyema and it's okay. I'm certain she's looking back and realize that things turned out as they should. She found a man that vibrates at the same frequency as her and they are blossoming so there's no way she's not happy things turned out as

they did. Yes, the process was painful but who grows when it's always sunshine and roses. She most probably is doing well without an apology from you but go give it to her anyway" he looked at her again. Scanning her entire face and watched her look down shyly.

Liyema: "Taking responsibility feels good" he said quietly "Thank you for listening. I'm sorry for what I have said that day. I can't remember much of it but if I hurt you, I'm sorry"

Vuvu: "I'm sorry too for

everything. I wish I could go back and not fight back but I did and the consequences were deadly" she took a deep breath "Go be with her. She'll open up and forgive you eventually. Hopefully the spy who took the picture is not outside taking record as we speak"

Liyema: "Spy?" she told him everything. Liyema took a deep breath "The only "enemy" I've got right now is Sita. Maybe he wants Portia just to get to my nerves again"

Vuvu: "Is he dangerous?" Liyema

shook his head.

Liyema: "Just a pain. I need to find a way to get this guy out of my damn business"

Vuvu: "Well since you assumed that he's only there to work on your nerves, why not pretend to have sold your shares. Pack up and "leave". If he's really just there to work on your nerves, he'll sell his too. You can do a private purchase and buy back your shares. Don't you have someone you trust who can act like they bought you out?" Liyema looked like one deep in thought.

Liyema: "I'll think of someone. Thanks for the advice" Vuvu nodded.

Vuvu: "You're welcome. I think you need to go" Liyema stood.

Liyema: "Thanks once again. I actually feel much better now. I have strength to face Portia and the guilt of it all once again"

Vuvu: "Take care" she opened the door. They made prolonged eye contact before he walked pass her. Vuvu inhaled his lingering scent and blinked to block her tears. The moment took her back a few steps. Liyema went to go

fetch Portia at the hospital though she told him she didn't want to see him. He found his family there already.

Mrs E: "Are you okay?" Liyema nodded.

Liyema: "Are you ready to go home?"

Portia: "Don't touch me. I told you that I'm going to get a ride with your mother" she stood further away from him.

Hlubi: "Portia, the two of you really need each other right now"

Portia: "So I need someone who killed my baby, Mahlubandile?"

Liyema felt his chest tighten.

Liyema: "I'm hurting as much ,
Portia.

Portia: "You've got absolutely no
right to grieve my baby...
absolutely none" she pointed at
him while shouting.

Mrs E: "I'll drive her home" she
looked at Liyema.

Portia: "And don't you dare think
I'm going to share a room with
you. Once I've healed completely,
Abongile and I going to leave"

Liyema: "Fine" he walked towards
the door.

Hlubi: "Haibo, Liyema?" he turned

to face them again.

Liyema: "What do you want me to do, Mahlubandile huh? What part of I'm hurting just as much as she does do you all not get? If she wants to make the wound deeper by taking my daughter away as punishment then fine" he threw his hands in the air "You all will see me as a villain should I tell her I'll fight her on that. So what the hell do you want from me?" a tear rolled down but he wiped it off quickly "I know what I did was wrong but this time I stopped it and decided to do it the

right way. It's not much but it's a hell of an improvement from how I handled things the first time. Now I'm also distracted to in how to grief? I'm sorry... I'm so sorry and I'm walking around wishing to be struck down by lightning that's how bad I feel. I'm sorry" he wiped a tear once again before walking out.

Mrs E: "Liyema!" she called out behind him.

Portia: "Please take me home"

Hlubi: "I'm going to go look for my brother" she rushed out. She found him sitting in his car crying.

The doors were locked so she knocked on the window and he unlocked the doors.

Hlubi: "I know that I have a "I told you so" tendency but I don't like seeing you in pain. I know that you are hurting. I guess in such situations, society has gotten used to feeling more for the mother than the father. I know how much you wanted this baby. I'm sorry" she moved closer to hug him "I love you so much, Lil bro. When I'm harsh on you it's because I want you to realise that you are better than the

actions you've made over the past few years. I'm glad you're open about not being monogamous. It'll save women a lot of pain as they'll know what their getting themselves into. If Portia leaves, we'll help you heal and you'll go visit Abo. I think you need a few months of being alone, Liyema"

Liyema: "What happened to me, Mahlubandile? What happened to that man who could distinguish between right and wrong?"

Hlubi: "He is having a midlife crisis" they both laughed "I googled it, it's actually a thing"

she looked at him "But like any phase, it had to pass, Liyema. Hasn't it cost you a lot already?" he nodded.

Liyema: "That's why I ended things with Nomvula. I wanted to do things right and had whoever not sent Portia that picture I'd have gotten it right"

Hlubi: "This can either break you and Portia or make you stronger. Only time will tell. My brother in law thought his marriage was ending but he fixed things with his wife. Their marriage is now stronger than ever"

Liyema: "Let me go and get Abongile from Alu then I'll go get my boys. I want to be surrounded by my kids" Hlubi nodded "Tell Portia that I am giving her space that she needs. I'll be back with Abongile on Sunday. We're going to visit Bandile". He said while pressing his phone.

Hlubi: "Is that wise?"

Liyema: "I'm not going to listen to her tell me that I've got no right to hurt. I need a pick me up and my kids will do exactly that"

Hlubi: "She might need Abo,
Liyema"

Liyema: "Then I'll go kiss my daughter goodbye and go pick my sons up. Nothing like a spontaneous trip to get the mood going. Please step out of my car unless you want to see yourself in Port Elizabeth" he looked at Hlubi. She said bye and opened the door. Liyema made flight bookings and was lucky to have found one departing in a few hours. He first went to Lungile's place to go see Abo who has been looked after by Alu while her mother was in hospital. He told her that he'll be gone for a while but promised

that Portia would come for her as he assumed she'd do. He got back in his car and drove to Ntombi's where he asked Bukhosi to meet him. He didn't just want to hoot and have the boys come out without talking to Ntombi. He nervously walked to the front door. The house was similar to one he and Ntombikayise once viewed but he convinced her that their old house was perfect because he didn't want to move. He was certain that she was happy in her current one. Lefa was at the gym.

Banele: "Old man" he gave his father a brief hug to greet.

Ntombikayise appeared in a tight dress which showed her bump perfectly. She didn't know what to expect with Liyema because the last time they spoke threats were made.

Liyema: "I came to ask the boys if they are willing to go with me to PE in a few hours to visit Bandile" he explained to her.

Ntombi: "They are in control of themselves so ask them" she walked away.

Banele: "I'm ready to go and have

a boys weekend" he looked at his father "Come in, dad" he stood aside. Liyema looked inside hesitantly "She won't bite" he laughed so Liyema walked in. Banele went to tell his brothers what their dad was promising. Hlomphe asked what the hype was all about and Banele told him. Hlomphe: "Let me go pack" he wore a look of excitement. Ntombi was standing at a distance and get heart broke when he said so but she had to break the news to him.

Ntombi: "You can't go with,

Hlomphe" he looked at him.

Hlomphe: "Why?". Liyema was lost throughout the conversation.

Ntombi: "Because your father does not know and he's at the gym and his phone is most probably not on him"

Hlomphe: "But I won't be lost. I will be with my brothers and their dad" he reminded her.

Bukhosi: "Do you mind if he joins?" he asked his father.

Liyema: "Nha" he said quickly.

Ntombi: "It doesn't work like that so stop encouraging it please, Liyema. Hlomphe you can't

go to another province without your father knowing. I'm sorry but it is what it is. This is their father and that's why they can go but yours won't like coming back to news that you're gone". Hlompho's head dropped and Ntombi's heart broke.

Liyema: "I really don't mind"
Ntombi gave him a cold look.

Bubele: "Ma" he pleaded.

Ntombi: "No, we're not there yet. she walked to comfort Hlompho who was crying. She held his chin so he'd look at her "I'm sorry but you'll understand one day" she

added.

Bukhosi: "Now it won't be nice leaving knowing that he is crying" he sat back down.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry" she said in whisper as though it were her fault.

Liyema: "Go pack. I already told Bandile that we're coming" the older boys looked hesitant.

Ntombi: "Go, he'll be fine" she hugged Hlomphe who was still crying. The quads went to pack with heavy hearts. Lefa entered after a while looking at Liyema like he had broke on or something.

Lefa: "What's going on?" Ntombi explained the situation

"Remember I told you that there will be times when your brothers will be spending time with their dad and you won't be included?"

Hlomphe nodded. Eyes red with crying.

Hlomphe: "I don't understand why I can't join. I want to see Bandile too and I don't mind that their father is taking us"

Liyema: "Look I'm really sorry about everything that I've done in the past to hurt you. I just told Ntombi how sorry I am. I

don't mind him tagging along"

Ntombi: "It's not as easy as you are saying you're sorry and us forgiving, Liyema. We just aren't at that full blended family point yet" Liyema nodded.

Liyema: "I'm sorry" he held his hand out to Lefa. Lefa looked him in the eyes first for a long while and after seeing sincerity in them he shook Liyema's hand and nodded.

Lefa: "It's all good. I do agree with my wife though. I don't think we're at that point yet. Had the tables been turned, I

think you'd have felt the same.
Baby steps"

Liyema: "Yeah of course. Please tell him that next time I'll be sure to book him a seat on the plane" Ntombi translated and Hlompho just hid his face against her after hearing that. He was heartbroken mainly because he didn't get why he couldn't go though Liyema said it's okay.

Banele: "We're ready" he stood with their bag. He tapped Hlompho's shoulder but the young boy wouldn't let go of Ntombi to look at them.

Bubele: "This just sucks" he walked out to not see more.

Bukhosi: "We'll win at this blended family someday. You guys already did with Hlompho's mother. You'll reach that point with dad too" he said optimistically.

Liyema: "Take care"

Ntombi: "I'm sorry about your baby" Liyema's jaw tightened and he just nodded.

Liyema: "That's why I need this weekend with them"

Ntombikayise nodded "Bye" he walked to the door. Banele was still trying to let Hlompho look at

him but he just clung to Ntombi's dress tighter and Banele tried to rip him off.

Ntombi: "Leave him. He'll calm down". The boys said their goodbyes. They were excited to see Bandile especially since he didn't come home for a short visit but they were sad to leave Hlompho. Hlompho didn't want to see them leave. When Ntombi peeled him off her he knew they were gone.

Lefa: "We're sorry" he said to his son "We can go do something" he tried to soften Hlompho.

Hlomphe: "I'm sleepy" he said before walking to their room. Ntombikayise and Lefa looked defeated.

Ntombi: "I hate this" Lefa nodded in agreement.

Lefa: "Liyema is doing this because he wants to bond with his children. Hlomphe will someday understand why he couldn't join them"

Ntombi: "Do you think he was sincere in his apology?"

Lefa: "Changed behaviour is the best apology. Let me go try to bribe that one" he kissed her

cheek before walking down the passage. The quads didn't ask their father about the loss much and that's why they agreed to go with him. They wanted to make him feel good even if it was for a day or two. Portia heard Liyema left and she didn't feel sad.

Instead she took it as opportunity to get her ducks in a row. Mrs E offered to stay until Liyema returned but Portia said she wanted to be alone with her daughter. She was glad Liyema was feeling pain because she wanted him to feel how much pain

she felt when he cheated with her friend. She knew it were two types of pain that could not really be compared but she didn't care. Seta on the other hand had tried to get inside Zola's apartment but Jester was like a house cat as he never really left the house. He had not had a woman in his life since his revenge started and he didn't realize that his life was on standstill trying to revenge a woman who didn't even love him back. He was just a means to pleasure get fantasies but he loved her. Vuvu decided to ask her

neighbours if they saw something strange a couple of weeks ago but non recalled such. She wanted to know who the person who took the picture was. She suddenly suspected that Portia knew about the affair long ago.

Something about the entire situation didn't sit well with her and she decided tnot to brush her intuition off but rather follow it and allow it to lead her to the answers. 

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Portia felt her energy deplete when she opened the door only to find Seta standing before her. She thought that she cut all ties with him after telling him that she wanted nothing to do with him but clearly he was not done with her. She no longer had desire to revenge Zingisa. Her loyalty were to herself and no one else. She gotten plenty done in the fee days of "healing". She had to stop her mother from coming to Cape Town to support her because she didn't want to hear "I told you

so" from her mother. Mrs E had been supportive which shocked Portia and she ended up giving Zola advice on updating security at her flat because she knew Seta would go look for answers there.

Portia: "Are you crazy?" she whispered as they still stood at the door.

Seta: "I saw his car leave so just drop the damn act" he let himself in and she didn't fight him but instead locked the door behind them "Nice life" he looked around "No wonder you dropped me. He's

giving you the life your parents never could" he added.

Portia: "What do you want?"

Seta: "For you to go to your mother in law's place and get whatever the hell you suspect is there which connects to Zingisa"

Portia went to sit opposite him.

Portia: "Why are you doing this, Seta? Let's say you kill Zingisa's killer and get your revenge, what then?" she raised a brow.

Seta: "None of your damn business" he looked away.

Portia: "I'll tell you" she shifted closer "Then you'll still be left

with that void" she pointed to his chest "Did Zingisa even love you as much as you love her? Let me tell you what I know. I know that she loved Liyema, was perhaps even obsessed with him. I know that because he's the only man that she ever spoke about to me. I only learned of you when you approached me but I've never heard her utter your name"

Seta: "Liar!" he stood quickly clearly angry.

Portia: "It's true" she stood to go stand next to him "So ask yourself if this revenge is worth

it. Ask yourself if Zingisa is worth you putting your damn life on hold and even risking jail. I learned that absolutely no one is worth that much energy even if we love them"

Seta: "You're not going to talk me out of this. I was the one she went to when he didn't love her enough"

Portia: "Who did you go to when she didn't love you enough?" she looked into his eyes "when she'd return home to him. Who was with you?" he didn't answer.

Seta: "Just shut up!" he shouted.

Portia: "Seta, you were just someone Zingisa could enjoy her nasty sexual fantasies with because Liyema was just too conservative to do things such as threesomes. She didn't love you. She loved him but liked the way you fucked her" Seta nearly grabbed her by the neck but he stopped himself just in time.

Seta: "You don't know what the hell you are talking about. She loved me and I loved her" his hand was shaking as he pointed a finger at her.

Portia: "She loved him. She even

came back to try and convince him to take her back right before her death. I love Zingisa but let's not forget she was not innocent. She had orgies in her marital bed while her husband was at work and you were one of those people. Does that mean she loved all the people you had these sexual parties with too?". Seta looked at her and she could see he was fuming "There is your version, her version and the truth. Truth is she never loved you. She loved Liyema and I think that's why you want to kill him. Not because

he killed her but because he had the heart that you wished you could have" she added. "Dammit just get yourself a nice woman and move the hell on. You are in your late thirties yet you don't have a wife no child because you've been hung up on this perfect imagine of a dead woman who didn't love you" she added.

Seta: "When she came back she was the one who came to me to tell me that she wanted to take what's hers from Liyema. She only pretended to want him back. They must have found out about

her plan and killed her. Let me fucking tell you something else that you didn't know, Portia. She was pregnant with my child when they killed her. So not only did they kill the woman that I love but my child too. I heard about your little fight with his side chick. Will you ever forgive the woman for killing your child?"

Portia: "We're not talking about me here" she looked down and back at him "I didn't know that she was pregnant" she added.

Seta: "A while ago you spoke like you knew every single thing about

Zingisa but really you know things on the surface. I'm not going to forgive them for killing what would have been my first born. Even if I have to kill every single Elephant related to Liyema, his mother, siblings, children, nieces and nephew I will. Up until I can close that void you brought up I'll do anything"

Portia: "I hope you count my child out of the children you just mentioned, Seta!" she fumed "You better not hurt any damn child who never even knew Zingisa" she warned.

Seta: "My child was as innocent. If his mother killed them, I'm going to take all of her children in one damn day" his chest was moving up and down rapidly as his breathing quickened "If her love for her grandchildren is greater than that she has for her children then I'll take them all from her in one day" Portia's heart started to beat faster "All of them" he added and watched her jaw tightened.

Portia: "Keep Abongile out of this"

Seta: "You do know that I could destroy this little home you've

built on another woman's pain? I can first make sure that he has custody of Abongile and then attack" he wore a smirk.

Portia: "Try me" she looked at him "You just dare try me" she added.

Seta took a good look at her.

Seta: "Were you ever even pregnant?" he watched her flinch

"What game are you playing at, Portia? Did you want to eat the rewards of my plan alone?" he asked.

Portia: "The only reward of your plan which backfired was my daughter whom I had to raise

alone because you men can choose what you want to be part of and what not. If you dare take that reward away not even your father, the devil, will save you from me. Your plan has been dead since it begun. If I get any rewards it'll be because I followed my plan"

Seta: "Do you really want to take me on?"

Portia: "Do you want to take me on?" she looked at him and he laughed softly. The door opened and Liyema walked in. Had they not been in the heated moment of

rage they'd have heard him fiddle with his eye at the door. Seeing Seta with a woman he was in a relationship with once again brought back anger.

Liyema: "Why are you meeting with this thing in my house, Portia and that behind a locked door?" he walked towards them but his gaze was at Seta "You don't have any respect, do you?" he pointed at Seta.

Seta: "I don't want her so don't flatter yourself" he said sarcastically.

Portia: "He said that he wanted

to come and talk to you. I didn't realize the door was locked" she said quietly.

Liyema: "Get the hell out of my house. If it's business related, then you can talk to me at work I don't want you anywhere near my family" he said to Seta. Seta didn't fight but instead just walked pass Liyema and out the door "I never want to see you with another man in my house again" he looked back at Portia.

Portia: "Yet you want me to share you with another woman. A woman I thought was my friend.

You're not letting that man privilege go to waste now are you" she said sarcastically before walking away.

Liyema: "I think it's best that you go back home. If you want to take Abongile with you it's fine but I will fight you if you deny me visiting rights. I can't live like this anymore" she turned around.

Portia: "You want to bring her here. Say it like it is" she started to cry "A woman who killed my baby and you want to bring her here" she shouted "I wanna marry you okay. I want to have

more children with you but I'm scared. You hurt me and you continue to by dismissing me instead of being there for me. I lost trust in you, Liyema" she wiped her tears.

Liyema: "I've been here but you just don't allow me close to you. I'm grieving too, Portia. I don't know in what language you want me to say that so it can get through your thick skull. I want to be here for you. Hell, I am here" he shouted in frustration. She just stood crying so he softened up. He slowly walked

towards her and was shocked she didn't push him away when he held her "I'm sorry" he added "I know you're hurting but I think a break will do us good. It won't be goodbye but rather a time to figure this out"

Portia: "And you cheating in peace"

Liyema: "I ended things with her but I'm still a polygamist man that hasn't changed. If it won't be her it'll be another woman and you'll need time to think if you want to involve yourself in that" he added.

Portia: "I think I want to continue planning the wedding. Focussing on something positive. I love you too much so I want to give us a chance"

Liyema: "I still want to marry you so if you're sure then do it. Just take it easy. I love you" he kissed her forehead.

Portia: "I love you too" she held him tighter. She knew that she had to conclude her plans. She had to find a way to make Alu and Ntombi look after their children without raising any suspicious. She loved the quads and Alu's

babies too so she didn't want any harm to come their way. She knew she could easily have gotten to Liyema through his children but she was not about to bring children in a war they didn't deserve to be dragged into.

Seta went to Nomvula's apartment and she wondered who he was. She could see by the suit he wore that he was no delivery guy.

Vuvu: "How many I help you?" she asked after greeting.

Seta: "I'm the one who took that picture of you and Liyema" Vuvu wanted to close the door but he blocked it with his hand.

Vuvu: "These nails will dig into your eyes so deep you'll feel your soul move" she showed him her sharp stiletto nails.

Seta: "Keep your claws in for now. Do you love Liyema?" Vuvu didn't answer "I'll take that as a yes. I'm here to make you a proposition. Portia is not who she says she is. The dumbest thing she could do was use my contact to fake a miscarriage. If you

work with me then I'll get you your man" he looked at her.

Vuvu: "I suspected it but no, man..." she said to herself as she was in disbelief "what do you want in return?" she got back to her senses.

Seta: "My revenge on everyone who took something extremely important from me" Vuvu felt herself get a bit scared but she kept a brave face. She wanted to call Liyema and tell him that Portia faked everything but it was best she does that when she has proof and she knew the only

way to get proof was if she helped Seta. She wondered if Liyema was worth getting into an alliance with Seta because something about him unsettled her. When she offered him a seat and closed the door, she knew that she was about to do things that she didn't imagine doing for a man whom would most probably not even stick around for long but her feelings for him made her feel that he was worth whatever Seta was about to propose.

Bandile enjoyed last weekend with

his father and brother. It was supposed to be his time with Kwanele but after his brothers told him about the supposed miscarriage, he knew that his father needed them. It was a weekend of doing everything that they loved doing with their father since they were young. They loved him and he sat down with them and openly discussed polygamy with them. Neither had a problem with it but they were glad that it was not affecting Ntombi in any way. The only thing that made the weekend

unpleasant was knowing Hlompho was crying but Ntombi and Lefa took him out too and like the child he is, he forgot that he ever cried after his older brothers. Bandile and Daniel's friendship had become non-existent because Daniel felt betrayed by his best friend. Kwanele stopped fearing what Daniel might do after Bandile spoke to her parents. They had not seen each other in a while because of the tests and assignments that kept them both busy even during weekends but that weekend they both had

nothing planned so they decided to take advantage of the freedom. She smiled when her taxi pulled into the taxi rank because she saw him waiting for her as usual. They put the ex-issues to rest and she trusted him fully once again. The long hug after she climbed off proved just how much they missed each other. That meeting would be like no other because Kwanele decided a few days ago that she was ready to take the relationship to the next level. Her friends advised her a week after they started dating

to sleep with him because he was going to get it elsewhere if she didn't but she is glad she didn't give into the pressure but instead waited on herself to be ready. Bandile on the other felt like he'd been waiting for eternity so when they had that talk he felt like jumping through the roof with joy. They got on a cab and headed to his place. He bribed his housemates so they'd be out of the house because he planned on cooking dinner for him and Kwanele. The two of them shared a passionate kiss as soon as they

entered the commune.

Kwanele: "Babe, try to act less excited" she giggled but he just leaned in for a kiss once again.

Bandile: "I can't help it. Had it been up to me I'd have skipped all else and just go show you some love" they both smiled "But I want our first time to be special so I'm going to cook for you"

Kwanele looked impressed.

Kwanele: "Don't poison me" he laughed.

Bandile: "Never" he promised "I bought your favourite wine so you can just sit while you watch your

man cook for you"

Kwanele: "I love that idea so much. Don't cook complicated things. I don't think I'll eat much anyway" she said softly.

Bandile: "Nervous?"

Kwanele: "More like scared of what our relationship will be like afterwards, Andile"

Bandile: "Why should it change?" he kissed the tip of her nose "I love you" he looked at her.

Kwanele: "I love you more"

Bandile: "No, I love you more" she giggled. The two of them got out the ingredients to make a

homemade burger with wedges. Bandile was not shy on the kisses between the feel frying. Kwanele excused herself before they could finish to go freshen up just as she saw done on movies. She was so nervous her underarms were sweating like it was the hottest day on the planet when in fact there was some drizzling outside. She wondered how Bandile kept so cool when she felt like she was about to burst with nerves. She didn't eat much just as she expected because her mind was ahead of her imagining what will

happen later. She was glad the commune was empty and it took the edge off a bit. Bandile drew her closer after they washed dishes.

Bandile: "I don't want this if you're going to wake up with regrets tomorrow, Anele because it would mean a break up just a few days after that" he held her face in his hands.

Kwanele: "I'm ready" she kissed him.

Bandile: "But?" he asked "waiting more won't hurt me. I've become best friends with my hand

actually" he joked and they both laughed.

Kwanele: "Shame, baby" she hugged him "How long did your ex make you wait before you two....you know" she stuttered.

Bandile: "It doesn't matter. She doesn't matter. I'm with you so you matter". He felt her soft hips against his in a slow kiss. He lifted her up on the kitchen counter and she broke the kiss to look around "we're alone" he assured her before kissing her again. He could sense that she was not comfortable so he broke

the kiss and turned around "Get on" he tilted his head back to look at her.

Kwanele: "Are you crazy?" she laughed.

Bandile: "About you yeah. Get on or the train is going to leave you" she laughed again. Her arms wrapped around his shoulder as he held her legs firmly. Kwanele kissed his neck as he carried her on his back to the bedroom. Her best friend went to the campus clinic with her so she'd get her very first contraceptive. She didn't know how stressful that

would feel she felt a sense of discomfort as she waited for her turn to go in but she went out feeling good about protecting herself. Bandile locked his bedroom door because he had a housemate who barged in without knocking sometimes. He kissed her again when he put her down and Kwanele felt more at ease when they were away from any possible preying eyes. It felt like her heart was stuck in her throat when he gently lowered her on his single bed which smelled like fabric softener. Bandile wanted to rip

her clothes off but he managed to enforce self-discipline by taking each item of clothing off gently and slowly not forgetting to kiss each bare spot of skin he met on the way. He felt her relax a bit beneath him so he pulled his shirt over his head.

Kwanele: "Baby, please turn the lights off"

Bandile: "Why? You shy?" he asked in a whisper. She just shrugged with a nervous smile. Bandile stood to take his study lamp from his desk and placed it by his bedside floor and switched it on

before going to switch the bright main light off "Is that better?" he kissed her. She scanned the room and nodded with a smile.

Kwanele: "Thank you"

Bandile: "You're beautiful" she smiled before they kissed once again. She felt herself relax more and more until neither of them had any piece of clothing on. It was the first time a guy explored her body with his hands as Bandile was doing. It felt good so she closed her eyes to enjoy it all not sure what to do with her hands. He didn't mind leading. He

made sure that he put on protection before getting between her warm thighs. She felt his manhood at her entrance and she took a deep breath. He kissed her once again.

Bandile: "I love you" he kissed her chin and gently eased himself into her tightness but she flinched making him pause. Kwanele was not one to stand pain of any degree so he was not surprised to see her shed a tear "Want me to stop?" he had to put her before himself. She shook her head "Sure?" she nodded "Try not to

tense up. You're with me, your boyfriend who loves you. Don't over think it, just give yourself to the moment" he smiled before kissing her. She kissed him more passionately and felt him go deeper within her folds. His thrusts were slow and gentle and it was a first because he'd never been with someone inexperienced. Whenever his body felt like it was overtaken with his own pleasure he had to slow down to think about her. His mouth explored the spots that he could. For Kwanele it was a pain mixed with a hint of

pleasure She felt safe so she stopped over thinking as he advised so the pain faded somewhat. Bandile tried to delay his release but failed. Kwanele brushed the side of his sweaty face as he tried to breathe again. It was not a mind-blowing moment but it was not bad at all. She expected it to go terrible but she loved how he handled things. Kwanele: "I don't regret it" she whispered before kissing him. Bandile took a deep breath with eyes shut before looking at her. Bandile: "It'll get better as your

body starts getting used to it"

Kwanele: "I know. I love you, Bandile Elephant" she whispered.

Bandile: "I love you too". He wished that she was not as nervous but they would work on her confidence as time goes on. He couldn't remember feeling so in love with a girl and it scared him. because he vowed after his parents divorce that he was never going to get married. He knew Kwanele wanted a family life someday and he wondered if he'll ever get over his fear. He decided to dismiss the thought and be

present in the moment. Kwanele felt a deeper love for him in just those few minutes of physical intimacy but she no longer felt scared about what would happen afterwards because she believed him when he said he loved her. She knew going back to Grahamstown would be more difficult than usual because as she laid in her arms she didn't want that moment to fade. 🖤

S2-INSERT 84 (NOT EDITED)

The day that Seta went to pay

Vuvu a visit was a day Vuvu had to choose if she wanted to get involved in Liyema's mess or if she wants to walk away. That day she sat briefly next to Seta but stood up once again after she realized that she didn't want to get involved. She knew that her working with Seta wouldn't guarantee her a happily ever after with Liyema. "I don't want to know anything" were the words she told Seta. His angry reaction to her choosing not to be involved was reason she didn't regret turning him down. She heard of Seta from Liyema so she knew it

was him but she underestimated Seta's hatred towards Liyema. She advised Liyema through text message that he should be careful around Seta but Liyema brushed it off because in his mind Seta was nothing but a toothless dog who craved attention. Vuvu knew that Portia faked a miscarriage but she didn't know how to prove it because she didn't have the name of the doctor who supposedly treated Portia. She didn't want to go home to get family but after Seta's visit she packed her bags after she decided to lay low for a while because she

didn't know what Portia could do to her. Her concern for Liyema ran deep but she feared for her life so she chose to save herself but she went to visit someone first. When she arrived at the apartment Zola shared with Jester she found the door open and their belongings were scattered around. Vuvu tapped her knuckles on the door softly and she could see the anger in Zola's eyes when she turned to look who was at the door.

Zola: "Please tell me that you are an officer of the law. We've been waiting an entire hour for you

people to arrive" she lashed out at the stranger. Vuvu swallowed hard. She'd never met Zola but knew where Zola lived because Liyema once had to go make a short visit to his mother on one of his and Vuvu's date nights so she sat in the car waiting while he went to see his mother.

Vuvu: "Ummm..." she looked behind, Zola"

Zola: "Don't just stand there. Take finger prints or something" she was fuming "You see why I didn't want to involve cops, Layolo" she shouted.

Vuvu: "Mrs Elephant, I'm not a

police officer of any kind. I'm a friend of Liyema's" Zola gave Vuvu her attention.

Zola: "Your name?" she asked before folding her arms "I know all of his friends or rather the lack thereof. So who are you claiming to be his friend and even having the audacity to come to my house unannounced as if Liyema lives here?" she walked towards the door where Vuvu still stood outsiders.

Vuvu: "Nocawa Stofile, we met for business but figured that we have a lot in common than just business"

Zola: "Let me guess...that's code for "we are sleeping together" she raised a brow.

Vuvu: "I'm into women" she lied "So nothing like that" Mrs E nodded "May I come in please. I don't want the neighbors hearing what I have to say" Zola's eye brows drew closer as she looked at Vuvu suspiciously. She stood aside arms still folded and watched Vuvu's heels click on her wooden floor. She checked Vuvu from head to toe wondering what her story was "A friend of mine came to me upset after losing a big client. It came to my

attention that the client who cancelled all his insurance agreements safe guarding his estates was Mr Liyema Elephant" Mrs E didn't look moved at all. Mrs E: "So you want me to go beg my son to use the company again so your friend can get her commission back?" she asked looking confused "I thought he was your friend so as risk so as his friend why don't you tell him the risks involved in changing insurance companies?" she added. Vuvu: "Because I'm not supposed to know what goes on in a rival company. My friend had no

business telling me but she was venting"

Zola: "So you're snitching on your friend?"

Vuvu: "Mrs Elephant, you don't understand. Liyema has been a client of this company since before his kids were born. Why would he want to change companies all of a sudden?"

Mrs E: "Little girl, I really don't have time to listen to this. I've been a client to different insurance companies for years. If you can't speak to Liyema about this then I don't know why you're talking to me"

Vuvu: "Please ask him if he changed insurance companies" Zola took a deep breath clearly frustrated.

Mrs: "Okay" she said casually.

Vuvu: "Thank you"

Zola: "How did you know where I live?"

Vuvu: "I've come with Liyema on our way to a meeting once. What happened here?" she looked around.

Zola: "Someone with a death wish chose me to be their exicator that's what. I hope it's not you, Nocawa Stofile" she walked around Nomvula scanning her once

more to intimate Vuvu.

Vuvu: "I have many wishes but death is not one of them, Mam" she watched Zola come from behind her to stand in front of her.

Zola: "I'll relay your message to Liyema and be sure to keep your name out of it. If you didn't go straight to him then you clearly want to remain anonymous" Vuvu nodded.

Vuvu: "Also please make sure that your son isn't mourning for nothing" she said before she quickly ran out the flat. Mrs E tried to run after her but Vuvu

was at the parking lot and drove off before she could say anything else. Mrs E stood at the open space wondering what just happened. Vuvu didn't want her real name known because she was afraid of what might happen to her. When a friend of hers came crying because of loss of commission for losing a major client a few days ago Vuvu didn't expect that it would be Liyema's name coming up. She could have asked Liyema but he'd have wanted to know who split the beans and Vuvu didn't want her friend losing her job for giving

confidential information please.

She hoped that Mrs E would look into what she disclosed but she suddenly doubted it because Mrs E clearly had problems of her own.

Jester: "I knew I should never have let you talk me into going away for a few days. Now look" he looked around "Funny how all your fancy jewelry is still here" he looked confused.

Zola: "Jester" she looked at him with widened eyes "Please tell me that incriminating information you had on me is destroyed" she held a single finger up.

Jester: "Long ago. I'm sorry that

I held on to it for so long" he kissed her forehead "I don't want to love you the wrong way like he did" Mrs E smiled.

Zola: "That's impossible. I think whoever it was was trying to get something they could use against us. There was a woman here who said the most unusual things for someone who doesn't know me". She told him everything.

Jester: "If someone is attacking the family then we best put up our best defences" Zola nodded.

Mrs E: "And our starting point should be Liyema's household.

Let's get our place tidy because

the police are clearly not coming. I think they've had it with the Elephant family" she laughed softly. The two of them picked up fallen objects and put them in their places. They told the police that it was a false alarm because they wanted to deal with it.

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Liyema was having a bad day. From being vomited on by Abo the morning he took her to crèche, to being stuck in traffic longer than usual though he left the house earlier and to make matters worse two of his tires burst forcing him to wait for roadside

assistance because he only had one spare. A hobbo made his way to Liyema. His face looked like it was dipped in charcoal dust and his clothes were no better.

Man: "R2?" he shook the tin and his coins made noise "R2?" he asked Liyema again. Liyema looked to his left then right to check if roadside assistance was anywhere in sight. He got tired of being asked for R2 so he took his wallet from his pocket and took out a R50 note. He handed the note to the man "I asked if you want R2" Liyema looked confused.

Liyema: "You want to give me R2

when I can give you way more. So who is lacking more between us?" he asked.

Man: "I lack absolutely nothing. I need nothing not do I want anything yet so much is given to me" Liyema let out a sarcastic laugh.

Liyema: "Will you take my money or not?"

Man: "Will you take my money or not?" Liyema looked at the shiny coin. He was a bit disgusted by the dirty hand which held the money but to get the man off his case he accepted the coin. Liyema in return placed the R50 note in

the tin "This breakdown of your car was not accidental. You were meant to stop right here so we can meet. Both of the women who you think you love are not good for you" Liyema raised a brow.

Liyema: "Sir, please move along because I really do not need this...not today"

Man: "They want to milk your pockets dry and they are already milking your spirit dry. Many have adviced you to be at peace alone but you constantly run after external love. Being loved by other people doesn't mean you don't have to work on the project of

self love. Do not marry this woman that you plan to marry and do not pursue a relationship with the other one either. Great men have fallen because of the women they chose. She either builds you or helps your enemies bury you, Liyema" Liyema turned to look at the man.

Liyema: "How do you know my name?". It was strange enough for the man to know he was struggling between holding on to two women but to hear that the man knew his name without chin telling creeped him out. The man just laughed.

Man: "Would you believe me if I said that I am you" Liyema laughed out "If you don't make wise choices then you'll meet me in yourself someday" he walked away leaving Liyema with multiple questions.

Liyema: "At least tell me your name!" he called out behind.

Man: "Dladla" he shouted back.

Dladla was part of Liyema's ancestry. A loud knock disturbed him and when he opened his eyes he realized that he had fallen asleep in his car. The man knocking was the roadside assistance personnel. Liyema rolled

his window down and Jeff introduced himself.

Jeff: "There was an accident blocking me from reaching you, sir. Apologies for the delay". Liyema sat up and blinked a few times "Next time please try to keep awake. You become an easy target when you're not being vigilant" Jeff warned.

Liyema: "Yeah thanks" he opened his door "I must really be tired to just doze off like that". When he stepped out of the car a shiny silver coin fell to the tar road.

Liyema bent to pick it up "Do you believe in receiving warnings in

your dreams, Jeff?" he looked at the coin that felt as warm in his hand as it did in the dream.

Jeff: "My Nana used to say that a dream remembered is a message, sir" he said to Liyema "Let's get you towed up" he went about his business. Liyema looked around hoping to see a hobbo but there was no one but him and Jeff and Jeff's assistant on the road.

Liyema: "What the hell just happened, Liyema?" he asked himself still confused. Jeff got Liyema's car up and going in no time and he was soon on the road

again. His phone rang so he put it on loudspeaker.

Mrs E: "I heard that you switched insurance. Is the grass greener on the other side?" she asked after they greeted each other.

Liyema: "I did no such. Where did you hear it from?"

Mrs E: "I can't remember but calm and ask if everything is still fine. Where are you?"

Liyema: "On the road. Had the strangest dream. The man basically warned me about the women in my life"

Mrs E: "Oh is it?" she sounded

intrigued "Then be warned,
Liyema" she added.

Liyema: "I'll come see you later.
Mahlubandile says you got broken
into. I hope you called the cops"

Mrs E: "Those good for nothings"
Liyema laughed. He'd never met a
person who had no faith in police
as his mother "I'm making a U-
turn now" he did so "I'm on my
way to you" he added.

Mrs E: "Good because we've got
plenty to talk about. Something
just isn't right and your dream
just confirmed it. My intuition had
never been wrong. So come and I'll
call Mahlubandile and Lungil. I

feel we'll need to be close knit for this" she added.

Liyema: "See you now". They hung up. Liyema drove back to town to see his mother. Something urges him to call his insurance company. He gave his details and was shocked to hear that he cancelled his insurance. He had a few words with the consultant and she asked him to come see them tomorrow. Since all calls were recorded by the insurance company, they had proof that he cancelled his insurance. He tried to think of a time he made such a foolish decision but he couldn't

recall. He wondered if he was in yet another dream.

The ladies came over with some drinks and snacks to celebrate Ntombi after the magazine issue with her story came out. Ntombi remembered growing up wishing that she had friends to go play with but she was glad that her best friendships came when she had the maturity to appreciate them. Baby Gwala was growing and her parents were eager to hold her already. It was Hlompho's first visit to Mimi after the Charles issue and

Ntombi had to remind Lefa to not stress too much.

Ntombi: "Ladies, I've missed you so much. Like you guys are now hiding under rocks lately"

Poppy: "Really?" she raised a brow and Ntombikayise laughed.

Ntombi: "Okay all of you except my favourite neighborhood buddy" she held Poppy close "She sometimes even comes in her pajamas guys" they all laughed.

Othu: "How will you see us when Lefa keeps you away from us" she said it loud enough for him to hear. Thru could hear him laugh from the lounge.

Yandi: "You happy?" she asked Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Am I glowing?" she closed her eyes and took a deep breath while smiling.

Lefa: "You're glowing, sthandwa sam" he kissed her cheek "I'm off" he added. The men were meeting where they wouldn't be disturbed while watching a game.

Ntombi: "Drive carefully" Lefa nodded.

Lefa: "Will do" he promised

"Ladies, any messages I should pass on to your husbands before they become game zombies and ignore calls?" he joked and they

laughed.

Lucia: "As if they'll listen. Even you your mind is gone already"

Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I love you guys" he kissed Ntombi before kissing her belly.

Ntombi: "We love you too" she smiled and watched him walk towards the door.

Mandla: "Stop drooling please" she said to Ntombi and Ntombikayise turned her head to look at her friends laughing "Ladies, what do you guys think of an open marriage?" she asked when they were finally alone.

Hlubi: "I've had enough sexual

partners to last me several lifetimes. I want to have sex with Yanda alone until I die. Why are you asking?"

Mandla: "I think I want it" all the lady's expressed shock "Don't judge" she said softly.

Yandi: "I advise against it. You don't know what energies people carry around. You find that as soon as you start you suddenly get an unexplainable decrease or you lose your job because that person you're sleeping with is not clean" she gave her advice from a healer's perspective.

Poppy: "Try new things with your

husband rather, friend. It's normal after kids and years together to feel like your intimate life is not good. Try new things". Nomandla nodded. She dropped the topic. The boys walked in with a couple of their friends making a lot of noise.

Bubele: "Mom, could we please host our braai here. Sk's dad said we can't use their place anymore.

Ntombi: "You'll clean up after yourselves afterwards right?" they all nodded "Then you may" they all smiled.

SK: "Thank you, Mrs Gwala" he said in his sweetest voice.

Ntombi: "On condition that you feed us too" the boys looked at each other.

Banele: "You'll have to give us bucks to go buy more food then"

Ntombi: "It's a bring and braai. You bring that stuff and I offer the place" the ladies laughed.

Bukhosi: "Really now. You're cutting a deal with kids?"

Zuko: "Take it or leave it"

Bukhosi: "Okay we'll feed you guys too" Ntombi laughed "Dabs don't think that I'm neglecting that project you assigned to me" he looked at his aunt.

Hlubi: "Good. You guys are growing

up so fast. Are you growing beards now too"

Bubele: "I'll go get started on the fire before we get embarrassed." he walked out and they all followed.

Ntombi: "Othu, please tell me that Chula is close to finishing with her wedding plans"

Othu: "With indecisive Chula I can only hope. I think they are financially stuck but don't want to bother us. I'll give them time to talk to us about it". They spoke more on the topic until Bukhosi returned to the lounge looking shocked.

Bukhosi: "One of dad's buildings are on fire" he showed his mother the social media video circulating.

Ntombi: "Oh my goodness. It looks like someone bombed the poor place" the ladies all gathered to watch it.

Bukhosi: "What does he say?"

Banele: "Apparently he is at the scene but not of this building.

Two of his buildings have caught light and it's the storage units meaning they were packed with things belonging to other people"

Ntombi: "Surely they are all insured. Oh my goodness, what are the chances of two of his

buildings catching fire"

Hlubi: "I have to go find out what's going on. Zola said something is not right but I said she was paranoid" she took her bag.

Banele: "Please can I catch a ride with you, Dabs" Hlubi nodded. The boys told their friends the party was no more before they followed Mahlubandile. The friends also went home not feeling like partying when their friends dad was facing difficulty.

Poppy: "Karma is a bitch. Just when you think she's forgotten your address she shows you she

hasn't"

Ntombi: "No, I don't wish him bad. I relate hope that there's a logical explanation for all of this". She checked the video out of her own and there was no way what was stored in it could be saved.

Liyema stood with his hands behind his back facing the blaze and he felt like crying. Just a few hours ago, he was told his insurance got cancelled and then before he could investigate the buildings which were insured under that company caught fire. Even closing his eyes didn't help escape reality because he could still feel

the intense heat of the fire. He watched from the video his sons sent how his other source of income was turning to dust and he couldn't help but cry amidst all the chaos. He felt no better when his family arrived as they all watched the firemen try to put the big orange blaze out but them being there made him feel less alone. Mrs E wished that she had taken Vuvu's insurance warning seriously and told Liyema that morning instead of waiting hours to do it. She knew without doubt that her family was being attacked. She asked Jester to pay Dr Tom a

visit and she hoped for Portia's sake that she didn't fake a pregnancy. Liyema felt like life was taking away way to much from him 

S2-INSERT 85 (NOT EDITED)

Zola: "No!" she shook her head not believing her ears after getting news that two more buildings owned by Liyema were set alite "The devil personally came from the pits of hell to test us" she walked around. She was stressed and could see that Liyema was not well at all. They all feared that he'd get a heart attack

because it was no secret that his heart was fragile.

Bubele: "No, man this is clearly sabotage" he felt his anger build up when he realised that someone could be behind the fires. Lungile stood closer to Liyema.

Lungi: "They are right... someone's after you" he whispered "Did you make any enemies lately?" he asked "What about Ntombi's new husband, do you think he's capable of this? Let's not forget that you almost took his pregnant wife to court so..." he added. Liyema just kept quiet.

Hlubi: "The insurance company

says that you cancelled your insurance. How the hell can you cancel your insurance, Liyema? Do you have cash to replace all that you lost in these fires?"

Mrs E: "Mahlubandile, can't you see that he's taking strain? Why do you always have to fight Liyema?. No man, don't add to the stress"

Liyema: "I didn't cancel anything. I was going to go sort things out tomorrow because I had a meeting on the other side of town when I got the news" he said with frustration.

Hlubi: "well, I heard the recording

of you cancelling your insurance with my own ears" she held her ears.

Liyema: "I didn't cancel anything!" he shouted.

Hlubi: "Portia called on your behalf that day, Liyema and she gave you the phone to confirm that cancellation. How the hell do you explain that?"

Liyema: "Portia did no such thing"

Hlubi: "Well I heard her voice, so you best believe that it's her. I just... I just can't believe you right now" she went to make another call. Mrs E also got a call so she excused herself.

Mrs E: "Jes" she said after putting the phone against her ear.

Jester: "Zola, you should all come to the hospital A.S.A.P" Mrs E's heart started to pound. She just knew that it was more bad news. She didn't reply but rather just ended the call. She looked over at Liyema who was standing with his sons looking at the building being watered down. She walked towards them slowly.

Mrs E: "We need to get going, Liyema. There's no use staying here. There is some place we need to go" she said to Liyema "You

three take my car and go home. This is adult business" she looked at the boys.

Banele: "We can't just leave dad in crisis like this, Makhulu. We are adults too. You forget that we went to the mountain" he reminded her.

Mrs E: "Banele, to me you are a child. You might be of legal age and be from initiation school but there are certain things you are just not adult enough for" she took her keys from her bag "So take the keys. I don't care if you go wait at your father's or if you go to your mother's but you're not

going where we are going" she put her foot down.

Liyema: "Go home. I'll keep you updated. There's nothing we can do here anyway. The police have their statement so we should just wait for the investigation to finish". Go to your mom's because really at this stage I don't trust that whoever is behind this won't target my house. I told Portia to take Abongile and go to Lungile's" he tapped Bukhosi's shoulder.

Bukhosi nodded before taking the keys from his grandmother. The adults watched them walk to the car slowly.

Banele: "Makhulu never allows us to drive her beast so clearly whatever is going on is big" he said looking back "I say that we go to dad's, should whoever did this come to the house he'll have us to deal with" he added.

Bukhosi: "I agree. They must know that we are not afraid. I know the old man has not been many people's favourite, but he doesn't deserve all of this".

Bubele's phone rang.

Bubele: "It's Bandile" he said before answering "Yeah, that dad's buildings you see burning, bro" he said while getting into

the car.

Bandile: "What the hell happened?"

Bubele: "We don't know but it's clearly a plot against dad. Now they chased us away because they want to go to attend to some "adult business" as if we're kids" he shook his head.

Bandile: "What was the use of sending us to the mountain to be initiated into manhood when they'll continue to treat us like boys" he sounded angry.

Bubele: "Beats me". Banele drove like a crazy person with a speed that was not allowed on the road

they were on, but he didn't notice the sign on the side of the road. The others didn't call him out on his reckless driving because they were also in their own little worlds. By grace and luck they finally arrived at their father's house because they feared their stress would run off on Ntombi and they didn't want to make their unborn sister sick by stressing their mother.

Liyema didn't know where his mother was driving his car to but he realised when they parked at the hospital parking what the destination was.

Liyema: "I'm not going to have a heart attack for goodness sake, Ma" he looked at her.

Mrs E: "I fear that the news that you're going to get are going to give you chest pains but rather have it all happen in one go so you'll pick up the pieces" she unbuckled her seatbelt and stepped out of the car. Liyema did the same.

Lungi: "What are we doing here?" he asked after getting out of his own car. Hlubi went to try sort out the insurance issue and hoped she could prove that Liyema didn't know what he was doing

when he cancelled it.

Mrs E: "Liyema, before we go in I just want to let you know that we love you and we are here to support you. Absolutely nothing is going to break our unite"

Liyema: "Don't tell me that something happened to Portia and Abongile. I knew something was wrong when she didn't pick up my calls" he did a little run towards the entrance and his family ran behind him.

Mrs E: "It's not that but it does involve Portia". Liyema ran faster after she said that because his mind immediately went to

Abongile. He was hurt by the fires but what would hurt him more is if his children get caught up in the mess. Mrs E found Liyema at reception frantically trying to get information on a patient by the name of Abongile so Mrs E had to make him listen to her before she could tell him that nothing is wrong with Abo. She called Jester and he told her where they could find him. Mrs E checked the hospital direction signs and asked around before she was directed to where Jester said he was. They found him sitting with Dr Tom and the

hospital head.

Liyema: "Why am I here?" he looked at his mother "Surely if Ta Jes is sick he doesn't need the entire family here" he added

Jester: "I'm not sick sonny, but you are going to want to hear what this man here has to say" he pointed to Dr Tom "Tell him everything that you told us" he said to the doctor. Dr Tom looked at his boss nervously and swallowed hard before parting his lips "Would you rather talk at the police station?" he asked.

Dr Tom: "Before I start..."

Mrs E: "You better get to the

point because you don't want to know what my also feels like" she pointed "Talk!" she shouted. Her shaking finger indicating just how angry she was. Dr Tom started to tell them about his history with Portia and Liyema felt like the entire Elaine situation again just dressed differently. He didn't even have strength to fight Dr Tom because he felt defeated but Lungile was sure to punch the doctor for the pain he inflicted on Liyema. Lungile was not one for physical fighting but he was furious.

Jester: "Easy, Lungile" he ripped

his son off the doctor "I suggest that you go home, Liyema. We don't know what else this woman is planning" he said.

Liyema: "Abongile" he stood up quickly. He opened the door and ran down the long passage. Mrs E swore to strangle Portia the second she sees her. Jester alerted the police and told them to go to Liyema's house because they knew who could be behind the fires. When the boys entered the house, they found Portia pushing a suitcase in one hand while holding Abongile's hand in the other.

Bubele: "Sis Portia, are you going somewhere?" he looked at the bag. They could see that she was in a rush.

Bukhosi: "Does dad know that you are leaving? He's been trying to call you but you didn't answer"

Portia: "I'm on my way to him now" she looked at all of them.

Banele: "With luggage?" he pointed to the bag with the car keys. What they didn't expect was for Portia to reach to the bag of her and draw out a gun. All of them raised their arms up in the air breathing heavily already due to fear.

Portia: "I didn't want to involve you children in this, but clearly you're not going to let me go" her own chest rising and falling like one who had just run a mile "Move" she ordered but the three stood.

Bukhosi: "If you're going somewhere then you are not leaving with our sister" he braved up but was still shaking like a leaf.

Portia: "You think I won't shoot?" she directed the gun to Banele who was standing in the middle. Bandile was still on the line because Bubele didn't hang up as

they still had plenty to talk about. "Move or your mother is going to lose three of her children in one night. Do you really want to hurt her like that?" the boys gave each other brief looks as they could already imagine Ntombi losing the baby too should she get news that they had been shot dead. Bandile hung up when he heard Portia's last line and called his father with shaking hands. He felt helpless and prayed that nothing happened to his siblings. The boys slowly moved out of Portia's way "Good, boys" she said still pointing the gun at one of

them "Now give me your car keys. I don't want you following me once we're out of the door" she held her hand out. Banele threw the key to her but it fell and she laughed "Did you really think that I'll flinch and you'll jump me?" she laughed "You can thank God I like you four" she added before slowly bending down to pick the key up. Bukhosi: "Abo, come to Bhut" he said to his little sister.

Portia: "Don't test me, Bukhosi!" she turned the gun to him and he got a little fright. They were terrified but they had to try fight for their little sister "She's

not your father's child" she lied "So don't claim a sister when you don't have one" she started to move forward towards the door. Her eyes still on the boys "One sudden move and I shoot for the kill" she warned. They still had their arms up while watching her move. There was a cat that belonged to the neighbours that liked walking around in their yard. It knocked over one of the clay pot plants that were outside and Portia's gaze went there for second because she thought that Liyema had come home. Banele took the few seconds opportunity

to grab Abongile and the shot Portia promised to shoot should there be any sudden movement went off.

Bukhosi: "Banele?" he ran to where his brother was lying with their sister in his arms not caring if Portia shot at them once again. When Bukhosi got to Banele he saw blood, but it was Abongile's.

Bubele: "You shot her" he said in a shaky voice. Portia just stood looking at what she had done. Her bitter cry filled the air when she watched the boys try by all means to stop Abo's bleeding.

Banele: "She's not moving. I think

she's dead". Portia's cries became louder. She didn't want to leave but she opened the door and walked out only to find the streets blue with law enforcement lights flickering in the dark. Banele carried Abo to the car and when Liyema saw that his children were behind Portia he walked closer. She pointed the gun at him, but he didn't care. She couldn't bring herself to shoot him and just watched him take Abo from Banele's arms before he ran with the child to the car. The boys followed behind their father while

the police ordered Portia to put her weapon down. Just as the family was getting inside their car, they heard a single shot and when they looked back Portia was no longer where she stood. She fell to the ground after turning her own gun to herself and pulling the trigger.

Liyema: "Don't look. Just get inside the car" he said to his sons because he didn't want them witnessing more than they already did. Their car started to move against police orders as they were advised to wait for the ambulance. Lungile drove like a

madman taking his niece to the hospital. Liyema was holding on to Abongile to try and keep her warm. They finally arrived and Liyema ran in with his child to get her the best medical care possible. They took Abo inside and cut Liyema off as he could not go any further. He threw himself down the chairs behind him and wept. All buildings that he lost that day were replaceable but not his daughter. Mahlubandile came running inside the hospital and when she saw the blood on Banele's shirt she ran quicker to reach them faster. She counted

her nephews and was relieved when they were all there as expected but when she heard about Abo she also had to balance against a wall. The events of the day proved to be too much on them, especially on Liyemaa. The police arrived wanting statements from the boys.

Jester: "Can't you see that they aren't in the right space of mind to make statements? Please, we'll bring them when they've calmed down" he promised.

Bukhosi: "I'm okay. I'm ready to tell you exactly what happened" he said.

Mrs E: "I hope that you are guarding the ward that girl is admitted in because should she escape, I will take care of her myself" she promised.

Officer: "There won't be a need for that man because she took her own life" they heard Liyema cry more after hearing the news "We're sorry" he added.

Banele: "None of this would have happened had you just looked the other way when these women tried to seduce you, Dad" he spoke from a place of pain.

Hlubi: "No!" she reprimanded

Banele "Can't you see that he's

suffering?" she asked while pointing at her brother.

Banele: "He had a perfect woman, Dabs" he shouted while crying "A damn perfect woman who was not some sort of psycho. I'm now angry at him all over again" he wiped his tears "we don't like it when he hurts" he said before walking away.

Mrs E: "Luyolo please follow him" she wiped her own tears "When will this family be free of pain?" she asked.

Lungile: "I'll go" he ran after Banele before fearing the youngster would do something

that he would regret.

Hlubi: "I curse these women" she went to sit next to his brother and Liyema really broke down in tears. It was just a long moment of waiting in emotional pain. They got news that Abongile was in theatre. They waited for hours and information finally came. The doctor said that the child was in ICU because she was in critical condition.

Mrs E: "At least she's alive" she said hopeful. The next few hours would be touch and go "What was this girl's story? To shoot her own child" she felt her anger rise

again.

Liyema: "I don't understand either. I gave her option to stay or go. For her to go through such lengths to punish me for being honest is just beyond my understanding. I've got so many questions and the only person who can answer them is dead" he shook his head "I'm clearly the toxic one. I drive women to kill themselves" he added.

Hlubi: "we don't know what was going through her mind". The police took statements and promised to give the case first priority. Abo had a setback once

again, but the doctors managed to stabilize her again. They heard it might be like that for the next 24 hours and that she might even die. Liyema didn't want to hear about death so he just stood to go get some fresh air.

When Ntombi read an online news article about what happened at Liyema's house she felt a little cramp hit her abdomen.

Ntombi: "Ma!" she called out before slowly sitting down "Makhulu!" she gritted her teeth rubbing her belly. Makhulu was not quick on her feet but she sensed the urgency in Ntombi's

voice and she tried by all means to hurry.

Makhulu: "What is it?" she asked while making her way to where Ntombi sat "Tata, call the ambulance!" she said out loud and Tamkhulu came into the lounge quickly. Makhulu held Ntombi's belly. Lefa came home and could immediately see something was not right so he put his keys down and hurried to kneel in front of Ntombi.

Lefa: "What's wrong, Siba?"

Ntombi: "An article said that there was a shooting at Liyema's house. It said one person died on

the scene and one of the people shot was one of his children" she started to cry.

Tamkhulu: "Let me call them" he took his phone out.

Ntombi: "They aren't answering, Tata. I was on my way when I felt a little cramp" Lefa wiped her tears.

Lefa: "Do you need to go to the hospital?" Ntombi shook her head.

Ntombi: "I just want to make sure that my babies are okay" she cried.

Lefa: "Okay, I'll drive there and ask questions. I'm sure the article was mistaken. Our boys

are all okay" he kissed her forehead "I'll call you when I have real news okay" he promised. Ntombi: "I want to go with you" she tried to stand.

Makhulu: "No, Ntombikayise" she eased Ntombi back down "Lefa will go. Your children are all fine. You know that I can sense things so I'd have felt had they been in any kind of danger" she rubbed the sides of Ntombi's belly.

Tamkhulu: "Will you ladies be fine on your own? I feel I need to go with Lefa"

Makhulu: "Go, Tata"

Ntombi: "Baby, please bring my

boys back safe" tears rolled down once again "Hlubi isn't answering her phone either" she added. "I'm so stressed right now" she confessed.

Makhulu: "Let's rather take her to hospital first". Ntombi protested so Lefa and Tamkhulu promised they'd come back with real news. Both men having individual silent prayers that the child of Liyema shot was not one of the quads. They prayed that no one was hurt altogether.

Makhulu tried an old trick to ease stress and Ntombi felt its effectiveness so much she

started to feel sleepy and all Makhulu did was rub essential oils on certain spots on her body. Lefa called as soon as he got wind of the real story and Ntombi got the shock of her life when she heard that it was Portia who died by suicide and Abo was fighting for her life in hospital. Lefa went to the hospital to see with his own eyes that the boys were okay and was relieved when he saw them all in one piece. He called Bandile to make sure he was fine too before going to Liyema to give a few words of encouragement. He sat a while

longer as Tamkhulu gathered everyone to prayer for the Elephant family and for little Abo who was fighting for her life. Liyema wished that he never brought up the case of polygamy to Portia because he thought it was what drove her over the edge. His phone rang and it was Vuvu. He took the call not to get comfort from her like last time but to tell her that it was over for good.

Vuvu: "I read the articles and saw the videos. I'm so sorry. What can I do to help?"

Liyema: "How about invent a time

machine where I go back to the day we met, so that I can walk away. Portia was a good woman but clearly, I messed her up by sleeping with you. She faked a pregnancy and had me mourn a baby that never existed to get back at me. She managed to make me cancel insurance and burnt my buildings to the ground. So, invent me a time machine so I can walk away from having an affair with you, Vuvu. So that I can prevent my daughter's mother shooting herself because she thought she killed her own daughter" he wiped a tear.

Vuvu: "I'm sorry" she said quietly.

Liyema: "So am I. Please move on. I'm not taking you, not any other women as a wife. I had a wife and I screwed it up and I've been paying endlessly for it. Right now, I'm literally just waiting for the punishment of death because clearly my karma is being served cold"

Vuvu: "Please don't say that"

Liyema: "I've got to go. My daughter's heart keeps stopping. I can't be talking about second wife issues when my child might take her last breath tonight. Hell with the way things are going, I

might be the one who takes my last breath. If my daughter dies it'll be because of me so I really would deserve death" Vuvu wiped her tears off "Bye" he blinked his tears away.

Vuvu: "I love you"

Liyema: "You deserve better. I'd have messed you up too and you'd most probably have been the one to serve me a bullet. Right now, I'm just waiting to receive whatever karma is served because I'm sure life will serve me heavy for hurting my children yet again" he started to cry and slowly went down on his knees.

Nomvula was also crying on the other side of the line until she heard the beeping of an ended call. She regretted seducing him but she unfortunately didn't have a time machine. She didn't imagine the ending that life served them. She imagined Portia someday welcoming her as a sister wife as they'd both be good wives to their husband while he honoured them both, but it was all far from what she imagined. The tragedy of it all was just too heavy so she started her car and she drove without regret to Humansdorp where she'd be with

family. There was an emergency and the medical staff ran to ICU as Abongile slipped away. The family could see from the look on the doctor's face that she was gone. Everyone started to find their own corner as they all cried. The quads wished that they hadn't stopped Portia from leaving because they felt Abongile gone to a different country alive was better than her passing away. Liyema wanted to die and he remembered his dream. In that moment he did feel like a hobbo but not in lacking food or shelter but lacking the will to go

on. Portia was not there to see her revenge play out, but she broke him. She managed to leave with his daughter leaving him with a void but the plan was not for them to go and never be able to return. Even the strangers at the hospital could feel the mourning energy of the family and the family could see a little flicker of light go out in Liyema's eyes because he was many things but his love for his children could never be doubted. Abo might not have been planned like her brothers but after it was confirmed that she was indeed his, his heart opened

wide to welcome her not knowing she was just passing through. He didn't feel he'd ever forgive himself. 

S2-INSERT 86 (NOT EDITED)

When Seta got full news of what happened at Liyema's he quickly got the ball rolling on selling his shares. He hated how the potential buyers could sniff his desperation and therefore offer him a below market value price for the shares, but he didn't have the time to do lengthy negotiations. He rang Liyema's doorbell and knew he had company

judging by the cars that were parked outside. Lungile opened looking defeated as expected from a grieving uncle.

Lungile: "Have you got no self-respect, Seta? Do you really want to kick him with your words now that he's down? Man, just get the hell out of this yard and never come back" he sounded nearly disgusted because he knew Seta never brought Liyema any peace.

Seta: "I'm not here to cause trouble. I'm here to offer him something that I think he'll be interested in having back" he said

in a whisper. Liyema appeared behind his brother looking worse than Lungile. Seta pleaded with him for a chance to talk and Liyema walked out to hear what he had to say.

Liyema: "I swear if you are here to tell me about how this is my fucking karma, I will kill you" he promised. The edge in his voice made Seta realize that he was not joking.

Seta: "Firstly I'm sorry to hear about what happened"

Liyema: "Don't act like you give a damn about what I feel. Have you ever lost your child and her

mother on the same day?" his eyes started to shine as he pointed at Seta. Seta clenched his jaw blinking away his own tears. Seta: "I actually have" he looked at Liyema. Both men emotional. Liyema's eyes softened a bit after the revelation "That's why I have decided to stop being a thorn in your life because I know how you feel. When Zingisa was killed she was carrying my child" Liyema's brows drew together. Liyema: "Oh". It was the only reaction that came out.

Seta: "So I know your pain very well and though I don't like you. I

wouldn't wish it on anyone. I'm here to give you back your shares if you want them" Liyema raised a brow "Well, sell them to you because I need to make up the money that I lost when buying them" Liyema laughed a bit because he knew "giving" was too good to be true.

Liyema: "After so long I've been begging you to do that since we can't stand each other. So now you want me to believe that you pity me enough to sell me back my shares?"

Seta: "Okay maybe a part of me is happy that you are feeling pain

because it was someone from your family who took my fiancé and baby from me. So maybe I did wish this pain on you since you are my worst enemy" he said bringing out his true colours and Liyema let out a laugh again because he was wondering where that Seta he knew disappeared to a few seconds ago "But now that you are suffering, I feel we are equal because I know that you might never find answers as to what really happened which is what will eat at you like in my case. So, I walk away feeling victorious knowing that you and I are

suffering the same way. If your father really killed her then it's only right that you suffer because the son should carry his father's karma. So I hope it consumes you. I only offer you these shares because I know you will pay market value for them because you want to get rid of me so desperately" he added.

Liyema: "Do you have the share transfer papers?" he asked wanting to get it over with. Seta took out a file from under his arm and handed it to Liyema. Liyema opened it and scanned through it briefly "Let me read through it.

For all I know you came here thinking you can take advantage of my grieving process by making me impulsively sign away my remaining shares" he looked at Seta.

Seta: "On believe me, I thought of that but after what happened I knew your guard would be up. Everything is up to standard. The price is non-negotiable"

Liyema: "You aren't good at negotiating anyway so it's good you saved yourself the trouble."

Seta felt his anger rise but he kept it cool "I should have an answer by tomorrow" he added.

Seta walked away but turned around again.

Seta: "When is the funeral?" he asked.

Liyema: "Why do you care?"

Seta: "I don't. I guess I wanted to see you look more defeated than you do now because no pain hits as hard as seeing the coffin of those you love go down knowing you'll never see them again". His words left a sharp sting in Liyema's chest that forced him to take a deep breath before going back inside the house leaving Seta out. Seta hoped Liyema would transfer the money to him by end

of business day tomorrow because he wanted to leave the country as soon as possible.

He changed from his suit and into a work overall when he made a stop at a garage. He walked the distance to Dr Tom's house which was close by leaving his car parked at the garage. He wanted the neighbours and Tom family to think he was just a man looking for odd jobs. Dr was fired from work and was at risk of losing his license. When he saw Seta at his gate after the dogs barked uncontrollably, he felt himself get sick.

Dr: "You have a nerve coming here. The only thing stopping my dogs from ripping you apart is this gate that I'm holding" he said between gritted teeth.

Seta: "The only thing stopping you from doing anything is because you know that I hold your son's life in my hands with that incriminating evidence that I have against him. That's the only reason why you did dirty work for me aside from the fact that you're a man controlled by casino machines. You'd better keep your mouth shut or sweet Jerad is going to maximum prison" Dr Tom

swallowed hard. He knew his son wouldn't survive jail "Don't look so sad. Soon I'm going to go away and I'll give you all that I have so you can do with it as you want. All you've got to do is keep that mouth of yours shut" he warned. Dr: "How will I find it?" he asked. Seta: "You will but I'll tell you where, when I'm out safe. I didn't make any copies don't worry" he promised "You just don't tell anyone that I knew Portia" he added.

Dr: "If I wanted to I'd have done so long ago"

Seta: "I'm glad we're on the

same page" he saw Dr Tom's neighbour walk towards his gate like one who wanted to know what the problem was "I understand that you already have a gardener sir" he said out loud to the doctor while walking away.

The neighbour lifted his hand to greet Seta. Seta hoped that his plans didn't backfire like Portia's. He thought she was stupid for backing down on their original plan because he thought it was what led to her unnecessary death and that of her daughter.

Liyema felt exhausted but even more so when he got a call from

Ma Maduna for the millionth time.
Maduna: "I hope that my daughter and granddaughter's bodies are on the way. I heard that the police released the bodies. You didn't marry her Liyema so she must be buried here. Abongile was Abongile Maduna not Elephant. You've got no right to keep their bodies" the coldness in her voice cut through the phone.

Liyema: "I'm too tired to argue about this. No matter where they are buried, I don't care because it won't bring them back. I'll make sure they are

transported"

Maduna: "I don't want you at the funeral" Liyema sat up "You told my daughter that you wanted more wives, one of them being her best friend so you drove her to death" she added.

Liyema: "I'm going to come lay my daughter to rest, Ma. If you stop me then believe me there'll be no funeral. Portia could have just left me so I'm not going to carry the guilt of her death on my shoulders but I do put the guilt on my child dying on her"

Maduna: "Make sure that those bodies arrive by the end of the

week. I've already started with the funeral preparations. You may come so you'll see what your actions have done. Liyema ended the call and heard a knock on the door before Mahlubandile let herself in.

Hlubi: "It's pretty standard" she looked at the documents she had just gone through "I sent it through to one of my associates so she can look at it. It's not wise for me to because I kept losing focus while reading through it"

Liyema nodded "How does an angel just come, make us love her and leave us so soon after we met

her?" she took Abo's picture that was in the child's bedroom.

Liyema: "Because angels aren't earthly beings" he smiled "I can't believe I missed out on two years of her life, Mahlubandile. That's half of her life. We think our children will outlive us but then..." he lifted his shoulders.

Hlubi: "We're here for you. Pack your stuff and come live with Yanda and I, Liyema please" she pleaded "You can't be here where it all happened" she added.

Liyema: "I'll be fine"

Hlubi: "No, you won't. You know that you choose unhealthy

escapes. If not with me then go live at Lungi's then. I'm sure they won't mind"

Liyema: "I can't even hold Zoë after everything. You know she and Abo had a strong resemblance. I'll decide what to do after the funeral. Good thing Ma told me to not plan a funeral since the Maduna's won't allow it. I'm having them transported within the week"

Hlubi: "But Portia though" she still couldn't believe it "To steal so much money from you and then try to run away. When stopped she chose to kill herself and her

child"

Liyema: "I don't think she meant to shoot Abo. I think she wanted to scare the boys but she didn't know how to use a firearm, so it hit the wrong target. I don't think she wanted to shoot any of my children. I think that was meant to be a warning shot"

Hlubi: "Isn't a warning shot upwards?" Liyema shrugged.

Liyema: "The firearm was not licensed so this person most probably didn't know how to shoot use it. I think what led her to kill herself was because she thought she killed Abo. Portia loved Abo"

Hlubi: "Dammit she should just have dumped you and let you maintain Abo. I think this family has some bad karma"

Liyema: "Seta said that I'm paying for Tata's karma. Maybe that's why"

Hlubi: "I miss Makhulu so much. She'd have known how to fix things. Let me go make you something to eat" she hugged him briefly.

Liyema: "Thanks" he brushed the arm around his shoulder "Please have Lungi call the family to tell them to not bother coming here. They can just go straight to

Portia's home as things will be happening there" he stood. The two of them walked out of Abo's room and Liyema went to the backroom where he knew he'd find his boys. The door opened and Bandile walked in. He dropped his bag at the door and went to give his father a hug. He had some university work to wrap up before he could come. He greeted the entire family and walked out with his father. The others stood to go hug him and Bandile held on to each a little while longer than usual. He started to cry when he let go of Banele. Liyema drew him

close in a hug.

Bandile: "When I heard the shot I thought..." he couldn't finish his sentence. He was torn by his sister's death, but he knew that he would have sunk to a state of depression had it been one of his brothers because the bond they shared was unexplainable. The others joined in on the hug.

Bukhosi: "We're okay" he patted Bandile on the back "We couldn't save Abongile but we're fine" he wiped his own tears.

Liyema: "You did what you thought was best at the time"

Banele: "I should never have

grabbed her, dad" Liyema held all four of them as best he could. It took him back to when he could carry them all at once "She didn't even get a chance to cry because everything happened so fast but she was scared when her mother took the gun out" he added.

Bubele: "You did as any caring older brother would have. You didn't think it'll turn out like this"

Bukhosi: "Yeah"

Liyema: "I love you all so much. I blame none of you for what happened. I know Abo is thankful wherever she is that her older brothers were willing to risk their

lives to keep her with them. You guys donated blood to her when she needed it after losing a lot of blood. I'm proud of you and none of this is any of your faults". Hlubi brought them all something to eat.

The church people had arrived and Liyema felt nearly ashamed of himself because he couldn't remember the last time he saw many of them. He became so busy with his life and chasing other things that he neglected his spiritual well-being. He appreciated their presence through and the prayers. He still

couldn't sit long in the lounge because it reminded him of the blood that he saw which belonged to Abo before they cleaned up. He went to his room to make a few calls to transport the bodies off to the Eastern Cape. He didn't care about the money that Portia stole because it was recovered nor did he care about her cancelling his insurance but he was angry at her for taking her own life to avoid taking responsibility for her actions and for killing one of his children. He sat on his bed looking at Portia's picture before throwing the frame against a

wall breaking the glass. He cried once again. There was a soft knock on the door.

Liyema: "Go away!" he shouted not wanting anyone to see him so broken. He heard the door open, so the person clearly had no regard for privacy. Liyema didn't look up to check who it was because he thought it was his mother checking up on him for the millionth time. The spot next to him on the bed sunk a bit so Liyema knew whoever it was also invited themselves to sit. Ntombi just looked at him. She was sitting uncomfortably but she

didn't want to annoy him by moving too much. She waited for him to calm himself and he did so by wiping his eyes. He was shocked to find her sitting next to him so he stood up to get away. Ntombi: "I'm not here to fight" she held her hands up.

Liyema: "Does your husband know that you're here? I don't want to end up hospitalized because I am sitting with you behind the closed door of what used to be our bedroom."

Ntombi: "Well I heard that you wouldn't come out so I figured I should come up to give my

condolences. Lefa knows that I'm loyal" she shifted backwards on the bed for comfort "I left the door open too" she pointed at it. "I know that you now see me as some kind of witch" she faked a laugh "But I'm really sorry for all that happened. You don't deserve any of it" she watched him walk towards the bed again before sitting down. He sat on the edge so she looked at his back. He turned his head to look at her "You're most probably wondering why I'm here. Well you're my children's father. We might say and do the cruellest things to

each other, but it doesn't change the fact that we share children. I might not like you, but I don't hate you" she fiddled with her keys.

Liyema: "Thank you for coming to check on us. The boys are out back if you want to see them.

Bandile arrived a while ago"

Ntombi: "I know" she watched him move backwards "I have been sitting with them and they really are devastated especially Banele. Makhulu and Tamkhulu are downstairs too" she added.

Liyema: "Banele knows it's not his fault. He's just in shock. I know

you hate me because once again you have to help our traumatized children because of me" he whispered.

Ntombi: "You think I hate you though I don't and that means that you hate yourself at the moment. I'm mirroring you" she looked at him. He bit his bottom lip.

Liyema: "That's true" he nodded "Yeah...that's true" he added "For what it's worth I'm sorry for being the virus in our children's lives once again" he added.

Ntombi: "You didn't know it would happen. Do you know why she did

it?"

Liyema: "It's only speculation at the moment so I don't know" he said honestly. "They say it's because I pressured her into a polygamous marriage. I think it's much deeper than that. She could just have left me. I don't know where to start looking though because nothing in her belongings left clues. She must have hated me for faking a pregnancy and then a miscarriage through" he looked at her. His glasses, the perfect way to hide his over cried eyes. Ntombi listened to the pregnancy story and her mind

instantly went to the odd night
Portia visited her.

Ntombi: "When did she say she
was pregnant?" he told her and
she knew that night was part of
Portia's plan. She told him what
happened that night.

Liyema: "How is your baby by the
way?"

Ntombi: "I thought you hated my
baby" she smiled faintly.

Liyema: "I hated that I was not
the father of the baby. I didn't
hate the baby. Who hates
babies?" they both laughed.

Ntombi: "She's fine, thank you.

Easy pregnancy because with the

boys I used to spend a maximum two weeks at a time in hospital throughout the entire pregnancy" Liyema: "I wish you called me back then. I would have still been angry for the lies but I'd have made your pregnancy easier by making sure you had everything you needed to be comfortable" Ntombi: "Your anger would have caused me stress so no new pregnancy technology would have helped ease it. A woman's body is the technology and when she's stressed the baby senses. It was best I not be with you that time" Liyema nodded multiple

times "Why are we talking about this?" she asked.

Liyema: "I envy your husband, Ntombi" he confessed "I've honestly never envied a man as much as I envy your husband" he added.

Ntombi: "He's not perfect"

Liyema: "He's better than me in that he has a loyal wife. He's not even worried that you are up here with me because he knows the type of woman he married. Do you know that I used to be the envy of other man when I was still married to you?" Ntombi laughed not believing it "It's true. You

fought with me in private but in public you had my back. It made my acquaintances think we had a perfect marriage when really I had a partner who didn't want to drag me down as the world did. I've been doing a lot of introspection. I don't mean a mental one but I'm talking about an emotional one. I silenced my mind and let my heart and soul speak. They miss you." Ntombi made sure to move a few inches away from him.

Ntombi: "Liyema, I think it's best that I go. I'll tell my grandparents that you are not

ready to talk to people"

Liyema: "My mind, my ego didn't miss you but my heart and soul does, Lala" Ntombi moved forward to get off the bed.

Ntombi: "That's typical of who is afraid of being alone speaking and I'm not going to entertain this"

Liyema: "No it's not true. I know that I won't get you back.

Nothing like losing a child to shatter the ego self that I've allowed to operate my life. It made me realize I'm really not all of that as my mind made me believe. My heart opened and my soul whispered back to me and

reminded me of just how much damage I've done to myself and others by switching it off and listening to my ego"

Ntombi: "Good then you can have a talk to your spiritual leader about that" she stood and looked around.

Liyema: "I shared this with you for over sixteen years" he looked around too. "I loved you with my ego for four years of those years when really my soul was crying for you...is crying for you. So I didn't hate your child, I hated that it wasn't my seed carried by you" he admitted.

Ntombi: "When is the funeral?" she cleared her throat "My husband and I would like to attend in support of the boys" she added.

Liyema: "It'll be at Portia's home, Lala"

Ntombi: "Okay" she nodded "Let me get going" she added while walking towards the door backwards.

Liyema: "I'm feeling better because you are here. You've always gave this house life. From the time you came here as my potential surrogate to this day. The day you left the house

became empty because the energy that gave it life moved" he stood "Please forgive me for everything that I've done to you," he said.

Ntombi: "You're not going to kill yourself right?" Liyema laughed softly before shaking his head.

Liyema: "I wouldn't do that to our children. Pregnancy suits you" he looked at her body which was in a baby maternity dress "I've never seen you pregnant but now that I do, I think it suits you" he added.

Ntombi: "Thanks. I'll get the details of the funeral from the boys"

Liyema: "Let me walk you out. I want to thank your grandparents for coming". Ntombi led the way out and he followed behind. The family sitting at the bottom stared at them and to their kids them walking down the stairs came with many good memories. Liyema went to greet the Mlandu elders and they gave their condolences.

Tamkhulu: "We might not talk as much as we used to but because of those young men, we'll always be family. I know that losing a child, especially your princess is not easy. Don't let society fool you. A

man cries so don't suppress those tears. Condolences" Liyema nodded before they shook hands.

Liyema: "Thank you, Tamkhulu"

Makhulu: "Come here" she hugged him. Mrs E started to cry.

Hlubi: "Sorry, Ma" she rubbed her mother's back.

Ntombi: "I'm sorry, Mrs E. I know you loved Abo very much"

Mrs E: "It's not that" she wiped her tears before blowing her nose

"This moment" she looked around

"I wish that Abo never existed" she added.

Hlubi: "Haibo, Zola" she expressed shock.

Mrs E: "Well I wish she did but not in this family. I wish that we were grieving the death of someone who lived over a hundred. I wish that we were still this unit you see in this house right now. I wish Liyema lost an elder and Lakhawe was by his side. I wish that the child she is carrying was his, so we'd look forward to the new arrival after all the tears. I just wish, wish and wish. I can't help it" she cried more. Mahlubandile just looked at Ntombi before she shrugged.

Ntombi: "I've got to get going. I

have a little boy at home left with a father who can't cook" she joked to lighten the mood.

Mrs E: "I wish you didn't have to go"

Hlubi: "Well she does because she has a family. Thank you for coming, bestie" she hugged Ntombikayise.

Ntombi: "Please make sure that those four eat. I feel so bad for leaving them, but I can't stay all night"

Hlubi: "You leave them with their favourite aunt and other family. They'll be okay" she promised and Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "Goodnight, Mrs E" she rubbed Zola's upper arm.

Mrs E: "Goodnight" she whispered before walking away.

Ntombi: "Are you ready to go, Tata?" she asked.

Banele: "I'll drive you because I see you're tired. I have to get a few things at the house"

Ntombikayise nodded.

Ntombi: "Thank you, ndoda". They left Liyema's house and drove in silence until they arrived. Banele greeted Hlomphe and Lefa before going to grab the stuff he said he needed. Ntombi just went to hug Lefa. A part of her felt

guilty for giving Liyema chance to have his say while they were alone.

Lefa: "Let me drive you back" he said to Banele.

Banele: "I was going to take a taxi" he put the large bag on the floor.

Hlomphe: "Are you moving?"

Banele: "I'm supporting my father. We'll be back home after the funeral" Hlomphe nodded. He went to take out a drawing.

Hlomphe: "Please give this to your father" he said before giving Banele the drawing.

Banele: "Thank you" he took the

piece of paper.

Lefa: "Let's drive him back to his father's house" Hlompho nodded.

The three of them left after Banele gave his mother a hug.

Makhulu: "This life is hard sometimes" she took her hat off and went to the bedroom.

Tamkhulu: "Let your grandfather go make you a nice cup of tea" he smiled.

Ntombi: "What did I deserve to be so spoiled?" she smiled.

Tamkhulu: "This situation made me realize that parents need to show appreciation to their children. Come, maybe we still

have some biscuits too. I want to hear all about what you are up to as a boss lady lately. I framed that article of yours and showed everyone who I bumped into" he held her hand and led her to the kitchen. While Tamkhulu went about making tea, Ntombikayise checked what she could cook. She found a pot of samp and beans ready for dinner. Makhulu's recipe book next to the stove. She smiled appreciating Lefa's efforts. She took a spoon and tasted. It was perfect after she added more seasoning. She and Tamkhulu sat

having tea and biscuits while Makhulu was taking a bath. He didn't understand all the big business words she used but he gave her his undivided attention. Lefa had no choice but to go into Liyema's house after Hlompho insisted on giving Liyema his drawing of a man releasing a balloon into the blue sky he drew. The balloon was yellow which was a colour Bubele told Hlompho Abongile liked.

Hlompho: "My dad said that she has gone to heaven. That balloon is her that's why it has her name in it and is the colour of her

favourite colour and you are the man. You are releasing her so she can go be with angels" Lefa translated as he spoke. Liyema looked at the drawing and saw great talent for such a young boy. Liyema: "Thank you" Hlompho read his lips and smiled.

Lefa: "Condolences" he shook Liyema's hand and Liyema nodded in appreciation. Lefa and Hlompho said goodbye to the quads. Bandile promising to go visit Hlompho as he didn't see his young brother much. The two of them went back home. Mahlubandile got a call from her associate saying the

contract was standard. Liyema didn't mind paying the money Seta asked for it. He called Seta immediately because he wanted to get all negativity out of his life and Seta contributed to that. He appreciated that his family didn't leave his side through it all. He knew once they all left to go to their homes after the funeral, it'll be the start of his healing and something told him it won't be easy at all. ❤️ ❤️ ❤️

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The Maduna family came to conduct the ritual of taking the

spirits of the departed from where they took their last breath. Liyema felt like it was not even his child who was going to be laid to rest because the Maduna family kept telling him that he had no say because he was not married to Portia. To keep the peace, he kept quiet. He bought back his shares from Seta and he also got a sense of desperation from Seta and had he not been so exhausted he'd have tried to make Seta lower the price but he wanted Seta out of his life. To have full control of Ndlovu Communications again felt

like a mini victory but he wished he could sign a contract to get Abo back but life didn't work like that. His doorbell rang and he sighed loudly because he couldn't remember the last time he was alone in his house uninterrupted. The person kept on ringing and he remembered that Ntombi was the most persistent person that he knew so he walked out the room and quickly ran down to open the door. For some reason he was smiling all the way to the door with no apparent reason. When Nomvula stood in front of him he shook his head disappointed.

Vuvu: "I know that you told me to stay away. I guess I just wanted to check if you are okay" she looked at him.

Liyema: "Still in one piece as you can see" he looked at his body.

"I'm packing to go to the Eastern Cape. My boys should be back from their errands anytime and we'll catch our flight so I can't let you in" he added and she nodded.

Vuvu: "I've stayed away, Liyema but there is something that has been bothering me. I tried not to think about it but I think it'll bother me until I tell you" she

spoke quickly.

Liyema: "Nomvu..." he looked up looking like he was done with life.

Vuvu: "There was a connection between Portia and Seta" she spoke quickly before he could shut her down completely. Liyema looked at her attentively. He stood aside and watched her clench the strap of her handbag over her shoulder tightly before walking inside. Vuvu looked around and stood by the entrance not wanting to go in "How are you able to live here after everything?" she turned to look at him. He didn't answer "Oh

right...you want me to get to the point" she added "Seta was the one who sent Portia that picture of us kissing" she said.

Liyema: "I should..." he tightened his fist until his knuckles turned pale "I'm sorry... please continue" he calmed himself. She told him everything that Seta told her when he wanted to recruit her to help him with his revenge agenda against him "This man really believes that I killed Zingisa? No wonder he's rejoicing right now. He thinks I killed his pregnant girlfriend" Vuvu nodded "Did you say that Portia deliberately

sought me out so she can get closer to me to push their plan?"

Vuvu nodded. Liyema shut his eyes "Zingisa just can't seem to let go of me" he added softly.

Vuvu: "The pregnancy wasn't a part of the plan though...well I assume because she used to tell me that she never planned on getting pregnant but it worked in her favour at the end I guess so she wasn't complaining" Liyema walked around the room leaving her confused as to what to do.

Liyema: "Do you know that I never considered cheating on Ntombi until Portia came into

life? Yes, I had already started to take her for granted but the thought of cheating on her never crossed my mind until I met Portia" he walked back towards her.

Vuvu: "Maybe she made use of the muthi that her mother makes to lure you in" she whispered. Liyema sat down on the nearest chair he could find. His nails scratching his head like one on the brink of losing his mind "But you can't be sure, Liyema. You cheated on Ntombi again with the other woman that you divorced her for" she added.

Liyema: "You don't understand" he shook his head while blinking
"After I've been with Portia I've just lusted and lusted. I'm Liyema Elephant one of the good guys, I don't lust...or at least always.
Zingisa's lusting was what led to my demise because it cut me deep. When I married Ntombikayise I promised to never cheat on her because I didn't want to hurt her as I was hurt. Then I meet this woman randomly, sleep with her and I've been lustful since" he stood "Yeah, we all have a lustful desire within but I promised myself that I'd never act on it.

Portia's mother came with muthi so she can keep me forever. How sure am I that Portia didn't put a spell on me that night we met?" he asked. Vuvu didn't have the answers. When he started to break down in tears was when she realized just how hurt he was "Please leave" he whispered "Thanks for telling me" he added. Vuvu: "I could stay" Liyema shook his head.

Liyema: "Please go" he wiped his tears. When he heard the door open and close he raised his head and looked around. Growing up he dreamed about giving his children

the family stability that he and Lungile didn't get. He looked around at the empty house that was once filled with great energy from five beautiful children and a woman who could turn a cave into a home. Lungile walked in holding food.

Lungile: "I brought food. I also called the boys to tell them to come back" he looked at his brother "Liyema" he called out. Liyema turned his head and gave Lungile a distant look.

Liyema: "Do you believe that a person can be hexed, Lungile?"
Lungile put the food on the

kitchen counter and went back to sit next to Liyema "Do you think it's possible?" he asked again.

Lungile just shrugged.

Lungi: "You know that I don't pay attention to superstition. Heck between us you were the church goer. But I've heard stories...but I don't know" he added.

Liyema: "Do you think the spell ends when the person who casted it dies?"

Lungi: "Liyema, I don't know" he raised his shoulders looking confused.

Liyema: "When you used cheat on your girlfriends, especially

Alunamda what did I always say to you?" he whispered. Lungile moved about on his chair.

Lungi: "You told me to stop because I am going to lose the woman that God gifted me with. A woman who will make me realize that building a home is better than chasing woman who don't give a damn about me" Liyema nodded. "That's why I didn't get it when you cheated, especially when you divorced your wife for a woman you met just yesterday. Actually I even felt betrayed because you didn't follow your own advice but it's done" he added.

Mrs E walked in pushing her suitcases.

Liyema: "It's done...yeah it's done" he sniffed "It's done" he added.

Mrs E: "I call and call but no my children let me carry my bags myself" she said before looking at both her son's sitting on chairs looking at the floor "What's going on?" she stood closer.

Lungi: "Can a person be hexed?" he asked on behalf of Liyema.

Mrs E: "As in bewitched?" Lungile nodded "You bet your ass they can. People can hex you to the grave I tell you" she added. Liyema took his keys from the table behind

him before standing up. He put his glasses back on.

Liyema: "I'll be back. I'm sure the boys will be back by the time I return" he said walking towards the door.

Mrs E: "Where are you going?"

Liyema: "I don't know. I just need air. Maybe I'll go to the beach"

Lungile: "You'll lose track of time, Liyema". Liyema didn't listen but instead walked out. Lungile

wanted to follow but Mrs E held him back before shaking her head.

Mrs E: "He won't miss the flight" she said with certainty. Lungi went to take Mrs E's bags by the

door to place them elsewhere. Mrs E went to Liyema's bedroom and found all that he was going to pack on the bed so she started packing for him. Liyema was on auto pilot and he led his plane to the Gwala household. He wanted to tell Ntombi that Portia didn't just randomly choose him but chose him with purpose. He wanted to tell her that Portia's mother once brought love potion for her daughter so he would cling to her forever. He wanted to let her know that he felt that Portia used something on him to make him so weak the night that

they met. He heard a lot of laughter outside so instead of going to knock on the front door he walked around the house. The laughter was coming from Ntombi just as he expected. She and Lefa were both holding large and colourful water guns running around on their grass spraying water on each other. Her white dress clinging to her belly as the fabric was wet and it revealed her growing bump. Liyema blinked so many times to stop tears from forming that he lost count. Since the ordeal he started to feel like Lefa stole his life. He wished

that he could tell Ntombi that Lefa was in cahoots with Seta and Portia but something told him that Lefa was innocent. That he was just a man who met a beautiful woman, appreciated her and chose to wife her so that she won't be available to any other man. Brown, the household dog came around the other corner of the house barking at Liyema grabbing Ntombi and Lefa's attention.

Ntombi: "Liyema, hi" she said while Lefa went to stop Brown from barking at Liyema.

Liyema: "Hi" he smiled faintly. He

watched her pulled the glued fabric which semi exposed her body so that he won't see parts of her that he had no right to see. Parts of her that he missed. He remembered a time when Ntombi wouldn't undress fully during their first intimate moments together because she was self-conscious about her body. Times when he was the one who told her that he loved her stretch marks and all imperfections and meant it. He couldn't believe that he told her that she was not beautiful before he divorced her.

Ntombi: "Earth to Liyema" she waved her hand in his face while smiling. He snapped out of it. Lefa returned from putting Brown where she wouldn't bother Liyema. The two men shook hands.

Liyema: "Uhm... I just came to" he tried thinking about an excuse "Are the boys here? Our plane is going to depart soon and I don't want us to miss it" he added.

Lefa: "They could be anywhere. Hlompho has been on Bandile's case so they took him out for a spin and juice" he looked at Ntombi and she nodded.

Ntombi: "Let me try to call them." she went to a white garden table where her phone was. The men both stood looking at her make the call "They say that they are waiting for you at home" she said to Liyema after talking to Bukhosi. "Sthandwa sam, your mom ran into them so she took Hlomphe with her and they are on their way" she looked at Lefa. His phone rang and Bonolo's name appeared.

Lefa: "That's her" he said to Ntombi. Bonolo wanted to let Lefa know that she and Vakele ran into the boys. The quads had

Lefa's car so they asked Vakele to drive it back to Lefa with Hlompho after they saw the missed calls from their family. Luckily Vakele and Bonolo took a taxi to town so they didn't mind helping.

Ntombi: "How are you holding up?"

Liyema: "I'm just holding on I guess" he looked at her "Lala" he looked briefly at Lefa who stood not so far from them before his eyes bore into hers.

Ntombi: "Liyema, my husband is standing right there. Please don't, because I know when you say Lala it goes back to the past"

she whispered.

Liyema: "Please answer this one question please" he stood closer and Ntombi backed down. Lefa was so in conversation over the phone he missed the awkward moment "Are you happy?" he asked.

Ntombi: "Very much so. I'm extremely happy" she said honestly. She watched his jaw clench "Why?" she asked. Liyema took a deep breath. He's been doing that a lot.

Liyema: "Then I'll stop bothering you. I love you enough to stay away from you because I can see

that you are happy". When Ntombi saw a tear roll down his right eye she wondered what was going on.

Liyema: "I've got to go" he rushed away not giving her chance to ask what the problem was. Lefa looked as confused about the sudden rush after hanging up the call.

Ntombi: "This loss is really not easy on him"

Lefa: "It is painful, baby" he held her belly before kissing her cheek. She looked at him before they shared a kiss "I never take for granted that you and our children

are healthy. I felt like hell when I thought you would have to have that procedure when we thought it was an ectopic pregnancy. I can't imagine losing a child that you had already met and knew. That cuts even deep. I hope the man finds healing"

Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I'm glad that the doctor gave me permission to travel. I want to go support the boys because Abongile was their sister"

Lefa: "At least Makhulu and Tamkhulu will go with you. I'm sorry that I can't go with you".

He wanted to but he was on a deadline to finish work for not one but two clients.

Ntombi: "I'll be going with my grandparents and my friends so I'll be well looked after" she kissed him "Let me go check if I have everything. You know that Othu is a punctual person" they both laughed.

Lefa: "Don't forget your pregnancy pillow" they held hands and walked inside their house.

Liyema couldn't drive another mile due to the lump that was stuck in his throat, so he stopped the car and cried. He hated how it

felt as though he was only then starting to process the divorce. It all felt as raw as it did to Ntombi back then. It was a rawness that he didn't feel up until a few days ago. Suddenly he was mourning his child and a marriage that he thought he had long gotten over. It felt as though a veil had lifted after Portia's death making him feel like his body didn't belong to him until after she died. He knew the story of what Yanda's mother did to drive his father to insanity and he felt like Mr Mbuzo only he came home to find another man

occupying his spot. He cried so much that he had to step out to vomit while coughing endlessly. He felt he was himself again because the Liyema that he had been would have told Ntombi everything leaving her with what ifs but he felt like his selfless self again and put her happiness before himself. He got into his car after a stranger came to check if he was fine. He found his family waiting for him so they could go. No one asked him about his appearance because they knew that he was grieving. A prayer was said and they all departed

from his home going to lay
Abongile and Portia to rest.

The Elephants all came out in
numbers to come and support one
of their own and many were
happy to see Ntombi again after
such a long time. Liyema
appreciated Makhulu and
Tamkhulu coming all the way too.
He was not present all
throughout the ceremony because
he kept looking at Portia's casket
and felt like kicking it to the floor
but then he'd look at the white
coffin right next to it and he'd
feel himself calm down. He decided

to rather fix his eyes on Abo's coffin to avoid making a scene out of rage. He stood up and interrupted the preacher by singing a gospel song. His voice filling the entire church and Ntombi was reminded of that man who caught her attention in church before they even knew each other. She couldn't remember the last time she heard him sing his heart out like that. She occasionally had to break her focus and look as though she was not taken down memory lane. When the choir stood to back him, she suddenly felt like

that young girl charmed by the handsome dark skinned man who sang for angels with his powerful voice. As he sang, he also moved to the rhythm of the song around Abo's coffin and it had many crying out loud. Tamkhulu stood with to go join Liyema and soon people stood to go sing while moving around the coffins. Seta was right when he said that when a loved one's coffin sinks into a hole it hit harder because one gets slapped with the reality that you'll never see them, speak to them or hug them again. The quads were no better than their

father with sadness. Ma Maduna even went as far as nearly crying herself into Portia's grave.

Liyema realized that he was not there for Portia's funeral. Had they been buried on separate days, he'd have skipped Portia's.

The ceremonies were done with and for many it was back to normal but for the Maduna and Elephant family, it was not going to be normal ever again.

Hlubi: "Such small coffins shouldn't even have existed because babies just shouldn't die so young" she put her shades on. Her friends were there to support her and

Alu and both were grateful for it.
Liyema: "After we wash our hands, we're all leaving"
Bandile: "Can we please eat first, dad?" We didn't have breakfast this morning" he pleaded.
Banele: "I'm not hungry"
Liyema: "We'll eat on the way. We did what we came here for". They got into their hired cars and drove back to the Maduna household. They washed the graveside soil off their hands with the water by the gate.
Liyema went to announce to Portia's uncle that he is leaving with his family.

Maduna: "So you're just going to leave like a thief in the night?" she raised her voice drawing some attention.

Liyema: "Is it not you who told me that I'm not a son in law here, Ma? So why does me leaving bother you?" he turned to look at her.

Maduna: "You are the one who killed my baby!" she shouted while pointing at Liyema. Liyema was glad that his kids were waiting in the car already. He also saw Ntombi sitting out and he was glad because he didn't want her hearing what he was going to get

off his chest either.

Mrs E: "Do not blame my son for a choice that was made by your daughter" she pointed back.

"Don't for one second think that I won't cause a scene of my own.

This is not the place nor time.

We've both just buried our granddaughter so don't do this" she calmed herself.

Maduna: "The same granddaughter that you did everything in your power to keep secret? Now she's suddenly your granddaughter. She's been my granddaughter from day one so don't come here Mafikizolo and

claim a person whom you once wanted nothing to do with. I lost a daughter and granddaughter. I entrusted them both in your son's care yet they both come back with bullet holes in their lifeless bodies" she started to cry "I curse the day Portia laid eyes on you" she pointed to Liyema.

Liyema: "I curse that day too" he shouted "I curse that day more than you do because your daughter did something to me that day and my life has never been the same since" he looked at Maduna "Now you can't say anything because you know...you

know exactly what I'm talking about" Ma Maduna looked around "Was it not you who came to my house to come and give your daughter muthi so that I may look at her and only her?" he shouted "Now you're quiet, Ma" his bottom lip started to shake "I curse... I curse the day I met your daughter too" he added before walking off.

Lungile: "Ma, no" he said to Mrs E when he noticed that she wanted to say more.

Hlubi: "Let's go, Mama" she held her mother's hand and led her away.

Maduna: "What are you looking at?" she asked rudely while looking around before retreating to her bedroom. Liyema didn't even wait for his family to come out. He got inside the car and drove away with his children. Mahlubandile made sure to look after her friends and Ntombi's grandparents by making sure they had accommodation. They'd all be heading back the same day. Ntombi heard the shouting inside but she didn't bother involving herself in family politics. It was when Liyema stormed out to the car their children sat, that she

realized that he was the one who was shouting. Liyema drove to a huge plot of land. It was the land that he was going to settle down on.

Liyema: "This is the land that I bought" he said to his children. .

Bubele: "It's huge" he looked through the window.

Liyema: "Let's go check it out" he opened his door "we'll get food after this, I promise" he closed the door and led the way to the heart of the plot. The boys stood next to him taking in the beauty of the place.

Bandile: "I think you should start

farming. What else will you do with such land?" he looked at his father.

Liyema: "This is all for you four. One day when I'm no more, you'll inherit everything"

Bukhosi: "Dad, please don't talk death now. We just buried our sister and now you want us to have an image of you being gone too?" he shook his head.

Liyema: "I'm going to be around for a long while" he wrapped his arm around Banele and Bukhosi's shoulder as they stood next to him. The two did the same making a chain of Elephant men

"The reason why I wanted children was because I knew I'd have a legacy to leave. I'm not going to die yet but I want you to know that all that I've worked for is for you guys. Bandile you might take this farm to greater heights with the knowledge you'll get from your agricultural studies. Banele you might take Ndlovu Communications to greater heights with your marketing studies. Bukhosi you might take Mlambo Attorneys to greater heights" Bubele looked down. Bubele: "And I'm just a

disappointment" he said softly before his father could beat him to it.

Liyema: "Lungile didn't know what he wanted in life for many years but he eventually found himself so I'm not worried" he looked at Bubele "I'm proud of you all equally. When I look at you, I see myself but twice as great. All that your mother and I wanted was for you all to grow up to be responsible young men and I know I speak for both of us when I say that we see the type of men you are becoming and we love what we see. It's easy for a

father to want to choose his children's paths but your mother always made sure that I don't burden you as my father did me. It's great to see you all coming back to the legacy on your own though. Some of us are meant to build your own legacy like I did" he looked at Bubele smiling.

Banele: "We love you, dad" the others nodded "we might fight you a lot but we love you" he added.

Liyema: "I love you too" he brushed their hands with his hands.

Bandile: "When did you buy this

land?" Liyema kept quiet for a long while.

Liyema: "Years ago actually" he finally said "Your mother always dreamt of retiring in the rural areas, away from the chaos of the city. I bought this land for her but never got to gift it to her. I think it'll be inappropriate for me to do that now" he laughed softly "She knows of it because I had to put everything on the table during the divorce settlement but she didn't want half ownership" he added.

Banele: "If only she knew that you bought it for her" he looked

around "I don't know but..." he looked at Liyema for a long while. Liyema: "What?" he smiled.

Banele: "I feel like you're back. I don't know how to put it but I feel like it's one of those days where you'd come home from work after a long day of not seeing you" he laughed at how silly he sounded.

Bukhosi: "I thought that I was the only one feeling that way" they all laughed.

Bandile: "You guys forget that we are more connected than average brothers" laughter again.

Liyema: "Well it feels good to be

back home" he smiled "I think turning this into a little farm should be our little project.

Bandile can tell us what to do and we'll follow his lead"

Bandile: "Thanks for the vote of confidence. I'm glad that we're doing this. I see us producing fresh produce to various food chains"

Liyema: "Good luck convincing your future wife to come live in the rural areas. Your mom wanted it only because she's a rural girl. Since you guys date city girls, I don't know" they laughed.

Bubele: "I can help with the

project but there's no way I'm coming to live here full-time so my future wife need not worry"

Bukhosi: "Does your future wife even exist with the way you lack commitment?"

Liyema: "It's good to settle down someday. Find yourselves young ladies who will be good for your heart and soul. Marriage is beautiful, I can give personal witness to that"

Bubele: "Are we still going to have a hundred stepmothers?" Liyema laughed out.

Liyema: "No" he said honestly "You might never have one stepmother

let alone a hundred"

Bukhosi: "What happened to the polygamy thing? You do know that we respected your choice right?"

Liyema: "I don't know what happened to the polygamy thing" he said honestly "I know you do and I appreciate it" he added "Let me go feed you before your mother strangles me for not giving you food" they all started to walk towards the car.

Bandile: "She's already sending endless texts" he looked at his phone. Ntombi just wanted to know if everything was fine after the way Liyema sped off with her

children.

Bukhosi: "We'll be okay" he looked at the other men "I don't know when but it'll get better" he added. Liyema was not sure if things will get better for him.

They saw a yellow bird that had a black chest on the car's roof as they walked towards it. No words were exchanged between them they just looked at each other smiling because all of them felt it was Abo coming to say goodbye before flying away because yellow was her favourite colour. Liyema recited his family clan name as they all stood waiting for the bird

to fly away. When he was done, it spread its small wings and let them all watch it fly up to the blue sky until it was out of sight. A peace washed through all five men as they still looked to the direction the bird went. Liyema still filled with many questions as to how Portia got him to lower his pants with ease that night. He knew Seta fled and he knew that he'd never know if he was drugged with something that night. All he knew was that he had no control over his sexual impulses after his encounter with her. Because he couldn't change

the past, he decided to focus on the good that came with that night of infidelity, which was his daughter. He recalled someone saying that a father never knows how big his heart is until he has a daughter. He knew Abo was there to make him realize that he had more love than he imagined and for that he'd forever be grateful. 

S2-INSERT 88

Weeks had gone by and everyone tried their best to get back to normal. Liyema put his house on the market because Mahlubandile

was right in that he couldn't stay there by himself, not after everything that happened there. He was living with Lungile and Alu for a while because he didn't like the thoughts that flooded his mind when alone. Burying himself in his work was how he chose to escape at least until he was ready to face the shadows.

Liyema: "MamTshawe" he said to Ntombi after putting the phone against his ear.

Ntombi: "Hey, I think Banele is back to his old ways again. Can you please talk to him?" she got straight to the point. There was

a brief knock on the door and Banele came in after Liyema gave permission.

Liyema: "I'll have a chat with him" he said looking at Banele who couldn't even make eye contact.

Ntombi: "Thanks, bye"

Liyema: "Bye" he ended the call. He stood and walked around his desk to go stand next to Banele "You're drunk, Banele" Banele looked at his father briefly before looking at the documents in his hands.

Banele: "I'm not drink. I had a rough night last night" he put

the papers on his father's desk
"Frank asked me to give you
these graphic design drafts for
the Moola account". he added.

Liyema: "Look at me" he ordered
and when Banele didn't he held
Banele's chin and forcefully lifted
his son's head so he can face him.

Banele: "I just had a late night
party" he pulled his head back
aggressively to get his face out
of his father's grip.

Liyema: "Why are you doing this to
yourself again? Why are you
choosing toxic escapes?" he asked
in a stern yet calm tone.

Banele: "Because I'm my father's

son" he said confidently "Monkey see, monkey do" he added.

Liyema: "My DNA might be a part of you but I've got no control over your mind. Don't blame your bad choices on me" he walked back around his desk "You took the decision to drink and come smelling like a brewery to work. Choice, Banele do not think you'll guilt trip me into thinking I'm responsible. Since you made the choice get ready to face the consequences" he sat in his office chair "Expect a final written warning before end of business day" he looked at the graphics.

Banele: "But this is my first offence. I might not know much but I know I'm supposed to get two warnings before I get a final one" he shouted. Liyema stood and leaned forward over the desk.

Liyema: "Go check the disciplinary code of this organization. It states that should an employee come intoxicated to work they will be given a final warning. You do this again and I'm going to fire you" his eyes bore into Banele's.

Banele: "I'll take you to the CCMA" Liyema laughed.

Liyema: "Be my guest. Here I'm not your father but your boss" he

pointed his finger on the desk "I will give you the same treatment that I give any employee in this company. I'm not playing house here, I'm running a business" he pointed to Banele.

Banele: "It won't happen again" he looked at his father.

Liyema: "Good because you'll pack your little work station up and be gone" he sat again.

Banele: "When will I get a more stable position? I mean... I mean all I do is be assistant to everyone else" he mumbled.

Liyema: "Why are you here, Banele?" he asked while typing on

his laptop. Banele didn't answer "You're here for your experiential learning in order to get your National Diploma. Technically you are still a student but a very fortunate one because you get R4000 for studying. All the other students here are assistants to the experienced ones because it's how learning is done. Don't think that because an Elephant is the owner you'll be treated like some prince. You'd better stop coming to my building drunk" he added. Banele: "I heard you" he moved backwards "when you are done with those please let me know,

boss" he turned around after that sarcastic comment.

Liyema: "I'm going to discuss it with the other interns. You go home. If I'm so nauseated by your stench I can't imagine those sharing a work space with you" he added.

Banele: "But I worked with Frank on those for weeks" he walked back to his father's desk "This will be important for my logbook" he said in a nearly crying tone.

Liyema: "You make a choice, you face it's consequences" he looked up at Banele.

Banele: "Dad, please. I went to bed late most nights to fulfill the duties Frank handed over to me on this project, please. Don't shut me out of the pitch tomorrow because it'll be a huge career boost" he pleaded.

Liyema: "Choices come with consequences. You make the wrong choice, you face its consequences. Now go home" he raised a brow.

Banele: "But...,"

Liyema: "Think before you act. Get out of here" he pointed to the door. Banele gave his father one last pitiful look before slowly walking out. He was the one who

worked on those graphics and he and Frank agreed to only tell Liyema should Moola choose one of them for their campaign. So to hear that he might never get his recognition since a fellow intern will be put on the project hurt. The fact that he'll be greeted with a final written warning first thing tomorrow morning was not pleasant either. He decided not to go home but went to check Bukhosi on campus since he was close.

Bukhosi sat with Ivi eating a burger when Lumka who used to be Ivi's friend walked towards

them.

Ivi: "Baby let's go because I'm not in the mood to deal with Lumka" she took her sling bag.

Bukhosi: "I'm not going to let some chick make me stand up to avoid her. She'll pass" he bit his food. Ivi sat back down.

Lumka: "Buviwe" she said loudly making a combination of the couple's names "Love is nice nhe?" she reached forward trying to take a chip from Bukhosi's takeaway container.

Bukhosi: "You touch my food without asking and watch me teach you a lesson you'll never

forget in your entire existence" he said to her and watched her hand move over to Ivi's food before she could touch his. Lumka took a few of Ivi's chips.

Lumka: "I know something that you'll never forget in your entire existence should I tell you so don't be so cocky"

Ivi: "Please just leave, Lumka. Take the entire takeaway just leave us alone" she closed the container and handed it to Lumka.

Lumka: "Beggars can't be choosers" she took the half eaten burger and chips "Hey, student life is hard man" she shook her

head "You know that you are a good person when you have screenshots that you can use to blackmail people to buy you food but choose not to use them" she put the food in her bag.

Bukhosi: "Let's go" he stood and held Ivi's hand "Your class is in 15 minutes so let's go now" he added.

Lumka: "I wish that I had a boyfriend from a rich family too. I know you'd have starved just like me had it not been for your boyfriend buying you meals"

Ivi: "My bursary treats me well thank you" they walked away.

Lumka: "Bukhosi!" he ignored her.

Ivi on the brink of a nervous breakdown "Bukhosi!" she called out again.

Bukhosi: "What?!" he asked frustrated.

Lumka: "A friend of mine terminated a pregnancy without her boyfriend knowing. So as a guy do you think she should tell him?"

Ivi: "Baby, let's go" she pulled at him.

Bukhosi: "Tell her to go with the secret to her grave because no man will forgive that" he said before turning around to walk with his girlfriend. He walked her to her class before going about

his business as he was done for the day. Ivi's mind was everywhere but the lesson of the day. She went to visit her aunt but really she went to see her cousin.

Scooter: "Cozy" he walked in from his backroom "Yho, no one visits me anymore...not family anyway so to what do I owe this honor" he sat down.

Ivi: "I need your help" she whispered.

Scooter: "Typical family. Only remember you when they need something" he shook his head "Talk because I see you're

desperate" he sat.

Ivi: "Mntase, I need you to rob someone and take their phone please" Scooter laughed so much he had to go get a glass of water.

Scooter: "Remember how you told my mom "throw him out, Makazi because he'll end up stealing household stuff too?". He just had to reminded her "Now you are the one sending me to do the thing you judged me for but I guess it's okay because it's you right?" he added.

Ivi: "Please, mntase" she went on one knee and then both.

Scooter: "Okay that's easy. So what's in it for me?" he looked at his nails still leaving her in pleading position like a king looking at his servant. He felt that's what she was at that moment because he possessed a skill she needed.

Ivi: "My bursary gives me pocket money. Each time I get it I'll share half with you"

Scooter: "How will I know that it's half?" he looked down on her.

Ivi took out her phone to show him proof of how much she got

"Okay, that can come in handy. My baby mama will stop seeing me as

a useless piece of nothing when I give her this money to buy baby stuff" he nodded "But that's for babymama though so what's in it for me?" he asked.

Ivi: "Haibo, Scooter"

Scooter: "Hey I'm risking jail for you" he reminded her.

Ivi: "After I've done whatever it is that I want with the phone you'll steal, you can go sell it and keep the money" he just looked at her "My boyfriend bought me a necklace that costs a few thousands. You can sell it and easily get about R1000 for it" she said.

Scooter: "Sounds fair but..."

Ivi: "Oh please you do this all the time"

Scooter: "For myself, Couzy not others. But because I love you I accept the offer" Ivi breathed "How sure are you that what you are trying to get on this phone was not saved on another device?" he asked.

Ivi: "I know the person very well. Backup is not their strongest point"

Scooter: "Does your boyfriend know he's dating a thug?"

Ivi: "I'm no thug"

Scooter: "You are initiating

thuggery. A drug lord might not deal the drugs himself on the streets but he's a drug dealer non the less" he pointed out.

Ivi: "I'm a desperate woman, not a thug" she justified her actions.

Scooter: "whatever" he shook his head "I see your bursary money was transferred yesterday. So send my half now. I want to go give my babymama some money"

Ivi: "After the job is done"

Scooter: "You go back on your deal I'll revenge" Ivi nodded "Now go make me some coffee with peanut butter bread as a deposit. I want to be served while you're on

your knees too" he laughed. Ivi had no choice but to stand and do what he said. She showed him a picture of Lumka and told him how their classes are structured. Scooter promised it would be done by end of the day tomorrow.

Banele and Bukhosi were home cooking dinner. Liyema finally agreed to get his boys a flat because Bukhosi was to used to having his space and moving in with his mother meant sharing a room again. Bandile also had a room for days he visited. Bubele walked in doing a victory dance. Bubele: "Boys, guess who finally

got a real sponsor?" he continued to dance.

Bukhosi: "Your ass is a boy" he said while peeling a potato.

Banele: "Does that mean that you'll contribute to groceries now?"

Bubele: "So non of you are going to ask me who the sponsor is and how much I'll make?" he sounded disappointed "You guys know how hard I worked on my Instagram profile in order to have influencer status. Now it's happening and no one's happy. I miss coming home to mom because she'd have danced even if she doesn't

understand how exactly being an influencer works" he said in a low tone.

Bukhosi: "We're kidding" they both stood to go jump on him on the couch and tried to get that feel good mood energy he entered with back again. Bubele felt good again and laughed out at how excited they were for him "So who is the sponsor?" he asked and Bubele told him.

Banele: "So will they give you products like the other company?"

Bubele: "Money, money, money, money....money!" he sang with excitement "So yeah you bet I'm

going to contribute to groceries as I do with my pocket money already" he said proudly. There was a knock on the door and Liyema walked in when they told him to. He could sense the good energy so he asked what's going on and they told him.

Liyema: "Does that mean you'll start paying your own rent now that there'll be an extra income?" they all scratched their heads and Liyema laughed.

Bukhosi: "I use the money I get for doing admin for Mlambo Attorneys for groceries and so does Banele with his stipend and

Bubele bought electricity with the pocket money you give him. We gave him the lesser responsibility"

Bubele: "Whatever" Bukhosi laughed "But I see where he's going. We're gaining this independence slowly but surely so be gentle n us" Liyema nodded with a smile.

Liyema: "Imagine if you lived with Bandile full time. That man only eats expensive organics" they all laughed.

Banele: "That guy" he shook his head still laughing "I'm really sorry for my behavior. I now see

that I deserve the punishment"
he looked at his dad.

Liyema: "It's not punishment but discipline" he stood to go to the little kitchen area "Let me cook for you folks. When was the last time you tasted my cooking?" the boys stood.

Bukhosi: "I think we were fifteen" Liyema laughed before rolling up the sleeves of his shirt "What the hell is this?" he opened the pot.

Bukhosi: "We were trying a new recipe"

Liyema: "I'm not eating this junk"

Bubele: "But who invited you

through?"

Liyema: "Technically you're boarders here since this is my place" he reminded them and they laughed.

Bukhosi: "Stay, dad. I like this. We've had so many of these moments with mom since the split that we forgot how they feel with you" he smiled.

Liyema: "I'm sorry for that"

Bubele: "All good, we're all here so no sweat" they nodded "Please can you look over my contract for me? Last time I signed one I thought my payment would be money but it was products" the

others laughed.

Liyema: "Proud of you for not repeating the same mistake. Give it to me after dinner" he looked at Bubele "Frank told me you were the one who did those graphics" he turned his gaze at Banele "They only need a few tweaks from an experienced professional but I loved them" he added.

Bukhosi: "My man" he patted his brother's shoulder "Straight from the boss's mouth while he cooks for you. Some people live lavishly" they all laughed.

Banele: "I hope the people of Moola approves them" he said

feeling proud of himself "Thanks, dad" he added.

Liyema: "You'll find out after we pitch them to them"

Banele: "So I'm still on the account?" Liyema nodded and Banele looked relieved.

Liyema: "You're still going to get that final written warning tomorrow though"

Banele: "All good. Knowing it's my last chance will motivate me to be disciplined. I didn't mean to embarrass you in front of your workers"

Liyema: "That's just the thing, Anele. You embarrassed yourself

not me. Your actions are not a reflection of me but of your own demons. If you aren't coping with Abo's death, tell me so we can arrange therapy again" Banele nodded "All of you" he added "I'm so hard on you because I see you someday sitting in my chair"

Banele looked up with a smile.

Banele: "I can see that" he said confidently.

Bubele: "Dad, I have a huge following. So how about I put Ndlovu Communications on the digital map. Banele said all your business is like from old school advertising. So let's go where

everyone is which is digital" he suggested.

Liyema: "Compile a proposal, set up an appointment to pitch it to me and my team and then we'll negotiate" he said.

Bubele: "But I'm proposing now"

Bukhosi: "Big shots like dad prefer it on paper. It's just easier on a legal point as well. I'll help you compile it and Banele can give you points on pitching it"

Liyema looked at them while cooking and loved how they effortlessly put the little knowledge they have together to help each other. Bandile video

called his brothers and was glad his father was also there.

Bandile: "Dad, I emailed suggestions on which produce are in demand in agriculture at the moment. I think you should buy the land next to the one we have now too, so livestock can graze there" he said. Liyema just stopped what he was doing and looked at all of them before laughing softly "I know money doesn't grow on trees and all but you know...yeah" he added.

Liyema: "It's not that. I just like how I'm now the student and not the teacher with you guys. It's

refreshing" the boys looked at each other impressed "I'll talk to the man and ask about the land, Andile" he said "You are missing out because I'm cooking" he added.

Bandile: "The last you cooked was when we were 15 or something so I really am missing out"

Bukhosi: "Told you" he said quickly and Liyema laughed "Wish you were here, bro" he looked at the screen.

Bandile: "I wish so too but thanks to technology I kinda am. Good thing we've got free WiFi where I live so I'll also go cook

while talking to you all so we can have dinner together"

Bubele: "Dude, I got a sponsor"

Bandile: "Will you get products again?" Bubele made money signals with his fingers and Bandile stood to do a happy dance in celebration of his brother.

Liyema: "Where did you all learn to dance when getting good news?"

Them: "Mom" they said simultaneously before laughing.

Bukhosi: "You can come occupy Bandile's room until you find a place of your own"

Liyema: "Code for you can come buy the groceries while we buy

sneakers...no thank you. I'm glad your mother and I decided to cut those who make some income off where necessary, I like these independent young men"

Bubele: "So I'm also off child support?"

Liyema: "You bet you are, Ntwana. I'll read that contract so I'll know which month I should stop giving you money just like we're doing with Banele and Bukhosi. Your mother and I agreed that we help when you guys are really stuck. Since rent is taken care of there's no reason you can't feed yourselves. As soon as Bandile

finds means to make his own money he's off child support too"

Bukhosi: "So much for having rich parents" he teased.

Liyema: "Exactly rich parents who work their asses off. You're not rich but you can work to gain those riches" he said "Get me some seasoning mix" he looked at them before stirring a pot.

Banele went to get it.

Banele: "Man, you like this hits deep because it's a reminder that we are two short" he gave his father the bottle. His brothers all took a deep breath.

Liyema: "And this concludes the

lesson that I tried to teach you today. If you make a choice that's not good, you better be prepared for its consequences. You can't run from them"

Banele: "Lesson taken" Liyema nodded. The night was good as they helped their father prepare dinner for them. They felt they got him back after a long period of distance though he was not far physically all that time.

Mr Mbuzo went to visit his wife and he decided not to tell Yanda and Yandiswa as they'll try to talk him out of it. Ma Mbuzo was

happy to see him because she only got visited by Yamkela and on rare occasions. They greeted one another before she sat down.

Mr Mbuzo: "How are things here?" he tried making small talk.

Ma Mbuzo: "They told me if I continue with my good behaviour I'm going to get parole in the years to come. I hope that it'll happen while I'm still strong because all of me is burning to hold Yamkela's last born, Nandi's baby and Yanda's boy. I see them only in pictures Yamkela brings me. I told them to not bring babies here" she looked around "It's not

as bad as it was though. The warden pitied me and moved me to another cell on condition that I'll help knit blankets and clothes for children in need. So it's not as bad as it used to be if anything it taught me gratitude and to be kind. Those are things I know that I lacked. I also help mothers who gave birth on the inside to adjust to motherhood. That's my favourite part about being here. Kissing those little cheeks and calming stresses new mothers" she smiled "Lisakhanya also came to see me. She says Yanda is not ready to forgive yet"

she looked at him "I'm sorry for everything that I did to you and our family, Tata ka Yanda" she looked him in the eye.

Mr Mbuzo: "You know...they say that you have matured when you finally understand why someone did something and I think I've reached a new level of maturity. There is no manual on how a person is supposed to react to their spouse cheating more so when a baby is conceived through that. I take accountability for everything. I could just have left you and married another woman or told you I wanted a second

wife but I cheated"

Ma Mbuzo: "I drove you out of the house and for that I take accountability" she said softly.

Mr Mbuzo: "I know that you've told them the story that you have, Nolali. Please tell me the real story. I promise not to be angry. I just have to learn the truth perhaps for real closure" he looked at her.

Ma Mbuzo: "You are not going to like the truth, Yavela"

Mr Mbuzo: "Who ever does?" he asked "But we need to know it anyway" he added. He watched her take a deep breath "Please"

he pleaded.

Ma Mbuzo: "I can't" she started to cry.

Mr Mbuzo: "Try... remember I'm not here for judgment but for understanding" he held her hands. She freed one to wipe her tears. She breathed deeply once again.

Ma Mbuzo: "That day I was doing laundry outside. I could hear the cries from inside but I was... I was..." she cried more. The guard reminded them about the no touch rule a few seconds too late.

Mr Mbuzo: "You were too angry at me to look after my child" he

finished her sentence and she nodded many times "which can be understood from an emphatic view" he added.

Ma Mbuzo: "I suddenly heard complete silence, Yavela. At first I thought the child cried itself to sleep but something inside of me just told me to go and check so I walked inside the house" she looked up "I found Yanda right next to the baby who was on the floor. I left that child in the middle of our bed and I knew he was too small to roll by himself so there would be no way he'd fall off. Found Yanda in the kitchen

next to the lifeless body saying "Fell, Mama...Bhabha fell" while pointing to the child" she cried out making others look at her. Mr Mbuza sat back and shut his eyes "He was trying to bring the baby to me so I can comfort him so he'd get quiet but he was a toddler so of course a baby was too heavy to carry. He's arms must have gotten tired when he reached the kitchen causing him to drop the child and clearly it was a fatal drop. I should have gone in when I heard that first cry but I kept imagining you in bed with another woman and I'd

get so angry" she continued while wiping her tears.

Mr Mbuzo: "Oh Jehovah" he said quietly "why didn't you say so?" he looked at her again.

Ma Mbuzo: "How? You'd have believed that I killed the child because I had motive. I panicked and buried him. You kept asking about him and whenever you did I'd feel deep guilt so that's how I ended up using muthi on you so you'd just forget about it but instead it made you lose your mind and walk away from the family which just added to my anger because I was left with the

responsibility to feed our children when I was a housewife. I used to dose myself with both muthi and pills to forget until my heart grew as hard as stone, more than before so I'd continue with life. I didn't want my son going through life with the guilt that he killed his brother" he gave her his napkin so she'd blow her nose and she did. They sat in silence for a while knowing time was not on their son.

Mr Mbuzo: "I believe you" he said after a long while "Thank you for telling me the truth" he added.

Ma Mbuzo: "Please, Yavela don't

tell Yanda. It'll hit him harder now than it would have had he found out from at a young age" she pleaded.

Mr Mbuzo: "I think that it is time that we close this chapter. Yanda and Daluxolo add a lot to each other's lives. I do not want them to retreat to the past because I fear this will ruin the brotherhood. We were responsible for everything so let's deal with it alone. I'll go with the revelation to the grave and since no one else witnessed it will stay between us" his wife nodded.

Ma Mbuzo: "And Yanda not having

memory of it is good. Thank you for understanding" he nodded.

Guard: "Times up" he hovered over them. Their conversation was a whisper but they could hear each other.

Mr Mbuzo: "I'll come visit you again soon. I'll bring you pictures of all the grandchildren together and how our house looks like now"

Ma Mbuzo: "Your house"

Mr Mbuzo: "I have a feeling we will handle marriage better next time after your release. We've already done so much leading in the right direction from this short conversation of complete

open communication and accountability. I didn't like the past Nolali but the woman in front of me might not be her at all. So I'll keep coming to get to know her" Mrs Mbuzo couldn't help but smile while nodding.

Ma Mbuzo: "She's still a firecracker"

Mr Mbuzo: "The reason why I was attracted to her to begin with. I never had a problem with your feisty personality. I'd have never taken you to meet my mother if I did. I had a problem with you trying to control me. A man can't treat a woman like a

queen when she is constantly trying to be the king, Nolali because then she tells him she doesn't need him" he stood "Until next time" he brushed her upper arm fondly before walking out. Ma Mbuzo just looked at him and smiled to herself feeling like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. She trusted he wouldn't tell Yanda the true story because they both wanted to protect their kids from unnecessary pain. She could easily have told the judge the truth to reduce her sentence for covering it all up but a lower sentence was

not worth Yanda's psychological well-being going off the tracks. Telling her husband the truth and nothing but the truth felt good and she went back to her daily duties feeling happy for the first time since she arrived in prison. 

S2-INSERT 89 (NOT EDITED)

Ivi sat up the entire night thinking about what she asked Scooter to do. She felt herself lose yet a part of her once again and she hated it. She curled up on her bed and cried her eyeballs out. After releasing the pain inside of

her she took her phone and called her aunt.

Gerty: "Why do you want to speak to Nkosi so late in the night, Iviwe?" she asked after they greeted one another.

Ivi: "I'm trying to enrol him in a youth empowerment group, Makazi. I'm hoping him going to such will make him stop his easy money hustles" she lied but her lie left a smile on her aunt's face.

Gerty: "Oh wow, Nana" she placed the Bible she had on a lap on her bedside table before standing "I'm going out to go knock on his door now please hold on" she added

walking out of the house to
Scooter's room.

Ivi: "Okay, Makazi. Thank you"
she waited on her aunt.

Gerty: "Nkosinathi!" she called out
and Ivi could hear her bang on
Scooter's door "Iviwe mntanam, I
don't think he's home" she said to
Ivi. Ivi shut her eyes
disappointed.

Ivi: "Thank you for checking,
Makazi. Bye bye"

Gerty: "wait!" she said before Ivi
could hang up "I hear footsteps"
she added and the door opened
"Iviwe wants to talk to you" she
said to her son "Ivi, I'm giving

him the phone now" she spoke over the phone. She gave Scooter the phone and waited for him to finish speaking.

Scooter: "Yes, I'm still up for tomorrow" he said annoyed thinking Ivi called to check if he had not gotten cold feet. Gerty smiled thinking her son was going to a workshop or something.

Ivi: "Mntase, forget about what I asked you to do. Don't do it because I've changed my mind" she said quickly.

Scooter: "You think I'm one a cartoon character to play with, whe Ivi?" he pointed as though

she stood in front of him. "I don't have time to play man nxa" he said sounding annoyed. "I still want that money that you promised me because I told my baby mama I'll bring it tomorrow" he added.

Ivi: "No problem, I'll come give it to you tomorrow but don't do what I asked you to please.

Security around campus is tight so you'll get caught. I don't want you to go to jail"

Scooter: "My money tomorrow" he said before giving his mother back her phone before going back inside his room and locking.

Gerty: "What happened?" she asked Ivi while walking back to the main house.

Ivi: "The programme got cancelled because not enough people enrolled" she lied once again.

Gerty: "And what money did you promise him?"

Ivi: "You know how Scooter is, Makazi. I had to bribe him to be interested" more lies. Gerty just shook her head.

Gerty: "I wonder where I went wrong with Nkosinathi" she locked her door "But thank you for trying to uplift your cousin, Vivi ka Makazi. Next time though please

get Sabatha in such because he'll be very keen" she added.

Ivi: "Okay, Makazi. Let me go to bed I've got an early class. I love you vha" Gerty smiled.

Gerty: "I love you more. Tell your mother that I'll see to that thing this weekend"

Ivi: "What thing?"

Gerty: "She'll know, my baby. Goodnight" she made kissing sounds before hanging up.

Ivi: "Ma!" he called out from her room "Mama!" she said again

"Makazi said that she'll see to the thing during the weekend" she relayed the message though

she wasn't sure her mother could hear her. When her mother replied with "Okay" she knew she got the message. "Then why didn't you respond when I called you?" Ivi whispered to herself annoyed with her mother. Their relationship was not good at all and Ivi was in no mood to mend it. Next year she decided she'll go live on campus residence to get away from her mother. He covered herself with her duvet and checked her WhatsApp texts. Bukhosi left a sweet goodnight message as usual leaving her smiling. She asked him to come

over to her home tomorrow afternoon while her mother was still at work because she wanted to tell him about what happened herself before someone beat her to it. She was certain Lumka would use those screenshots that she mentioned and Ivi knew Bukhosi would lose his mind if he found out from Lumka.

Her mind was not at the lectures of the day because she mentally prepared the right words to reveal the secret to Bukhosi. He met her on campus, and they decided it was best they go to his place since it was nearby and his

brothers and Ivi agreed. Bukhosi instantly kissed her as soon as the door behind them shut and for a while she got lost in the kiss but she broke it.

Bukhosi: "Come on" he kissed her forehead "It's not every day that I have the place to myself. I told my aunt I'm sick and that's why I won't be able to go to work as usual. I want to spend time with you" he kissed her again while trying to place his hands under her too.

Ivi: "Baby, I've got something to tell you" she said after breaking the kiss.

Bukhosi: "After this" he picked her up and carried her to the couch. The kiss got passionate but Ivi stopped it.

Ivi: "What will make you stop loving me, Bukhosi?" she looked at his eyes that looked hypnotized by the pleasure of the kiss they shared.

Bukhosi: "Must we do this now?" he asked and she nodded so he sat up and watched her do the same "I'm listening" he looked at her.

Ivi: "Answer me first"

Bukhosi: "Cheating...you cheating on me will make me stop loving you" he said without hesitation "I

hope you didn't cheat, Iviwe" he looked at her intensely "Iviwe?" he said when she didn't answer. Ivi: "I had an abortion" she said quickly before tears rolled down. Bukhosi: "What?" he let go of her hand "With whose baby, Iviwe?" Ivi could already hear the rawness of his emotions in his voice "You told me you were a virgin and that I was your first" he added.

Ivi: "You were"

Bukhosi: "So it's my child that you decided to kill?" he pointed to himself "Mine, Iviwe?" he started to hit his own chest.

Ivi: "Mama made me do it. The time I attempted suicide was after she forced me to do it, Bukhosi" she broke down. He was breathing heavily, his chest starting to feel a burn. He stood and walked to the little kitchen area where he leaned over the counter before banging it a couple of times and letting out a grunt. Ivi didn't even want to look at him. He took his wallet and keys walking towards the door and Ivi followed behind "Bukhosi" she called out in a pleading tone. He just kept walking so she pulled at his T-shirt to get his attention.

He did a power turn.

Bukhosi: "Hey!" he shouted while pointing between her eyes. The vein on his forehead swollen and his eyes full of rage. Ivi backed down not wanting to add fuel to the fire "Leave me the hell alone" he said before leaving her alone. Iviwe felt like someone had punched her in the gut and she sunk to the floor crying.

Ivi: "I wanted to keep it" she whispered to herself while crying. She calmed herself after a long while because she didn't want one of Bukhosi's brothers coming home to her on the floor crying.

She decided to give him time to process the news. She found her mother home early when she arrived. She didn't even greet but just gave her mother a hateful look before going to her room. Her mother knew from the tears and dirty look that it had to do with what happened in the past and that's why she didn't try to talk to Iviwe.

While Bukhosi and Ivi were going through what had just happened Lefa and Ntombi were at the doctor for a check-up. Her belly was huge and Lefa made bubbles

on it with his mouth while they waited for the doctor to do an ultrasound.

Ntombi: "Stop it" she laughed and tried to get his head off her tummy.

Lefa: "I get so excited when we come here. I wish we could just come here often and see our little one" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Baby, carrying her at first was bliss but now I'm over it. I just want her to come" they both laughed.

Lefa: "You hear that, MaDebeza mommy has just served you an eviction notice" he spoke to his

daughter "I know it's not nice of her but surely you are tired of being in that small space.

Princesses deserve palaces" when the baby kicked Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "You must be out in a few weeks' time, Nana" she brushed her tummy.

Lefa: "Siba" he looked at her "She heard you the first time" they both laughed "Daddy will bribe mommy just so she can allow you time to pack your stuff" laughter again.

Ntombi: "I'm married to crazy"

Lefa stood to kiss her.

Lefa: "And crazy is crazy about

you" he kissed her again "But she should come though because damn three is a crowd when we're busy loving each other" Ntombi laughed "I've been busting out some really moved to get the perfect positions. So yeah, do come, daddy's girl" he held Ntombi's belly while making funny faces at her. She made faces at him too and he got out his most creepy expressions.

Ntombi: "Stop it, your baby will look like that" Lefa laughed out.

Dr: "I hope I'm not interrupting anything" he walked in smiling.

Lefa: "No, Doc. Just a man

married to an amazing wife who can make him laugh" the doctor laughed.

Dr: "Keep doing that. Laughter is important" he smiled at both

"Let us see how our young one is doing today" he placed his hand on Ntombi's belly.

Lefa: "Kicking and kicking and kicking" he told the doctor and Ntombi smiled and nodded "I see foresee a young Banyana player here" the doctor laughed.

Ntombi: "No, I already have five boys. My baby is going to be a girly girl not a tomboy" the men laughed.

Dr: "My daughter grew up tomboy because she had three older brothers so prepare yourself"
Ntombi frowned "She's a primary and proper lady now though so don't worry" Ntombikayise breathed. The doctor got on with the business of the day while having conversation with the couple. Lefa's favourite part was the heartbeat and he'd smile whenever that familiar sound would pop up "Everything looks good but I am a bit concerned about the fact that she has not turned at this stage of the pregnancy" he looked at the

ultrasound "But she might in the last weeks leading to her birth" he added.

Ntombi: "Meaning she could be breech?"

Lefa: "As in her feet will come out first?" Ntombi nodded and Lefa felt worried.

Dr: "Let's not panic. Like I said she might turn in the coming weeks we'll just have to monitor it. Should she not, then we'll act. Many breech babies were born healthy so please don't panic those young hearts" he smiled.

Lefa: "You need to face downwards now, MaDebeza

please" he pleaded in a whisper.
Ntombi: "I really want a natural birth so she should turn". The doctor explained in detail what would happen should baby Gwala not turn to face downwards and the couple remained hopeful that she'll get her move on in the coming days. They decided not to over think it as it would add more stress.

Lefa: "I think you must stop working from home too, Sibabalwe"

Ntombi: "Baby, me working from home is not why our daughter has decided to stay in head up

position. She'll turn" she assured him.

Lefa: "I just don't want any complications to occur in your health or hers" he said while helping her inside the car. Ntombi waited for him to get in as well.

Ntombi: "Can we please go baby clothes shopping?" she smiled "It'll take the stress off and remind us that our baby is healthy. She's just stubborn"

Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Shops are going to close in an hour so let's hurry" The shopping indeed made them forget about everything that

disturbed their peace "Is this a jean?" he laughed out holding the smallest denim item that he ever saw "I can already see her matching with mommy wearing this nice dress" he held up a white dress "Everything is so small" Ntombikayise liked seeing him excited.

Ntombi: "So you have patience to do this but not to wait on me while I do shopping?"

Lefa: "She doesn't have to go for three of the same dress on different sizes" Ntombi laughed "We just see 0-2 months and we know it'll fit" he added.

Ntombi: "Whatever" she laughed
"Stop picking only bright stuff.
Bees will fly after her thinking
she's a garden" they both
laughed.

Lefa: "More like think she's their
queen" he kissed his wife

"Makhulu said we shouldn't buy
too many of the newborn stuff
though before she'll outgrow it
quickly" Ntombi nodded "Look at all
these onesies" he went to where
the baby grows hung "The bunny
one is good right?" he looked at
Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Yes and three will do. I
wish I could get you to help me

choose clothes too" Lefa just looked at her "wishful thinking, I know. I guess I should drag my dad to come" she joked and laughed.

Lefa: "Yup because I'm not your daddy"

Ntombi: "I thought you're my dzadzy" she said in a flirty tone and Lefa bit his bottom lip looking at her.

Lefa: "And that's why I don't buy you clothes, I prefer you without any" Ntombi let out a seductive laugh.

Ntombi: "Makes sense now" he kissed her "Let's go pay before

we buy her stuff we won't need" she kissed him before leading the way to the tills. She couldn't see her feet anymore and walked like a penguin but she liked taking strolls while holding Lefa's hand. They called Makhulu and told her to not cook as they'll come with food. When they arrived Makhulu greeted them at the door.

Makhulu: "Bukhosi is in the lounge" she whispered "He's not okay, Ntombikayise not even your grandfather can get through to him today" she added. Lefa left the ladies at the door and went to the lounge.

Lefa: "Ndoda" he said to Bukhosi
"What happened?" he sat next to
Bukhosi. All Bukhosi did was
shake his head. Ntombi also sat
next to Bukhosi.

Ntombi: "Bhabha, what's wrong?"
to her they'll always be babies.
She brushed his back gently.

Bukhosi: "Ma" he said before
crying. He wrapped his arms
around his mother's waist and
rested his head on her belly while
crying. The family looked worried
and Tamkhulu felt helpless
because usually he was the one
who could reach Bukhosi but not
in that moment. Bukhosi let out a

loud sob when he felt his sister's soft kicks before she gave a powerful kick. He placed his hand on Ntombi's belly to feel the kicking better.

Ntombi: "Bukhosi" he didn't reply.

Lefa: "Let him cry it out, baby" they all sat and waited on

Bukhosi. Bukhosi had a blank stare as he still had his head on Ntombi's belly.

Bukhosi: "Iviwe had an abortion months ago" everyone expressed silent shock "I would have been a dad by now" he added.

Tamkhulu: "That is heart-breaking. We're sorry, Mlambo"

Bukhosi: "I don't want to talk about it" he said "Can I please sleep here tonight? I don't want to be asked a lot of questions.

She's most probably still at the flat and I don't wanna see her"

Lefa: "Of course you can sleep here. Stay as long as you like"

Bukhosi: "I'll just go to the guest room now if you don't mind"

Ntombi: "Should I bring your food to you?" Bukhosi stood.

Bukhosi: "Yes please, Mom" he wiped his tears.

Lefa: "I'll make sure Hlompho gives you space" Bukhosi nodded before walking off. Ntombi took a

deep breath.

Ntombi: "I was not expecting that" she looked at everyone "I was just not expecting it" she repeated.

Makhulu: "We know Iviwe. So she must have gone through a dark time to do that" they all nodded "But it doesn't take away the fact that she took away his right to choose" nodding once again "We need to pray for these young people" she added.

Tamkhulu: "Let's wait on Bukhosi to open up again" he looked down the passage "How did the appointment go?" he asked and

they told him.

Makhulu: "Come, let's go to your room so that I can try something my great grandmother showed my mother" she said to Ntombi.

Lefa got up and helped Ntombikayise up on her feet.

Lefa: "Can I come with?"

Makhulu smiled and nodded.

Tamkhulu checked inside the shopping bag and laughed at the little clothes he found inside that looked like it were meant for a doll. Makhulu had Ntombi raise and top as she laid on her back.

Lefa took his phone out to record after seeing that it won't expose

his wife in any nude manner. When Makhulu's hands gently held the side of Ntombi's belly Ntombi felt a little discomfort. They trusted Makhulu not knowing what she was doing. After a while a mastering turning her great granddaughter Makhulu was done. The baby moved and Ntombi was in no pain.

Makhulu: "Sometimes they just need a little encouragement" she smiled "You children make a fuss over everything. We used to give birth without these doctors and our children came out healthy. Let me go warm up the dinner I'm

hungry"

Ntombi: "Thank you, Ma" she smiled and so did Makhulu. The elder left the couple alone and closed the door behind her. Lefa snuggled closer before kissing her.

Lefa: "Should we make an appointment to check if it worked?" he asked and Ntombi nodded. The two of them spent some intimate time alone in their room before joining the family.

Hlomphe didn't see Bukhosi when he came, and the adults didn't tell him that Bukhosi was in the guestroom. Ntombi went to take Bukhosi his food and she hated

the way he looked like a zombie. He asked for headache pills after eating and Ntombi gave him her strongest ones which eventually made him sleepy. Lefa picked Ntombi up for her appointment and the doctor didn't argue with the couple and did the ultrasound and indeed baby Gwala was facing head down leaving her parents over the moon. Ntombi bought Makhulu her favourite box of chocolates to thank her but Makhulu didn't feel she needed any recognition for it, but she was not one to turn down a good box of chocolates. 

S2-INSERT 90 (NOT EDITED)

Bukhosi has been avoiding Iviwe like the plague and she being someone who always avoided conflict just let him be. She missed him and all the dark thoughts returned because after her suicide attempt he was the one who made her feel better. She was back to no speaking terms with her mother because she blamed her for everything. She met up with Hlumelo who was looking very pretty. The two of them don't hang out as much as before but Ivi needed someone to vent to and Hlumelo was one to

keep secrets well.

Hlumelo: "How's varsity?" she asked after their greeting hug. Ivi just shrugged.

Ivi: "Difficult. I got a few distinctions in matric but at varsity that's like a fantasy"

Hlumelo laughed "How's the learnership?" she asked.

Hlumelo: "Learning a lot and putting my best foot forward because there is talk of one or two of us being employed permanently"

Ivi: "Girl, you are competitive so I know that you will shine brightest" they both laughed.

Hlumelo: "True" she looked at the menu "Iviwe, you and I haven't done this lately so I'm sorry but I have a feeling it's not just drinks and lunch" she looked at Ivi.

Ivi: "I had an abortion without Bukhosi's knowledge and I told him about it days ago" Hlumelo wore a look of shock "I know...how can perfect Iviwe go terminate babies right when everyone thought she was still a virgin" she said sarcastically before laughing at herself.

Hlumelo: "I'm not going to judge because I don't know what you

were going through at the time. I'm just sorry that it had to come to that because I know how against it you were" she held Ivi's hand.

Ivi: "I still am. Difference now is that I'm not against it from a judgmental point like I was in high school. I'm against it because I know how it can mess a person up emotionally and otherwise" she blinked her tears away "That time I was in hospital" she looked at Hlumelo and Hlumi nodded "I attempted suicide because I just couldn't bare with the psychological

consequences" she quickly wiped her tears away. A restaurant staff came to tell them they can't sit without buying anything so Hlumelo quickly went to place their orders before returning to Ivi.

Hlumelo: "Why didn't you tell me all of this when I went to see you?"

Ivi: "Girl, you saw how my mother hovered over us when you were there" Hlumi nodded because she remembered "I hate her, Hlumelo. I hate her so much" the coldness in her voice made Hlumelo realize that she meant every word "Now I've lost a boyfriend and a baby

because of her. I really hate her shame" she repeated. Their order number got called and Hlumelo went to the counter to get their food.

Hlumelo: "Have you tried therapy?" she asked while handing Iviwe her food.

Ivi: "No and it's free at school but I just can't seem to bring myself to go and talk to anyone" she opened her can of coke and took a sip. "I'm going to go live at Res next year. Even if it means sleeping with the SRC guy"

Hlumelo's eyes shot open "Don't look at me like that. The first

time I went, the guy said he will give me space if I have sex with him and high moral Iviwe said no. I lost of sense of morality so I'll do it just to get away from that monster of a mother" she added.

Hlumelo: "No need to do all that. My sister is also an SRC member at your school and has a voice too. She's also feminist so I'll tell her your story and I know she'll help because she hated it when men flex their power on women. Please let me speak to her first before you go do something else that's against your personal values"

Ivi: "Thank you so much" she

smiled "You just seem to save me all the time. Remember when those girls wanted to prank me in high school?" they both laughed.

Hlumelo: "That was actually Bukhosi" she reminded Ivi "Ivi, go fight for your man" she added.

Ivi: "I'm not fighting against some girl who took him. I inflicted his pain" she started to eat.

Hlumelo: "Out of all of us you were the one who got the more mature Elephant brother. We didn't say but we secretly envied you and couldn't understand how the other three couldn't be like Bukhosi" Ivi smiled faintly.

Ivi: "I still don't know how I got so lucky to have him" she laughed softly "He is amazing and I could already see myself married to him. Sure, having a baby while fresh into varsity wouldn't have been easy but we'd have made it work" she thought about the what ifs.

Hlumelo: "I know you would have but it's time you stop playing those scenarios in your head. Just sit with him and make him understand that it was your mother who did it"

Ivi: "I'm scared, not of him but of the look he had in his eyes after I told him. He went from

looking at me like an angel to
looking at me like I'm the devil's
daughter"

Hlumelo: "Then move on" Ivi
glanced at Hlumelo "You don't
want to try fight for him and you
don't want to move on. What do
you want?"

Ivi: "Things to get back to
normal again"

Hlumelo: "Wishful thinking" Ivi
gave Hlumi a pity filled stare "You
called me here because you know
I'll tell it like it is so don't look at
me like that. You've got a good
man so it's either you fight tooth
and nail to make him see things

from your perspective or you move on"

Ivi: "Ja nhe" she shook her head
"Life is difficult shame" she ate her food. Hlumelo gave her suggestions on how she can try and get Bukhosi back. Ivi didn't want to fight no more and she knew Bukhosi's anger was still raw and it would lead to an argument and she was not ready for that.

Bukhosi told his brothers everything so they'd understand why he was walking around like a bear with a sore foot. He went to work after classes as usual and

went to sit on his little desk sorting out some paperwork. .

Hlubi: "Bukhosi, what did you do with the file that I asked you to put away yesterday because I can't find it in its usual place?"

she asked while looking elsewhere.

Bukhosi: "I always return things where they belong" he stood to go look where it usually is but his aunt was right it wasn't there "But,..." he looked around.

Hlubi: "If we lose it, we lose business because no client wants lawyers who carelessly place their details where it's not safe. Those are confidential so please try to

think"

Bukhosi: "Uhm..." he looked elsewhere "I never make a mistake with such because I know they aren't to be seen by others" he added.

Hlubi: "Is the work getting too much? I know that varsity can be tough. You don't have to work here if you can't cope, Khosi"

Bukhosi: "I'm coping just fine, Dabs" he assured her "It's just personal stuff" he added.

Hlubi: "You got dumped?"

Bukhosi: "Something like that" he moved back to his desk to look for it "Maybe I took it home by

mistake"

Hlubi: "No, Bukhosi" she was clear on what work he could take home and what not and that was not work for him to take home.

Bukhosi: "I'll quickly go and check, Dabs" he opened his bag to get his house key and was greeted by the red file his aunt was looking for "I'm sorry" he took it out slowly while looking at Mahlubandile who stood with folded arms. She took it from him. Hlubi: "This had better not happen again" she warned "After we've worked so hard to secure these clients we can't lose them"

she checked if the file was still intact "Sometimes all that is needed in a relationship is communication, ndoda. Please fix your love life so it doesn't affect other areas of your life" she advised and he nodded. He went back to work. He didn't want to stop working because he was far ahead with experience than his classmates and it was a privilege that he was not going to take for granted. When Iviwe walked in after a while he felt his anger start again.

Bukhosi: "If you don't leave then I'll call security"

Ivi: "I'm not here to fight, baby" she sat down opposite him "I just came to apologize for everything that I did" she quickly told him the story.

Bukhosi: "You had a choice to tell me so that we can find a solution that wouldn't involve you killing my child" Ivi felt her chest sting "So blame your mother all you want but she didn't drug you and had the procedure done while you were unaware. You walked into the clinic, filled in your details and you went through with it. Your mother encouraged it but you had the last say" he added.

Ivi: "Wow...okay. Clearly you can't put yourself in my shoes" she said quietly.

Bukhosi: "As you seem to fail to put yourself in mine. You girls go on with this "my body, my choice" thing but forget that you allowed the bits seeds in those bodies"

Ivi nodded.

Ivi: "So what now?" she once again avoided conflict but it started a war within herself.

Bukhosi: "Now we stay away from each other" his own heart beating fast as he spoke "I don't trust you to not repeat this down the line" he looked at her "So it's

best we just go our separate ways"

Ivi: "Okay" she stood "Uhm... I love you, Bukhosi" she looked at him but he focused on his work "I'll stay out of your way"

Bukhosi: "Thank you now please leave because I have a lot of work to do". Ivi walked away slowly and he watched her leave but he quickly turned his head when she turned to walk back to him.

Ivi: "After using two tests I knew that I was pregnant because my body was also giving signs. I was terrified as hell but

then I remembered the type of boyfriend I had and it made me feel much better. I went with Lumka to those R5 shops to buy her some eyeliner and I saw this" she put a toy on his desk "I bought it because I thought of the baby the second I laid eyes on it. If an abortion was on my mind I wouldn't have bothered. I'd go to shops and while my friends window shops for themselves, I secretly did so for the baby.

That's how Lumka put two and two together. When Mama gave me the cons of pregnancy at a young age and while unmarried

based on her experience, I got afraid too because I know she raised me with difficulty after my father got shot. Maybe you've never been afraid to the point where it controls your life, Bukhosi but I have because I didn't want to grow up bitter like Mama. Fear can cloud judgement. Sad thing is I've turned into that bitter woman I didn't want to be like. I'm really sorry for everything. I know how important family is to you, so I know how this hurts. Before Mama poisoned my mind with her fears, I was actually brave

enough to be a young mother and this proves just how much. Bye" she took the toy and did a semi jog out. When she got out she threw it on the ground and stepped on it several times until it broke. She expected him to ask for space but not for him to end things but it was what it was. She had to try and find a way to move on from the baby issue and their relationship but she knew it was not going to be easy. She wished she never gave him a chance or at least told him she wanted no sex until graduation like she did with matric but it

was too late for all of that.

Ntombi and Lefa had a video call with Mimi and Charles to discuss Hlomphe. Things were good between the four of them because each knew their place and respected it.

Lefa: "The money that we have been saving for Hlomphe's hearing aid has almost reached its target"

Charles: "I'm sure he must be happy"

Ntombi: "We haven't told him.

Lefa still wanted to do research on it and speak to people who

have had it done before we could get him all excited about it again" Mimi: "It's safe, Lefa. A colleague of mine had hers done when she was an infant and she's still perfectly fine. I think that we must now tell him that he is going to get what he wanted soon" she smiled.

Lefa: "I just wonder how much he'll change when he can process sound. Won't he be traumatized by it all. There are noises at night that even frighten Siba" he looked at Ntombikayise and laughed.

Ntombi: "whatever" she laughed

too.

Lefa: "So imagine hearing something and not knowing what it is or whether it's a threat or not"

Mimi: "He'll mute it at night so he'll have his usual peaceful nights. He'll still be Hlompho as we know him nothing's going to change" she assured him.

Charles: "Let's talk to him again. Who knows maybe he's changed his mind"

Ntombi: "Hlompho doesn't easily change his mind" they all laughed
"But yeah a real conversation on the topic will do no harm"

Mimi: "You should tell him that the most noise will come from his little sister" Ntombi laughed. .

Ntombi: "Never, she'll be the sweetest" Lefa nodded in agreement.

Lefa: "Let me go call him" he stood to go to Hlompho's room. He found Hlompho drawing in his art book as usual but the young boy set aside some time to go talk to his parents. He greeted Charles and Mimi with excitement and they asked him questions about school just to get an update on things in his life.

Mimi: "Remember when you came

to us about the implant?"

Hlomphe nodded.

Hlomphe: "Dad said it was a lot of money so I understand why I can't have it done"

Lefa: "We are close to saving enough for the first stages of it"

Hlomphe: "It's okay, dad. I do not want it anymore" the adults were all shocked.

Ntombi: "Is it because of the money? You don't have to worry about that"

Hlomphe: "Grandma said that I am already perfect. That God made no mistake when he created me deaf and I think she is right.

But keep the money saved up just in case I change my mind"

Ntombi: "Are you sure? Makhulu is right you are perfect as you are, but this is your life that we're talking about"

Hlomphe: "I will give you my final answer when I am officially a teenager. I will be older and wiser by then" the adults laughed

"That's why I ask that you keep the money if you won't need it for anything else" he added.

Lefa: "I'll put it away where it'll grow a bit then when you are 100% sure you want it, we'll do it but if not we'll keep it for your

education" Hlompho nodded.

Hlompho: "There were times when one of my brothers would have a very annoyed and frustrated look, and when I asked they said it's because one of you was calling them so they'd go do something for you" Lefa and Ntombi laughed "So I'm glad I don't have to give in to the pressure because they said you called the first name that came to mind" Ntombi was in tears with laughing "You know I can't hear you call so I'm safe from that torture" he added while laughing.

Ntombi: "I'm done with this child"

she said wiping her tears still laughing.

Lefa: "Well glad to know that you're living your best life"

Hlomphe nodded looking all smooth.

Lefa pointed to the screen after Mimi asked for Hlomphe's attention.

Mimi: "You are one of the greatest gifts that I have ever received" Hlomphe smiled.

Hlomphe: "Of course I am" the adults laughed.

Lefa: "No modesty at all" he whispered to himself.

Charles: "We still up for fishing next weekend?" Hlomphe nodded.

They had a great conversation that was filled with laughter. Lefa was glad that Hlompho decided to give it more thought. Perhaps teenage Hlompho would know what he wants because Lefa felt Hlompho wanted the implants because he wanted to fit into society when his father didn't want him to ever blend in. He wanted his son to embrace his uniqueness in whichever form it came. Ntombi and Charles felt as blessed as Hlompho's parents to be able to call themselves his parents. It came with great adjustment from both but it was

all worth it. What Hlompho didn't know was Ntombi would call out his name while in the other room and laugh at herself afterwards that's why she laughed so much when Hlompho brought it up.

They ended the call with Mimi and Charles.

Hlompho: "When is the baby coming? It's getting lonely now. I was not meant to be an only child"

Lefa: "Five seconds of living with siblings and suddenly you're not made to be an only child?"

Hlompho laughed.

Hlompho: "That's what made me realize that I'm not made for it"

Ntombi: "She'll be here in a couple of weeks" she smiled.

Hlomphe: "Finally"

Lefa: "You do know that girls are different siblings to boys right?"

No rough playing like your brothers did with you"

Hlomphe: "Girls are more powerful than boys. I see it at school all the time" he shrugged after speaking.

Ntombi: "Yes" she held her hand out and high fived with Hlomphe "Hear that?" she looked at Lefa.

Lefa: "Who do you think taught him all that"

Ntombi: "Tshisa hubby man" she

high fived him too and he just shook his head.

Hlomphe: "Let me go nap. Dad don't put the baby bed together without me"

Lefa: "Never" he promised. They watched Hlomphe go to the kitchen to get yogurt before going to his room.

Ntombi: "Poor guy doesn't know that his sister will be like a pain in the butt" she laughed "I should know because Amahle worked on her brothers nerves" she added.

Lefa: "Baby, Hlomphe doesn't have time for nonsense. If he had

those implants he'd literally have lowered the sound to avoid hearing his sister's noise" Ntombi laughed "Boy doesn't have time for drama" he laughed "Talking about Amahle, did Asakhe agree to her spending the day with you as you asked?" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I miss her and I'm sure Asakhe could hear it in my voice. Funny how she and Vusi agreed to never keep the child from us but Liyema says he struggles just as much to see her. When he calls saying he wants to see her, they always have some family thing" Lefa: "Have you thought that

maybe it's Amahle who wants to keep some distance?" I mean she's got a phone so if she wanted to spend time with you guys she'd have said so herself by calling"

Ntombi: "Never thought of it that way" she said softly "I guess I'll have to respect boundaries" she looked at Lefa "You still owe me a foot massage"

Lefa: "No, baby it's you who owes me a back massage"

Ntombi: "Ohhh so I carry your baby yet I still have to do hard labour when I'm soon going to do painful labour delivering your child"

she sulked and Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "Ease up on the emotional blackmail" he kissed her and she smiled "Okay go lay on the couch so I can massage those feet that look like they had yeast added to on them" he teased and Ntombi gave him a look.

Ntombi: "I'm going back to hotness soon" she snuck her tongue out at him.

Lefa: "You're not already" he kissed her. Ntombi went to get herself comfortable for a massage. Lefa brought her snacks and changed the channel to her favourite show to make her

foot pampering package better. He didn't know how living with a newborn full time was and neither did Ntombi but they were both excited for the sleepless nights their friends told them about. ❤️

S2-INSERT 91 (Not Edited)

Several weeks had gone by and the family was finally getting back in the groove of things.

Liyema found a lovely couple who was willing to buy their house. He first had Yandi cleanse the house and the yard before signing the papers giving the new owners ownership. Nomvula had been

trying to get back into his life but he was not ready to welcome any woman into his life because he felt better alone after everything that happened. He allowed the couple to choose the furniture that they preferred to purchase with the house and took the rest to his apartment. Hearing that Bukhosi lost an unborn child cut deep and he planned for Bukhosi to be cleansed when they went to the Eastern Cape in a few weeks. His relationship with the boys reached a great level of friendship which they were all

gratefully for. Bubele enrolled in a short business course because he realised that being an influencer was more than just glitz and glamour. Banele and the other interns at Ndlovu Communications got offered real contracts with salaries after the group of youngsters worked their butts off to get a huge new account. Liyema went to Mrs E's place because he hadn't seen her after a long time and when the door got opened for him, he couldn't help but feel he was interrupting something.

Liyema: "Are you two going

somewhere?" he asked looking at how dressed up they were. The older couple looked at each other. Jester: "We might as well tell him" he looked at his lady.

Mrs E: "No..." she protested "The whole point of keeping it quiet was so that they wouldn't try to stop us" she reminded Jester.

Liyema: "As if you ever allow us to stop you from doing anything" Mrs E laughed out.

Mrs E: "Okay..." he wrapped her arm around Jester's waist while smiling "I'm about to become Mrs Rasmeni" she looked at Liyema with excitement. Liyema frowned

and nodded a couple of times.

Liyema: "Uhm...okay... congratulations then" he smiled before hugging his mother and giving Jester a firm handshake.

Mrs E: "You're not upset?"

Liyema: "I will be upset if I'm not going to witness it" he tried to score himself an invite "I know the others will be too" he decided to use some emotional blackmail to go see his mother get married.

They weren't blind, they could see a look in their mother's eyes when she looked at Jester that she never had when looking at their father.

Jester: "Okay, you may invite the others but tell them to be here in 15 Min or miss out" Mrs E gave him a look for not consulting her first and he just laughed and raised his hands in surrender.

Mrs E: "Tell them to dress up. Can't have you look like street kids in my pictures" she scanned Liyema from head to toe. Liyema made calls to his siblings and told them to meet him at their mothers and it was an emergency "I have a jacket in the car. Should I go put it on?" he looked at his mother "And oh, they are rushing here as we speak" he

smiled.

Mrs E: "Go put on the jacket. At least you are formal most of the times. Lungi will come here with track pants showing those stick legs of his" Jester laughed.

Jester: "He gets them from me remember?" they both laughed

"I'm actually glad that our boy will witness us tie the knot" he kissed her hand "And your other children too" he kissed her lips

"You're so beautiful" Mrs E blushed.

Mrs E: "Do you know how many times I fantasized about marrying you?" she asked quietly.

Jester: "We used to dream of it together remember? But rather late than never right?" Mrs E held his cheek before planting a soft kiss on his lips.

Mrs E: "Rather late than never" she agreed "we're older and wiser now" she added.

Jester: "Should we tell them that we bought a caravan and are planning a yearlong road trip?"

Mrs E: "Well we were going to tell them after getting married so yeah. I can't wait to go to the beautiful places in our country and watch sunsets and sunrises with you every day" she wrapped her

arms around his neck "It feels like we're still those young people madly in love and planning to travel" she laughed softly.

Jester: "In here" he tapped his heart with two fingers "We are young and madly in love" he said with a smile.

Mrs E: "I just have to sort out the issue with my treatment"

Jester: "I sorted that out for you already. You'll be well supplied all year long"

Mrs E: "I'm sorry, Luyolo. Sorry that you met me broken when we were young and found me more broken after our reunion" she

looked down. She wasn't one to show vulnerability because she felt the world didn't deserve that side of her. Jester kissed her forehead.

Jester: "I don't see any brokenness. I see a queen with life experiences. A woman who is made of everything this world couldn't take from her"

Mrs E: "And it took a lot" she let out a laugh before wiping the tears that escaped.

Jester: "Then let us live our lives freely. A lot got taken from both of us but we are here. I'm going to show you such a love that it's

going to make you nauseous" Mrs E laughed.

Mrs E: "The last time you showed me love that made me nauseous was when you impregnated me" they both laughed "I love you so much" she added. He hugged her for a long while and Liyema appeared again wearing his jacket. The others arrived worried sick only to find they were on their way to a wedding.

Mahlubandile refuses to be seen in pictures wearing what she wore but fortunately she and Mrs E were about the same size so she quickly raided her mom's wardrobe

and Lungile did the same thing with his father in search for a jacket. Luckily he was wearing a jean and not sweatpants as his mother assumed. They drove to the reverend's offices for their appointment and made their union official. It was beautiful to watch them because their love was contagious.

Lungi: "Hayi no, stop it!" he shouted when his parents kissed a moment too long for their liking. Mrs E laughed in her soft voice. Hlubi: "I can't believe that you were going to keep this from us" they stood to go give

congratulatory hugs.

Liyema: "Had it not been for me you two wouldn't have known. You guys owe me big time"

Lungi: "Oh boy" he shook his head
"Parents, congratulations. May you not have another child" he joked and everyone laughed.

Jester: "Where would a child fit in with all the traveling that we are planning?"

Liyema: "Oh nice" he raised his brows. "So can we take you newlyweds out for lunch at some upmarket fancy place?"

Mrs E: "Of course you may" she smiled.

Hlubi: "We didn't even get a chance to get gifts"

Photographer: "Can the family please give me their best smiles?". They all stood in position for a snap. Jester went to show the siblings their travelling vehicle.

It was more than just an average caravan because it was fitted with everything that a household would have.

Hlubi: "A house on wheels" she looked around "Yanda and I will definitely borrow this one" she looked at them.

Mrs E: "R10 000 a day" Hlubi's

eyes widened "What? I should be able to make money from a thing that costed us so much to get" Liyema: "Capitalists" he shook his head. They went to the fancy place that Liyema spoke of afterwards and toasted to the new beginnings. Mrs E kept looking at her husband and indeed late was better than never because she could never let him out of her heart and mind over the years. She felt content and was glad that she was living in the moment with someone she wanted to spend every moment with.

Ntombi had been very busy that day doing anything that would take the boredom away. She was glad that Lefa was at work because he'd have wanted her to sit with her feet up all day. The days were getting hotter and being pregnant became more and more a struggle on her body. She journaled her pregnancy journey with her daughter as she did with her sons and while she sat comparing them, she felt blessed to have had a smooth journey with her daughter. Makhulu was not far from Ntombikayise

because she was certain that the baby would come any day so Ntombi was not to be left by herself. As the day slowly went by, she started to feel some little cramping but she thought blbothing of it as she'd had a couple during her last trimester and a few Braxton Hicks too. The men returned from their daily work at the same time as Lefa went to pick Tamkhulu up from the counselling sessions he had with young men at church..

Lefa: "How are you feeling?"

Ntombi: "Big and many other things I'd rather not say out

loud" she rested her head on his forehead "Is everything fine at the office?" she tilted her head to face him.

Lefa: "Perfect, sthandwa sam" he kissed her forehead. Tamkhulu went to open the door after a short knock and Bonolo and Vakele walked in.

Bonolo: "Granny's little girl" she rubbed Ntombi's belly "Hey, baby" she kissed Ntombi's cheek.

Ntombi: "Hi, Mme" she smiled. "I've missed you" she looked at her mother in law.

Bonolo: "I've missed you too" she sat "If I could drive, I'd take

the bakkie but dololo" they all laughed

Tamkhulu: "They've been speaking Sesotho lately" Bonolo looked impressed "Well Lefa has, Ntombi has been mumbling things" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Tata though. I just want my daughter to be good with languages" Lefa came from Hlompho room to go call him.

Hlompho jumped on his grandfather first.

Vakele: "This one thinks I can't break" he said while laughing "How are the exams going?" he asked Hlompho.

Hlomphe: "I think I should be in a higher class. Everything is just too easy" the elders laughed.

Bonolo threw a cushion at Hlomphe.

Bonolo: "Where is my hug?" she asked and he smiled before he went to throw himself on her with a hug too "Goodness, just yesterday I could handle this but now I can't" she thought out loud while hugging him.

Ntombi: "Ah" her jaw clenched.

Lefa: "Baby?"

Ntombi: "I'm fine. It's been happening but I don't think the baby is coming. Just my body

preparing more for delivery"

Vakele: "Hey but a woman's body deserves praise" Tamkhulu nodded in agreement.

Makhulu: "One of the most sacred things in life is the female body"

Tamkhulu: "Nto-Nto, are you sure you are fine?" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I am hungry though so can we go eat"

Lefa: "Stay on the couch I'll dish up for you and bring it"

Ntombi: "And listen to everyone have a great conversation around the dining table? No thank you, myenam" she put her feet on the floor.

Makhulu: "We'll all come and sit here with you then, since you have fear of missing out" Ntombi laughed before agreeing. Dinner was served and Ntombi really loved being in her in laws company. With the quads busy at work and varsity they couldn't come often during the week but Hlompho was sleeping over on weekends if he's not with his mother. The Gwalas went home after a great night with family. Hazel had not called to apologize because she still didn't see her faults but she was keeping in touch with her son. Ntombi started to feel pain again

during the wee hours of the morning but she was certain that it was Braxton Hicks as they made her go to hospital several times only to find it was not the day. She tried to use the pregnancy pillow to get comfortable but it didn't.

Ntombi: "Lefa" she shook him.

"Lefa Gwala" she raised her voice.

Lefa: "No, it's not my turn to feed the baby" he mumbled and Ntombi couldn't help but laugh softly.

Clearly he was dreaming of the baby shifts he'll deny his way out of soon. Another contraction hit hard and Ntombi had to take a

few seconds to just let it pass.

Ntombi: "Lefa, I think I'm in labour" she shook him harder when the pain subsided. He had a drowsy second but once her words marinated in his mind he jumped up quickly even giving Ntombikayise a fright "And then?" she asked while trying to do breathing exercises.

Lefa: "I thought you said the baby is coming"

Ntombi: "Baby, please don't panic because you'll make me panic. I don't want to be told about my blood pressure being too high for a natural birth. Please go and

wake Makhulu up" she said calmly though she felt like giving birth there and then. Lefa did a few paces around the room leaving Ntombi frustrated but he finally remembered what she said. She heard about men panicking but she never imagined her husband to be one of those. Makhulu was in the room soon enough giving Ntombikayise the calm that she needed while they got ready to go to the hospital. Ntombi wanted a home birth but the doctor said it was risky so she went to the hospital with a somewhat sad heart but at least the doctor

gave the green light for a natural birth. Once everyone was dressed Lefa drove with Makhulu and Ntombi to the hospital.

Tamkhulu remained so he'd look after Lefa. They didn't want to wake him up to go to hospital with because Makhulu said Ntombi might be in labour for hours before the baby could come. Indeed Ntombi was in labour for hours on end. Bonolo and Vakele rushed to the hospital after the doctor confirmed that she was in labour. Lefa watched as Ntombi leaned over the handle of her bed swaying left and right slowly and

he could only imagine the pain she was in.

Lefa: "Do you need any water?" he asked trying to help.

Ntombi: "Ahhhh" she said before trying to breathe through gritted teeth.

Lefa: "When will this end? It's been hours now" he held her belly gently from behind and ended up swaying with her without even realising.

Ntombi: "I'm just glad they haven't spoken about emergency c-section" the swaying was her way of trying to lessen the pain. She didn't know why Lefa was

doing it and under normal circumstances she'd have had a good laugh but that was not the time because all she wanted was everything to be over with. She listened to him plead with the baby to come out already and appreciated his efforts to help but the baby was going to come when she was ready and she was clearly not going to listen to anyone tell her when that should be. Makhulu called the boys and they too went to the hospital and waited for the new arrival with great excitement. Ntombi loved that her partner was next to her

all the way because she didn't have that with the boys since she had no partner. She loved how he'd ask her to rate her pain from 1-10 so he'd understand just how severe the contradictions were. She loved how he would kiss her forehead and continue to plead with his child to come so mommy can stop feeling so much pain. The sun started to come up and clearly baby Gwala had no intentions of being born while it was dark. As soon as the first sun rays penetrated the windows Ntombi was told it was time. She watched several natural birth

videos from women who filmed theirs so she'd get an idea on what to expect but what she didn't expect was for to push as much as she did. With the encouragement from Lefa and the medical staff around she was able to push baby Gwala out and it left her exhausted.

Doc: "It's a boy" Lefa and Ntombi looked at each other confused "I'm kidding it's a girl" he laughed and so did they. He was one to joke a lot so they were not surprised by that at all. Lefa was asked if he wanted to cut the cord and he nodded with

excitement. He looked at his baby to make sure it was the daughter they were expecting.

Lefa: "Damn doc, I was just thinking about all the girly clothes we bought. Why isn't she crying?"

Doc: "Babies aren't the same. She's perfectly fine though. I forseeable stubbornness here" finally the baby let out a little cry but not much.

Lefa: "Clearly she doesn't like that much" he laughed

"Ngqangqa" he looked at Ntombi

"Thank you so much" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "Can I hold her please?"

The doctor only needed a moment but he wrapped the baby up and gave her to her mother. Ntombi's tears fell on the baby's arm because she was just so happy to finally meet the princess "I've wanted this for such a long time. This peace of knowing there won't be complication involving her. Like, baby she's mine" she wiped her tears "I can breastfeed her too" she smiled and Lefa kissed her. He looked at the little person fresh into the world and he knew life would not be the same ever again but in a great way.

Lefa: "I think we should name her Kganya" he suggested and Ntombi looked at her daughter.

Ntombi: "Buhlebendalo" she looked at Lefa smiling and he kissed her.

Lefa: "Kganya Buhlebendalo Gwala" he looked at her. She opened one of her eyes and she had her father's eyes. Lefa's smile became louder "Pity your mother already took the name Ntombikayise, my angel" he whispered "Look at you looking like daddy" he added proudly.

Ntombi: "No she doesn't look like anyone yet. She just has your eyes so don't even" she laughed softly.

She was tired but the joy was more than the exhaustion.

Lefa: "Jealous much?"

Ntombi: "Haha" she said sarcastically before kissing her daughter's forehead "She's so warm" he smiled. After hours of labour Ntombi finally held their bundle in her arms. Lefa was certain she looked like him. The family was allowed to briefly see mom and baby but only for a short while. Bonolo let out a little scream of excitement when she saw her granddaughter.

Lefa: "Meet Kganya Buhlebendalo Gwala" he said proudly.

Makhulu: "Oh this is definitely Lefa's copy. She looks like a white baby" everyone laughed.

Ntombi: "Haa, Ma" she raised a brow.

Bonolo: "She's everything her grandmother imagined her to be and more. Oh my goodness Nkono is going to spoil you rotten"

Ntombi raised a brow looking at Lefa.

Makhulu: "And once Ntombikayise goes back to work we'll look after her not some nanny or day-care"

Bonolo gave Makhulu the baby.

Banele: "She's the last born. Has overprotective men around her

and will be looked after by her grandmothers. Forget it, mom you lost the battle. She'll be raised spoiled" Ntombikayise sulked.

Bukhosi: "Imagine having five brothers" he laughed "This looks like Jan van Riebeeck's great granddaughter" they laughed.

Lefa: "Watch it" he warned with a smile.

Bubele: "I think I should get that shotgun now" he joked.

Lefa: "Thought that's my duty"

Bubele: "Then boys will think twice if we are all armed"

Lefa: "Great thinking"

Ntombi: "Can I please just enjoy

my new-born without being reminded of the fact that she'll grow to be a teenager in no time like other people I know" she looked at her boys. Bukhosi sent Bandile a picture and Bandile sat up on his bed looking at the adorable little face smiling. He felt he had to go home as soon as he could just to hold his baby sister. Bukhosi felt a bit emotional but he was happy that his sister came into the world healthy.

Vakele: "Finally Tamkhulu gets to hold you after waiting patiently for his turn" he said after Vakele

gave baby Kganya to him "This is indeed a natural beauty" he laughed "Oh blessings to you my dear granddaughter" he kissed her forehead "Your Sesotho side is clearly strong" everyone laughed. The baby started to be a bit fussy.

Bonolo: "She must be hungry" she looked at Ntombi. The nurse came in saying that visiting hours were over. Ntombi was just glad to have her baby in her arms again after she was passed on from family member to family member. Makhulu: "Let me take a picture of our little baby for Tamkhulu. I

can't believe I'll be looking at this face every day" she said in a baby talk tone.

Bonolo: "And I'm just plain jealous"
Makhulu laughed.

Vakele: "Don't say you're moving in with Lefa" he looked at his wife
"Ntombam, we thank you for the addition to the Debeza clan. She is adorable and yes, she'll unfortunately be spoiled rotten but we'll try to have boundaries"

Bonolo: "No, don't count me in that. I can't contain myself as is. Oh but why do we have to go so quickly?" she took Kganya again
"You are the spitting image of my

mother" she ran her finger over the baby's cheek before giving those bubble cheeks a kiss.

Makhulu: "Let me go and clean that house again. I don't want her coming home to a dusty house. Did they say how long you'll stay?"

Ntombi: "I think a day or two"
Makhulu nodded.

Makhulu: "I'm so proud of you" she hugged Ntombikayise. The family each said their goodbyes and Ntombi gave breastfeeding a go and the baby latched with ease.

Ntombi: "This is amazing" she looked at Lefa "Like baby, we

gave life to this adorable little girl" she smiled.

Lefa: "I love how content you look" he whispered.

Ntombi: "I am. Her brothers might really call her Jan van Riebeeck though" Lefa laughed out as he could already imagine it.

Lefa: "I don't want to leave you" he said in a sulking tone "I don't see why you must be kept here. You're both healthy"

Ntombi: "Standard procedure, I guess. I'm sure by end of the day tomorrow we'll be discharged. For now go and rest because after feeding her I'll get some much

needed rest too. I'm surprised you didn't faint in the delivery room" they both laughed.

Lefa: "I did feel a bit light headed but I remembered that you were the one who was doing the most so I had to pull myself together. It was beautiful though, creepy yet beautiful. Glad you could deliver naturally"

Ntombi: "Me too" they kissed.

Lefa: "Let me get going. I'll come back after a few hours with some snacks for you"

Ntombi: "Please bring me my other gown. That one is itchy"

Lefa nodded "Say bye bye, Tata"

she said in a giddily tone.

Lefa: "See you later, my angel" he kissed her forehead "Be sweet because I don't want to hear mommy telling me how naughty you were. I'm not ready to discipline you yet" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "She's got you wrapped around her little finger already. Shame on you, comrade for giving in so quickly" she joked and they both laughed.

Lefa: "I'm sorry, comrade" he kissed his wife "I love you so much" he looked at her for a long while before kissing her again "I love you too" he whispered to

Kganya.

Ntombi: "We love you too. Go rest"

Lefa: "I'm so excited rest is not an option right now. Later, gorgeous mommy" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Later, sthandwa sam. We're counting the hours already"

Lefa: "I watched a documentary on baby switching. I know my baby and it had better be her when I come back"

Nurse: "Don't worry, sir. We have never had a case of such here."

she couldn't help but laugh.

Lefa: "Later" Ntombi got a last kiss before she watched him

leave. She couldn't explain the bond

she felt with her baby as she breastfed her. She felt she was made for it and felt lucky to be the one who could stay with the newborn all the time. She was tired and her body made it clear to her that she had just undergone hard labour but she'd do it all over again if she needed to. 

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Mrs E: "I just have to sort out the issue with my treatment"

Jester: "I sorted that out for you already. You'll be well supplied all year long"

Mrs E: "I'm sorry, Luyolo. Sorry that you met me broken when we were young and found me more broken after our reunion" she looked down. She wasn't one to show vulnerability because she felt the world didn't deserve that side of her. Jester kissed her forehead.

Jester: "I don't see any brokenness. I see a queen with life experiences. A woman who is made of everything this world couldn't take from her"

Mrs E: "And it took a lot" she let out a laugh before wiping the tears that escaped.

Jester: "Then let us live our lives freely. A lot got taken from both of us but we are here. I'm going to show you such a love that it's going to make you nauseous" Mrs E laughed.

Mrs E: "The last time you showed me love that made me nauseous was when you impregnated me" they both laughed "I love you so much" she added. He hugged her for a long while and Liyema appeared again wearing his jacket. The others arrived worried sick only to find they were on their way to a wedding. Mahlubandile refuses to be seen in

pictures wearing what she wore but fortunately she and Mrs E were about the same size so she quickly raided her mom's wardrobe and Jester did the same thing with his father in search for a jacket. Luckily he was wearing a jean and not sweatpants as his mother assumed. They drove to the reverends offices for their appointment and made their union official. It was beautiful to watch them because their love was contagious.

Lungi: "Hayi no, stop it!" he shouted when his parent's kissed a moment too long for their liking.

Mrs E laughed in her soft voice.

Hlubi: "I can't believe that you were going to keep this from us" they stood to go give congratulatory hugs.

Liyema: "Had it not been for me you two wouldn't have known. You guys owe me big time"

Lungi: "Oh boy" he shook his head "Parents, congratulations. May you not have another child" he joked and everyone laughed.

Jester: "Where would a child fit in with all the traveling that we are planning?"

Liyema: "Oh nice" he raised his brows. "So can we take you newly

weds out for lunch at some upmarket fancy place?"

Mrs E: "Of course you may" she smiled.

Hlubi: "We didn't even get a chance to get gifts"

Photographer: "Can the family please give me their best smiles?". They all stood in position for a snap. Jester went to show the siblings their travelling vehicle

It was more than just an average caravan because it was fitted with everything that a household would.

Hlubi: "A house on wheels" she

looked around "Yanda and I will definitely borrow this one" she looked at them.

Mrs E: "R10 000 a day" Hlubi's eyes widened "What? I should be able to make money from a thing that costed us so much to get"

Liyema: "Capitalists" he shook his head. They went to the fancy place that Liyema spoke of afterwards and toasted to the new beginnings. Mrs E kept looking at her husband and indeed late was better than never because she could never let him out of her heart and mind over the years. She felt content and

was glad that she was living in the moment with someone she wanted to spend every moment with.

Ntombi had been very busy that day doing anything that would take the boredom away. She was glad that Lefa was at work because he'd have wanted her to sit with her feet up all day. The days were getting hotter and being pregnant became more and more a struggle on her body. She journaled her pregnancy journey with her daughter as she did with her sons and while she sat

comparing them she felt blessed to have had a smooth journey with her daughter. Makhulu was not far from Ntombikayise because she was certain that the baby would come any day so Ntombi was not to be left by herself. As the day slowly went by she started to feel some lite cramping but she thought blbothing of it as she'd had a couple during her last trimester and a few Braxton Hicks too. The men returned from their daily work at the same time as Lefa went to pick Tamkhulu up from the counciling sessions he had

with young men at church..

Lefa: "How are you feeling?"

Ntombi: "Big and many other things I'd rather not say out loud" she rested her head on his forehead "Is everything fine at the office?" she tilted her head to face him.

Lefa: "Perfect, sthandwa sam" he kissed her forehead. Tamkhulu went to open the door after a short knock and Bonolo and Vakele walked in.

Bonolo: "Granny's little girl" she rubbed Ntombi's belly "Hey, baby" she kissed Ntombi's cheek.

Ntombi: "Hi, Mme" she smiled.

"I've missed you" she looked at her mother in law.

Bonolo: "I've missed you too" she sat "If I could drive, I'd take the bakkie but dololo" they all laughed

Tamkhulu: "They've been speaking Sesotho lately" Bonolo looked impressed "well Lefa has, Ntombi has been mumbling things" they all laughed.

Ntombi: "Tata though. I just want my daughter to be good with languages" Lefa came from Hlompho room to go call him.

Hlompho jumped on his grandfather first.

Vakele: "This one thinks I can't break" he said while laughing
"How are the exams going?" he asked Hlompfo.

Hlompfo: "I think I should be in a higher class. Everything is just too easy" the elders laughed.

Bonolo threw a cushion at Hlompfo.

Bonolo: "Where is my hug?" she asked and he smiled before he went to throw himself on her with a hug too "Goodness, just yesterday I could handle this but now I can't" she thought out loud while hugging him.

Ntombi: "Ah" her jaw clenched.

Lefa: "Baby?"

Ntombi: "I'm fine. It's been happening but I don't think the baby is coming. Just my body preparing more for delivery"

Vakele: "Hey but a woman's body deserves praise" Tamkhulu nodded in agreement.

Makhulu: "One of the most sacred things in life is the female body"

Tamkhulu: "Nto-Nto, are you sure you are fine?" Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "I am hungry though so can we go eat"

Lefa: "Stay on the couch I'll dish up for you and bring it"

Ntombi: "And listen to everyone

have a great conversation around the dining table? No thank you, myenam" she put her feet on the floor.

Makhulu: "we'll all come and sit here with you them since you have fear of missing out" Ntombi laughed before agreeing. Dinner was served and Ntombi really loved being in her in laws company. With the quads busy at work and varsity they couldn't come often during the week but Hlompho was sleeping over on weekends if he's not with his mother. The Gwalas went home after a great night with family. Hazel had not called

to apologize because she still didn't see her faults but she was keeping in touch with her son.

Ntombi started to feel pain again during the wee hours of the morning but she was certain that it was Braxton Hicks as they made her go to hospital several times only to find it was not the day. She tried to use the pregnancy pillow to get comfortable but it didn't.

Ntombi: "Lefa" she shook him.

"Lefa Gwala" she raised her voice.

Lefa: "No, it's not my turn to feed the baby" he mumbled and Ntombi couldn't help but laugh softly.

Clearly he was dreaming of the baby shifts he'll deny his way out of soon. Another contraction hit hard and Ntombi had to take a few seconds to just let it pass. Ntombi: "Lefa, I think I'm in labour" she shook him harder when the pain subsided. He had a drowsy second but once her words marinated in his mind he jumped up quickly even giving Ntombikayise a fright "And then?" she asked while trying to do breathing exercises.

Lefa: "I thought you said the baby is coming"

Ntombi: "Baby, please don't panic"

because you'll make me panic. I don't want to be told about my blood pressure being too high for a natural birth. Please go and wake Makhulu up" she said calmly though she felt like giving birth there and then. Lefa did a few paces around the room leaving Ntombi frustrated but he finally remembered what she said. She heard about men panicking but she never imagined her husband to be one of those. Makhulu was in the room soon enough giving Ntombikayise the calm that she needed while they got ready to go to the hospital. Ntombi wanted a

home birth but get doctor said it was risky so she went to the hospital with a somewhat sad heart but at least the doctor gave the green light for a natural birth. Once everyone was dressed Lefa drove with Makhulu and Ntombi to the hospital.

Tamkhulu remained so he'd look after Lefa. They didn't want to wake him up to go to hospital with because Makhulu said Ntombi might be in labour for hours before the baby could come. Indeed Ntombi was in labour for hours on end. Bonolo and Vakele rushed to the hospital after the

doctor confirmed that she was in labour. Lefa watched as Ntombi leaned over the handle of her bed swaying left and right slowly and he could only imagine the pain she was in.

Lefa: "Do you need any water?" he asked trying to help.

Ntombi: "Ahhhh" she said before trying to breath through gritted teeth.

Lefa: "When will this end? It's been hours now" he held her belly gently from behind and ended up swaying with her without even realising.

Ntombi: "I'm just glad they

haven't spoken about emergency c-section" the swaying was her way of trying to lessen the pain. She didn't know why Lefa was doing it and under normal circumstances she'd have had a good laugh but that was not the time because all she wanted was everything to be over with. She listened to him plead with the baby to come out already and appreciated his efforts to help but the baby was going to come when she was ready and she was clearly not going to listen to anyone tell her when that should be. Makhulu called the boys and

they too went to the hospital and waited for the new arrival with great excitement. Ntombi loved that her partner was next to her all the way because she didn't have that with the boys since she had no partner. She loved how he'd ask her to rate her pain from 1-10 so he'd understand just how severe the contradictions were. She loved how he would kiss her forehead and continue to plead with his child to come so mommy can stop feeling so much pain. The sun started to come up and clearly baby Gwala had no intentions of being born while it

was dark. As soon as the first sun rays penetrated the windows Ntombi was told it was time. She watched several natural birth videos from women who filmed theirs so she'd get an idea on what to expect but what she didn't expect was for to push as much as she did. With the encouragement from Lefa and the medical staff around she was able to push baby Gwala out and it left her exhausted.

Doc: "It's a boy" Lefa and Ntombi looked at each other confused "I'm kidding it's a girl" he laughed and so did they. He was one to

joke a lot so they were not surprised by that at all. Lefa was asked if he wanted to cut the cord and he nodded with excitement. He looked at his baby to make sure it was the daughter they were expecting.

Lefa: "Damn doc, I was just thinking about all the girly clothes we bought. Why isn't she crying?"

Doc: "Babies aren't the same. She's perfectly fine though. I forseeable stubbornness here" finally the baby let out a little cry but not much.

Lefa: "Clearly she doesn't like that much" he laughed

"Ngqangqa" he looked at Ntombi

"Thank you so much" he kissed her.

Ntombi: "Can I hold her please?"

The doctor only needed a moment but he wrapped the baby up and gave her to her mother. Ntombi's tears fell on the baby's arm

because she was just so happy to finally meet the princess "I've wanted this for such a long time.

This peace of knowing there won't be complication involving her. Like, baby she's mine" she wiped her tears "I can

breastfeed her too" she smiled and Lefa kissed her. He looked at

the little person fresh into the world and he knew life would not be the same ever again but in a great way.

Lefa: "I think we should name her Kganya" he suggested and Ntombi looked at her daughter.

Ntombi: "Buhlebendalo" she looked at Lefa smiling and he kissed her.

Lefa: "Kganya Buhlebendalo Gwala" he looked at her. She opened one of her eyes and she had her father's eyes. Lefa's smile became louder "Pity your mother already took the name Ntombikayise, my angel" he whispered "Look at you looking like

daddy" he added proudly.

Ntombi: "No she doesn't look like anyone yet. She just has your eyes so don't even" she laughed softly. She was tired but the joy was more than the exhaustion.

Lefa: "Jealous much?"

Ntombi: "Haha" she said sarcastically before kissing her daughter's forehead "She's so warm" he smiled. After hours of labour Ntombi finally held their bundle in her arms. Lefa was certain she looked like him. The family was allowed to briefly see mom and baby but only for a short while. Bonolo let out a little

scream of excitement when she saw her granddaughter.

Lefa: "Meet Kganya Buhlebendalo Gwala" he said proudly.

Makhulu: "Oh this is definitely Lefa's copy. She looks like a white baby" everyone laughed.

Ntombi: "Haa, Ma" she raised a brow.

Bonolo: "She's everything her grandmother imagined her to be and more. Oh my goodness Nkono is going to spoil you rotten"

Ntombi raised a brow looking at Lefa.

Makhulu: "And once Ntombikayise goes back to work we'll look after

her not some nanny or daycare"
Bonolo gave Makhulu the baby.
Banele: "She's the last born. Has
overprotective men around her
and will be looked after by her
grandmothers. Forget it, mom you
lost the battle. She'll be raised
spoiled" Ntombikayise sulked.

Bukhosi: "Imagine having five
brothers" he laughed "This looks
like Jan van Riebeeck's great
granddaughter" they laughed.

Lefa: "Watch it" he warned with
a smile.

Bubele: "I think I should get
that shotgun now" he joked.

Lefa: "Thought that's my duty"

Bubele: "Then boys will think twice if we are all armed"

Lefa: "Great thinking"

Ntombi: "Can I please just enjoy my newborn without being reminded of the fact that she'll grow to be a teenager in no time like other people I know" she looked at her boys. Bukhosi sent Bandile a picture and Bandile sat up on his bed looking at the adorable little face smiling. He felt he had to go home as soon as he could just to hold his baby sister. Bukhosi felt a bit emotional but he was happy that his sister came into the world

healthy.

Vakele: "Finally Tamkhulu gets to hold you after waiting patiently for his turn" he said after Vakele gave baby Kganya to him "This is indeed a natural beauty" he laughed "Oh blessings to you my dear granddaughter" he kissed her forehead "Your Sesotho side is clearly strong" everyone laughed. The baby started to be a bit fussy.

Bonolo: "She must be hungry" she looked at Ntombi. The nurse came in saying that visiting hours were over. Ntombi was just glad to have her baby in her arms again

after she was passed on from family member to family member. Makhulu: "Let me take a picture of our little baby for Tamkhulu. I can't believe I'll be looking at this face everyday" she said in a baby talk tone.

Bonolo: "And I'm just plain jealous" Makhulu laughed.

Vakele: "Don't say you're moving I. with Lefa" he looked at his wife "Ntombam, we thank you for the addition to the Debeza clan. She is adorable and yes, she'll unfortunately be spoiled rotten but we'll try to have boundaries"

Bonolo: "No, don't count me in

that. I can't contain myself as is. Oh but why do we have to go so quickly?" she took Kganya again "You are the spitting image of my mother" she ran her finger over the baby's cheek before giving those bubble cheeks a kiss.

Makhulu: "Let me go and clean that house again. I don't want her coming home to a dusty house. Did they say how long you'll stay?"

Ntombi: "I think a day or two"
Makhulu nodded.

Makhulu: "I'm so proud of you"
she hugged Ntombikayise. The family each said their goodbyes and Ntombi gave breastfeeding a

go and the baby latched with ease.

Ntombi: "This is amazing" she looked at Lefa "Like baby, we gave life to this adorable little girl" she smiled.

Lefa: "I love how content you look" he whispered.

Ntombi: "I am. Her brothers might really call her Jan van Riebeeck though" Lefa laughed out as he could already imagine it.

Lefa: "I don't want to leave you" he said in a sulking tone "I don't see why you must be kept here. You're both healthy"

Ntombi: "Standard procedure I

guess. I'm sure by end of the day tomorrow we'll be discharged. For now go and rest because after feeding her I'll get some much needed rest too. I'm surprised you didn't faint in the delivery room" they both laughed.

Lefa: "I did feel a bit light handed but I remembered that you were the one who was doing the most so I had to pull myself together. It was beautiful though, creepy yet beautiful. Glad you could deliver naturally"

Ntombi: "Me too" they kissed.

Lefa: "Let me get going. I'll come back after a few hours with some

snacks for you"

Ntombi: "Please bring me my other gown. That one is itchy"

Lefa nodded "Say bye bye, Tata" she said in a giddily tone.

Lefa: "See you later, my angel" he kissed her forehead "Be sweet because I don't want to hear mommy telling me how naughty you were. I'm not ready to discipline you yet" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "She's got you wrapped around her little finger already. Shame on you, comrade for giving in so quickly" she joked and they both laughed.

Lefa: "I'm sorry, comrade" he

kissed his wife "I love you so much" he looked at her for a long while before kissing her again "I love you too" he whispered to Kganya.

Ntombi: "We love you too. Go rest"

Lefa: "I'm so excited rest is not an option right now. Later, gorgeous mommy" he smiled.

Ntombi: "Later, sthandwa sam. We're counting the hours already"

Lefa: "I watched a documentary on baby switching. I know my baby and it had better be her when I come back"

Nurse: "Don't worry, sir. We have never had a case of such here."

she couldn't help but laugh.
Lefa: "Later" Ntombi got a last kiss before she watched him leave. She couldn't explain the bond she felt with her baby as she breastfed her. She felt she was made for it and felt lucky to be the one who could stay with the newborn all the time. She was tired and her body made it clear to her that she had just undergone hard labour but she'd do it all over again if she needed to. ❤️

S2-INSERT 92 (Not Edited)
Makhulu was strict about

outsiders seeing the baby too early which meant that Ntombi's friends had to wait days before they could come see Kganya but they respected that it was a Gwala baby and allow the family to do as they felt was right for their little one. They all stood waiting at the door with great excitement after knocking.

Lefa: "Ladies" he said in greeting "You all look like you are about to burst with excitement" he laughed and they did too before walking inside.

Hlubi: "Hi, girls" she said in a bragging tone "It's aunty

benefits" she teased before laughing. The ladies all walked towards the lounge "Did you guys wash your hands? Did you cleanse all your bad energy before coming by taking an Epson salt bath?" she joked and laughed.

Ntombi: "Hi, guys" she said walking from her bedroom. She hugged all of them. Mahlubandile gave Yandi the baby and Yandi felt broody all over again though she and Babini finally agreed they were done having kids.

Yandi: "Now this is a Ntombikayise" she looked at Lefa who looked rather pleased with

himself.

Ntombi: "Don't stroke his already big ego more" she raised a brow looking at her husband.

Lefa: "Let me go get what you said you needed. I might be a while because I first want to go to the bank"

Ntombi: "Okay, baby" he kissed her lips "Lefa please look at the list, baby. I know you and trying to memorize then throwing the list away coming with only two of the things that were on it" she said quietly and they both laughed. Lefa took the list out of his pocket and Ntombi smiled and

nodded.

Lefa: "I don't feel like I'm in charge of my mind anymore. I'm now just constantly thinking about what I can do to make things easier for you and I know shopping is one way so I won't mess up, baby" he promised "Go stop your friends...they are fighting over our daughter" they looked at the group. Othu had her arms out but Yandi was just not handing the baby over. "See you" he kissed her forehead, took his wallet and keys before rushing out the door. It was a busy day in town because many had gotten

paid so he knew he'd stand in a long line at the bank.

Ntombi: "Would you ladies like anything to eat or drink?"

Othu: "Ntombi, please tell Yandi not to hoard the baby" she shook her head.

Yandi: "But I've just held her" she sulked. Ntombi felt like they were little girls playing house.

Ntombi: "You ladies want to sort that out quick. It's almost time for her feed and she does not play when it comes to that. For such a little person she can cry". She watched Yandi finally give Kganya to Othu. Othu melting just as

Yandi did.

Hlubi: "Do you mind if I go get the drinks?" she asked Ntombi. She could see and knew how exhausted Ntombi was.

Ntombi: "Thank you so much, Best. I'd appreciate that very much". Hlubi smiled before going to the kitchen. Ntombi went to sit down and watched the ladies sit too.

Mandla: "Let me make conversation while I wait my turn" she looked over at Othu before laughing "How are you feeling?" she asked Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Excitingly exhausted"

they all laughed.

Poppy: "How the coochie?" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Makhulu had some old people remedies to quicken the healing so she's great thanks" she laughed shyly.

Zuko: "You guys really need to pop dem babies now because we still have a road trip on our bucket list" the others laughed.

Lucia: "Greg finally accepted that we do not need more. With my daughter and his sons we are cool"

Alu: "One can't help but get broody when looking at a new person though" she said with a

smile when Othu gave her Kganya.

Othu: "She's adorable, friend. She actually does look like you. Those eyes are what make people think she looks like daddy"

Ntombi: "Right?" she smiled.

Hlubi: "Don't fool our friend, Othunyiweyo. Nothing on that face says Ntombi" Ntombi waited until she put the tray of juice down before throwing a cushion at her.

Yandi: "I can actually feel how at peace you are, friend" she smiled looking at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "Friend, knowing that I

didn't sign any contract to hand her over to someone is what gives me this peace. Also I've got an amazing husband" she smiled.

Othu: "You deserve this. I can't believe that when you and I met you were in a dark place. I feel blessed to be here to see this" she pointed at Ntombi from head to toe before standing to hug her.

Hlubi: "I was telling her the exact same thing". Makhulu appeared and the ladies sang a greeting.

Zuko: "Makhulu, Alu is holding the baby but she did not wash her hands" they all laughed softly.

Makhulu: "Alunamda" she jokingly

pointed while laughing.

Alu: "I was the one who told them to wash their hands Makhulu so you know that it's not true" she smiled and have Zuko baby Kganya.

Makhulu: "Do you children not want anything to eat? I'm about to make umfino"

Othu: "Yes..." she raised her hand "I'm hungry for it, Makhulu" she added.

Makhulu: "Then come help me"

Othu: "Haaa, Makhulu. What will Kganya say if I leave her but I've come to visit her?"

Makhulu: "we'll ask her when she

finally has speech" she said sarcastically "Come, Othunyiweyo" she led the way. Othu shook her shoulders sulking like a child. .

Ntombi: "One for the team, friend" she held up a fist. Othu stood and went to the kitchen.

They had a great conversation as always and through Othu was in the kitchen her ears were not, so she'd comment where she wanted.

Kganya finally made it to her mother because it was feeding time. It was Ntombi's favourite time because no one but her had means to feed the baby as of yet which meant they could bond

without interruptions.

Poppy: "Don't you just crave a good dirty drink?" Ntombi brushed her baby's cheeks.

Ntombi: "I plan on breastfeeding for a year so I have to get used to not having any"

Poppy: "What?" A year?" she expressed shock and Ntombikayise laughed.

Mandla: "I confess to breastfeeding my first born until three years" Poppy clapped her hands as she couldn't believe her ears.

Ntombi: "I heard that it helps mothers lose some of the baby

weight so I'm all for that". They had a great time and left after Makhulu and Othu served them lunch. Lefa was in the same block the quads lived in, so he decided to surprise them with a visit.

Hlomphe was also there having the time of his life because he never had to be told "no" by his brothers. Bubele opened the door and the first thing that Lefa noticed was the mess behind him. Lefa: "I know that this is a boys only place but damn" he looked around disgusted.

Bubele: "You and my dad like popping in unannounced to come

and judge how we live" Lefa laughed before giving him a proper handshake. He found the other boys on the couch eating snacks while watching an action movie.

Hlomphe: "I'm sure the baby is sleeping as always" he shook his head.

Lefa: "She is supposed to" he took a sock off the couch before sitting down "I was in the area so thought I'd drop by. Are you all good?" he signed and spoke out loud.

Bukhosi: "You mean you ran away from baby cries?" they all laughed.

Lefa: "No, just because my other kids are out of sight it doesn't mean they have to be out of mind" he sat back for more comfortable "I will admit to feeling tired through". Banele appeared with a girl by his side looking awkward when he saw Lefa.

Girl: "Hello, Tata" she said looking down "I'll see you" she said quickly before rushing out.

Banele: "I'll call you!" he shouted but instead of getting a reply the door shut loudly.

Lefa: "I'm sure she now thinks you lied when you said you only live

here with your brothers" he laughed "whatever you guys do, just don't get a girl pregnant because babies might be cute and all but they are work" he spoke quickly and only remembered by the look everyone gave Bukhosi that he must have struck a chord "I'm sorry"

Bukhosi: "No, no" he laughed softly "It doesn't mean you can't talk about babies around me because of what happened, Bhut Lefa" he looked down "I was actually planning on visiting mom and Buhle later on too. Hlompho says she's boring because she

sleeps at night and during the day" Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "He is fortunate enough to not hear her crying at night" he looked at Hlompho who was playing a game on Bukhosi's phone. There was a brief knock before the door opened. Liyema let himself in holding three large boxes of pizza.

Liyema: "Uhm... I didn't know that you guys had company" he stood awkwardly by the door.

Lefa: "It's alright" he stood "I just came to check on them but I'm on my way"

Bubele: "No man" he stood looking

at his fathers "There is absolutely no reason why we can't all hang out" he added.

Hlomphe: "Are you leaving already?" he asked after tapping Lefa on the leg.

Bubele: "See now you are making the child cry" he tried to use emotional blackmail.

Banele: "Plus it looks like dad got enough pizza for six and a half men" they laughed.

Lefa: "Okay I'll stay" he sat back down.

Liyema: "My father said a man make his presence known by a firm handshake" he put the boxes

on the table and Bubele opened it to get a whiff of the pizza.

Liyema and Lefa exchanged a firm handshake "How's the wife and new baby?" he sat.

Lefa: "Healthy and happy. How's business going?"

Liyema: "Better each day" he nodded.

Bukhosi: "We're not going to get out plates. Only ladies eat dish out pizza"

Liyema: "You mean you've got no clean dishes" he shook his head.

Liyema felt a Tao on his hand and looked at Hlompho. He showed Liyema the phone's screen with a

question reading "What do I call you?".

Lefa: "What does it say?" Liyema told Lefa. Liyema took the phone from Hlompho. "How about uncle?" he typed before showing Hlompho. Hlompho smiled and nodded.

Hlompho: "Can I come visit you the next time my brothers do, uncle?" he gave the phone to Liyema.

Liyema: "Only if your parents agree" he gave Hlompho the phone.

Bubele: "What's with the secrecy?" Liyema laughed. The pizza got eaten from the box and

they also had a good afternoon.

Mr Mbuzo had been visiting his wife more frequently. He'd take books for her to read and would listen to her telling him what she was doing. He called Yanda to his house hoping that he could convince his son to forgive his mother.

Yanda: "It will not be a heartfelt forgiveness if I force myself to do it, Tata" he said after figuring out where the conversation was going.

Mr Mbuzo: "I have been visiting her, Nyana. She has changed

indeed"

Yanda: "Is she dying?"

Mr Mbuzo: "No, why would you think like that?"

Yanda: "I just don't see how you could want to continue being married to a woman who has killed your child. How do you think Daluxolo will feel if he has to see Mama at family gatherings? Just because you want to play husband should she get released it doesn't mean we have to like it". Mr

Mbuzo just looked at Yanda for a long while "If only you knew the truth" he thought to himself.

Mr Mbuzo: "What's the use of

being a believer yet we can't forgive others? Unlike you Dali has gone to see her at least"

Yanda: "That's on him". Yandiswa came in holding a white envelope in her hand and gave it to her father. Mr Mbuzo put on his reading glasses and scanned the envelope "I need to get going. I've got work to do" he stood.

Yandiswa: "Bhuti please wait" she blocked his way.

Yandi: "Please don't tell me that you're going to tell me to go see Mama as well" he sounded annoyed.

Yandi: "No it's something else" she

smiled "Something good". Yanda heard his father say their clan names before he stood to dance. Yandiswa: "I'm getting married" she said excitedly.

Yanda: "To what? Your bed?"

Yandiswa raised a brow "You hardly leave the house, Yandiswa"

Mr Mbuzo: "It is Xolani" Mr

Mbuzo said "He is from church. He is also the one who got her a

permanent job" he told Yanda

"They thought I didn't know but I could see they were more than friends"

Yandiswa: "He is a really nice man, Bhuti. He also loves my son like

it's his own. I'm happy. For the first time since the drama with Mama I'm actually happy" Yanda looked at her smiling.

Yanda: "Congratulations then my dear little sister" they hugged "I have to meet this Xolani through"

Mr Mbuzo: "Good young man.

Lives for God that one. I would not be surprised if your sister becomes a pastor's wife soon"

Yandiswa laughed.

Yandiswa: "Never" she clapped once "So I have your blessings, Tata?"

Mr Mbuzo: "Anything that brings you children joy has my blessings.

I will have to sit down with Xolani but if you are happy I am too" they hugged "I must tell your mother the good news. She will be so happy to hear that one of her daughters are getting married. I'll go tell her tomorrow" he smiled.

Yanda: "Let me get going. I love you" he hugged his sister "Tata, I'll come by with Lisa and Vuyo tomorrow. What time do you go to prison?" Mr Mbuzo smiled.

Mr Mbuzo: "Do you want to go with?"

Yanda: "I want to know if you will be here when we visit"

Mr Mbuzo: "Oh...I should be home by the afternoon" Yanda nodded. He was not ready to talk about forgiving his mother because he was not there yet. He was glad that his father was at peace though. When Xolani told Yandiswa that he dreamt that she would be his wife she at first laughed at him but they had been dating secretly for a couple of months because Yandiswa didn't want to get into marriage with someone she didn't know well. It was not love at first sight for her as it was for him, but she grew to love him. When she went to church it

was to try and heal from her mother's drama. The last thing that she expected was marriage, but she was not complaining at all.

When Lefa arrived home he found Ntombikayise laying on their bed with their daughter on her chest. He just stood to look at them while smiling before carefully getting onto the bed.

Ntombi: "Hi, did you come back with Hlompho? He needs to come pack for his trip to Vredenburg"

Lefa: "I was hoping not to wake you up" he got comfortable next to her "That one will most

probably postpone because he is having the time of his life there. He's even invited himself to Liyema's place" Ntombi laughed softly "Your brother is such a people's person" he whispered to Kganya "She opened her eyes and looked at him leaving him smiling "We are thirteen days today" Lefa added and Ntombikayise laughed. Ntombi: "You're actually counting?" he nodded "Wanna hold her a bit" he gently took his daughter and Ntombi stood to go to the bathroom.

Lefa: "Tata can't wait to have imaginary tea with you perhaps

even with an imaginary friend" he put her on the bed. Makhulu said they shouldn't spoil her by always holding her in their arms but she was the one who held her most.

There was a soft knock on the door and Ntombi went to open because she was closer to the door. Bonolo was standing by the door.

Bonolo: "Hello" Ntombi let her mother in law into their room "I actually came to ask if you two do not need some sleep? I can take her" the couple laughed. "We are growing" she walked over to the bed smiling.

Lefa: "Mme, you haven't greeted me" he reminded her.

Bonolo: "What's with the jealousy, Lefa?" she joked and they laughed

Lefa: "Okay, take your granddaughter so I can spend some time with my beautiful wife" Bonolo didn't need to be told twice.

Ntombi: "I swear she has felt a lot of different arms today yet Makhulu doesn't agree to the newborn shoot" she shook her head "I'll wait another week".

Bonolo: "I will see you two now now. Try to get some rest so you'll be fresh for the night shift" she

walked out.

Ntombi: "I'm going to take advantage of this moment and go run myself a nice cool bath" she said heading back to the bathroom. The two of them decided to soak together. Ntombi closed her eyes smiling when she his lips against her neck.

Ntombi: "Thanks to our great support system we can have a moment of privacy alone"

Lefa: "Don't encourage it, baby. Next thing Mme will think we are inviting her to stay" Ntombi laughed softly.

Ntombi: "At least we know that

we can have our date nights
when I'm ready"

Lefa: "How are you feeling?" he
started to massage her
shoulders.

Ntombi: "Grateful" she said
"That you never gave up in trying
to find me after we met" she
titled her head to look at him.

Lefa: "I don't think I ever told
you this but the day before we
met I was just disgusted with
love" Ntombi laughed "Not love
itself but my "bad luck" when it
came to it not knowing that the
next day that luck would change"

Ntombi: "That's why one must

never give up on what they desire. I'm glad that the universe conspired for us to meet. I wonder where those two guys who tried to rob me are now?"

Lefa laughed.

Lefa: "I do not know and do not care" he said "I just look forward to growing old with you and having grandchildren someday"

Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "How was Bukhosi when you were there?"

Lefa: "I think he has accepted that he can't change anything. I do think he misses the girlfriend though because she broke his

trust" Ntombi nodded "They were all actually happy to have Liyema and under the same roof sharing a meal with them"

Ntombi: "You don't have to do that, sthandwa sam. I know Liyema can be unpleasant at times"

Lefa: "He was actually cool. So much that I gave Hlompho permission to go sleep over at his place the next time the quads go. He seems like a changed man"

Ntombi: "Or maybe the old Liyema just returned. I'm glad because the boys said even their relationship with him is good. I

think we're winning at this blended family thing. We're on good terms with Charles and Mimi too" she smiled. She leaned backwards against his chest and felt him hold one of her breasts. "Don't squeeze". Lefa did exactly what he was told not to and milk leaked making them both laugh. "I can't believe you're playing with your daughter's food" she covered them with her hands "So rude" they laughed.

Lefa: "I'm sorry. I just couldn't resist it and luckily there's more from where it came from. "Please let's not lose this, Siba. Just

because we can't have sex yet, it doesn't mean that we can't steal such moments" he kissed her and Ntombi nodded.

Ntombi: "It's easy because I married a man who doesn't believe it's my job alone to take care of the baby. I appreciate you, Lefa Gwala" he held her tighter

Lefa: "I appreciate you too, Mrs Gwala. You're still the most beautiful and sexiest woman that I know by the way" he listened as she let out a blushing laugh.

Ntombi: "Keep them compliments coming. Best foreplay for when mommy and daddy can play adults

game" she kissed him "I don't want to get out through"

Lefa: "You should buy those things that sucks milks out so we can store it in the fridge. If Kganya wants milk she'll find it in the fridge as we all do when we're hungry" he joked and Ntombikayise laughed out.

Ntombi: "Yeah Mr "baby I think she's hungry" she reminded him "It's a breast pump by the way"

Lefa: "I love you" he whispered in her ear. Business was doing well and growing each month and the family was not perfect but they were happy and healthy.

Ntombi: "I love you too" she whispered back. They soaked for a while before stepping out of the tub. They fell asleep still in the towels wrapped around their bodies catching up on much needed rest. When Ntombi found her mother in law and grandmother cooking while her father in law and grandfather sat with their granddaughter she felt her heart get warm. They woke up just in time for Kganya's feed and Ntombi did that while having a great conversation with the older ladies. She wished that her mother was there with them but

she knew that Nobandla was there. She was not only a part of her but also a part of Kganya so she could always be there through them. Her heart was filled with nothing but gratitude. ❤️

S2-INSERT 93 - FINAL INSERT.

Times flies and Ntombi got reminded of just how much when she and Asakhe were busy helping Amahle to get a furry mini jacket to drape over her shoulders because the day of her matric dance was cold. Asakhe was going

from store to store with a panicked heart because none seemed to have what they were looking for. Ntombi sat with Amahle at the salon as she was getting her weave done. The salon was packed indicating that the day was indeed a special one to most of the teenagers that were there. When Amahle stood from the chair and flicked her long weave before putting it behind the ear Ntombikayise knew that she liked it.

Kganya: "Wow, Mahle" the sweet voice said over the loud hair dryers. It was her way of telling

Amahle how beautiful she looked. Ntombi knew because she got "wowed" by Kganya many times before "Let me touch" she held her hands out. She was holding a huge lollipop.

Amahle: "The lady said you can only touch later" she said to the three-and-a-half-year-old not wanting any parts of Kganya's sweet on her hair. Unlike with Abongile she liked being an older sister to Khanya and she couldn't understand why she had a favourite. She was sad that Abo died so young though making her regret not giving the toddler the

time of day mostly out of jealousy. Perhaps that's why she was a bit close to Kganya because she didn't want to repeat the same mistake.

Ntombi: "The makeup artist is going to meet you back home in a few hours. Now we must help your mother search for that shoulder wrap"

Amahle: "Thank you so much for everything, Mom. Especially for the designer dress from uncle Yanda" she hugged Ntombikayise smiling. It had been the first time that Amahle called Ntombikayise Mom since after

Asakhe told her to call her something other than mom.

Kganya: "Mommy, are you also Mahle's mommy?" the toddler asked while hopping next to her mother. Ntombi had no choice but to hold the small sticky hand. She indeed was a copy of her father and even Ntombi stopped denying it.

Ntombi: "Yes, I am" she smiled.

Kganya: "Wow that is nice" the way she said it made Ntombi laugh. Had she been an adult Ntombi would have thought it was sarcasm. Amahle was walking in such a way that her weave

would just sway and Ntombi laughed softly. Asakhe approached them out of breath. Asakhe: "I finally found it but not the red that you wanted, Amahle. I got the black" she took it out of the bag "I had to fight someone's mother to get this" Ntombi: "This will actually go well with her red dress" she brushed her fingers across the faux fur "It's warm too"

Amahle: "I wanted a red one, Mama but since it was the last one, I will wear the black"

Asakhe: "You better because you don't know what I had to go

through to get it" the way her hat was positioned compared to when they parted Ntombi believed she really snatch it from someone's mom. All mothers wanted their daughters to have the best that night. "Buhle, don't grow up okay" she looked down smiling.

Kganya: "Okay" she said before biting into her sweet.

Ntombi: "Ndalo, please don't bite the sweet, Nana" Buhlebendalo looked up at her mom with those big brown eyes before nodding.

She had many nicknames and she didn't mind any of them "Uhm we

are going to go home and change and meet up with you later"

Ntombi added with a smile.

Amahle: "Please be on time for pictures, aunt Ntombi" Ntombi nodded. They parted ways.

Kganya: "Mommy, are you Mahle's mommy and aunty?" she asked.

Her legs were too short and

Ntombi was in a rush to get home so she scooped her daughter in her arms.

Ntombi: "Mommy will explain it to you when you are older". Kganya was a talkative child and even visitors asked about her first when they felt the house lacked

her usual presence. Ntombi absolutely loved getting to know her as her personality was starting to show bit by bit. Kganya got into her car seat and they drove home. The business was doing so well that they hired more staff. Ntombi was just glad that she and Lefa still liked each other enough to spend time together at home and at work. Tamkhulu came playfully running to Kganya as soon as the door opened and Ntombi had to endure her daughter pulling her skirt to try get away from Tamkhulu. When Tamkhulu caught her

laughter filled the air. He made bubbles on her neck and Kganya was clearly in her own mini amusement park.

Kganya: "Ticklish, Khulu" she managed to say between all that laughter. Tamkhulu then tickled her neck with his finger and the laughter got worse so Ntombi just walked pass them shaking her hand while smiling.

Makhulu: "Did Amahle get everything that she needs?"

Ntombi: "The way she looked at the drape her mother got her I'm not so sure"

Makhulu: "Is it bad?" Ntombi

shook her head.

Ntombi: "It's just not what Amahle wants and you know she doesn't like getting the opposite of what she wants" Makhulu nodded "Are you and Tamkhulu going to go with Kganya and I later?"

Tamkhulu: "I wouldn't miss it for the world" he came into the lounge holding Kganya.

Ntombi: "She made your shirt dirty" she pointed at the stain.

Tamkhulu: "It's just a stain, Nto- Nto. That laughter was worth it all"

Kganya: "Mahle has hair that

makes like this" she swayed her head left and right flicking her imaginary hair and the adults laughed. Hlompho came back from school and he had clearly undergone puberty because it was clear that he was in his mid-teens. It had been an interesting few months for him because he decided to get the cochlear implants. It came with intense psychological evaluation and many other pre surgical tests and his parents have been supporting him like no other. The operation was done a few weeks ago and next week they'd put in the outer part

of the implant that will process sound. Kganya wiggled to let Tamkhulu put her down so she'd run to her brother. Hlomphe put his bag down to pick her up. They were people's people much like their father. He put her down so he'd communicate with her.

Hlomphe: "How are you?"

Kganya: "Good". Lefa has been consistent and dedicated in teaching Kganya how to sign since she was just a few months old. At first Ntombi feared it would delay Kganya's speech but it actually made it easier on them because Kganya was able to express her

needs through sign way before she even uttered word. Basic things such a milk so her parents knew that she wanted milk.

Ntombi took her hat off to her husband for the effort and since it was the only way Hlompfo communicated, Kganya caught on quickly after age two. "Mahle has a wave" she told her brother.

Hlompfo looked at Ntombi.

Ntombi: "She means a weave" she explained what she meant and Hlompfo finally understood.

Hlompfo: "Do you want a wave?"

Kganya shook her head quickly.

They went to the kitchen because

Hlomphe was starving. He liked her company. At first Kganya would call Hlomphe and got frustrated when he didn't look her direction, but she's learned that it was best to stand in front of him when speaking.

Hlomphe's relationship with his older brothers was much stronger now that he was in his teen years as they felt they could communicate more openly with him on certain matters. The day went on and Lefa also came home from work and was told he'd find his wife in the bedroom because she was getting ready to go see

Amahle off to her dance. No one got a more excited greeting than Lefa from his daughter. She could be in the other room but when she heard his voice, she'd first let out a scream before running to go greet him. She was a chubby toddler and Ntombi remembered herself being like her daughter too. Her father never got tired of picking her up in greeting so she imagined a man who trained martial arts like Lefa didn't either. Lefa went to check on Hlomphe in his room.

Lefa: "How was your day?" he asked after putting Kganya on

his shoulders.

Hlomphe: "Alright" he nodded "Are you going with mom to the dance?" Lefa shook his head.

"Wrestling later on then?"

Lefa: "Are you challenging me?"

Hlomphe laughed.

Hlomphe: "Why would I want to risk breaking an old man?" Lefa laughed out. "I mean on TV" Lefa nodded.

Kganya: "Daddy"

Lefa: "Mmmm?" he tried moving his eyes up to look up at her.

Kganya: "You have a nice head" she said while sizing it up with her small hands. Lefa laughed

before taking her down.

Lefa: "Well thank you" he smiled.

He spent time with his children before going to the bedroom.

What he didn't expect to find was Ntombi standing in front of the

mirror with one of her many matching undies collection. He

locked the door because they had

a toddler who didn't know what

boundaries were yet. Lefa went

to give her a bear hug and buried

his face in her neck to get a good

smell of her freshly cleaned skin

before kissing it.

Ntombi: "Hi" she turned to face

him with a smile. Ntombi could see

that he was already lost in her half nakedness as he brushed his thumbs across her cleavage before kissing both twins softly. Lefa: "Hello, sexy" he came up to her lips and kissed her lips.

Ntombi: "Baby, I'm going...Mmmm" she didn't know when he undid her bra nor when it landed on the floor but his hands gently kneading her bare breasts while placing soft kisses on her neck made her aware of the fact that the fabric was gone before she could even finish telling him that she'll be late. She knew there was no going back when he

lifted her up onto their dressing table. Her hands started to undress his bottom until there was no fabric keeping her from touching his very proud manhood. She pressed her hands on the wooden surface and lifted herself off it slightly allowing him to slip the lacy bottoms off with ease before she parted her legs again to give him access. His hands were exploring all sensitive spots between her warm thighs forcing Ntombi to not moan too loudly as her parents might be walking down the passage. She undid his shirt's buttons while they kissed

passionately. He didn't have enough patience to wait for the shirt to be completely removed as he positioned himself to enter her. The two joined as one. Because of the low design of the dressing table Ntombi not too comfortable so she stopped her husband. Lefa thought she was going to stop and get dressed which would have left him frustrated to say the least but instead she pushed him backwards slightly, got off, kissed him before bending over driving him insane as he took in the sight of her curves which she deliberately held up in the air. He

first let his hands slide over her round behind before he held the side of her thighs and kissed her spine from the bottom to the top leaving her with goosebumps. He didn't keep his lady waiting so he gently eased himself in her warmth and started to thrust slowly. Ntombi bit her bottom lip closing her eyes to let the pleasure wash over her. Both were drunk in pleasure not wanting the moment to end. Ntombi even forgot that she was time strapped.

Kganya: "Mommy...Daddy" her timing was off. They could hear

her fiddle with the handle and Ntombi was glad that Lefa locked the door. A soft knock followed "Mommy" she said louder. The parents knew that had something been wrong they'd have been getting a knock from the elders. It was just Kganya wanting attention as always. Ntombi was certain Lefa couldn't even hear their daughter on the other side of the door. There was silence on the other side. Because she knew it was not an emergency she decided to go back to the moment she was sharing with her lover. That moment was meant

to be steamy and short anyway. Lefa's thrusts intensified until they both reached the edge. Lefa kissed her back again trying to catch his breath.

Lefa: "I love you" Ntombi straightened after the moment calmed and turned to look at him before kissing him. He looked at her for a long while before smiling. Kganya: "Daddy" they both looked at the bottom of the door where they saw little fingers making them both laugh.

Lefa: "When will we ever have our privacy back?" he still had his shirt on so he just buttoned it

and put his pants on. Ntombi took her stuff to the bathroom to go get ready there. Lefa went to open when he was decent and found Kganya on her knees sticking her fingers through the opening at the bottom. She looked up and smiled when she saw her dad. "Those fingers will get stuck there and then you'll cry nonstop" he was ignored. She ran to their bed and got on it before jumping on it. Lefa just shook his head "Daddy, should teach you boundaries nhe?"

Kganya: "No" she shook her head before jumping on Lefa. He

laughed because he knew that she had no idea what boundaries were yet she gave an answer. She went back to jumping on the bed and would once again make him catch her. It went on for what seemed like forever to Lefa.

Lefa: "Okay that's enough" he laughed catching her the last time. She was out of breath but not tired enough to stop.

Kganya: "Why?"

Lefa: "Because daddy is tired" he looked at her and smiled when she laughed out showing her small teeth.

Kganya: "Why?"

Lefa: "Why am I tired?" Kganya nodded "Because I worked hard today. Tell me about your day at the mall again" he put her on the bed and watched her as she told him about her day again. She couldn't pronounce a lot of words properly yet but she was getting there. Ntombi got out of the bathroom dressed to impress and Lefa whistled.

Kganya: "Wow, mommy"

Ntombi: "Thank you" she smiled.

The word wow was a compliment to Kganya.

Lefa: "You've got a beautiful mom" he looked at his daughter

"I might just wife her" Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "No, thanks. I already am a wife to a handsome man"

Lefa smiled. He watched his ladies as they sat in front of the mirror as Ntombi applied make up. He didn't think she needed it but didn't say it out loud. Ntombi would look at him through the mirror and find him starrng already "Repeat later?" Lefa raised a brow.

Lefa: "If you can wake me up yeah" they both laughed "Today was hectic, sthandwa sam. Thami messed up figures on a major

audit which caused a lot of trouble"

Ntombi: "Why didn't you call me? Which client?" he told her. It was one of their most difficult but Ntombi had him wrapped around her finger mostly because she reminded him of his late daughter.

Lefa: "I know how much being involved with Amahle's matric ball means to you. I sorted it out, baby" he yawned.

Ntombi: "I love you too" she watched him smile before he laid on his belly to get some rest.

Kganya did not allow it because

she went to jump on him again.

Lefa: "Siba, please take your child, baby please yho" he mumbled his plead and Ntombi laughed.

Ntombi: "Ndalo, come let mommy apply lip gloss" she watched the toddler get off the bed quickly. It was a cherry Labello that made lips a shade of red that she applied on.

Kganya: "Mmm smells nice"

Ntombi: "Don't lick your lips okay" her daughter nodded. "Baby, we're gone. I already prepared dinner so you and Hlompho will just dish up for you guys" she went to him but he was gone already "Come let's

let daddy sleep" she held Kganya's hand and they closed the door behind them. The elders were ready to go and Ntombi told Hlomphe they were on their way. The implant left no discomfort to Hlomphe and so far no complications. He was excited for next week after months of preparation leading to it. He'd have to see a speech therapist afterwards and other specialists but he was ready. He was grateful to all four of his parents for the money saved. He locked the doors after Ntombi and the others left because he wanted to

take a short nap too. He could sense he was not Amahle's favourite person and that's why he didn't go to her do. Ntombi and the family arrived to a yard surrounded by people as many waited to see how Amahle look. Bubele would be her partner mainly because he was a social media celebrity and teenagers loved him. The others didn't mind at all because they were busy at work. Banele worked permanently at Ndlovu Communications after graduating. He decided to study further through correspondence. Bukhosi was also thriving at

Mlambo Attorneys. Ntombi knew her children were privileged and it was something she did not take for granted. She and Liyema worked hard to ensure they are good and they were blessed to have boys who didn't take the sacrifices made for granted. They bought a car they all shared. At first Ntombi thought it wouldn't work but oddly they did good with one car.

Jane: "Amahle is lucky to have two mothers" said a neighbour.

Asakhe: "Ntombi is like an aunt to her now though" she said it in a joke but the other ladies

exchanged looks "She even asked me to match with her as her mother for the pictures"

Ntombi: "That is great, Sakhe"

she smiled. Bukhosi closed

Kganya's eyes with his hands and she got a bit startled.

Bukhosi: "Guess who?" she eased up when she heard his voice. They absolutely adored her and spoiled her way too much for Ntombi's liking. She gave them all a hug before choosing to stay in Banele's arms. Head resting on his shoulders while her arms wrapped around him. Ntombi hugged her sons too. They could

no longer be called boys because they didn't even look like it anymore. All grew beard one way or another. Bandile was permanently in the EC but he came down to support Amahle. With the help of experienced individuals that Liyema hired, they finally got the farm off the ground and even supplied two big supermarkets with fresh produce in the local area. There was suddenly screaming from young girls and it turned out Bubele pulled up with the hired car he'd take Amahle in. Ntombi didn't understand why young girls fussed

over her son but she didn't rain on his parade. He hugged his family when he entered.

Asakhe: "Bubele, please remember that tonight is not about you".

Bubele laughed and nodded.

Liyema arrived soon after. He was still single and looked happy too. Finally Amahle made her way from the bedroom looking stunning. Her make up making it difficult to even recognize her. Vusimuzi hugged his daughter before complimenting her. Amahle loved the attention she was getting. The drape was not bad either. Lots of pictures were

taken with everyone. When she and Bubele made it to their car everyone outside was screaming with excitement. Liyema couldn't help but miss Abo whenever he looked over at Kganya because he reminded her of Abo. Kganya was more outspoken but they were similar in a way. Amahle waved as they were being chauffeured to the matric dance.

Bubele: "Look at you looking all grown up"

Amahle: "I'm eighteen duh" she rolled her eyes and laughed. He hated how beautiful she appeared to him and if it was not

his younger sister he'd have asked her out. He dismissed such thoughts from his mind. The hall looked like heaven to the matriculants but to Bubele it was just okay because he'd been invited to better themed parties. He didn't want to go with Amahle but his father pleaded with him after Amahle hinted just how jealous the girls at her school would be if she went with her influencer brother. Many took pictures with him and Amahle didn't mind one bit. Someone smuggled booze into the party and soon all tables had a bottle or

two going from hand to hand and into juices. The food was great and the dancing more so because most were intoxicated Bubele and Amahle included but they were not out of it, not yet anyways. The lights on the floor dimmed all colours and somewhere between the fun chaos Bubele ended up kissing Amahle. She pulled back shocked at first but then kisses back. It was a short kiss but it was no innocent kiss. Both of them shocked by the moment and couldn't even look at each other. Luckily no one saw it. Bubele: "I've got to go. The

driver will come pick you up later on" he walked out of the hall and she followed.

Amahle: "You kissed me" she reminded him "Gross, Bubele damn" she wiped her mouth.

Bubele: "It was a mistake and I'm sorry. Just with the makeup and hair it's like you're someone else. And you kissed me back so don't gross me"

Amahle: "That's why I'm shaking"

Bubele: "It's not like it's incest. We don't share any blood relations" he tried to justify their actions and she nodded "This can't come

out. We're drunk. So we go to the grave with this"

Amahle: "Okay"

Bubele: "Shap" he walked away. He hated how much he enjoyed the brief moment. They both felt disgusted with themselves but they vowed it was a first and definitely the last it would happen and they'd take the moment to their graves. Amahle couldn't focus on the fun anymore and when her friends suggested an after party she passed. She felt afraid of what will surely happen should the parents find out. But she told herself no one

would and so did Bubele. She got home safely after the driver dropped her off. Bubele found his brothers still up when he returned and he couldn't even look at them. They asked him all about the night and he gave a brief mumbling feedback which made his brothers assume he hated the teen party and were glad they didn't go. He was not going to tell anyone, not even his best friends. He texted Amahle and they were still on the same page. To the grave was where they'd go with what happened.

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A few days after Amahle's matric dance it was Kwanele's graduation. She was there when Bandile graduated so there was no way he'd miss her day. He scored himself a ticket by buying it from a student whose parents couldn't make it to his. She did her articles in PE and the company offered her a position once she completed. Daniel stopped policing their relationship when they dated for two years without a single complaint from Kwanele. He realised that Bandile was not a player like him and he was glad. When Kwanele's name

got called Bandile stood up with her parents and he whistled as loud as he possibly could. He was extremely proud of her. After the ceremony was done lots of pictures were taken. Mr and Mrs Desha treated Bandile like family already.

Bandile: "I'm so proud of you" he kissed her forehead.

Kwanele: "Thank you, baby" she smiled "Thank you so much for the support" they hugged.

Mrs Desha: "Let us go to lunch to celebrate" she wrapped her arms around them both "You've made us so proud, my baby. When your

father heard about a boyfriend he was worried about you dropping out" she put her husband on the spot.

Mr Desha: "I'm still only going to give blessing to this the day this one sends his uncle. I'm just being polite right now" they all laughed.

They left to go have the celebratory lunch before driving back home. There were days

Kwanele felt like giving up as varsity got more difficult but Bandile encouraged her not to.

She failed two modules in second year but she pushed and she was glad that she did. The two of

them went where they could get some privacy.

Kwanele: "Baby, is there no way you can help your father with the farm while living here?"

Bandile: "I know everything that goes on there when I'm there, Nana" he watched her nod "Maybe you could come work where I am" he suggested.

Kwanele: "But it's such a small place"

Bandile: "It's not too bad and I'm not such bad company" he kissed her "I miss you when I go back" she missed him as much if not more.

Kwanele: "Why don't we both go to Cape Town?"

Bandile: "I'm certain you'll find work there. What will I do? Be a stay at home boyfriend?"

Kwanele: "Work at a chemical company or something"

Bandile: "Anele, I helped my father establish a farm. I'm more invested in this than anyone in my family. I now want to start a herb section where I'll sell herbal medicine"

Kwanele: "I know" she looked down.

Bandile: "Or we can live in East London. You can get work at a

municipality or something but I don't want to be far from my project. I know it's not making much money as of yet but it's still new"

Kwanele: "Andile, I'm pregnant" she blurted out "So baby we both need a stable income to care for a baby" she looked at him.

Bandile: "Uhm...okay" he smiled.

Kwanele: "I'd have been more at ease if you fainted. Now I'm just worried" Bandile laughed.

Bandile: "You're pregnant right?" she nodded "with my child?" she nodded once again "And you want to keep the baby" a nod once

again "Then why would I be upset for something I can't change which I'm partly responsible for?"

Kwanele: "I don't know what I'll tell my parents, I'm like so scared"

Bandile: "Now it sounds like you're on the verge of collapse" she laughed "I'll be here for you guys all the way. I do get a salary from my dad for the work that I do. Soon the farm will be a running like a well-oiled machine but I need you to be patient. Please be patient with me" he pleaded.

Kwanele: "Okay, I've got you"

Bandile: "And I've got you" he held her waist looking at her belly "Our baby will be well provided for. I hope you don't mind Kganya's old clothes being passed on to our child" Kwanele laughed before shaking her head.

Kwanele: "I'm just glad that you're smiling" he kissed her "I'm scared shitless" he laughed.

Bandile: "Well if you swear then I'm sure you really are but we'll be alright. Tell your mom so she'll tell your dad. I'll tell on my side so I'll pay damages. Someday soon I'll pay lobola" he was dead serious. .

Kwanele: "What happened to being afraid of marriage? I don't want a baby to trap you into marriage with me, Andile. I'm not desperate"

Bandile: "I've just come to appreciate that I scored myself a once in a lifetime girl. Who communicates openly instead of leaving me guessing. Who is loyal and respects me. Who had got my back"

Kwanele: "No, save it for our vows one day" she kissed him to shut him up and he laughed "Let's hope it's a girl. I've seen Kganya's clothes so I know baby will be

dressed well in her aunt's old clothes"

Bandile: "Do you think she'll call Kganya Dabawo?" they both laughed.

Kwanele: "It'll either be mtasekhaya or chommee" laughter again.

Bandile: "Dabs chommee" more laughter "Tell your mom okay?"

I'm not going to bail" he promised and she believed him. Suddenly she got excited too. She absolutely adores babies so having her own would be great. She imagined her parents being lenient because she was done with school and would be

earning good money soon. The two of them definitely had to sit down and think about where they'll live because they wanted to move in together.

The Elephants had a family dinner after a while of not seeing each other. Mrs E and her husband travelled nearly the entire African continent having the times of their lives.

Yanda: "So you're really not going to get into another relationship?"

he looked at his brother in law.

Hlubi: "There is a young woman who just started as our new receptionist" she looked at

Liyema.

Liyema: "I'm actually happy without someone...well for the time being anyway"

Lungi: "Don't let what happened shut your heart, Liyema"

Liyema: "Stop worrying about me. I'm happy really and without someone too" he said honestly "So Yanda your mother will be out soon?"

Yanda: "Yeah and my dad wants to give his marriage another go. The house is lonely now that Yandisa is married, I guess"

Alu: "Understandably so"

Yanda: "Daluxolo said he made

peace with everything. I don't know but something in me just doesn't allow me to"

Hlubi: "You held your mom to a high regard so it's understandable but you must try for your own sake"

Yanda: "I'm just glad that Mashudu got a better job this side. Meaning my baby girl will be close"

Alu: "Goodness but to move when you're about to give birth"

Hlubi: "At least she will be surrounded by family"

Mrs E: "When are they coming?"

Hlubi: "They should be here"

tomorrow. Luckily they got an apartment in one of Liyema's units"

Yanda: "Thanks, sbali"

Liyema: "She called me saying that it was either I help her or they are moving in with you guys until they found a place. She was like "Please, Malume don't make me go live with my overbearing parents again" he joked and they all laughed. "So Malume came to the rescue"

Jester: "My famous lamb roast is ready" he put it on the table and they cheered him on.

Lungile: "Alunamda and I have an

announcement to make" he held his wife's hand "we've decided to be Elephant-Rasmeni's" Alu nodded. Jester did a little dance before shaking his son's hand. Jester: "Thank you so much for the honour. I understand you'd want to keep Elephant because the man raised you" Lungi nodded. Mrs E: "I'm just happy". They enjoyed dinner around a table filled with laughter while the kids were making pleasant noise as they sat on a mat in the lounge eating. Banele, Bukhosi and Bubele chilled in their apartment. Bubele: "Guys, read a story of a

guy who fell in love with his adoptive sister ear..."

Bukhosi: "Arg sies, man" he cut Bubele's sentence short wearing a look of disgust.

Banele: "Don't even continue" he said to Bubele. Bubele wondered how the parents would react if he pursued a relationship with Amahle when his brothers looked so disgusted by the idea. As the older one he decided to stay away from Amahle but he'd find himself thinking about her and hated it because it was no longer in an innocent way. He felt as disgusted by himself as his brothers looked.

Bukhosi: "I miss Iviwe" he admitted "Yes, after all these years, I actually do. I guess I'm now calmer"

Banele: "Go tell her. I've got a thing for this woman at work and she's about ten years older than me" he laughed.

Bukhosi: "Good luck getting that pass your boss. Bandile is the only one who has a stable love life amongst us" they all laughed "And we'll be uncle's soon which is great"

Bubele: "You and Bandile and making babies when your asses are broke" he shook his head.

Bukhosi: "At least we're certain we don't shoot blanks. How sure are you that you don't?" Bubele threw chips at Bukhosi.

Banele: "Friday there's Hlompho getting the other part of his transplant? Do you think we'll soon talk with him over the phone?" they all smiled liking the thought.

Bubele: "Don't know but our boy is brave" they nodded "I can't picture him not signing. It'll be so strange"

Bukhosi: "Right?" he looked at his brother and Bubele nodded.

Banele: "Things didn't turn out

badly at all. We've survived our parents' divorce. We were lucky enough to welcome three new siblings even if one unfortunately died too young. Life is good. We're still a team and that's all that matters"

Bukhosi: "I actually can't imagine life without Kganya. Best little thing I've ever met and she knows it" the others laughed. They reflected individually and they all liked how things eventually ended up. Family growing bigger and stronger and to them it was all that mattered.

Friday came and everyone woke up nervous and excited in the Gwala home. Bonolo and Vakele were there early morning to wish Hlompho luck.

Kganya: "Nkono and Tata" she ran to hug them. She couldn't say Tamkhulu yet so she said Tata to Vakele and Khulu to Tamkhulu to differentiate between the two.

Bonolo: "My little pastry dumpling" she kissed Kganya's cheeks.

Vakele: "You get talker each time I see you" he picked her up.

Hlompho appeared and everyone looked at him.

Hlomphe: "No more gossiping about me while I'm in the room after today" everyone laughed.

Lefa: "Mimi and Charles will meet us there. Do you want to eat something?"

Hlomphe: "Too nervous" he shook his head.

Lefa: "Uncle Kgethang said all the best. He'll video call later"

Hlomphe nodded.

Hlomphe: "We must get going"

Tamkhulu: "Hlehle, let's go check if there are early worms in the garden"

Vakele: "Oh I want to see them too" he acted excited to get her

excited too.

Kganya: "Yes" he raised her arms up. She went out to the garden with her grandfathers so she wouldn't see her parents leave with Hlomphe.

Bonolo: "You were born perfect, you do know that right?" Hlomphe smiled and nodded. Bonolo started to cry "I'm just overwhelmed" she laughed "Go before your sister cries after you"

Makhulu: "Everything will go well" Hlomphe nodded. Ntombi and Lefa with their son walked out to the car. Hlomphe's tummy was rumbling. After the first

procedure he was anxious about the sound processor being put in after he'd healed. He was anxious and excited. When they got to the specialist they found Mimi and Charles waiting.

Mimi: "Are you ready?" Hlompfo nodded. They went inside all feeling a sense of nervousness. Hlompfo was told once again about what he should expect and he nodded in understanding. His ear healed well so the processor could be placed on the outside of his ear. He fiddled with his fingers while it was being done and his heavy breathing indicated

to his parents just how nervous he was.

Doc: "Ready?" he asked and Hlompho nodded. Once all was done she looked at Hlompho.

Hlompho: "Can I please hear my parents voices first?" the doctor nodded before going to tell the elders. Lefa walked inside first looking more nervous than Hlompho and the rest followed behind him. The doctor got busy once again before she smiled and nodded at the parents giving them the green light.

Lefa: "Hi, my boy" he spoke gently.
Mimi: "Hello, Mpho" she also said in

a whisper.

Ntombi: "Hey, boyzie" she even added a wave.

Charles: "Hi, Hlomphe". Hlomphe just looked at all of them with no reaction.

Lefa: "Something wrong?" he asked the doctor "Didn't it work?" The doctor looked at Hlomphe and before she could touch him he started to cry. He was overwhelmed by hearing them for the very first time. His father's voice deep yet Charles's was not deep at all. Ntombi and Mimi's both soft yet so different. Lefa went to hug his son and wiped his

own tears.

Hlompfo: "Say something again"
he signed.

Lefa: "Can you hear me?" Hlompfo
nodded multiple times. They were
all just in awe of the moment.

They didn't overwhelm him by
saying too much. The specialist
did more things and explained
again to the parents and Hlompfo
what would follow. They spent
hours there. She told them
everything they knew already but
they listened anyway. Hlompfo
went to the toilet before they
could go back home. When he
flushed the toilet he got such a

big fright then he fell over backwards breathing heavily. He didn't expect it to make noise. He always imagined it as one of the silent things. He stood up and flushed again before laughing at himself. The sound was extremely annoying to him but he would get used to it. When he opened the tap to wash his hands he expected a loud noise too but there was none. He went out and explained to his parents what just happened and they got concerned until they saw him laugh about it.

Hlompfo: "Things I thought were

silent are loud and vice versa. I saw a man yawn. I thought he'd make noise"

Ntombi: "Your grandfather makes noise when he yawns" Lefa laughed because she spoke about Vakele. There were different sounds coming from different places and the elders all feared he'd get overwhelmed but clearly he was psychologically prepared for what was happening. The therapy sessions helped. The first person to greet him was brown with barks of excitement. He could not believe that she only made the barking sound, he

expected more. He'll go to a speech therapist to learn how to use speech. When they got home they all headed to the lounge.

Kganya: "Saplize!" she shouted.

She actually wanted to say

Surprise. The grandparents and the quads all signed surprised to not overwhelm Hlompho by shouting unexpectedly.

Bukhosi: "Oh damn" he put his hand over his face.

Banele: "We've been telling her that she should not shout it"

Kganya: "Suplize, Mpho" she repeated.

Bubele: "Kganya" he kneeled in

front of her "Did we not tell you that Hlompho's surprise was not to be shouted" Kganya looked at her dad sulking.

Bonolo: "We kept saying it's a surprise and that we must say it when Hlompho comes. My dumpling didn't hear the part that we must sign it. Please forgive, Bhut Bubele, please forgive". Bubele tickled the sulking Kganya and she forgot all about him calling her out on what she didn't do right. Hlompho was just taking in all of what was going on so he'd familiarize himself with the different voices.

Hlomphe: "Thank you for the surprise" he looked at them all. His speech is not 100% because he spoke in what many called "the deaf accent". Because he'd never heard words being pronounced he could not repeat them well and that's why a speech therapist was needed. For those who paid attention they could hear some words he tried to say. Many think that something was wrong with his speech just because he was deaf but nothing was wrong with it. He just never heard how words are pronounced but that has changed.

Kganya: "What is this?" she asked her brother.

Hlomphe: "Something to help me hear" Kganya nodded. She was told that Hlomphe was deaf from as early as she could understand but to her sign language was a norm because she thought everyone knew how to sign. She opened her mouth and would hit it with her hand to make a very annoying "wawawawa" sound.

Kganya: "Can you hear that?"

Hlomphe wore a neutral look nodding.

Banele: "She might as well say testing 1, 2, 3 while tapping the

implant" he shook his head.

Mimi: "Oh but she doesn't know better shame"

Bukhosi: "Poor Hlompho is in for a nasty surprise. Those cries she throws when having a tantrum yho"

Tamkhulu: "If you are overwhelmed feel free to switch it off and shut us out" he advised. They were still going to use sign language and might even do so forever depending on how well Hlompho does with his speech therapist.

Mimi: "Thank you so much for the party" she smiled.

Bonolo: "This is my first grandbaby. I'm just glad it all went well". Hlomphe found himself staring at everyone who said something rather than eat.

Bukhosi: "You good?" he said after tapping his younger brother's shoulder and Hlomphe smiled.

Hlomphe: "I thought you four had the same sounding voice but it's not"

Banele: "Who wants Bubele's terrible high pitched voice?" they laughed. Hlomphe asked to have a word with the family. He stood in the front so they'd all get to know what he was saying.

Hlompho: "I wanted to say thank you all for everything. To my parents...all four of you, thank you for saving the money. I googled it and I know it's a lot. To all of you thank you for the support. Thank you for taking time to learn my language because I know you all learned to sign only after I was born. I promise that I will do my best to learn to speak your language too" everyone around the able laughed. "I love you" he added looking at them all. They all said "I love you too" in sign language.

Kganya: "I love you too" we'll all

expect for his sister because now that she knows he can hear her she decided to speak with him loudly. "I love you, mommy. I love you, daddy. I love you, tata. I love you, nkono. I love you, Khulu. I love you, Makhulu. She told them all individually that she loved them while pointing at them "And I love you, Kganya" she pointed to herself.

Makhulu: "Oh yes, my baby. Never forget to tell yourself how much you love yourself" she clapped hands. Hlompho knew that the road was still long before he could learn many things but with the

support of the family he knew he could do it. They made peace with Hazel though she didn't make peace with them. Kganya has never met Hazel and Lefa was not planning on having them meet. They only went for family gatherings but would sleep over at a B&B while Kganya was left with Makhulu and Tamkhulu. Mr and Mrs Mbuzo could not wait for her parole because they wanted to spend their golden years giving marriage another go. Ntombi's friendship circle was going great and they managed to get more sponsors for their "stokvel"

project. Chulu ended up getting married and her mother and her mother's friends were the planners. Rose and her family were also doing well. The Dudumashe family picked up their pieces, mended them and moved on with life as best they could.

Liyema and Ntombi were on speaking terms again and deep within he still regretted letting her go but seeing her happy made him think she was never his to hold on to. Mashudu and Nandi were about to welcome their second born and this time she showed. He got a promotion that

meant relocating back to head office in Cape Town and Nandi was just glad she'd be close to her parents again. Ntombi and Liyema were unaware of the fact that they'd have yet another bond, a grandchild. They might not be together but in many ways they were through the lives they brought to the world. They did not know what the future had in store but they chose to just go with the process because it led to beautiful things most of the times since their divorce. For Ntombi and for Liyema it came with lessons. Though learned the

hard way, they added to both their growths as parents and individuals.

THE END

